



# IN CONTEXT

SUSILA DHARMA INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION • JANUARY 2010



Susila Dharma International (SDIA) is an association of seventy organizations including national Susila Dharma organizations and projects from twenty-eight countries dedicated to relieving human suffering and to promoting just and sustainable development through:

- partnerships and support for grassroots, participatory development and humanitarian initiatives,
- empowering individuals and communities to engage in human, social and economic development,
- raising awareness of global issues and inter-dependence.

The development activities of the SDIA include:

- Education and Child Development,
- Health and Community Well-being,
- Community Development and Sustainable Livelihoods,
- Protection of the Environment.

The Association was founded in 1969 and is an affiliate organization of the World Subud Association. Susila Dharma International is a US-registered nonprofit organization that holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNICEF and Department of Public Information (DPI). US Charitable Tax No. 98-0156249.

More information is available at [www.susiladharma.org](http://www.susiladharma.org)

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## IN CONTEXT!

**Chairperson** . . . . . Sharifin Gardiner

**Executive Director** . . . . . Virginia Thomas

**Editor** . . . . . Rosanna Hille

### Editorial Committee

Samuel Chapleau, Arnaud Delune, Sharifin Gardiner, Mardijah Simpson, Virginia Thomas

**Graphic Design and Layout.** . . . . J. Cassidy Sterling

**Cover Photo** . . . . . Samuel Chapleau

Groupe Scolaire Lemba Imbu, D.R. Congo

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### Contact Information

Susila Dharma International Association  
777 rue Campbell  
Greenfield Park, QC J4V 1Y8  
Canada

**Telephone:** 1-450-761-0592

**Email:** [info@susiladharma.org](mailto:info@susiladharma.org)

**Website:** [www.susiladharma.org](http://www.susiladharma.org)

# WELCOME TO IN CONTEXT!



It is more than 30 years since Wilbert Verheyen's father sent him a packet of cabbage seeds from Holland while he was working with villagers in the Highlands of New Guinea. Thus, a community gardening enterprise began. Later Wilbert moved to Jakarta, connected with Subud and, with others, established health programs and a refuge for homeless children. He would become the chairperson of Susila Dharma International. Since then the Susila Dharma Network has evolved and flourished in many countries around the world and diverse projects have been initiated and grown in response to local needs. This magazine tells the stories of some of these projects.

In this magazine we hope to increase understanding of the current trends and complex forces that shape development processes. We also want to show how Susila Dharma projects in eighteen different countries are addressing some of these challenges.

The first part of *IN CONTEXT!* addresses themes relevant to all development projects. Solen Lees Gratiet (Uruguay) focuses on the importance of recognizing international human rights conventions and standards to develop a rights-based approach to development. Education in all its forms is the key to living a fulfilled life and benefits communities and societies alike. Kumari Beck (Canada) provides a comprehensive overview of education issues in development. Once established and successful, most projects are challenged by how to increase their impact through scaling up participation. Bardolf Paul (Indonesia) compares his experiences using participatory rural appraisal methods in community planning projects in Vietnam and in Indonesia. Erica Zoltan Sapir (France) writes about the role of creativity and artistic expression as an essential element in the development process.

The second part of *IN CONTEXT!* features some of the development challenges faced by projects. The consequences of war blight people's lives and hamper all development efforts. Imbert Mathee (USA) describes how Clear Path's mine and unexploded ordnance clearing in Asia has made way for a better future. Illène Pevéc (USA) describes the evolution of a project in Brazil and communal efforts to achieve its sustainability. The economic conditions that lead to migration from villages to the city in India, as well as alternate and sustainable agriculture initiatives which may mitigate the situation are explained by James Cassidy Sterling (USA). Virginia Thomas (Canada) writes about the critical health situation in Democratic Republic of Congo and the collaboration starting between SDIA and an African non-governmental organization to create community-based health centres.

We finish with the experiences of young people interested in making a contribution to global development. Hadrian Holloway (UK) gives his impressions of participating in an international conference in Caux, Switzerland. Myroslava Mykytyn (Canada) brought microscopes and her biological expertise to the children of the market in Asunción, Paraguay. The children learned to examine the microscopic biological world all around them and Myroslava learned about herself and the lives of others.

If we work collaboratively, sharing our vision, energy, skills and material resources and most of all our inner conviction, we can make positive changes in this world.

We hope you enjoy this overview!

From the SDIA Team

# A STEP FURTHER: A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

by Solen Lees Gratiet

Nine-year-old Kavitha goes to school near Bangalore. Her family is from the Dalit (or 'untouchable') caste and her parents are illiterate. Her mother works selling incense on the streets and her father is a manual labourer. Kavitha's older sister, now 15, has helped her mother make incense sticks from the age of 6, working twelve hours a day for the equivalent of 30 cents, and never had an education. Kavitha is lucky and was sent to school. The school she attends is part of a development project which sees education as key in empowering people and helping them break the cycle of poverty. Here, Kavitha is learning to read and write and do maths, but perhaps just as importantly, she's learning about human rights, about those of all children, and particularly those of girl children. She's also learning that, despite her poverty and low situation in Indian society, she deserves to have her rights respected as much as any other child.

At home she talks to her family about what she is learning, and feels she is even gaining the respect of her brothers and father. Sometimes her parents attend meetings at the school where issues such as conflict-resolution and child-labour are discussed. Kavitha hopes they are realising that her education is just as important as that of the male members of the family, and that they will allow and help her to continue her education after primary school. Kavitha's greatest ambition is to become a lawyer and to help those who are oppressed, especially women who are not aware of their rights.

## CHARITY VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTS

This is a story based on a true-life situation. It illustrates the importance of schools in which children learn that they are worthy of respect and are taught about their rights and those of others. Children attending schools where human rights are not specifically taught may receive moral and ethical guidance but, when human rights are on the syllabus, these subjects are explored in a systematic way. These students attain better social skills and greater respect for themselves and others than students from schools where human rights are not specifically taught.

This example shows the importance of basing development on the concept of human rights rather than the concept on charity. Longer-lasting effects can be achieved if project participants are not considered to be helpless recipients; but rather as people dispossessed of rights that need to be respected. One of these rights is knowing what our rights are, who or what is depriving us of our rights and how we can reclaim them.



International Child Development Programme, El Salvador.

Within the Susila Dharma network, project leaders, workers and supporters around the world strive to defend human rights: the rights to education, health and a decent livelihood, among others. While many work consciously for human rights, others (both people at the grassroots and in donor countries) still speak of this work as 'development work' or sometimes as 'charity.'

Looking at this kind of work as charity portrays poverty and inequality as personal misfortunes rather than recognising them as a failure of the state to provide basic services and guarantees. In the charity approach, beneficiaries are seen only as victims and passive recipients, not as active participants in their own destinies and as rights holders equal to all other citizens.

SDIA has a role in assisting its members to ensure that the lack of access to basic goods and services is understood as a systemic failure of the state first and foremost, and also of the international community. Action needs to be taken to ensure protection of the full range of human rights. It is the responsibility of projects to help people claim and maintain those rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The wide acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly in developed countries, provides a multicultural and near-universal agreement upon which to define development objectives. By focussing on economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, it is simple to ground a development agenda on the provision and protection of human rights. Seen from this perspective, SDIA can

easily frame its work on a rights basis. All SDIA members are striving to ensure that human rights are respected. There are many Susila Dharma sponsored projects which demonstrate this. (*Human Rights in the Susila Dharma Network, page 4.*)

Some of these Susila Dharma members, like the Mithra Foundation in India, have gone a step further from the basic provision of services that uphold people's rights. They can be considered Human Rights Defenders. Although the term 'human rights defenders' evokes the image of lawyers or NGO activists, in reality they may be people from all walks of life. For example, a journalist who reports objectively on a demonstration that was brutally suppressed by police, the editor who agrees to publish, and a policewoman who stops one of her colleagues beating up a demonstrator, are all human rights defenders. In the same way, a development project which consciously raises awareness about the rights of the project participants and/or actively campaigns on their behalf is also a human rights defender.

In Argentina, children under four are kept in special prison facilities with their mothers, who are mostly guilty only of minor offences. Tierraviva Asociación Civil, an SDIA member, began its work in the defence of the women prisoners and their children in Buenos Aires.

UNICEF has stated that young infants, children of convicted female offenders, should be kept with their mothers where possible. This may be less traumatic than separation. However, the prison environment is an unnatural and very unsuitable one for a child. Children sometimes leave prison with a fear of grass, men or aeroplanes—things they never experienced behind bars.

According to Rasjid Cesar, Coordinator of Tierraviva, human rights abuse of both mothers and their children is rife. One inmate gave birth to a stillborn baby that could have been saved by cesarian because the authorities took so long in

*Continued on page 4*

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

**H**uman rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

UNIVERSAL AND INALIENABLE

The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. This principle, as first emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, has been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions.

All States have ratified at least one, and 80 percent of States have ratified four or more of the core human rights treaties, reflecting their consent. This creates legal obligations for them and gives concrete expression to universality. Some

fundamental human rights norms enjoy universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations.

Human rights are inalienable. They should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law.

INTERDEPENDENT AND INDIVISIBLE

All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.

EQUAL AND NONDISCRIMINATORY

Nondiscrimination is a cross-cutting principle in international human rights law. The principle is present in all the major human rights treaties and provides the central theme of some of international human rights conventions such as the International

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The principle applies to everyone in relation to all human rights and freedoms and it prohibits discrimination on the basis of a list of non-exhaustive categories such as sex, race, colour and so on. The principle of nondiscrimination is complemented by the principle of equality, as stated in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.'

BOTH RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Human rights entail both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. At the individual level, while we are entitled our human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others.

*Source: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) www.ohchr.org*

**F**raming SDIA's work on a rights basis is logical and easy to do, given that SDIA members throughout the world are striving to ensure human rights are being respected. Here are some examples:

- **Albadi, Lemba Imbu and Nkembo** schools in the Democratic Republic of Congo are defending the right to education for all by providing primary and secondary education for children from underprivileged backgrounds. Albadi also provides vocational training and caters specifically for children who have lost their parents to HIV/AIDS.
  - **Asociación Vivir** in Ecuador empowers people to take control of their health, well-being and nutrition, and promotes health from a more human and integral perspective. Its success has been endorsed by the government, and its educational programmes have been replicated in more than eighteen provinces in Ecuador. Vivir has been elected by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of fifteen Health Promotion models globally.
  - **Puppeteers Without Borders**, based in France but working internationally, uses puppets as an educative and awareness-raising tool around potentially sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. Taking into account the specific background of the target audience, its members help plan and prepare performances and train teachers, health professionals and social workers in the use of puppets. It has implemented projects in Australia, Israel, Mexico and Serbia.
  - **Sun for Life** in Madagascar works for the prevention of deforestation and supports sustainable agriculture.
- To do this, the project encourages the use of solar energy to replace wood fuel or kerosene and replants deforested areas with a plant that is adapted to arid conditions and is also highly nutritious.
- **ICDP (International Child Development Programme)** is a worldwide programme – working in fifteen countries in Africa, Europe and Latin America—with UNICEF and WHO (World Health Organisation) endorsement. It works to educate and empower children's care-givers in at-risk populations, including in areas of conflict. This programme is particularly interesting from a rights perspective as it not only contributes to the development of the capacities of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights, but also to the capacities of 'duty-bearers' (in this case the care-givers) to meet their obligations.
  - **Mithra Foundation** in the slums of Bangalore, India, is working in the field of education and also carrying out human rights education. Its aim is to empower the most vulnerable people and facilitate their struggle against poverty, injustices and exploitation, focusing on migrants settled in the slums. Among these slum dwellers, women and the children are given priority. Mithra's many activities include children's programmes: for example, a preschool programme in the slums, education for child workers and support to girls and Dalit children. It also carries out Human Rights Education in schools in Karnataka, and has developed its own human rights training manual. Children are thus encouraged to explore social issues they face in their daily lives and the rights implications they carry, and to explore the respect and esteem they have for themselves and for others.

**A Step Further** — *continued from page 3*

deciding to hospitalise her. Even when the mother only has a few months of her sentence left to serve, very young children are often separated from their her simply because the child has reached the maximum age children are allowed to live in the prison. This can be extremely traumatic for the child.

Tierraviva started its work on awareness-raising among the mothers in prison using art, dance and bodily expression in order to help improve mother-child relationships. Life behind bars and the repressive attitudes of prison staff were factors which impaired the development of nurturing relationships. The project workers began to advocate for the mothers and were eventually helped to accelerate and monitor legal processes to obtain changes, such as home imprisonment and psychological care for the women and children. The project has gained the trust of the Attorney General's Office, which is expanding the use of these strategies to prisons in other provinces. The work has also been extended to include awareness-raising among female prison guards, which has been well-received.

The extension of its work gives Tierraviva wider institutional impact and the subject of childhood behind bars has begun to be incorporated into the agenda of the prisons involved. The project's achievements have been recognized by the public.

This was demonstrated in October 2008 when Rasjid Cesar was a panellist at the UNICEF-organised conference on 'The Rights of Pregnant Women or Women with Young Children in Detention'. He was the only participant (among deputies, senators, ministers and authorities of the penitentiary services) whose organisation had a concrete strategy with demonstrable results in its approach to this complex problem.

A recent change in the law has allowed judges to sentence offending pregnant women or women with young children to home imprisonment instead of condemning them to prison life behind bars. This has resulted in a more than 50 percent decrease in the number of women in prison with their children.

'It would be pretentious to say that this change came about because of the conference organised by the National Ombudsman's Office and by UNICEF in October,' says Rasjid. 'Nevertheless, two of the people who were instrumental in getting the law changed, Diana Conti and Senator Marita Perceval, were also panellists at this event.'

Tierraviva's work has had a more far-reaching impact than if it had been limited to giving workshops for inmates. Just as in my first example, Kavitha's education will probably have a greater impact on her chances in life (and those of her peers) than a



Testing Yodigo literacy software in India

regular education would have. Tierraviva's advocacy work on an institutional level will also have a wider and longer-lasting effect than if it had limited its work to providing services to inmates alone.

#### FROM A DEVELOPED WORLD PERSPECTIVE

Donor awareness of a rights-based approach is just as important as an attitude shift at the grassroots. If potential donors and other supporters realise that the work is not just supporting a small, isolated group of beneficiaries, but is a sustainable effort that is changing the situation at the policy, legislative and societal level, they are more likely to give. Moreover, if supporters understand that they are not giving to *charity* but are helping empower people to claim their basic rights, they are likely to participate in a variety of different ways in order to support this process.

Save the Children, the international development and humanitarian organisation, is an excellent example of this approach. From the 1920s, the organisation had an awareness of child rights that was expressed by its founder Eglantyne Jebb: 'I believe we should claim certain rights for the children and labour for their universal recognition...' Hand in hand with this rights-based approach went the intention to eradicate poverty on a permanent basis: 'The [Save the Children] Fund

must not be content to save children from the hardships of life—it must abolish these hardships...' (Eglantyne Jebb).

To attain this aim, the Fund has continued to run campaigns and carry out advocacy work throughout its history, often spurring shifts in attitude and policy. According to its most recent annual report:

'Coordinated advocacy... has generated a high political profile for the financing of education in countries affected by conflict. The United Kingdom has increased its spending in these countries as a result; the United States government has promised to, subject to approval by Congress; and other G8 countries have made pledges to do so.'

#### THE NEXT STEP

A logical next step in the process of awareness-raising and shifting attitudes is to use the tools we have at our disposal to help grassroots members achieve the policy changes needed to protect the interests of rights-holders and ensure that those in positions of authority are meeting their responsibilities. SDIA is ideally positioned, for example, to use the United Nations system—including its various human rights mechanisms to bring about lasting changes on regional, national and international levels. We have ECOSOC<sup>1</sup> and UNICEF accreditation and representatives in the main



Illene Pevec

Uraida Vacacela, Rasjid Cesar and Charlotte Ndong use a rights-based approach in projects in Ecuador, Argentina and D.R. Congo

**A Step Further** — continued from page 5

United Nations centres—Geneva, New York and Vienna. We are a worldwide network and we have already proved that our members can make linkages with other NGOs, government bodies and UN agencies.

We need to continue to move in this direction and to link Susila Dharma projects more closely with our representatives to the UN and with international fora where pressure is put on legislators and decision-makers. To do this, member projects could contribute to their country's Universal Periodic Review, whereby a country's human rights situation is evaluated every four years, or participate in the visit of a Special Rapporteur or Independent Expert on a specific issue of concern to them.

Of course, there is a limit to what our network can do, but by working together strategically and with other organisations, we can become a tiny but intense irritant, the stone in the shoe of legislators, or the mosquito in the bed of government rights-abusers. Sooner or later, they will have to make changes to ensure the enjoyment of human rights for all.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council



SOLEEN LEES GRATIET

Solen worked as a teacher and linguist before taking a masters degree in Social Development. She was involved in community projects and schools in Colombia and Eritrea, and with a children's charity in France, she has been with SDIA since 2008.

She recently attended a course in International Human Rights Law and Advocacy at the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest. Members of Susila Dharma work towards achieving the first seven goals.

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2. **Achieve universal primary education:** Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
3. **Promote gender equality and empower women:** Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.
4. **Reduce child mortality:** Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.
5. **Improve maternal health:** Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio, and achieve universal access to reproductive health.
6. **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7. **Ensure environmental sustainability:** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
8. **Develop a global partnership for development:** Address the special needs of least-developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing states. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries. In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

The UN publishes progress reports on the achievement of these goals on [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

# EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT/DEVELOPING EDUCATION: A CHALLENGE FOR OUR NETWORK

by Kumari Beck

We live in a world that is marked by intensified technological and scientific advances and marvels; but is also a world scarred by deepening inequities. Millions of children and youth, our future, live in conditions of poverty, in hunger, are susceptible to illness, lack basic health care, and have few prospects of attaining the most basic standards of comfort. Even children in the so-called ‘developed’ nations are not spared conditions of scarcity. They lack access to resources and suffer marginalization. It has been 60 years since the Declaration of Human Rights, and yet we are far from achieving economic, social and cultural rights for the majority world’s people.

Recognizing that it is a fundamental human right, we speak freely about education being the way to the future and the panacea for many of our problems. As a world community, we have pledged to address these issues through diverse plans of action. In spite of these good intentions, the reality on the ground is that, for many, the challenge is simply one of staying alive and the education that can make a difference becomes a lower priority. Our hopes for education may become platitudes unless we can act on those hopes in a way that is relevant to the particular conditions and contexts of each local community.

I share these thoughts about education, educating, and development for all from my particular location, straddling the world of educational research and teacher education and from my long-standing interest and work with the Susila Dharma Network. My comments are introductory and are meant to raise questions and ideas that will move us towards best practice and to encourage us to pause for reflection. It is a call to ‘right action’.

## EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

There are many initiatives and programs to make education a high priority in all countries, especially in countries in the difficult circumstances designated as ‘developing’. The call to action in the field of development is based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (pg. 6 sidebar) The Declaration on ‘Education for All’ (EFA) is the best known education-related development initiative and was launched in 1990 by a group of governments, non-governmental organizations and agencies, including UNICEF. All the MDGs are interconnected and relevant to education. An integrated approach to achieving progress in poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, access to and quality health care, gender parity, are connected to the education goals of providing access to, and maintaining, quality education



Semillitas education program, Fundación Amanecer, Colombia

for all. The facts are staggering: in 1990, 100 million children had no access to primary schooling or did not go to school, and 62 million of those were girls. 960 million adults (600 million women) were illiterate.

The United Nations' World Declaration on Education for All (EFA)<sup>1</sup> resulted in the creation of goals to meet the learning needs of diverse populations of children, youth and adults through access to education, creating an effective learning environment, attention to the scope and delivery of education (with a focus on the diversity of contexts, learning needs and modes of delivery), and strengthening the policies, partnerships and resource networks that will make these goals possible.

Two reviews of these initiatives (1996 in Jordan; 2000 in Senegal) revealed that much progress had been made towards universal primary education. Many countries were either close to achieving that goal, or had met it. There were fewer out-of-school children than in 1990<sup>2</sup> and more governments of low-income countries were working towards the EFA goals. However, challenges still remained. Striving to meet those challenges, the Dakar Framework for Action identified the following goals to be accomplished by 2015:

- All children, especially girls and children from marginalized groups, to have access to quality primary education;
- Young people and adults to have access to learning life skills;
- A 50% improvement in adult literacy rates especially among women;
- Equitable access to continuing education and improving the quality of all education, especially, literacy, numeracy and life skills.

Recommitting to the vision of EFA, delegates reaffirmed their pledge to ensure that all children have an education, described as 'learning to know, to do, to live together and to be'. UNESCO was given the task of coordinating the international efforts related to these goals.

The numbers associated with who is in school and who is not do not convey the experiences of the millions of children, youth and adults who are still illiterate or unable to access schooling due to the impact of HIV/AIDS and the resulting loss of teachers, the failure of harvests due to drought, the loss of land and livelihoods, war and conflict, epidemics and natural disasters, and the impact of being long-term refugees. Nor do the numbers tell of the quality of learning and teaching, of what is being taught, why it is being, or by whom. They do not convey the many reasons why the education of girls and gender disparity still remain widespread issues, nor do they explain the glacial pace at which these goals are being implemented.

Some of the educational challenges relate to the quality of learning that is sacrificed in order to get numbers into classrooms. There is a serious shortage of qualified teachers and a widespread use of unqualified teachers. Classroom sizes, lack of resources—especially locally generated and relevant learning materials as opposed to imported textbooks that are no longer

useful for classrooms in developed countries—are common problems encountered by teachers. From a development perspective, the most daunting challenge is to meet basic life needs and to address the relationship between the capacity to receive education and the improvement of living conditions.

The creation of international goals for the education of all marks progress; but it is another matter to reach those goals. Participatory decision making, effective governance, and partnerships at the local, national and international levels are strategies identified to attain them. Other strategies cover policy issues, curricula and instruction, teacher training, and overall learner support. EFA policies should be contained within sustainable, holistic frameworks that include development for the entire community. Curricula, instructional methods, teacher training, and resource development must be supported by systems of educational governance and should be relevant to and developed with the local community in mind. Strategies for implementation need to reach the most marginalized and ensure equitable access to classrooms and programs. A key to achieving success is to engage civil society at all stages, from policy making to delivery. At the heart of the learning-teaching relationship are teachers, and attention must be paid to their needs—pay, working conditions, training and professional development and participation in decision-making.

## DEVELOPING EDUCATION

There is no end of solutions and educational innovation to address the perceived 'problems in education' and 'problems with education'. Opinions on what's wrong with schooling and on the proper way to teach are many and diverse, with varying ideological positions on how schools should be differently run. Bring back the small school, say some; or, create arts-based schools, or technology-oriented classrooms. Classrooms should be learner-centred environments, according to the more common, Western/Northern models of learning and teaching. On the other side is the view that we need to get back to the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, and 'traditional' forms of instruction. Never mind the frills and added distractions. The language of accountability, testing and



Inca Samana Indigenous School, Ecuador

standards is becoming more common. Education is viewed as a means to support economic development to the exclusion of more holistic values incorporating creativity, imagination, curiosity, care, community building, and spiritual traditions (as distinct from religious values). In the face of the diversity of educational practices and approaches, how do we choose what is the right fit for each context and community?

Practitioners and supporters of Susila Dharma education projects have much to draw on, whether it be from the best practices of development or of education. One effective strategy might be to identify important common principles that reflect our strengths and what we have to offer, helping us to achieve our goal to develop education. Perhaps the enormity of the challenges themselves blind us to what is possible, especially in regard to our source of inspiration—our deepest values about human life and well-being. This, I suggest, is our own best starting point: to go back to the source and draw from the inner wellspring that feeds our hopes, aspirations, and our decision making, especially in the face of difficult circumstances.

Honouring the spirit, or creating a space for spirituality, is an important element of the Susila Dharma model. As our search for external solutions becomes increasingly frustrating, we must turn inward to find the way forward. We need to inspire our thinking and knowledge with the values of spirituality rather than externally administered remedies. Supported from this place, we will be able to call forth right action from ourselves, and from those we work with, and serve in our communities.

Another strength is our emphasis on the local: local initiative that attends to the needs of the people in a particular community rather than applying a template for recovery. How can we help local teachers and project leaders to access educational resources that best meet the needs of that population, in that space, place and time? How best can a curriculum be developed that will help students, not just to survive and get by, but to flourish? Could the curriculum emerge from the place, rather than be imposed as an external solution? What are the wisdom traditions of the place that could form the foundation of the curriculum? How do local wisdom traditions and spiritual values influence the principles of teaching? How do they shape our ideas on how we should relate to one another, which is, in the end, the basis of the learning-teaching relationship?

Placing relationships at the heart of the work (be it education, community building, or health care) has been key to the success of many Susila Dharma projects and should be acknowledged and strengthened. In schools there are many levels at which relationships can be developed: between teacher and student, among students, among teachers working collaboratively, between teacher and administrators, between school and policy makers, and among the school, the parents and the community at large. How can we support teachers and project leaders to develop, improve and enhance such caring relationships? How might these relationships lead to an increased capacity to deliver quality education that meets the needs of learners and the community they live in?

One of the messier issues in providing education for all is deciding what education is for, what should be taught, and how that content will be prepared for learners. The problem is compounded in places where colonial educational practices and schools have provided much of the education, or where marginalized peoples have been excluded from social participation. Curricula were produced based on what, in far off places or by elite groups, was considered 'good' for students, preparing them for imagined futures, for realities far removed from the experiences of the people being educated. To avoid reproducing the harmful effects of imposed 'imported' curricula and foreign languages, to avoid reproducing social exclusion and marginalization, we need to encourage and help teachers to be part of the process of curriculum development. What is the benefit of a curriculum that emerges from a local place, is relevant to learners, and contributes to the well-being of their communities?

This ties into teaching methods and practices, teacher training and the retention of teachers. As the renowned teacher and author, Parker Palmer, describes, we teach who we are, and the primary responsibility for teacher training is to 're-source' the



Student at Chimoza School, in Zambia

person who teaches. When teacher training is not available, when physical conditions are life-denying, and the teacher herself struggles to keep body and soul alive, effective teacher training falls off the priority list. It becomes difficult to avoid state policies and the wide-spread, systemic dysfunction of state-run systems in which many teachers are trapped. Partnership support for these situations must take the overall contexts into account while remaining sensitive to the cycle of dependency that interventions can produce, however well intentioned these interventions may be. Does our partnership support confirm the inadequacies of the local people, building further dependencies, or does it support their own emergence from harmful practices? Are we contributing to education as a process of 'becoming' rather than to education simply as a means to an economic end? Participatory models of governance and practice that have proven to be deeply satisfying and effective in other community development Susila Dharma projects could prove to be useful resources in approaching this challenge in schools.

*Continued on page 11*

This is a partial list of Susila Dharma projects that offer educational programs.

## INDONESIA

**Bina Cita Utama (BCU)** provides a bilingual international curriculum at Rugan Sari in Kalimantan. In collaboration with Yayasan Usaha Mulia and with grants from Barclays Bank, BCU has trained 100 teachers in human-based education methodology and plans to train an additional 200 teachers in 2010.

**Sekolah Cita Buana** is a bilingual school in Jakarta that offers an international curriculum and operates a program for special needs and marginalized children.

**Yayasan Usaha Mulia** provides learning centres and libraries in low-income areas in West Java, Aceh and Central Kalimantan, and provides sponsorship and scholarships to disadvantaged students.

**Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta** provides scholarship for high school and university students who need to travel away from their villages to complete their education.

## INDIA

**Anisha** supports families living in the central train station in Bangalore with educational support for children such as pre-primary education and education sponsorship.

**Centre for Culture and Development** offers enrichment programmes for disadvantaged children and rural poor, especially Dalits, focussing on creative arts and health education.

**Mithra Foundation** focuses on the needs of Dalits, women and children, and provides preschool preparation programs in many slums in Bangalore. Mithra also operates a primary school, delivers teacher training, and runs a vocational training program. Mithra has also developed a human rights curriculum that is delivered in high schools throughout Karnataka province.

## SOUTH AMERICA

**Child's Garden of Peace** provides school completion scholarships and initiated a community-based, environmental and nutrition education program in southern Brazil.

**Entrelazos** is a child-centered project operating arts programs in Buenos Aires and Traslasierra province, Argentina.

**El Refugio** provides comprehensive vocational training programmes to children and adolescents in two high-risk areas of Bogotá, Colombia.

**Fundación Amanecer** in Armenia, Colombia provides a preschool and primary program and works with the local indigenous community.

**Fundación Educativa Amor** in Soacha, Colombia provides primary and secondary education for children from disadvantaged populations displaced by civil war.

**Inka Samana**, Ecuador, developed a community-based, indigenous Inca curriculum. It operates a remote school in the community of Saraguro. This curriculum is recognized by the national education ministry and made available to other indigenous groups for use in their communities.

**Tierraviva** in Argentina provides creative arts and human rights training to incarcerated women and children. It is currently carrying out an outreach program in several provinces in the country, working with inmates and prison staff, as well as systemizing its methodology in order to be taught in university courses.

**Vida Plena** provides educational and other support to children living in the market area in Asunción, Paraguay. The project plans to provide ICDP training to the parents of the market children, and is currently working with a government department on a pilot project which aims to improve conditions in some of Paraguay's children's homes.

## EUROPE

**International Child Development Programme (ICDP)** in Norway provides training programmes in early childhood psychosocial development to care-givers. This programme is delivered in eighteen different countries and is recognized by UNICEF and WHO.

**Lewes New School** in England provides a human-scale education and through a tailored education programme assists children to develop their unique natures.

**Roda Viva** is an early-education and after-school learning centre near Lisbon Portugal that assists children in the surrounding immigrant community.

**School without Violence** is a programme provided in collaboration with UNICEF to reduce violence in schools in Serbia.

## AFRICA

**Albadi School and Orphanage** in Inkisi, D.R. Congo, operates a school and also cares for children born to parents who are victims of HIV/AIDS. Albadi provides education and vocational training to children and teenagers in a family environment where human beings have value and dignity.

**GSSD Lemba Imbu** is a private school on the outskirts of Kinshasa providing primary school education to children from the under-serviced community.

**CSSD Inkisi** in D.R. Congo provides primary and secondary school education.

**Nkembo School** is a primary and secondary school in Muanda, D.R. Congo, managed by a Board of parents.

**'Q' Fund** works with local community service organizations to build schools and provide education support to students in Zambia and Kenya.

## NORTH AMERICA

**My Neighbourhood** provides creative art classes for children in inner city schools in California.

### Read more

[www.project-activities.susiladharm.org/programme\\_child/index.shtml](http://www.project-activities.susiladharm.org/programme_child/index.shtml)



Mithra Foundation School, Bangalore, India

Bardolf Paul

**Education and Development** — continued from page 9

Many Susila Dharma projects, no matter what their focus, have emerged from a wish to restore equitable practices to populations that have been excluded from the wider community: low-caste people barred from school and work, children of incarcerated women, seasonal agricultural workers, people displaced by migrations caused by wars and natural disasters, or people who have lost traditional livelihoods as a result of development. We are already aware of the dangers of looking at others in terms of deficiencies, and help offered as ‘aid’ to improve others. We can take strength from these principles of equity in our schooling practices.

We should also acknowledge that there are educational strategies and principles being applied in all Susila Dharma projects and not just those identified as schools. This is a useful element to focus on in terms of the goal of education for all. How can a health project’s successful strategies contribute to teaching and learning in another, and how can ideas from a

successful school support community development in another place? We are a multifaceted and multi-sectored network, and we have much to learn from one another through regional networking, sharing and learning. A comprehensive community development approach that considers the needs of the community rather than just ‘education’ will provide a sound basis for successful strategies in enhancing our educational practices throughout our network.

<sup>1</sup> *The World Declaration on Education For All*, [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

<sup>2</sup> For example, 20 million fewer children drop out of school.

<sup>3</sup> In 2000, the World Education Forum created *A Framework for Action* in Dakar, Senegal, to implement the goals of EFA.



KUMARI BECK

**K**umari is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in BC, Canada. She teaches courses in social issues in education, global education, inter-cultural and international issues, and contemporary issues in curriculum and pedagogy. She also works with student teachers and with undergraduate and graduate programmes. Her

main research focus is international education. Kumari was on the Board of SDIA from 1993–2005, and the chair from 2001–2005.

## DREAMS, INTENTIONS, AND REALITIES: STORIES FROM VIETNAM AND INDONESIA

By Bardolf Paul

**A**n often-stated goal of development projects is the active participation of local people in the processes and events that have a direct impact on their lives. An array of methods and techniques began to arise in the late 1980s, created specifically to facilitate this involvement. Later many of these methods were brought together under the banner of Participatory Learning and Action, or PLA for short.

I was fortunate to start my development career in 1989 in one of the hotbeds of experimentation with participatory methods—southern India. At that time, a number of NGOs were trying out new approaches in communities where they traditionally worked. I happened to be working at MYRADA, and MYRADA staff were very instrumental

in refining the main methodology, which was then called Participatory Rural Appraisal.

In mid-1991, I moved on to Vietnam, which was at the beginning of its own development trajectory; and for the next twelve years I was able to experiment with and practice these methodologies on a large scale. At the beginning of 2003, I started work with a Canadian mineral exploration company in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Thus began another journey, applying participatory approaches in a different setting, the island of Borneo, and in a very different sector, mining. In this article, I examine my experience and the interplay between dreams, intentions, and realities in applying participatory practices in Vietnam contrasted with my experiences in Indonesia.

VIETNAM

The dream of many development professionals is to make an impact on a large scale and, ideally, to see some systemic change in the process. This often remains just a dream because the opportunity to actualize it never arises, or insufficient thought is given to how to make it happen. In Vietnam, the opportunity arose very quickly, as the project in which I was working was both large and well-funded. It was a forestry cooperation program between Vietnam and Sweden, and it eventually involved 350 communities in five provinces in the north. It was here that the dream began and the first large-scale demonstration of scaling-up eventually took place, though that was not planned at the beginning of the project.

Upon my arrival in Vietnam, I had no idea that I would be using the experience with participatory methods I had gained in India. The approach and methodology of the project had already been clearly defined. Vietnam was a communist-governed country. I assumed there would be no room for grass-roots democracy under such a regime. I could not have been more mistaken as, within five years, participatory approaches were widely adopted throughout the country in virtually every project and program and by all key development actors and agencies. The Swedish-funded project had been instrumental in this rapid spread and dissemination.

The project focused on helping poor farmers plant trees on land newly-allocated by the government. I immediately began to question the premise that the households we wanted to work with were only interested in planting a few tree species—mainly Acacia and Eucalyptus imported from Australia. Once I started talking to farmers, I learned that their interests were far broader.

I wanted to try out the Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology and see what might arise. If it didn't work, we could always take another approach. I discussed it with my Vietnamese colleagues and they were quite willing to try. In India I had received only a brief introduction to the method so I wanted to bring in an experienced trainer; however, none was available and I was faced with doing the training myself. This really deepened my understanding of how to use the methodology. One of the unique characteristics of the Rural Appraisal method is that it can only be learned while actually doing it in a community with local people.

The next hurdle was to get approval to go into a community and start the training. Up to that point, in our project area, no foreigner had ever been allowed to stay overnight in a village and, besides me, there were a half dozen other foreigners from the project who also needed to attend. Somehow we managed to get approval and, with a sprinkling of added security in the village, we were off.

None of the foreigners spoke Vietnamese, which meant that a lot of the time you never knew exactly what was going on and had to trust the process and your feelings. One incident stands out. A discussion had begun about electrification

in the village—specifically about using electric pumps to bring water up to the areas where trees would be planted. A division began to emerge in the discussion. Some people advocated working together to haul the water up by hand, others wanted electric pumps. As the discussion heated up, it appeared that people were about to come to blows. At that point, I felt I had to let go and trust in the process. Sure enough, no one started to punch anyone else, it was simply a typical heated exchange between Vietnamese—quite normal, apparently.

That was the very beginning of a process in which the methodology was tried in a small number of villages for a few years to test and refine the application for local conditions before extending the it to new villages. Soon we were invited to introduce the method to other projects and agencies and to train people outside of our project. Several large development projects began to introduce the methodology with our assistance. Once we felt confident that things were working well and that everyone was happy with the approach, we started to develop a plan for scaling-up to cover a larger number of villages in our project area. Because of limited government staff, we trained some villagers to spread the approach to neighbouring communities. Ultimately, 350 villages became part of the project, and in response to farmers' demands, the scope moved beyond forestry and tree planting to include all aspects of rural livelihoods: agriculture, animal husbandry, small-scale agribusiness, and rural finance, none of which was anticipated when the project first began.

INDONESIA

In Indonesia, the small mineral exploration company I worked for wanted to ensure that local people would benefit directly from any mineral production activities. This was the original dream, and ultimately it fostered the development of a unique development approach and methodology that became a mechanism for wider application in Indonesia.

My original intention had been to bring a more strategic focus to activities in the communities close to the potential mining area; however, within the first year unexpected



Sugar cane workers in Vietnam

circumstances would cause a rather different focus to emerge, one that resulted in a new and unique direction for the work.

Circumstances for the work seemed ideal. I was coming to run a small foundation called Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta that had been established five years earlier by a junior mineral exploration company, Kalimantan Gold Corporation. I had

#### YAYASAN TAMBUIHAK SINTA

**Y**ayasan Tambuhak Sinta (YTS) is a development foundation based in the Indonesian provinces of Kalimantan. These provinces have small populations, but are rich in natural resources; so it is inevitable that large-scale development will come. The foundation, YTS, is working to create conditions that will enable this development to be balanced, sustainable, and equitable. To this end YTS is collaborating with local communities and governments to strengthen their capacity to jointly manage the process of development.

**Community Development:** YTS is bringing together clusters of Dayak communities and local governments through a planning process that links community needs with government resources. Each village creates its own, individual development plan that feeds into the government planning cycle. YTS also provides immediate technical support for key livelihood activities that are prioritized in the village plan. These include upland rice cultivation and rubber production, and chicken-, pig-, and fish-rearing.



Bardolf Paul

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in villages, Indonesia

**Regional Development:** YTS is also striving to improve the capacity of government to plan and manage the overall development process. It is promoting an integrated platform for development and is lobbying both government and development agencies to work together with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to create a common development framework.

**Education Support:** YTS runs a higher education scholarship program for talented and financially needy children from remote villages.

[www.tambuhaksinta.com](http://www.tambuhaksinta.com)

visited the project before and so had some familiarity with the people and the working environment. Key people in the company were great supporters of participation and had just brokered an agreement with the provincial government and a United Nations agency to foster an integrated approach to regional planning in the province. This agreement was one of the factors that had brought me to Indonesia. I also understood that the Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology had been implemented in the villages. Things looked pretty straightforward. It seemed to be a simple matter of becoming familiar with the terrain and getting on with the job.

Well, it wasn't that simple. For starters, I discovered that participatory planning was *not* being used in the villages. I also felt that I needed to learn much more about development dynamics in the mining sector.

The knowledge gap about mining was remedied within a few months. I was invited to help out with a global review of the World Bank's involvement in extractive industries—oil, gas and mining. For the remainder of the year, I worked largely with the secretariat that was sponsoring this review. In the process I became intimately familiar with the important issues facing the mining sector. The number-one issue that was preventing communities from benefiting from mining projects was the poor quality of local governance. This understanding provided us with a new focus: to strengthen the involvement of local people in community and local government decision-making processes. With this in mind, we began to experiment with a community planning approach using the Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology.

We started off in four villages. It was a huge learning process for all involved, particularly for our staff; but everyone was very committed and enthusiastic. Each village developed its own annual plan, identifying priority development issues. The Dayaks in our area are very independent-minded people and, apart from religion and festivals, do not have a tradition of coming together to plan or to make decisions; so, our biggest challenge was how to engage villagers in a planning process that they would feel was beneficial. It was essential to link community planning with government planning. To our surprise we discovered that, at the same time that we had begun our experiment, the central government had enacted a system of bottom-up planning throughout the country. This provided us with an immediate entrée into the government planning cycle and meant that priorities identified in the community plans could be brought directly into the government plan. This gave villagers an important incentive to engage in the annual planning process.

The coming together of the government and village planning processes made us realise that the methodology we had created had much wider application, well beyond our project and project area. We soon began to engage in activities aimed at promoting this approach to others, testing it out in different locations, and with other partners. We immediately expanded in our own area to include a total of twenty villages.

We also started to work with other mining companies, while expanding our own activities into eastern Kalimantan. A network of like-minded people and institutions began to work on similar initiatives, and we started exchanging experiences on a country-wide level.

What had begun as a simple objective to support development activities in a select number of Dayak villages in one province in Kalimantan, evolved into creating an approach and methodology that had the potential for widespread application throughout Indonesia.

#### NOT THE END OF THE STORY

While we are far from the end of this particular story, in this paper I have tried to show two examples of the unpredictable nature of development that involves participatory processes and the potential for widespread application that can arise. When applied properly, these processes can open up the field for the unexpected to occur.

In Vietnam, the timing and circumstances were important. The country was at a turning point in the early 1990s, and was ready for a new direction in developing its rural sector. The Vietnamese were open for new ideas and were will-

ing to try innovative approaches to address issues of poverty and development.

In Kalimantan, timing was also propitious. We had no idea that what we were developing could ever have the possibility for widespread application. The new government planning mechanism made this possible. And now, new opportunities are arising in Kalimantan to extend this approach on a much wider scale.



BARDOLF PAUL

**B**ardolf Paul is a rural development specialist with 20 years experience in the Asia region, primarily in the natural resources sector. His speciality is strengthening the interface between communities and government, and improving the quality of governance at both community and government levels. In Kalimantan, Bardolf heads the foundation established by Kalimantan Gold in 1967, Yayasan Tambuhak Sinta.

## ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, CREATIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT

by Erica Sapir

**W**e live in a fast-changing society and need to adapt and learn fast. What will allow us to thrive, to build and sustain ourselves and our community, while enhancing opportunities for future generations?

Education, in the widest sense, has a key role. As a puppeteer and founder of the NGO, Puppeteers without Borders, my aim is to bring creativity and play into schools. We work with teachers themselves, to help them discover the joy of play by making puppets, creating the characters, giving them roles and recreating with the puppets situations and conflicts that they meet in the classroom or in their private lives. A happy teacher will make a happy pupil. By transmitting to their pupils these newly discovered techniques in puppetry, teachers will be able to pass on many useful subjects. Children and adolescents can learn history, languages, or more personal subjects such as Human Rights, sexual education, nonviolent communication or hygiene in an interactive, playful and creative way.

In 2008 at the tenth international conference on *Mask, Object, Puppet: the powerful means of theatrical expression* in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, I gave a workshop on *Using puppetry in education with special emphasis on nonviolent communication*. I

started with a short enactment of the story of Cain and Abel with walking puppets. The killing of Abel was particularly gruesome. Cain crushed him completely and threw him to the crowd! The audience was shocked by the cruelty: how easily they had forgotten that the crushed Abel was, after all, made of a cardboard toilet roll! After the killing, I explained what had moved Cain to his



Erica Sapir

Puppeteers Without Borders, Mexico AIDS Conference

violence: his need to be loved and appreciated, a basic need of all human beings, and how, with some empathy, he would have been able to express his anger at being neglected, without resorting to murder. I spoke about the importance of acknowledging our basic needs and what those basic needs are. I asked the audience to think of some conflict they faced in their personal lives or work and to think of what needs are involved in those conflicts. Then I showed how to make our famous walking puppets.

*'IMAGINATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN KNOWLEDGE'* —ALBERT EINSTEIN

We need to understand why imagination is so important in helping us to face the challenges of our changing societies and to what extent schools encourage, develop, and teach children how to use their imagination.

Learning and knowledge do not provide all the answers. When faced with a completely new situation it is not 'knowing' that helps, nor *experience*; what is most helpful to both ourselves and society is creativity, the direct result of imagination.

Creativity, or as Edward De Bono calls it, *lateral thinking*, is the capacity of every living creature to take another path, not to follow along the well-trodden one, but to dare to be different, to go into the unknown and to follow one's own *play instinct* and even to make mistakes. Carl Jung said, "The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct, acting from inner necessity." Another definition of creativity is the ability of the brain to generate original ideas that have value.

So, the question remains, why do so many people feel blocked in their creativity, or feel that only artists are creative people?

We need to encourage and develop creativity in our everyday lives. Creativity is the ability to find new solutions to problems of relationships, to find a new job more in tune with our talents, to improve our living conditions, to improve the way we educate our children. The more we use creative solutions in these everyday activities, the more our life will be worthwhile, interesting and fulfilled.

One form of creativity is artistic expression. Art encompasses many levels, perspectives and manifestations. Not everyone will be a great artist, but artistic expression is something else: a capacity that everyone has to create something out of materials. It is different and more than the sum of those materials. Artistic expression is one positive and useful way to develop creativity. Picasso said 'All children are born artists.' But, for many of us, this ability is stunted by school and family as we grow.

The International Child Development Programme (ICDP), a member of the Susila Dharma Network that was founded by Professor Karsten Hundeide, integrates play at the forefront of good practices for child care. Through play, many major



Erica Sapir

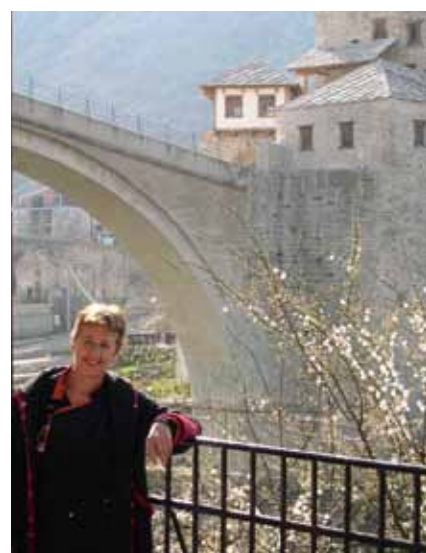
Puppeteers Without Borders, Australia workshop with refugees

skills necessary for survival are developed and strengthened. Many other projects in the Susila Dharma Network use play, as well as creative and artistic expression to enrich their development activities. My Neighbourhood in Los Angeles, California, USA, focuses on helping inner-city children develop their creativity; in India the Centre for Culture and Development in Madurai holds creative summer camps for Dalit children from the slums, and the Mithra Foundation in Bangalore helps teachers learn more creative ways to teach children; Asociación Vivir in Ecuador has a playroom in their health clinic to help parents discover why play is important for their children's health. We need more projects of this kind, if we want to educate our children to develop imagination to face the challenges that the future will bring.

Recently I held a workshop for sixteen teachers in Northern Italy on building puppets and using them in constructive communication. I was once more a witness to the joy and surprise these adults had in handling funny puppets they had made in an hour or two and breathing life into them. They had fun creating scenes from everyday life with the puppets in the uninhibited way that puppetry allows. With light in their eyes, some of the teachers said, 'It has been a life-changing experience!'

#### ERICA SAPIR

Erica was born and grew up in Florence, Italy, but has spent her adult life in Israel, where she raised her five children. Once the children were grown, she studied theatre at the School for Visual Theatre in Jerusalem. She has participated in the creation of many puppet shows for children as well as for adults. Now living in France, she uses her expertise in puppetry for educational and humanitarian causes. Erica is the founder of Puppeteers Without Borders.



# CLEARING THE PATH

By Imbert Matthee

When I first set eyes on the old Dong Ha combat base, nothing but a pair of rusted gate pillars marked its entrance. By then, it had been more than a quarter century since the Americans had abandoned it and there were few signs that this had once been home to 50,000 troops from the third Marine Division.

We had just left a fairly busy street near the centre of Dong Ha, now the fast-growing capital of Quang Tri Province. But once through the rusted gate, we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of a wasteland: a barren, haggard terrain of red dirt covered with shrubs and small groves of scrawny trees hanging on to life under a relentless tropical sun. I looked around and spotted some empty cinder-block barracks, some Vietnamese graves, a sand quarry and a scattering of ‘homes’ I was later told belonged to squatters. Unlike the busy street we just left behind, there were no cars, mopeds or bicycles here. The town’s growth and traffic simply parted ways, like a stream around an island. And for good reason. This was Dong Ha’s Ward 8, one of the most highly contaminated and dangerous sites in the former Demilitarized Zone region at the 17th parallel.

Leftover wartime ordnance is less problematic for people in such places as England or Germany. Not so in developing countries with a land mine problem. Although it’s difficult to get precise numbers, nearly 100 million land mines and untold pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO) litter the world. If you were to map the world with color-coding, using red as the highest level of contamination, it would show an intermittent band of hot, red spots roughly around the equator and loosely connecting such regions as the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Central America. Trouble spots in Africa, such as Angola and Mozambique, aren’t too much further to the south. In all, 140 million people are threatened in some way by the presence of land mines. Every 30 minutes, someone somewhere in the world gets killed or injured by this deadly debris. Two in every five victims are children.

The effects of this ‘pollution’ on development are far-reaching. In places like Vietnam, Cambodia and Afghanistan, where explosives were used during several decades of civil war, they severely limit access to food. During a conflict, land mines are often placed tactically along roads, near power stations or drinking water supplies. Cluster bombs are used similarly to cripple infrastructure and restrict an enemy’s ability to function. This adds to the burden of reconstruction after war, thus further hampering development.

There is also the burden of land mine accident survivors on society, its work force, and its public health system. In Afghanistan, one in every ten adult males is a mine survivor.

The country has to receive vast sums of foreign aid to help support its health care system, which tends to be accessible in larger cities but not in the smaller communities where most of the accidents happen.

While there may be domestic and foreign support for



Erin Fredrichs

400 students from Ward eight elementary Peace School in Dong Ha, Vietnam now get an education on grounds once too dangerous to walk on.

the immediate treatment of life-threatening injuries in most developing countries, this is rarely the case for the kind of long-term treatment necessary to fully rehabilitate land mine accident survivors. These patients need proper orthopaedic care, psychological treatment, special skills training and other forms of socioeconomic support. Almost every survivor suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, which can lead to depression, which in turn can lead to substance abuse and domestic violence, thus further adding to the need for and cost of treatment, if treatment exists at all.

But, why do developing countries find it so much harder to rid their countryside of wartime UXO? The answer in one word: money. It can cost up to \$1,000 to detect and destroy a single land mine, depending on the type and the place where it is found. One estimate puts the cost of removing all land mines in the world at \$57 billion—providing no new conflicts break out.

The United States, which spends more money removing land mines and unexploded ordnance around the world than all the other countries combined, has devoted more than \$1.3 billion to help do the job since the early 1990s. As a result, places such as Kosovo are now considered ‘mine-safe’ (not ‘mine-free,’ mind you) and others are considerably safer than they were just after the conflict. But other mine-affected countries are still decades from being accident-free or threat-free. In places like Vietnam, where less than ten percent of all wartime munitions have been cleared, it will take many generations to eliminate this obstacle to growth and peacetime development.

*Continued on page 18*

## IN CAMBODIA, LAND MINES ARE EVERYWHERE

Anyone who has travelled to Cambodia since the late 1990s has probably encountered land mine amputees, often more than one. Sometimes, it seems like they are everywhere. Some of them besiege tourists for a handout outside well-known sites such as the Tuol Sleng genocide museum in Phnom Penh, while others have formed small Khmer folk music groups that busk near the temples of Angkor Wat. But the other reason is that they are virtually everywhere. Statistically, Cambodia has a higher per-capita number of land mine accident survivors than any other mine-affected country. One in every 200 Cambodians has suffered injuries from such an explosion.

Cambodia's reconstruction and development after three decades of war has been severely hampered by the ubiquitous presence of wartime UXO and land mines. Conservative estimates put the number of land mines there at two million, which means there is at least one anti-personnel device for every five Cambodians. In rural communities, the presence of land mines and land mine amputees go hand in hand, compounding the challenges to development. But it does not have to be that way.

Clear Path International has found that targeted development or humanitarian mine action aid for such communities can bring about positive change, turning development challenges into opportunities. After working in Cambodia since 2001, providing vocational skills training for land mine accident survivors in the eastern province of Kampong Cham, Clear Path International and its local partner, Cambodian Volunteers for Community Development, switched their focus to the more heavily mined province of Battambang near the border with Thailand. Here, in the heart of the notorious K5 mine belt along the arc of the long border where Khmer Rouge troops fought government troops long after they were forced from power elsewhere in the country, we met hundreds of amputees struggling to get by as rice farmers in a very fertile but dangerous place.

With the financial support of the U.S. State Department, the McKnight Foundation and the former United

Nations Association USA's Adopt-A-Minefield program, Clear Path International built a rice mill to help pave the way for economic self-empowerment far from the tourist attractions where these farmers' counterparts could only beg or busk for money. The half hectare for the plant and seven hectares for a planned demonstration farm were co-purchased by Clear Path International and cleared by the Mines Advisory Group of the United Kingdom whose de-miners found dozens of land mines and pieces of UXO on the site.

So, in a tiny village called Seam in the district of Bavel not far from the Thai border, there is now a rice processing factory that buys paddy from an ever-growing cooperative of amputee farmers who also receive training in farming techniques and irrigation, micro loans, storage and crop seeds. The ultimate goal is to generate enough revenue from the sale of rice that there is money left over to support other training programmes for non-farm enterprise, such as mechanics, sewing and electronics. The co-op now has 150 households, representing 750 family members. These households are divided into smaller groups of five that share farming tools, make trips to the market for each other and even cover each other's loan payments to retain their collective creditworthiness.

Ream Loung is a member of one such group. In 1983, he was 23 when he stepped on a land mine and lost his left leg below the knee. In the quarter century that followed, he started a family, raised three children and lost his wife to sudden illness—all while trying to make a living as a rice farmer in the heavily contaminated K5 mine belt. Until he joined the co-op, Ream was forced to borrow money from loan sharks to invest in his crops or send his children to Thailand to search for work,

mostly unsuccessfully. Because he had no place or way to store his crop, he was forced to sell all his rice at harvest time when prices are the lowest. He worked in isolation without any means to share with others the many daily farming tasks, let alone his struggles as an amputee. In 2007, after hearing about the rice mill project benefiting land mine accident survivors in his district, Luon joined its cooperative and began receiving its services, including a \$250 springtime loan to prepare his crop. The program let him repay the loan after harvest at a fraction of the interest charged by other lenders. Meanwhile, he stores his rice at the mill after harvest, shares tools



with the other families in the co-op, receives training in better cultivation methods and gets much better prices for his rice because its quality is better and he can sell it in the months after the harvest has ended when prices rise steadily. Today, Ream is debt-free except for what he owes the project, whose co-op members have a near-perfect credit history. 'The program has given me and my children a better future,' says the 49-year-old disabled farmer from Pau Takeav village.

This brings us back to the reason why I set eyes on the old Dong Ha combat base in the first place. At that time in late 2000, Kristen Leadem, James Hathaway, Martha Hathaway and I, a group of friends in the USA, had just formed Clear Path International. Although we have since narrowed our mission to providing accident survivors with medical and socioeconomic services, at that time, it still included land mine removal and we had interest from the Freeman Foundation in Vermont to pursue the clearance of a large section, 110 acres, of the base.

It took us almost two years and two million dollars to get it done. We found more than 500 pieces of UXO. The most painstaking part of the project was the phase in which the Vietnamese de-miners we recruited and trained ran into the base's former garbage dump. Littered with c-rations, boot shanks and all sorts of metal objects, the detectors went crazy and every signal had to be investigated. This is part of the reason why clearance can be so expensive. However, the results were gratifying. Measured by how much Ward eight flourished after the job was done, it gave me a new appreciation for just

how big an obstacle the wartime explosives are. When I go back now, I have trouble distinguishing it from the other neighbourhoods in Dong Ha where life thrives. Most of that development was funded by the government and some by other foreign non-governmental organizations. Clear Path's so-called 'end-use' contribution was an elementary school, the Peace School, where almost 400 children from Ward eight are getting an education without running the risk of finding a cluster bomb during recess.



IMBERT MATTHEE

Raised in the Netherlands and educated in the United States and England, Imbert Matthee worked for most of his 15-year career as an international journalist before making the switch to humanitarian work in Southeast Asia. Imbert is the Executive Director of Clear Path International, an organization dedicated to serving land mine accident survivors, their families and their communities. Since its founding, CPI has assisted more than 12,000 land mine victims and persons with disabilities in Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Matthee received an M.Sc. in International Relations from the London School of Economics in 1987 and a B.A. in Journalism from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Wash., in 1985.

## FROM COLONISATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by Illène Pevec

The face of poverty often shows great beauty, but that should not divert us from exploring the ugliness in poverty. The beauty lies in the shining souls portrayed but often not in the choices they have in life, the homes they live in, the water they drink, the sewage disposal they do not have or the schools they attend. What lies behind poverty is lack of opportunity to participate equitably in the services and goods of the modern world. What has caused this inequity and how can we change it for greater social and economic equity?

'Sustainable development decreases poverty and inequality and promotes socioeconomic inclusion for all groups. Unequal distribution of the products of economic growth increases both the extent and the depth of poverty. Poverty and inequality limit access to resources and opportunities.' (United Nations Population Fund Report, 2008, <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>)



Child's Garden of Peace

Child's Garden of Peace, Brazil

## COLONIZATION

A Child's Garden of Peace, a project founded in 2001 in Santo Angelo, which lies quite close to the Brazil-Argentina border, is not as beautiful as Salvador, nor is it as poor. Salvador, founded on the backs of slaves from Africa in the early 1500's, is a sprawling city clinging to the coastline with hills rising up behind. Santo Angelo, located in an inland agricultural area deforested by European settlers, was founded by Jesuit priests to be an agricultural and religious conversion settlement for Guarani Indians. The colonizers of Santo Angelo seem to have had somewhat better intentions than did those of Salvador, but in both places foreigners came to take land from the local people to create a town in the image that served their needs.

## PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Our work towards a sustainable development that cares for the needs of today's people without sacrificing the needs of the planet and people in the next generation, undoes problems caused by colonization. One of the primary methods used in any successful project activity is participatory planning. In the colonies much of the wealth was generated by slave labour and exported to the colonizing country. It was not used for the healthy development of the indigenous people. In many former colonies wealth and power have remained in the hands of a few. Through participatory planning we give the people who are most disempowered the tools to identify their community needs and work together to plan how to meet those needs.

When A Child's Garden of Peace began, we intended to create gardens that would improve the somewhat degraded physical environment of a poor working class community. I worked with a group of educators in Santo Angelo, Celuan, who wanted to serve the needs of the poorer children in the community. We set up planning meetings for all age groups at the small community centre. One of our first meetings was with the Mothers' Club, a group that receives minimal support in the form of



Elair and Mara work together on a purse made of pull tabs.

craft supplies from the municipal government. Before we could start gardens, the mothers identified the need for the community to be cleaned. We also had meetings during their day with school children of all ages and in the evenings, with the adults. The children used art and small-group discussion to identify community needs, while the adults mostly used discussion.



Children at the Zelina school paint the world they want to play in on their school wall. In multiple countries children envision almost identical environments for play and they almost always include apple trees.

We had collectively decided that our first public event would be a community clean-up day to remove the trash littering the community's public areas, including the school grounds. The people who showed up to do the dirty work were, with a few exceptions, the children. The voluntary community president, (father of fourteen children and grandfather of 25) came with one of his adult daughters, the community health worker, a large group of kids aged four to fourteen and some adult volunteers from the town's cooperative of trash pickers and recyclers.

The children, with their adult helpers, not only cleaned the community of filthy trash, they then cleared the community centre and school grounds of weeds and planted vegetable gardens, medicinal plants, and flowers. In most of Brazil school lasts only half a day. A child from a poor family, without the means to pay for enriched educational activities in the other half day, has nothing to do and often no supervision. This communal activity allowed the children to engage in something worthwhile that benefitted their need to work for a common cause, have fun mixed with hard work, and receive a good, healthy snack each work period.

## EDUCATION

Does a half-day of school create equal opportunity for poor citizens? It certainly offers more than a child gets in a country with no schools, but it is not equal opportunity. Parents who can afford to pay send their children to music, dance, English and computer classes. These private, after-school programs usually do not have scholarships available for the poorer children. So, by the end of twelve years of schooling

the children who have had double the educational hours are more likely to pass the university entrance exams and win performance-based (not needs-based) scholarships. Often, children whose parents are professionals and live in houses with servants and swimming pools, will win a fully paid scholarship to university. The maid's child who did not get that extra enriched education wins no scholarship and has no access to further education or career development.

A Child's Garden of Peace has grown over the years to address more issues of economic and educational inequality in Santo Angelo. In our planning meetings we learned about the lack of training opportunities for adolescents and the lack of community-based businesses where young people might be apprenticed and have a chance at employment. In 2004, Myra Margolin from the USA joined us to help with a participatory video project with teens. We worked with a group of eight adolescents to teach them rudimentary video camera skills and to encourage their storytelling abilities. Four of them completed documentaries about themselves and their neighbourhood. Encouraging self-reflection and the development of communication skills, the participatory video process also opened up the youths' homes to us. The mothers in particular became more interested in what we were doing with the children. When I asked the mothers what they wanted, I discovered they too wanted educational opportunities, specifically crafts and cooking.

In 2006 we paid local women who were already expert in knitting, crocheting, cooking, and fabric painting to teach their neighbours. In each initiative we have made every effort to pay local people to do the necessary jobs, because they all need an income since they generally earn only a minimum wage, if they have jobs at all. A gift from Myra of a purse made from aluminium pull tabs that she bought at a local Sunday crafts fair launched our next endeavour. Every day in Boulder and Carbondale in the USA, people asked me where I got my purse, so I decided to import them. I got a small grant to provide materials and instructors to the local women who wanted to learn to make purses. In December, 2007, I returned to the US with a suitcase laden with purses made from recycled aluminium and the hopes of the Realizing Dreams Cooperative that the women crafters formed.

## COLLABORATIONS

In order to fulfil my dream to provide higher education to young people in the community I enlisted the help of a group of professional women in Santo Angelo who had formed an association to help abused girls. They agreed to receive and distribute funds to the women making the purses and to the three girls who were selected for scholarships so they could continue their education. These three young women in turn agreed to keep up the environmental work with the younger children in return for their scholarships. They all go to school at night and work with the kids during



Illène Pevec

Child's Garden of Peace: completed playground

the day to keep up the community garden, integrate academics with environmental activities and work with other community groups with the same goals. I volunteer my time to sell the purses in the USA and pay the women about double what they can earn per hour in Santo Angelo. The profits beyond that pay for the scholarships. Donations have also supported scholarships. In 2008 we sold about US\$ 7,000 worth of purses, much less than I would like, but enough to keep these activities moving forward.

I am the least sustainable link in this circle of women who use their creativity and spare time to improve their family incomes and the young women working to guide children in becoming Earth's stewards. I am the weak link because I am not a born marketer and I am busy doing a Ph.D. I cannot devote myself full-time to this endeavour. Yet we have improved local access to education, increased the income earned by women, created a healthier environment and established processes of community participation. Together we have taken quite a few steps toward sustainability.



ILLÈNE PEVEC

Illène Pevec, born in Brazil and raised in North America, knew from her first visit back to Brazil as a fifteen-year-old that she wanted to work with Brazilian children. Inspired by a desire for social and environmental justice, Illène creates gardens with children to provide them with a healthy diet

and exercise, and to restore the local environment for their families and neighbourhoods. She has five children and five grandchildren. She is currently doing her Ph.D. at the University of Colorado's research centre for Children, Youth and Environment.

# FROM VILLAGE TO CITY: THE MIGRATION OF INDIA'S FARMERS

by James Cassidy Sterling

If you travel a hundred kilometres from the outskirts of any city in India, it is like stepping back in time. Small fields and tiny herds of goats, cows, or water buffalo, each with its own shepherd, replace the noisy congestion of the cities. It seems that nothing has ever changed or ever will. Seventy percent of Indians still live in rural villages, but, as in many countries whose people rely on village structure and non-industrialized, labour intensive agriculture, the traditional lifestyle is being undercut by forces over which the local people have little or no control.

Water and other agricultural inputs have become cash commodities in the new economy. My friend Ramesh had asked me to photograph him with a water buffalo cow that he was about to sell. 'I can't keep her any longer,' he told me. 'We have not enough water to keep cows. There is no well on our land and purchasing of water it is too much money.' But he was fond of his cow and wanted a photograph by which to remember her. 'Don't coming too close, sir,' he warned me. 'Until now she was never going away from home before and she is a little scary.'

With some irritation, Nandish, one of Ramesh's friends, filled me in on the details. 'You can hear him crying at night,' he said, 'It makes me angry. It's stupid! None of us can live like our grandfathers were living. Things are changing and we have to also change and learn new ways.'

Ramesh and Nandish both come from village backgrounds but now earn money in jobs based on the global economy. Nandish has had to turn his face to a new way of life. He sends all his money home to save for his sisters' dowries and refuses the self-indulgence of regret.

Village economies are disintegrating all over India. Rural people, faced with the collapse of their traditional way of life, seek jobs in cities. In some places entire villages have put their land up for sale and departed for the city *en masse*. As villagers are forced to adapt to an urban lifestyle for which they have no skills or education, some fall into despair.

Why are village economies failing in such large numbers? Population growth alone doesn't explain it because the same phenomenon can be found in virtually all underdeveloped regions of the world, including much of Latin America and even in the poorer regions of the United States, where population pressure is quite low; nor can it explain why in India even farmers who own land are forced to leave their traditional way of life. The catalyst is the economic change from a subsistence economy to one based on cash.

## THE COMMODIFICATION OF LAND

Indian farms are very small on average. Most village farmers acquire land through inheritance or marriage, or they farm other people's land as renters or sharecroppers. Farms are often divided through inheritance. This process eventually splits the farmland into minuscule units. The farmers often work several tiny and widely separated plots of land, some that they own and some that they lease. Sometimes, siblings will maximize field size by sharing inherited land, or farmers will trade the use of plots in order to consolidate fields. Ties of family, caste, friendship and social indebtedness often play important roles; and lack of status can be even more disempowering than mere lack of cash, because access to land is not synonymous with ownership of land.



George Helmer

At the current rate of migration, one quarter of India's population will have moved from rural regions to cities within the next ten years

Traditionally, land in India was not bought and sold, it was acquired mainly through inheritance, marriage deals, gifting, and, in olden days, by conquest. The exception was when a family ran into an economic crisis and was forced to use their land as surety against a loan which it often could not repay.

Long-term, government-regulated credit is a new phenomenon in India. Mortgages have created a new market in land and, as land is increasingly traded, it becomes an investment opportunity over and above its value for agricultural production. As the value of land is increasingly controlled by distant markets, rents go up and they have to be paid in cash. Many landowners find it more profitable to sell their land rather than rent it out. Land available for rent decreases and a general inflation of land prices results. Poor farmers are forced into the cash economy where they must produce a cash crop to pay rent or buy land. However, while the price of the land, water, seed and other inputs has risen steadily, the price the village farmers receive for their crops remains stagnant.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION

Traditionally, villages relied on local production from the land for their subsistence; but modern industrial agriculture relies on goods such as petroleum-based fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals that must be purchased with cash. This kind of market-driven agriculture has increased agricultural output, but this increase is not sustainable and, because the accounting is measured entirely in terms of money, the cost of the cultural and environmental injuries it leaves in its path are not included in the accounting.

Industrialized agricultural innovations that began in the 1960s, known as *The Green Revolution*, demanded larger fields, more water, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and antibiotics as well as farm machinery. It was supposed to solve the problem of hunger by increasing agricultural yields. Many of these innovations did increase yields to a remarkable extent, but all of the inputs have to be purchased with cash, which increases the pressure to consolidate plots of land and do away with the old system of renting. When farmers can't come up with the cash needed for land and materials, and they are driven out of business.

Traditional small-plot agriculture in India was based on many species and many varieties, each suited to a particular ecological niche. Soil was renewed with organic manures and soil structure was carefully nurtured to retain moisture and fertility. The new hybrid seeds require, not only chemical fertilizers and pesticides, but also much greater use of irrigation. These innovations led to an initial increase in production, but over the longer term such techniques can destroy the organic structure of the soil, leading to a decrease in the soil's ability to retain moisture and support root systems which in turn leads to a decrease in the health of crops and to soil erosion. Large plantations of single crops increase susceptibility to pests, which then develop resistance to the pesticides; water,

#### ANISHA: ORGANIC FARMING AND FOOD SECURITY

Large-scale, industrialized agriculture is not sustainable environmentally, and it takes security from farm families. Susila Dharma Germany and Anisha, a Foundation in South India established in 1998, successfully applied for funding from the German government (BMZ). The project is to return 500 acres of agricultural land from chemical to organic farming practices and thereby create an agricultural system that, over time, increases the fertility of the ecosystem. This grant is helping 200 families in twenty-one villages in south-eastern Karnataka province to improve their living conditions and their food security. The funding started in 2008 and will continue through 2011.



Mr. Sundarama explains organic methods to farmers.

Anisha identified many issues: poor soil quality; over-use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides; an increase in indebtedness and dependence on markets and subsidies for food products; a lack of employment opportunities apart from agriculture labour; more migration by villagers searching for work; and increasing health problems.

To achieve the project goal, a number of interlinked projects, activities and improvements are taking place. Agricultural methodology is being improved through the introduction of sustainable, organic techniques. This, in turn, improves overall food security. In the past, farmers saved seeds from year to year, a practice that was economical and led to a high level of genetic diversity. The creation of seed banks to re-establish this diversity will also help farmers to avoid the pressure to purchase the chemicals that the new hybrid seeds force them to use. Sustainable farming techniques depend entirely on the skill and understanding of the farmers themselves. To help build and maintain the knowledge needed, an integral part of Anisha's plan is the establishment of a resource centre with adjoining land for demonstration and trial purposes. Finally, in order to help the farmers to get better prices for their products, the plan includes the formation of a Farmers' Federation to improve the marketing of produce and to certify it as 'organic.'

brought up from shallow wells, contains salts that accumulate in the soil, causing the desertification of large areas of once-arable land; and all of the inputs required by the new farming techniques have to be paid for with cash that the

the past. With India's huge population, the old ways can no longer support the people. The new economics, based on trade with distant regions, does offer hope for India's most disempowered citizens even as it creates havoc. At the moment the benefits of the global economy are distributed very unevenly, with the upper and middle classes acquiring material goods as fast as they can, while the livelihoods of the powerless are destroyed. Education, training, and access to tools and micro-capital may be the keys to opening the door to reasonable prosperity for these people.

Several of the Susila Dharma projects in southern India—the Mithra Foundation, the Centre for Culture and Development (CCD), and Anisha Urban—are dedicated to providing the new urban refugees with education and training, and, especially in the case of the Mithra Foundation and Anisha, an understanding of their basic human rights. With education and hope, the children of these slums may grow up to be producers in the modern economy as well as consumers of food, health care, housing, transportation and other goods.

At the same time, SD India projects, such as Anisha Rural, CCD, SRADHA and Atam Deep Foundation, partner with villagers to develop new organic farming techniques and to help them think critically about an agriculture that is both economically and environmentally sustainable. Unlike Green Revolution technologies that replace human labour with hybrid seeds, chemical inputs and machines, the sustainable agricultural movement in India aims to educate farmers so that they are able to enter the new cash economy at an appropriate scale, without the dislocation that the Green Revolution technologies force on the rural population. In these systems grain, bean, and vegetable crops are complemented by cattle, goats, hens, ducks and fish, so that each process enriches the others while building natural resistance to diseases and infestations. Local knowledge, which can be reinforced by scientific research, enables the farmers to create a rich and healthy environment, while the *human* capital essential to sustainable agriculture is enriched instead of being displaced by economic and mechanical capital.



J. Cassidy Sterling

Ramesh is forced to sell his buffalo cow.

farmers don't have.

Of course, village economies do use money but, in the past it circulated locally and prices were fixed by local factors. As more goods and services produced outside the village are introduced—medicine, petroleum products, fertilizer, pesticides, tractors, motorbikes, plastics, higher education, etc.—the need for cash to pay for these imports increases. The result is that the small farmers, and in some cases even small villages, are being driven out.

#### SUSILA DHARMA IN THE CITIES AND THE VILLAGES

Gandhi claimed that, 'The heart and soul of India is her villages.' Yet, the traditional village was no paradise, especially for those at the bottom of the Indian caste system, the 'Dalits' who suffer badly in both the old system and the new. If there is hope, it lies in the people themselves creating a new life in the cities and re-imagining the village agricultural economy, creating institutions to support the dispossessed, and supplying the poor with the education and resources needed to retake control of their lives and re-establish their own prosperity and social structure.

My friend Ramesh still owns his family's land, but he cannot farm it. He has no access to water. He was fortunate to have received some education and so was able to find work to replace the loss of his family's livelihood. However, many of those who are forced to leave the villages in which they were raised do not have any schooling. These end up living in cities in makeshift shelters the fill empty lots and alleys or the rooftops of shops.

Transition is always difficult, especially when it occurs on a cultural level. Yet, even if one wanted to, it would be impossible to return to the subsistence-based village economies of



JAMES CASSIDY STERLING

Cassidy has studied the economic relationship of societies to the natural environment, focusing on the effects of land ownership, monetary structure and agriculture. At the New Alchemy Institute he worked on the development of sustainable technologies for living and at

the E.F. Schumacher Society he researched and published articles about issues of land ownership and local currencies. Cassidy currently works for SDIA and lives in Concord, Massachusetts, USA.

# SEEKING SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE IN DR CONGO

by Virginia Thomas

While the battle rages in the US about how to provide health coverage for all in the richest country in the world, the issue seems even more pressing for the poorest. The Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) health indicators are among the worst in the world and reflect the hardships resulting from many years of civil war, continuing conflict in some regions, high levels of government corruption and the deterioration of health services throughout the country. Malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS take a high toll on both human and economic resources. One out of six children dies before their fifth birthday and chronic malnutrition affects both educational performance and individual productivity. The synergistic effects of malnutrition and disease are currently shape the lives of most young children in the DRC.

## THE RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE: ARE WE GOING BACKWARDS?

The lack of government capacity for and commitment to healthcare for all means that DRC's health situation is worse today than it was in the 1990s. From 1990 to 2004 infant mortality went from 96 to 129 cases per 1000 live

births, while the TB prevalence rate went from 226 to 551 per 100,000. Maternal mortality was measured at 870 per 100,000 live births in 1990, but went up to 990 per 100,000 by the year 2000. These rates are among the highest in the world and reflect the failure of the government and the international community to bring improvements in healthcare at the grassroots level. It appears that, if communities do not become involved in managing their own healthcare, no one will.

## COST IS A MAJOR FACTOR

The cost of healthcare is a major barrier to access for ordinary people. Health facilities operating with little or no financial support from the government survive by charging user fees to cover the full cost of treatment. The cost of transport, construction materials and refrigeration of medicines, among other things, render health costs greater in rural areas, so user fees are also higher. This means that the rural poor tend to forgo medical care altogether. In a country where the World Bank estimates the average Congolese lives on \$0.20 per day, the price charged by most health providers is too high, and the poorest are the most vulnerable.



A clinic started by Lemba Imbu School near Kinshasa, DR Congo.



Samuel Chapleau visited the Kimpemba Medical School that provides training for nurses, D.R. Congo.

#### COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS

In Susila Dharma DRC there are seven health centres privately run by members that could be turned into Community Health Centres. On October 24, 2009, SDIA team member Samuel Chapleau invited Susila Dharma project leaders in the DRC to meet with Dr. Theophile Bansimba of Médecins D’Afrique (African Doctors) to explore how community health mutual societies and community health management committees, when implemented together, can reduce costs and improve the quality of healthcare and disease prevention in both the rural and urban areas.

‘When community health management committees are twinned with a system of mutual health insurance, the result is cost-effective, quality care,’ says Arnaud Delune, an SDIA Board member who recently met with Dr. Banzouzi of Médecins d’Afrique in Europe. In these arrangements, families contribute small amounts on a regular basis, calculated according to their income. The poorest pay less, the richer more. These contributions entitle families to consultations, care and medicines at reduced prices or free of charge. In addition, school-aged children receive quarterly check-ups with a full medical team (doctor, nurse, psychologist, nutritionist, etc.). Serious cases are referred to a hospital with which the Community Health Centre has signed a cooperation agreement. The partnering of the community health committee with mutual health insurance permits the Community Health Centre to become financially self-sufficient and sustainable within one year.

Lemba Imbu Infirmary on the outskirts of Kinshasa is the first Susila Dharma clinic to agree to work in partnership with Médecins d’Afrique and to ensure community responsibility for the provision of its own healthcare services. SDIA is encouraging other clinics to follow Lemba Imbu’s example. According to Dr. Banzouzi of Médecins D’Afrique in Europe ‘Community Health Centres are the missing element and the platform that is needed to deliver all sorts of healthcare and services to poor communities in Africa.’ For its part, SDIA, in partnership with Médecins D’Afrique, will be working to assist Susila Dharma health projects to create Community Health Centres responsible for the identification of and outreach to the poorest households, and for finding creative and sustainable ways to ensure that even the poorest will be able to access services.

VIRGINIA THOMAS



Virginia is a Socio-Economist, Evaluator and Consultant specialising in organisational development, human rights, gender and governance. Virginia works as a researcher with various UN agencies and has been the Executive Director of SDIA since 2007. Virginia lives in Montréal, Canada.

# AN INITIATIVES OF CHANGE CONFERENCE

By Hadrian Holloway

When I arrived at the ‘Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy’ conference in Caux, there was an atmosphere, helped by the stunning setting in the Swiss Alps overlooking Lake Geneva, that immediately put me at ease. I had never been to a conference like this in my life but all my doubts were blown away as soon as I arrived. Something drew me to this event and I’m very glad I followed my instincts.

There were people from all over the world—Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Uruguay and more. The conference was open to anyone, but targeted young professionals, social entrepreneurs, business leaders, students, farmers, media professionals, academics, NGO and charity workers and other concerned citizens wanting to contribute to an honest dialogue around four topics: the crisis in the world of business, the role of the media, the problems faced by young professionals, and issues of food, health and sustainability worldwide. The objective was to bring together people with a passion and willingness to take responsibility and initiate positive action, to create a framework and open space in which initiatives could develop and to build a foundation for future conferences.

Each group would discuss whatever topics came up each day and present their discussion to the rest of the conference, which would give feedback. I attended the ‘stream’ on Sustainability. At the end of the five days each group had a list of practical initiatives and ideas that could be taken forward individually or as a community. The business group, for example, committed itself to contacting several renowned business schools to encourage them and their MBA students to subscribe to ethical business principles. Some conference participants made presentations on their own projects and businesses. For example, ‘The Economy of Communion,’ a project that involves businesses on five continents, aims to build up a human society where there is no one in need, and to show that making money need not be at the expense of human dignity. Business owners who participate in the project freely choose to



Myrna Jelman and Hadrian Holloway from UK attended the Caux Conference

share their profits to help create new jobs for those in need, to spread a ‘Culture of Giving’ while still running an efficient and growing business.

My five days were not filled only with speakers and discussions. A significant and unique aspect to Caux was the communal work. Each participant was assigned to a ‘Community,’ which would take responsibility for some aspect of running the conference centre for a few hours each day—cooking, meal service, or household cleaning. It was refreshing to see various CEO’s and ‘important’ people donning aprons and serving coffee or chopping carrots. It added to the feeling of unity and equality. These community groups also met each day to talk about their thoughts and feelings about the conference.

From Caux I have gained a little more courage and confidence, and a lot of memories. There are a few moments that sum up my time there: the evening entertainment, seeing the stunning film *Baraka*, and listening to musicians playing while we looked out over the Swiss Alps and Lake Geneva. Most memorable was the teacher from the United States who spoke to us about the children she teaches and how they had noticed that she always focused on the negative things in the world. Her request to us was that we pass on our experiences, so she could take some positive stories back to her students.

As a young person, I am aware of the issues of climate change, poverty and the escalating health problems in the world. They are inescapable in the media, and yet what are we as young people supposed to do about it? Everyone says we should act now for the sake of our children, but most feel ill-equipped or don’t know what to do. So it was brilliant to go to a place where I felt connected to other young people with the drive to figure out what can be done. For me, that was the beauty of Caux.



HADRIAN HOLLOWAY

Hadrian Holloway is a third year Anthropology student at St. Chad’s College, Durham University in England. He is Chair of the Charities Committee in college, and this last summer volunteered in Vancouver with the Susila Dharma International Office Team. He recently attended the EU EcoSoc Committee and Stakeholder’s Forum Conference on a Rio+20 World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Brussels.

This experience has inspired me to further explore my interest in Fair Trade at university; but more importantly, I feel that I now have a way to find out what I might be able to do—now, and later on. I was not alone. Raffaella, a new friend, has now started a project back in Mexico with a friend to educate and support farmers in growing traditional crops to feed their families, not just the cash crops.

It inspired me to see and hear about what Initiatives of Change members and other people are doing, and to find out how many individuals clearly put value on the centrality of their faith or spiritual life in their work. Many also speak of how fundamentally important it is to deal with people

on a more human and personal level instead of the formal structure and distance that exists in the business world and elsewhere. It is invaluable to see that it is not as hard as we might think to live and practice our values, ethics and integrity in the world today and to make a difference. I plan to bring some of my enthusiasm generated in Switzerland into working with Susila Dharma to promote more youth involvement. It has been fantastic for me to make new friends and to see what is out there. In the words of a friend there, 'Every problem is an opportunity.'

<http://www.caux.ch/en/home>

## THROUGH A MICROSCOPE

by Myroslava Mykytyn

A year ago I was in awe of visiting South America. I wanted to be a paediatrician and, even though I had never visited before, my dream for a long time had been to work there. But, I knew I had to experience it first. My plan was to work with a children's organization to gain experience. I had already learned some Spanish for a journey to Spain.

My father suggested I look to Susila Dharma for opportunities to volunteer abroad. After having contacted many organizations throughout South America, I came across Benita Gavilán in Paraguay. She is the director of a small organization called Vida Plena in Fernando de la Mora, a town just next door to the capital Asunción. Vida Plena's efforts are directed towards helping impoverished children within the largest market in the city, the 'Mercado de Abasto' (the Supply Market), to obtain better lives than their parents, many of whom are illiterate.

At a warehouse rented by Vida Plena, children are given a healthy diet, basic clothing, medical attention, and academic support. Above all, Benita provides the children with a loving and caring environment for them to achieve their full potential and to find refuge from the daily stresses imposed by family and school. Benita very generously and openly invited me to stay in her home, living with her family in their Spanish style house, with the white stucco siding, red shingled roof, and big open patios. (Even though I was given ample warning not to drink the tap water, I suffered no adverse effects.)

### THE MICROSCOPE

Because of my science studies at the University of Ottawa, Benita asked me whether I would be interested in teaching biology to the children. I accepted eagerly and began to search for donations of microscopes, science equipment, and

children's books. I first contacted my university. I knew they had recently renovated the labs and I thought they might have some old equipment left over. But they had already donated the equipment to local elementary schools. My professor suggested that I contact the companies that manufacture the educational science equipment and ask for donations. After writing to numerous companies in both Canada and



Marcelo examines his own head lice!

Myroslava Mykytyn

the United States, one very generous manager from Boreal Northwest offered me two microscopes! He organized an entire package full of science equipment and even included posters on the life cycle of the butterfly. After this success, I contacted local book publishers in Ontario. Tundra books from Toronto very kindly sent me a collection of Spanish books they had in stock. I came to Paraguay with a large suitcase packed tight with scientific lab material. You can imagine how much interest the customs officials had in me!

When I arrived, everything was a culture shock, especially being a visible minority. Unlike Brazil, where skin colour ranges from the deepest black to the fairest white, in Paraguay all the locals are fairly dark skinned, and, given the lack of diverse ethnic groups, any foreigner stands out like a sore thumb. Being a Caucasian female, the unwelcome attention and verbal harassment was at times excessive and difficult to ignore. It took me a while to adapt and become familiar with my surroundings. I was overwhelmed when I first met all the children (aged three to early teens), as there were so many of them. The warmth and innocence of the children was obvious, but some were barefoot, had the sniffles, and some had teeth so rotted they were black. The economic situation of each child varied. Some children had to wear the same clothes every day, while others were always well dressed and clean. I quickly found that many children didn't have a single parent to come home to, let alone two parents, as many were left with members of their extended family.

The children's centre is located in the market, which was rowdy, fast-paced, crowded, and littered with pregnant cats and dogs running all over. The garbage dumps were overflowing and children rummaged through them in search of treasures to sell. There were aisle upon aisle of only fruit—you can't imagine how many different types of citrus fruits you could buy!—plus herb ladies, smelly meat vendors, chickens galore, decadent pastries... and all dirt cheap. You had to be wary of some vendors, though—the quiet elderly woman was usually a safer bet and was less likely to sell you caramelized sugar instead of pure honey. In this rather industrial area you might not expect to find a children's centre, but I soon came to realize that this was where it was most needed.

Some of the children live directly within the market where their parents work. Their main form of activity is soccer and they play it barefoot in spite of the glass and cut wire on the ground; yet, anyone who falls and hurts himself usually bounces back up, shrugs it off and keeps playing. These kids are tougher than I could have imagined.

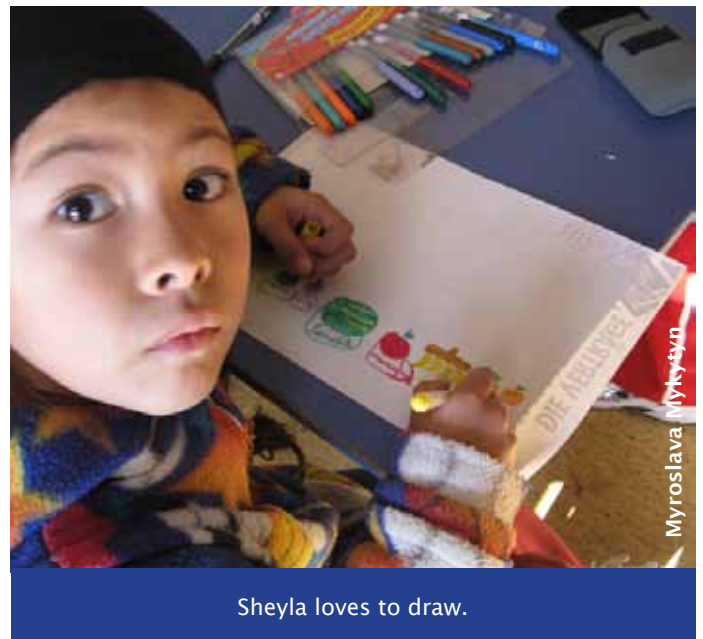
I took to them rather quickly, trying to learn everyone's name and what background they came from. Some had abusive parents, some didn't go to school, some worked in the market throughout the night, some had more than a dozen brothers and sisters, and some were the eldest in their families and responsible for their younger siblings, some of the children had to walk many kilometres to get there every day, some did badly in school, while others excelled, some spoke

Guarani while others could not. None were of completely indigenous background. Looking at my microscopes I admit that I thought, 'This is the last thing these children need right now.' Almost none had good shoes or a warm sweater to wear but I realized that these children had other priorities.

Nevertheless, the weeks went by and I slowly introduced all the materials: binoculars, magnifying glasses, goggles, test tubes, beakers, books, coloured markers, crayons and pens, then finally the microscopes. I attempted to get the kids to draw on their own, instead of using colouring books and to use their own imagination—a blank sheet of paper without limits. We collected dozens of different specimens to cut open and examine under the microscope. Everything went over very well and the children were enthusiastic.

#### LEARNING TO APPRECIATE

At first there were some difficulties sharing, so things broke or went missing; but the children soon learned to appreciate the materials. Meanwhile, as I got to understand each child individually, their likes and dislikes and what sort of activities we could do well together such as baking, making and flying kites, reading books, learning the alphabet, face painting, playing tag, making puzzles, cooking lunches, taking photographs and playing soccer, I became very attached to them.



Sheyla loves to draw.

Each day was a mixture of events. I did not structure a lesson plan for them, but let their curiosity drive their learning. All I had to do was guide them. Some days all we did was read children's books. Other days we played in the kitchen baking chocolate chip cookies or rice pudding. Most of the children were fluent speakers of both Guarani and Spanish, but few were fluent readers and none of the younger children knew the alphabet.

Over the months, ten-year-old José became quite an avid photographer. I would lend him my camera periodically throughout the day. I found that eight year old Sheyla was

a phenomenal artist. All she needed was blank paper and a pen. Four-year-old Marcelo never used to smile at me, but when he saw his own lice crawling under the microscope, he couldn't help but laugh. Jessica, twelve, was a wonderful cook and took on a leadership role in delegating jobs to everyone in the kitchen to help prepare a snack for the whole class. Each of these children had an underlying gift, not necessarily discovered yet, but with time I know they would be.

During my stay I improved my Spanish tremendously and even gained familiarity with the native language, Guarani, which the children would try to teach me, while I, in turn, taught them some English. I grew to love the Paraguayan culture very much. The people were the best part. Those two months in Asunción were probably the most meaningful of my entire life and I hope to return one day to see those same kids again.

#### MYROSLAVA MYKYTYN

**M**yroslava is a 22 year old Canadian who recently graduated with an honours degree in Biology, specialization in Physiology. She is taking a year off to work on a farm training horses and take some interest courses while considering a career in medicine, architecture, animal physiology or ecological conservation.



#### ABOUT VIDA PLENA AND PARAGUAY

**V**ida Plena, founded in 1998 by Benita Gavilán and her Paraguayan husband Silverio, is a foundation whose first project was a Montessori kindergarten and pre-school project for children of the neighbourhood, 'El Jardín Activo', for children of mixed social backgrounds. Friends and a German organization know as PPI ([www.proparaguay.de](http://www.proparaguay.de)) sponsored scholarships for the students whose parents could not pay the fees. The kindergarten ran for ten years and closed in April 2007 because too few children were enrolled.

In 2007 PPI suggested that Vida Plena take over the responsibility for the day-care facility in the Asunción Gross Market called 'Centro de Apoyo para Niños y Niñas del Abasto' (Support Centre for Market Children) which was founded in 2004 as a private initiative sponsored by PPI and a German Catholic youth aid organization.

The Centro de Apoyo's main issue is to create an environment that helps children and teenagers become healthy, happy, intelligent and creative people, able to organize their lives and build stable human relationships. The children who use the centre are provided with opportunities to develop their motor, emotional, social and cognitive skills.

The children who use the centre come from families in a poor neighbourhood beside the Central

Market where fathers and mothers are dependent on unqualified jobs. Many children live in what may be called the 'remainders' of a family: either the mother or the father or both have left, mostly to Argentina, to seek better job opportunities. Grandmothers, aunts or uncles or even the neighbours care for these children and survive on what the absent parents send them. Often at home no one supports the children in their activities or interests, or even to gives them enough to eat.

There are few similar childcare centres in the Central Market area or the town and those usually only accept younger children up to the age of eight. There are not even playgrounds in this part of town and public and private schools are the only institutions that receive children and teenagers.

Supported by the same two German organizations, Vida Plena offers spaces for about 80 children (aged three to 14). At the centre they get a warm welcome, nutritious snacks (which they also learn to prepare), do their homework accompanied by qualified educators, are supervised in the playground, and they can choose to participate in different kinds of games, handicraft and artwork activities. The number of children varies as they are not obliged to attend. Half of the kids, who attend school in the afternoon, come in the three hour morning shift and the other half come

for the afternoon shift because they go to school in the morning.

Three or four times a year Vida Plena organises day tours with the children and their families. These outings are funded by a Swedish organization called TAMAM ([www.tamam.se](http://www.tamam.se)) whose main role is to support immigrant children and youth in Sweden, and which has created outreach to the countries of origin of Swedish immigrants.

Benita relies on the International Child development Programme (ICDP) as the basis for her work with children. Her life experience as a mother of four, a La Lèche League leader and running the Montessori kindergarten for ten years has been fundamental to understanding what children need from adults.

Asunción is the capital of Paraguay, a landlocked country in the heart of South America, with a population of seven million. Paraguay's society is young; almost 50% of its population is under twenty years old and two-thirds of them are poor. Its main social problem is the sharp contrast between the few rich families and the mass of the poor, both urban and rural; a thin middle class; and the unequal distribution of land. Less than 10% of the population owns more than 90% of the land. The languages of Paraguay are Spanish and Guarani. Guarani is spoken by two-thirds of the population and one-third speak no Spanish.

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