

# HELPTHEWORLD

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY NEWS MAGAZINE

**now!**

POVERTY IN AZERBAIJAN

## *All the oil goes West*

GERMANY: *Ever younger teens are abusing drugs*

INTERVIEW: *Muhammad Yunus, "banker of the poor" and visionary*

DESERTEC: *Saving the world with power from the desert*

Focus: AZERBAIJAN

AZERBAIJAN

# Rags and riches

The discovery of giant oil fields made a whole nation giddy with dreams of a luxurious future. The reality is very different: The oil and its benefits flow in one direction only: to the West and into the pockets of a select few. The rest of the population is poorer, colder and hungrier than ever before.





Local kids play on the grounds of an oil drilling site near Baku. The wealth oil has brought to their country has not benefited them or their families

■ ■ BY: *Andrea Jeska*

**Suleiman Dinijev's house looks out onto the sea**, and the beach is just a few hundred metres away from his doorstep. Sitting round Suleiman's kitchen table at night, you can hear the sound of the waves lapping against the shore outside and gaze up into a dark sky sparkling with stars. Those are the kinds of moments when Suleiman likes to joke about opening a honeymoon suite for newlyweds. – and his wife Karima inevitably replies dryly that she'd rather he daydreamed less and brought home a bit more money instead.

The sea Suleiman gazes across every night is the Caspian Sea, and when morning comes, all hint of romance and possibility vanishes with the stars. Sullen, oily waves lick at the black sands of the beach. And despite the salty sea breeze, Suleiman's four children have been

coughing and wheezing for months because of the damp wind that blows through the cracks in the walls of their draughty house, which has no central heating. "A sick joke isn't it?" says Suleiman. "Two kilometres from here a million barrels of oil are pumped into the pipelines every day. The oil all goes to heat Western Europe, while we shivered and froze so badly this winter that the kids became chronically ill."

Karima keeps telling him that the children need to see a doctor, or have a better life. Perhaps Suleiman might get enough money together soon to satisfy her first wish, but the second is nothing less than utopian.

Ever since Suleiman Dinijev lost his job as an engineer at a subcontractor responsible for the technical maintenance of the drilling towers seven months ago, his family's fortunes have nosedived. It is a story similar to that of his

neighbours and thousands of others in Azerbaijan. He lives in a slum that mushroomed practically overnight and hasn't stopped growing since – a place where those end up who have lost their jobs and aspirations. Most of the slum's inhabitants arrived

there in 1994, when Azerbaijan lost the battle with Armenia for the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The Azerbaijani inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh were forced to flee and settled on the

**"They're all hoping," says Suleiman. "What fools we are!"**



**A man herds sheep across an abandoned oilfield. There are few countries where the gap between rich and poor is as great as in Azerbaijan**



outskirts of Baku, where most of them still are today.

“Just as I force myself to believe I’ll find a job soon, my neighbour is convinced that he’ll soon be back in Karabakh,” says Suleiman cynically. “We both cling to the promises the government made. He believes another war will give him back his home, while I believe in the government’s promise of the riches that oil will bring us.” Suleiman laughs tersely. “What fools we are, the lot of us! Baku is a city of wind and empty promises.”

**“Azerbaijan – a second Kuwait!”** and “Oil – we’re rich!” cheered the newspaper headlines of the Caucasian country on the shores of the Caspian Sea in 1995 when the so-called deal of the century was signed. Politically more stable and having a less troubled history than its neighbour Iran, Azerbaijan won the race to attract investors like BP, Exxon and other oil companies into the country. For the sum of eight billion dollars, the country sold the exploitation rights of its principal oilfield. Named Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli, it was estimated to hold 5.5 billion barrels of oil, a sum which has since been corrected downwards.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of state-subsidised oil production simultaneously brought Azerbaijan freedom and economic ruin. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had ridden the country into debt, and the contract with the investors seemed to offer an answer to its problems. At that time, Suleiman was more or less convinced that he had it made. “He designed a house for us. It was going to have ten rooms,” says Karima in a low whisper, as if she were afraid of reminding Suleiman of the past.

But the money never materialized. First it was deemed necessary to establish whether the Caspian Sea, which is 1,200 km long and 500 km wide, is to be regarded as a sea or not. If defined as a sea, according to international maritime law, neighbouring countries each have the right to claim their own territorial zone and whatever natural resources it contains. This question has still not been resolved. In 1999 Azerbaijan discovered the Shah Deniz gas field, whose potential is estimated at 42.5 million cubic metres of natural gas.

A heated debate ensued about the route along which the pipelines would be laid. >>



**The National Bank in Baku symbolizes the country's prosperity. Expectations were sky-high when the race to attract investors began**





Where there is light, there is shadow – a sad truth in this country so rich in resources

Russia wanted to link them up to its existing and planned pipelines that transport raw materials from Kazakhstan, the second-largest oil supplier on the Caspian Sea. However, in an effort to finally free itself from its dependency on Russian decisions on energy policy and its resulting vulnerability to extortion, the West insisted on building its own pipeline circumventing Russian territory. In 2005, construction commenced on the BTC pipeline, with a total length of 1,760 km, equivalent to the distance from Flensburg to Rome. Construction costs amounted to €2.5 billion and were covered by a consortium of international mineral oil companies, with 30.1 percent owned by the British BP Group and 25 percent by the state-owned Azerbaijani company Socar. The

## The dispute about pipelines nipped euphoria in the bud

petroleum company BP decided to locate the beginning of the pipeline at the desert terminal Sangachal. From there the oil flows towards the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, and then on to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean. The BTC pipeline got its nickname from these three cities. It takes the crude oil one-and-a-half weeks to cover this distance. From 2010 a daily volume of 160,000 cubic metres of oil are to travel along this route, a quantity that was only made possible because Kazakhstan agreed in 2008 to feed oil into the pipeline, as well. In order to bring the oil and gas from the Turkish coast to Western Europe, the Nabucco pipeline is to be completed by 2010. This pipeline represents another major element of the Western plan to secure strategic control over its energy

supply. The South Caucasus gas pipeline, which also runs via Georgia and Turkish territory and then branches off at the Turkish city of Erzurum, is the main rival to the South Stream pipeline owned by the Russian oil giant Gazprom.

**By the time construction on the pipelines began,** Suleiman had already completed three English courses. His bosses spoke neither Azerbaijani, nor Russian, nor German, which Suleiman learned when he spent two semesters abroad in Dresden. He took Karima out for meals and their kids wore American brand-label clothing. “My country’s economy was growing by over 30 percent a year. We had the fastest-growing economy in the world,” he says, as if seeking to apologize for past spending habits that stand in such stark contrast to the present squalor of his hut. Indeed, even in 2005 Azerbaijan’s economy was still growing by 10.8 per-

**For ordinary citizens, the oil has turned out to be a disaster. The construction of the BTC pipeline destroyed many of their houses.**

**Top: A woman points to a crack in her wall that was caused by blasting for oil. Centre: A boy plays on one of the pipelines. Below: The Western oil companies have erected their oil platforms off shore. They are the big winners in this game, and the money and power lie in their hands**



cent – but then the economic crisis hit. For 2010, leading economic institutes have forecast a negative growth of 2.5 percent.

Hints that the country's brief run of good fortune would soon be coming to an end were already discernible in 2007. The overblown estimates for oil and gas reserves were corrected downwards. Too little oil was being produced to use the multibillion dollar pipelines to capacity. "The proceeds from oil will help foster our country's development," said Heydar Babayev, then Azerbaijan's Minister of Economic Development, in 1995. But from the very beginning, a select few divided up the profits from the oil among themselves. The president's extended family owns large shares in SOCAR, and what doesn't go to line their pockets disappears in the corrupt political system. Only one percent of the country's eight million inhabitants found work in the oil industry. Most of the others who flocked to Baku in the hope of escaping rural poverty now live in the slums along with Suleiman.

The oil boom inspired Baku to seek to recreate the splendour of its golden era. Five-star hotels shot out of the ground on the outskirts of its historic city centre, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and thus off-limits for modern eyesores. Within a few years, the city was reliving the golden days when the Paris-based banking dynasty Rothschild and other Euro-

pean investors gallivanted around Baku in the glorious sunset of the waning 19th century, even then making millions in oil.

While Baku's pedestrian zone became a luxury shopping area and the nouveau riches amused themselves in glitzy casinos, Suleiman's company was going downhill. The checks Suleiman had performed were taken over by machines. "The Americans brought technology into the country that rendered entire occupations obsolete." Then in 2008, Azerbaijan and its oil were hit by a double whammy: the war in Georgia, which threatened the security of the pipelines, and the global economic crisis. In autumn 2008, Suleiman was out of work.

**He was sure it wouldn't take long to find a new job** – but he was wrong. In the space of mere months, the resident of a nice apartment in the historic city centre found himself a beggar in the slums of Baku.

The economic crisis saw prices for staple foods increase by 30 percent. The cost of medical treatment rose and is still rising; the manat was devalued against the dollar. When the day finally came that Suleiman was forced to tell Karima that the only place they could go now was the slum where their society's losers end up, his sense of shame was so intense that he felt sick.

Confident that its future was secured by oil, Azerbaijan failed to diversify its economy, and severely neglected the agricultural sector. Although President Ilham Aliyev announced that fighting poverty is one of the main points on his agenda for his time in office, the country's many internally displaced persons or "domestic refugees" and rural migrants have mostly been forced to depend on aid organizations for the past 15 years. Although the government has >>



#### Azerbaijan

Inhabitants	8 million
Living in poverty	24 percent
Total area	86,600 km <sup>2</sup>
Neighbouring countries	Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Turkey
Capital	Baku, officially 1.7 million inhabitants
Religion	Islam
Form of government	Presidential democracy
Head of state	Ilham Aliyev (re-elected in 2008)

Sources: German Federal Foreign Office, World Fact Book





The BTC pipeline starts at the Sangachal oil terminal south of Baku. It belongs to a powerful international energy consortium. A few slum dwellers have found work here. They won't get rich – but at least they have enough to eat

## As the strain grows, the family breaks apart

replaced the shanties jerry-built from scraps that once filled the refugee camp with little wooden houses, nothing has been done to integrate their inhabitants into Azerbaijani society, for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has still not been resolved.

When it became clear that the Dinijev family would have to spend another cold and hungry winter in the slums, Karima packed her bags and took the children to stay with her parents in Gabala, far from the Caspian Sea. The wind is not so damp there. And although their house doesn't have central heating either, at least there is a stove in every room.

Suleiman now takes the 5834 bus every day to the Sangachal terminal, where he has a small job helping out in the canteen kitchen. At least he can eat there, and once he has food in his stomach, his irony bristles anew: "As they say in Germany: no job's too severe for an engineer." ◀◀



- 1 Baku
- 2 Caspian Sea
- 3 Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli oilfield
- 4 Shah Deniz oilfield
- 5 Nagorno-Karabakh





## The fight against TB

Tuberculosis (TB) is the scourge of the Caucasus. Potentially lethal: Around ten percent of new infections are resistant to medication. Médecins Sans Frontières helps those affected to get – and stick with – the protracted and debilitating treatment. There are many ways of helping: food donations to ensure a balanced diet, help with transport fares for the daily trips to and from the hospital and an allowance for heating costs to make the hardest months of the winter a little easier to endure.

Médecins Sans Frontières has set up projects in various places: One targets the 1.2 million inhabitants of the Armenian capital Yerevan (see picture below). As soon as TB is diagnosed, patients are taken in for initial therapy at the 35-bed hospital the organisation renovated especially for this purpose. Once they are no longer infectious, they are sent home and receive outpatient care. Over 200 patients have been treated at this hospital since September 2005. Just as many have been treated in the town of Gulripsh in the Georgian province of Abkhazia (see picture above), where MSF has been supporting national efforts to fight TB since 1999. Of course these projects are just two drops in an ocean – but two very important ones nonetheless.

Médecins Sans Frontières – Ärzte ohne Grenzen Germany (MSF) e.V., [www.aerzte-ohne-grenzen.de](http://www.aerzte-ohne-grenzen.de)  
 Donations to: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft, Account number 97 0 97, Bank code BLZ 370 205 00  
 Send donations without designating a specific project to help people in need as quickly and flexibly as possible.



## LOCAL AID PROJECTS

### Help for the disabled

The physically disabled are left to their own devices in Georgia. Johanniter International Assistance modernizes orthopaedic centres, provides prosthetics and other medical supplies and trains local orthopaedic technicians. In short, they step in where the national healthcare system fails.

Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V., [www.johanniter-helfen.de](http://www.johanniter-helfen.de)  
 Send general donations to: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft, Account number 43 43 43 43, Bank code 370 205 00  
 Donations for this project can be given via:  
[www.helpdirect.org](http://www.helpdirect.org), Project number 11018810

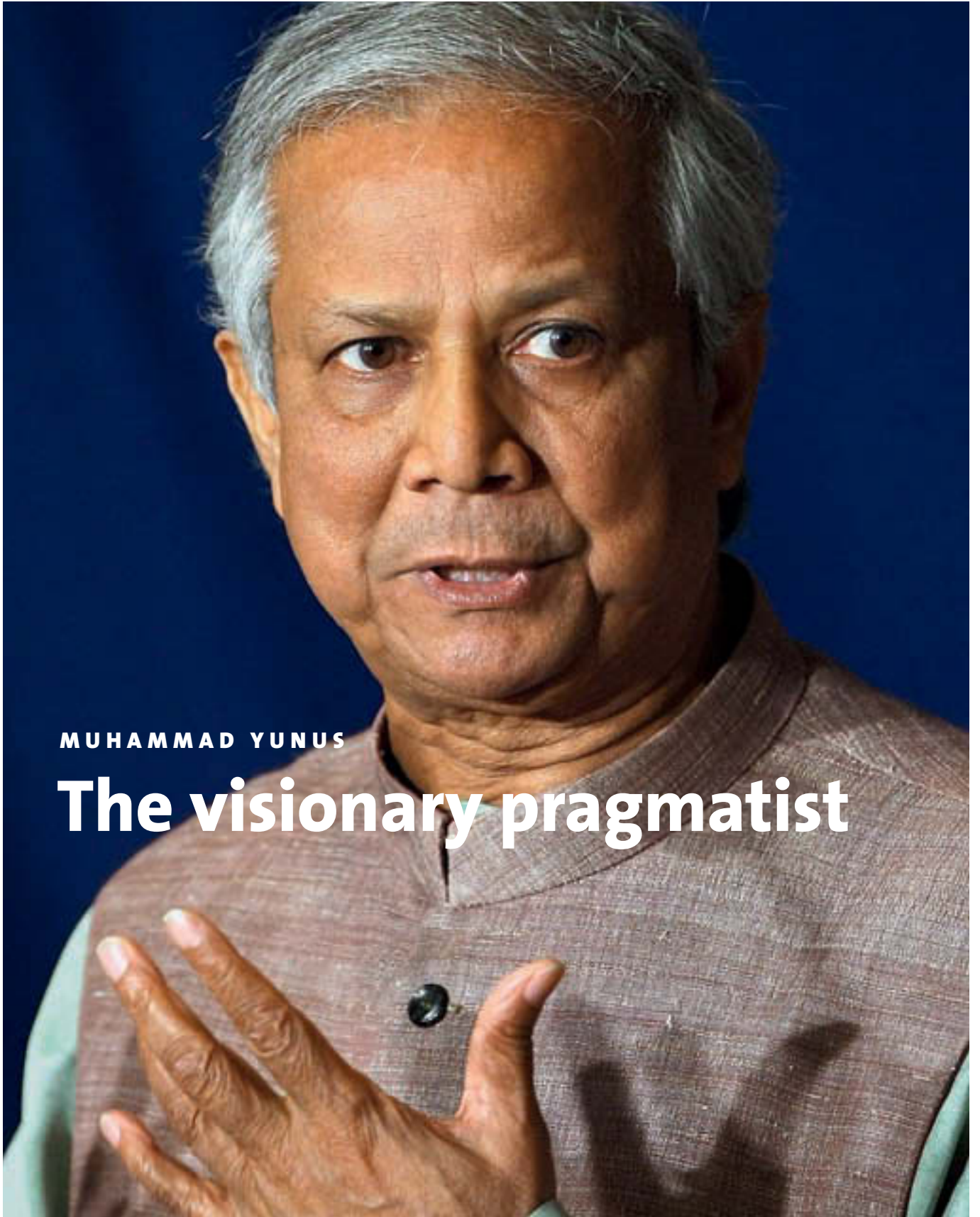


### Swapping minefields for playgrounds

The conflict zone of Nagorny-Karabakh in western Azerbaijan has been occupied by Armenian troops for the past 15 years. The local inhabitants are exposed to constant danger, particularly children playing outdoors, as large parts of the area are infested with mines. The German Red Cross believes they have a right to areas where they can play in safety and is building safe playgrounds in seven villages.

German Red Cross  
 General donations to: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft, Account number 41 41 41, Bank code 370 205 00  
 Donations for this project can be given via:  
[www.helpdirect.org](http://www.helpdirect.org), Project number 11022830





MUHAMMAD YUNUS

# The visionary pragmatist



## Muhammad Yunus's pioneering microloans for the poor brought him fame, acclaim and the Nobel Peace Prize 2006. An exclusive interview with the banker from Bangladesh on his dream come true: "Social Business"

■■ **INTERVIEW:** *Kerstin Humberg*

**Your vision of putting poverty into the museum by introducing a new kind of business to the marketplace is appealing. On the other hand this endeavor seems impossible. What feedback do you get when you are promoting "Social Business"?**

The general reaction is very positive – from the business side as well as from the academic side. New organizations are coming up to support "Social Business" like the "Institute of Social Business" at California State University Channel Islands or "Grameen Creative Lab" in Wiesbaden. Only recently people came from Glasgow Caledonian University, signing up a contract to promote "Social Business" among their students and the business community in the UK. Whether it's USA, Europe or Japan – wherever this idea is spread, I get a very good response.

**What do hear from your critics?**

On the negative side, we don't hear anything new, except the old argument. That it doesn't feel like this will draw attention of the business community, because after all people want to make money. "Who would like to be in business without money?" they ask.

**How do you react?**

I am replying that this is a kind of notion coming from the world, which has only one kind of business: the profit-maximizing business. Another kind doesn't exist. Once it exists, you will find out whether people do it or not.

**What does the reality check look like?**

We already have several "Social Businesses" in action. One is the "Grameen Danone Food Ltd.", a "Social Business" we established in 2006 in order to fight malnutrition among poor children in Bangladesh. This joint venture produces yoghurt enriched with crucial nutrients at a price of 6 Taka, which even the poorest can afford. Another one is "Grameen Veolia Water Ltd.", a joint venture that aims to make clean and safe water accessible to villagers in the poorest parts of Bangladesh.

**What's next on your agenda?**

There are several other "Social Businesses" in the pipeline. Like "Grameen Employment Services", a company that will train people from Bangladesh in order to find them jobs outside the country. We want to make sure that they can have a decent life, not being abused by people who are trying to make money out of them.

**What do your followers appreciate about the "Social Business" concept?**

The fact that there is room for it. Nobody is forcing them to get into it. "Social Business" creates a new option. For foundations for example. Instead of giving away their money as charity, foundations could invest in a "Social Business". Charity money has only one life, but a "Social Busi-

ness" can be financially self-sustainable. If your "Social Business" model works, the money will recycle and benefit even more people. It's a better utilization of funds, which we could apply also to bilateral and multilateral aid.

**For charity organizations this might be true. But why should for-profit companies that need to hold their ground in competition get involved?**

Money tagged as corporate social responsibility money, but used for public relation purposes, could be converted into a "Social Business" investment. No harm is being meant to the existing business. At the same time opportunities open up for using money in a better way to get involved with issues a profit-maximizing business cannot handle. >>

**“If “Social Business” works, the invested capital will keep flowing back, benefiting more and more people”**



**The realities of "Social Business": Grameen Veolia Water Ltd. wants to give the poor rural population access to clean drinking water**



**What are your experiences after more than two years of “Social Business” experiments with multinational companies such as Danone, Intel or Veolia?**

People coming from the traditional business world get very excited doing this work. The whole thinking process undergoes such a tremendous change. You are not the same person anymore. You look at issues you never looked at before and you do that with excitement, with thrills. There is no compulsion. Nobody is forcing you. Even employees not directly involved got very excited. Together we are developing tiny prototypes, and if we can demonstrate that these prototypes work, what we have done actually, we have developed a seed. The rest is a multiplication problem.

**Like it was the case with the Grameen Bank?**

There in fact the example of Microcredit comes very handy. Microcredit was developed in one village. Once it worked, the seed was developed. And once we started replicating, anybody could replicate. It became a global phenomenon. Some day probably our “Grameen Danone Food Ltd.” will become a global phenomenon too, because we all will know what to do. It will be a standard thing through which malnutrition issues can be resolved. One day maybe Veolia could be a seed, which can be replicated globally. That’s the interesting part of it – since there is no patent.

**Patent means protecting your knowledge?**

Yes, whereas in “Social Business” you publicize it. You publicize your

“People are gradually coming to realize that profit-centred business cannot be the only solution to the global challenges facing us now”

knowledge so that everybody else can join in and help. The seed development is the most important thing. Once you have developed the seed, it can grow.

**How did the financial and economic crisis affect your “Social Business” activities so far?**

It affects us in a positive way, because people feel that profit-maximizing business is not the solution to our global challenges. The confidence people had in market mechanisms – in the free market with maximization of profit – has been damaged. It didn’t work out. In that context, when people are full of doubts and frustration, when you talk about “Social Business”, it suddenly makes sense to them. Yes, why not? Why do we always have to go for making money? Why can’t we do something like this so that we can balance out? We can strain ourselves in the profit making side, but at the same time use our talent and creativity in “Social Business” to solve the world’s problems.

**The financial crisis as a chance?**

The financial crisis created a very right kind of environment where people are willing to listen. If everything is flourishing, the economy is moving very fast, expanding growth is ensured and there is no risk, people will say:

**Who is Muhammad Yunus?**

His nickname is “Banker to the Poor”: In 2006 Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank received the Nobel Peace Prize for their battle against poverty. Yunus developed the concept at the core of Grameen Bank: banking without collateral for the poorest of the poor. Since the 70ies the Grameen Bank offers small loans for self employment – especially to poor women. Muhammad Yunus was born in 1940 in the village of Bathua, in Hathazari, Chittagong, the business centre of what was then Eastern Bengal. He was the third of 14 children. His father was a successful goldsmith who always encouraged his sons to seek higher education. Yunus studied economics at the Vanderbilt University, USA, and received his Ph.D. in 1970. Returning to Bangladesh in 1972, he joined the University of Chittagong as Head of the Economics Department



“Come on, its working. Don't disturb. Let it happen.” Today it's a different context.

**What if your partner companies are just following their growth strategies? What if it's not about “Social Business”, but about entering new markets?**

This might be their strategy. My strategy is to get them into “Social Business”! Some people say: “Oh, Danone is using you!” I am replying: “I thought I am using them!” Probably we are using each other. However, the process will change them. It will change everybody else. Assuming that Danone came with a business mind, an intention to enter a new market and maybe get some financial returns in the long run. In the meantime probably their idea has changed. Maybe “Social Business” is a good idea, because it has changed so many minds in our company. The initial idea and the later idea is not necessarily the same thing.

**New joint ventures are in the pipeline. What are the main obstacles for implementing new solutions?**

It's a question of people getting familiar with the concept. Now, after BASF has taken the first step in Germany, other German companies will say: “Are they crazy? Why are they doing something in Bangladesh and calling it Social Business?” Others will become interested and they will like it, because it costs you so little. “Why don't we do it? We get a million dollar publicity for a one dollar investment. Let's get the publicity!”

**That's not a social mission yet.**

No, but let them come from their business angle. In the meantime, lots of new things will happen – and that will change the mind of the young people in school: “When I grow up, I will have a Social Business. I know what sort of Social Business I want to do”, they will think. Varieties of experience will come up. Let's move forward step by step.

**Early “Social Business” examples are trying to overcome malnutrition or to improve access to health care and information technologies in developing countries. What other “Social Business” opportunities do you see?**

Poverty reduction is only one area of “Social Business”. Ultimately all the issues which are piling up – issues profit-maximizing businesses cannot handle – all these issues are the subject of “Social Business”. If you can create a “Social Business” that benefits the environment, everybody benefits from the work. It's a global issue for everybody, rich, poor, middle class – everybody. It's about health, nutrition, water, sanitation and all those things. “Social Business” is supposed to address all the un-addressed issues.

**What about human rights?**

I never thought about it, but some smart guy will find out that yes, human rights issues could be converted into a “Social Business” too. Not that it solves all the problems, but it helps. Somebody could say: “I will start an insurance business to ensure your human rights. If you pay the insurance fee, we will protect you on human rights issues. We will fight for the last!” Like you protect yourself from health problems, you protect yourself from human rights issues.

**How do people in Bangladesh react to your activities?**

In Bangladesh nobody really pays attention.

**Why not?**

No, it's not surprising, because basically they think knowledge always came from the west. People don't pay attention to somebody who is doing crazy things next door. <<

### What's the Meaning of “Social Business”?

According to the Nobel Peace Prize Winner Muhammad Yunus there is a way to overcome global poverty: “Social Business”, a new type of enterprise in addition to traditional profit-maximizing business and poverty reduction through charity and donations. A “Social Business” is a non-loss, non-dividend business with a social purpose. A “Social Business” pays back only its original investment and reinvests its profits in innovations or further growth that advances its social and / or environmental goals. Although a “Social Business” is pioneering in its aims, it is traditional in its management. Its workforce is professional and does not rely on volunteers. It may or may not earn profit, but like any other business it must not incur losses.

A good example of “Social Business” in Germany is HelpGroup: [www.helpgroup.de](http://www.helpgroup.de).

Right: **The mothers of these young boys sell yoghurt from the “Social Business” company Grameen Danone Food Ltd.**

Below: **Reporter Kerstin Humberg on the road in Bangladesh**



*Kerstin Humberg*

After her journalism education through the Catholic Journalism School in Munich, our author Kerstin Humberg studied Economic Geography, Politics and Psychology in Hamburg and Granada, Spain. Since January 2006 she is working for an international business consulting firm in Hamburg. Up to April 2011 she will be on educational leave from her job in order to focus on her Ph.D. in Economic Geography. In the context of her research on “Poverty Reduction through Social Business – Lessons Learnt from Bangladesh” Kerstin recently met Prof. Yunus in Dhaka. In November she will travel back to Bangladesh in order to conduct field research on site.

A PROJECT FOR THE FUTURE

# Power from the desert

The world's deserts receive more solar energy in six hours than the entire world uses in a year. Could this be the solution to one of the most pressing problems of our time? Or nothing more than an illusion?

■ ■ BY: *Heike Blottner*



By the year 2050, we will require three earths to meet our resource needs



**Nothing new under the sun:** The technology on which the Desertec concept is based is already in use. The Andasol complex in Spanish Granada is just one example



**It sounds too good to be true.** According to the Desertec concept, all the renewable energy we could ever dream of is ours for the taking – in the desert belt that spans the globe to the north and south of the equator. If fully tapped, this source could provide power for over 90 percent of the world’s population, transform the poverty-stricken regions in which this energy would mainly be produced, put an end to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and, as a bonus, the residual energy could solve drinking-water shortages. Surely that’s just wishful thinking? Not at all, say proponents of this idea, which was first debated by global think tank The Club of Rome in the 1970s. Some 30 years later the German Aerospace Center picked up on it again to analyse its viability – with very positive results.

All the necessary technologies are available and sufficiently tried and tested, so implementation could begin immediately. And so it should because the fact is, if we keep going the way we have been, the earth’s resources will soon be exhausted. By 2050, we will require not one but three planet earths to meet our needs, according to the calculations of the Desertec Foundation, which was set up by The Club of Rome and a network of members from four continents. Our industry-based, fossil-fuelled economy has already left a gigantic ecological footprint on the planet. In the foreseeable future, climate change will cause flooding in some regions and desertification in others, precipitating waves of migration and conflict on an unprecedented scale. It is a bleak outlook, and one

which, according to a Desertec Foundation memorandum, should render the question of whether we should begin to change superfluous. What we should be asking is: How can this single planet support ten billion people by 2050?

#### **A 400-billion investment**

Desertec believes the solution lies in solar thermal energy. It plans to concentrate sunlight using mirrors, first in the desert regions of the Middle East and Northern Africa, then gradually extending to include all the deserts of the world. Unlike photovoltaics, this system uses sunlight to heat a special oil, which brings water to the boil, which in turn generates steam and drives turbines. A heat storage system means the system can function regardless of the weather and time of day.

These mirrored parabolic troughs have already been in use for decades in the deserts of California, the Desertec Foundation maintains. This means that mass production could begin immediately. The High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cables, which lose less than three percent of the energy they transmit over 1,000 km, have also been produced and distributed commercially for decades. These cables would initially transport the generated electricity to

Europe, and eventually to the rest of the world. With the necessary political will, the Desertec project could start immediately – and could reach the stated goals within 30 years.

However, only a global effort can ring in the age of solar power, say Desertec supporters, who are all too aware of how far away we are from thinking and acting at an international level on this issue. However, the foundation admits that the greatest challenge lies in establis-





The parabolic troughs in the Californian desert (right) were inaugurated decades ago. Parts of the Spanish Andasol complex are still in construction



Giant mirrors concentrate sunlight in the American desert. Desertec wants to see this system up and running in deserts around the world

the technology as too complicated and – despite assurances to the contrary – the whole system as extremely unstable and maintenance-intensive. As the energy expert Hermann Scheer from the German SPD party said in July 2009, the project is no more than an illusion. “The total cost of this project is incalculable and there are simply too many unknown factors.”

#### **This is no corporate PR stunt**

In summer 2009, the idea swept through the German media landscape like wildfire. Driven by the world’s biggest re-insurance company, Munich Re, and The Club of Rome, twelve companies joined forces to found an industry initiative. The consortium, which includes energy giants RWE and E.ON, the technology group Sie-

mens and Deutsche Bank, announced it would set up a planning company this autumn and produce ready-to-sign construction plans in the space of three years. The planning company was founded on 31 October 2009. According to media reports, the group is fast attracting new members, a development that Desertec rightly hails as proof of progress. “Companies are not getting involved in this as some PR stunt,” says Michael Straub, Marketing Mana-

ger at Desertec. “They’re really taking it seriously.”

When asked, Straub makes no secret of the laborious challenges that await project participants. He says that dozens of reference projects have been planned out in detail, some will be implemented in the next three years and their results discussed and fed into follow-up concepts.

The solution to one of the great questions of the future is as multi-faceted as the tasks that must be dealt with are diverse. The industry initiative is tackling things that can be done now and “on our doorstep”, says Straub, with no foregone conclusion. The foundation, he says, is staying focused on the big picture, the ultimate solution to the planet’s increasing lack of resources. Despite the prophets of doom out there, this great vision will be implemented one day, says Straub, affirming the core mission of the Desertec founders. Supplying the whole world with desert power, “that’s our ultimate goal.” <<

#### *Contact information*

DESERTEC Foundation  
Office Hamburg  
Ferdinandstrasse 28-30  
20095 Hamburg  
Germany  
[www.desertec.org](http://www.desertec.org)

hing suitable framework conditions in the producer countries that would give public and private investors the planning and legal security they need. But sceptics say that is just the tip of the iceberg. In their opinion, this system would put the user nations at the political mercy of the producer countries. The HVDC cables would also give terrorists a new and very vulnerable target. Critics see the Desertec budget of €400 billion by 2050 as too expensive,

DWINDLING EARTH

# No land in sight

Floods, droughts, natural disasters: climate change is forcing millions of people to flee their homes and face an unstable, uncertain future



Though annual floods are a normal part of life in many delta regions, they are becoming increasingly frequent and severe (shown here in Mozambique)

■ ■ BY *Anja Christina Lohmann*

**Paradise lost.** In 2005 salinization of the soil due to inundation by sea water and the danger of further flooding caused the government of Papua New Guinea to initiate the evacuation of all 980 inhabitants of the Carteret islands. It is indubitable that sea levels are rising, but calculations and experts are divided as to how much and how quickly. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates levels will rise by up to 90 centimetres by the end of the

21st century, while other scientists believe the increase could reach 1.5 metres.

However, no one doubts that the effects – over the short or the long term – will be disastrous for island nations in the Pacific and Indian oceans in particular. According to some calculations, most of the some 1,200 islands in the Indian Ocean will disappear completely by the end of the 21st century.

Around 80 percent of all land in the Maldives

lies just one metre above sea level. Last year the president of the island republic took the precaution of publicly requesting asylum for its 300,000 inhabitants. Even if the islands are not entirely submerged, widespread flooding would contaminate reservoirs of potable water and cause salinization of the little fertile soil remaining. The government has begun channelling tourism revenues into a special fund for the future purchase of land for relocation. Areas of Sri





**A bleak future: While cities and regions elsewhere are being engulfed by water, in China rainfall is becoming increasingly rare, turning once arable lands into deserts where survival is impossible**

Lanka and India are currently on the list of favourites by virtue of their cultural affinity. Although so far there have been no reports of actual purchase enquiries, this remains a much-debated issue – not least because countries like India face an uncertain future themselves. Asia, particularly its densely populated deltas, features alongside the Maldives at the top of the list of probable victims of climate change. More water flows through Bangladesh than through the whole of Europe, and the floods are becoming more frequent and extensive by the year. Greenpeace estimates that up to 125 million people in Bangladesh and India could be forced to leave their homes. Where they will go remains unclear.

#### **Regions most affected by climate-change (according to the IPCC):**

- The Arctic → melting ice caused by global warming
- Small island states in the Pacific → rising sea levels
- Africa south of the Sahel zone → drought, desertification
- River deltas in Asia → flooding

#### **Uncertain legal status**

Most countries do not currently recognize climate-change refugees as asylum seekers. A handful of countries at most admit temporary “environmental refugees” following major disasters.

However, in 2001 New Zealand reached an agreement with several island states to allow up to 75 Tuvaluans and 250 Tongans and Fijians into the country annually. Nonetheless, the New Zealand government repudiates any claims that this is tantamount to official recognition of the status of climate change refugees – the issue is still far too sensitive in the international arena.

Greenpeace believes there will be up to 200 million climate change refugees by 2040, while the IPCC warns of “increased deaths, disease and injury due to heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts.” Indeed, flooding in coastal regions and river basins is only one side of the coin – for rising temperatures are causing already arid land to dry out even further, and the desertification of the Sahel is progressing rapidly. The

soil is dying, and with it the life it nurtures. The majority of the 12 million inhabitants of Mali, for example, eke out their living from the land. When fields are reduced to dust, leaving is the only option.

#### **Nowhere to run: Climate-change refugees currently have no right to asylum. The issue has caused controversy in diplomatic circles**

Climate change is also heightening social tensions, with droughts driving people from the poorest regions of Africa into overpopulated cities with few prospects for the future. And it is by no means only in developing countries that people are fleeing climate change.

A one-metre rise in sea levels could force China to resettle as many as 73 million people. In America, Hurricane Katrina left more displaced people in its wake than any disaster in the nation’s history. Of the 1.5 million people forced to flee from the hurricane in 2005, 300,000 have still not returned. The shrinking of ice caps that once protected small coastal towns in Alaska has left them exposed to the full brunt of winter storms. The threat is real – and facing up to it is a challenge for the entire international community. <<

*Focus:* COLOMBIA

Many Colombian children have never experienced a life without violence. For those caught up in the civil war, guns are part of everyday life

Right: A view over the Colombian Andes





CHILD SOLDIERS IN COLOMBIA

# Playing with fire

Most child soldiers fighting with armed groups in Colombia joined voluntarily – in an attempt to flee the poverty and boredom back home. But those who try to return to normal society are putting their lives in danger. The story of one boy who escaped





A special-forces police officer at a shoot-out in Barrancabermeja. The city had been controlled by a series of guerrilla groups before the military stepped in

■ ■ BY *Toni Keppeler*

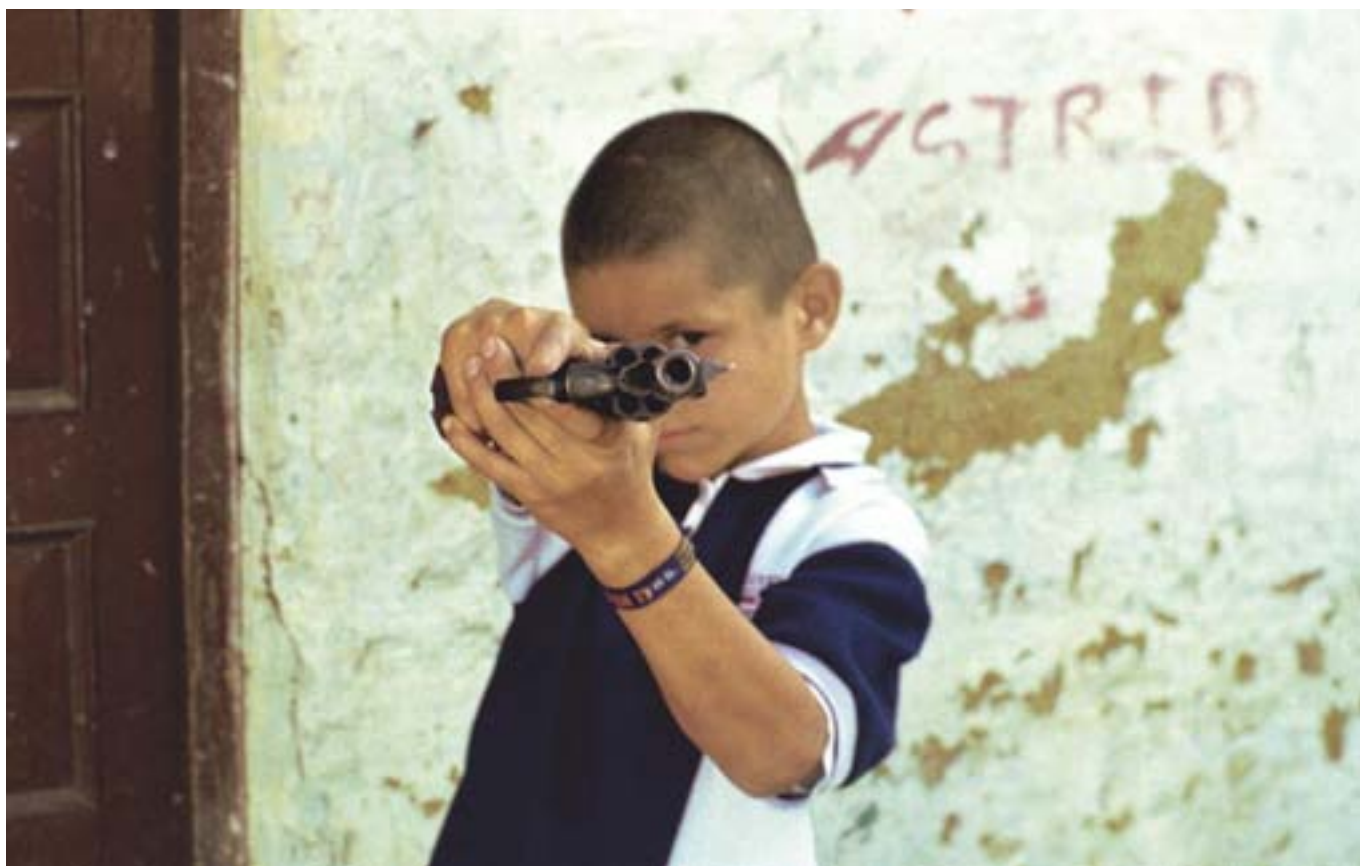
**San José del Guaviare is a sleepy provincial town in the south** of Colombia, on the edge of the Amazon rainforest. Beyond the town, the impenetrable jungle stretches for hundreds of miles, interrupted by nothing but the occasional clearing and coca plantation.

This was where the Colombian-French politician Ingrid Betancourt spent seven long years – as a hostage of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). When she was freed in July 2008, the helicopter carrying her and the other released hostages landed at the airport in San José del Guaviare, the busiest place in this otherwise somnolent settlement bathed in tropical heat. Small planes with US pilots at the controls regularly set out from here to spray the coca plantations with the herbicide glyphosate. The twin-engine aircraft are accompanied by a squadron of military helicopters, whose open doors reveal aerial gunners positioned behind machine guns. War is raging in the Colombian jungle below, and the armed groups are financing their fight with the cocaine from their plantations.

No one knows exactly how many FARC guerrillas are hiding out in the rainforest, nor how many right-wing paramilitaries are on patrol in the undergrowth. In the past four years, over 30,000 paramilitary fighters have laid down their arms – more than twice the figure believed to have been engaged in the conflict in the first place. Assuming government statistics are correct, the number of FARC guerrillas taken prisoner or killed over the same period would suggest there couldn't possibly be any more of them left out there. And yet, both groups remain a very real presence in the jungle.

**Nothing is certain about this war** other than that it has been ongoing for nearly 50 years and that almost one in five soldiers is a minor. But how many boys and girls is that in total? Human rights organizations estimate the number of Colombian child soldiers at between 6,000 and 10,000.





The war is not confined to the jungle – gangs also clash in the city. La Chinga is a 13-year-old gang member from Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city. He has taken five lives, sometimes being hired as a contract killer

The police station in San José del Guaviare is on the other side of town from the airport. This complex of long single and two-storey buildings is surrounded by a high wall and is heavily guarded. At the back of the compound is a mountain of empty blue plastic containers – these once contained glyphosate, a substance that has long since been banned in other countries. A small hut, with just enough room for a makeshift bed and a carrier bag containing a few clothes, sits in front of this plastic mountain. This is where 17-year-old José Javier Olaya lives. He looks older than he is, but this may be due to his grave, withdrawn expression. His jet-black hair is closely cropped and he wears a new black T-shirt and white cotton trousers that are far too big for him. His sports shoes, too, are the wrong size. “They gave me these clothes,” he says, scrunching up his eyes. “They didn’t have anything smaller.”

For two years José Javier lived in the jungle as part of a paramilitary group. He ran away almost

a month before we met him. “I chose to go with them,” he tells us. There was no chance of work in the village where he grew up, and nothing for the kids to do in their free time. When his father got drunk, he used to beat him. José Javier also admits that one of the reasons he joined up was to impress his first girlfriend.

**The paramilitaries are role models** for these boys. They have weapons – and power. José Javier was promised a good wage, so he joined the group voluntarily – like most child soldiers. They may be coaxed and bribed into joining the armed groups, but only about one in five are forced to take up arms against their will. Some of these are recruited by force when their village is attacked, others join up when their parents are blackmailed into handing over their children: “Give us your son,

and your family will be safe.” The countless number of massacres bears testament to what can happen when parents resist the fighters.

José Javier spent three months in a paramilitary training camp in the jungle. He had to run, climb trees and crawl through the mud on his belly. He learned how to dig trenches, make landmines, dismantle, clean and reassemble assault rifles, and, of course, how to fire a gun.

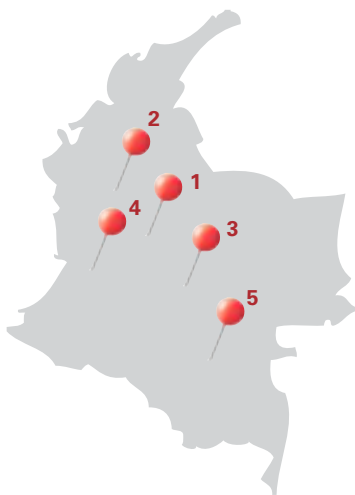
The normally reticent teenager becomes quite loquacious when asked about guns. “I had an M16,” he says, proudly. He can name every part of this US military rifle; he talks about bullets and calibre, and boasts about the weapon’s accuracy over long distances. His only complaint is that it was heavy –

much heavier than the AK47s the paramilitaries took after a successful battle against a guerrilla group. But José Javier is tall and >>

**Just one in five children is recruited by force**



Playing close to reality. These two boys in southern Bogotá have made themselves toy guns



- 1 Bogotá
- 2 Medellín
- 3 San José del Guaviare
- 4 Cali
- 5 Jungle region

well-built by Colombian standards, so he had to lug the bulky M16; the AK47s were reserved for the smaller, weaker fighters. When asked about himself rather than his weapons, he is much more reluctant to talk; every sentence is like blood squeezed from a stone. “Yes, I did go into combat against FARC,” he says. “I was always on the front line, right from the start.” And that is one reason why the paramilitary and guerrilla groups are so keen to have children on board – they are less scared than adults. They are more daring, because they are not fully aware of the danger. The possibility of dying pales in significance to the prospect of being considered a coward when the battle is over.

In the aftermath of battles with guerrillas, the army has found even 13-year-old girls among the dead. They are, however, the exception – usually girls are assigned to kitchen duties or used as messengers, as they arouse less suspicion than boys. And they are often forced to perform sexual favours for their commanders.

**We ask José Javier** whether he knows about the massacres carried out by paramilitary soldiers. “Yes,” he says, and stares down at his blue-and-white sports shoes. “I heard that somewhere in the north a unit took a chainsaw to everyone in this one village. I never took part in anything like that.” Only once did his troop attack defenceless civilians, he says. A farming family, who were members of FARC. How does he

know they were? “Because the boss said so.” When asked whether he also took part in the shooting, he falls silent.

When the police of San José del Guaviare embark on patrols in the hinterland, it is not a matter of two police-

men speeding off in a car with a flashing blue light. At least 100 officers set out from the town. Dressed in military uniforms and armed with semi-automatic assault rifles, they perch on board a convoy of pickup trucks. A helicopter circles above them, safeguarding against attack.

José Javier is travelling in the first car with the police commander. It is his job to show the

## Even 13-year-old girls are among the dead fighters



police where the paramilitaries buried the murdered family. “During my first few days here in San José I was constantly being questioned,” he says. “They wanted to know where my troop’s base was, where we used to operate, what villages we entered and when. Now I have to show them where we buried the family. But I’m happy to help.”

**Colombian law actually prohibits** minors from participating in any military or police investigations; it is considered too dangerous. The guerrillas and paramilitaries know that ex-fighters can pass on crucial information to police and army officers, so they always execute deserters if they find them. Or they threaten their families. José Javier knew the risks he was taking when he fled. “That was the only reason I put up with it for so long,” he tells us.

Although he spent two years as a fighter, José Javier tired of the soldier’s life a few months after he joined up. Life in the jungle wasn’t as exciting as he had imagined. They spent days on the march, or hanging around doing nothing in camps. “The leaders used to sit around on sacks stuffed full of dollars, snorting lines of coke. All we got were a few red beans to eat.”

José Javier’s chance to escape came quite suddenly, one evening at dusk. He was out on a march when he lost the rest of his platoon. He suddenly decided to turn around and hurry away in the opposite direction. He was on the run for two days and two nights before he came across a military post. “I had already thrown my gun away, and when I saw the soldiers I took off my jacket and T-shirt so they could see I wasn’t armed and wouldn’t shoot me. But I was still really frightened.” However, he tells us, he was treated well. The soldiers took him in, and the next day they brought him to the police station in San José de Guaviare.

According to the law, the police should have handed him over to the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) within two days. The ICBF provides the children with any medical care they may require before placing them in a temporary home. They are then supposed to return >>



Above: **Families are often so poor and the future looks so bleak that children are easy prey for paramilitary and guerrilla groups. Most children willingly join up; only one in five is recruited by force**

Below: **Leidy Joana, 13, lives in a home for former child soldiers. She joined the guerrillas when she was 12. Since fleeing, she has lived in fear that her former comrades may track her down. She hopes to be able to return to her family next year**



#### The Republic of Colombia

Independence	Declared 20 July 1810 (from Spain)
Official language	Spanish
Population	approx. 45 million
Total area	1,141,748 km <sup>2</sup>
Neighbouring countries	Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Venezuela
Capital	Bogotá, population approx. 7.2 million
Religion	Catholic (90 percent)
Life expectancy	72 years
Government	Presidential democracy
Head of state	Álvaro Uribe Vélez (since 2002)
GDP	US\$171,974 billion (2007)
GDP per capita	US\$3,619
Civil war	Since 1964, involving police, military, paramilitary groups and guerrillas

Source: Federal Foreign Office, World Fact Book



At a cemetery in Bogotá, a woman visits a memorial to the child victims of the Colombian civil war, ongoing for over 40 years. Many of the burial chambers are empty, and have instead been filled with colourful flowers.

to the care of their families – though this is usually not practicable. Most of the children come from conflict areas; were they to go back home, they would become a target for both sides. One faction would regard them as traitors, the other would suspect that the returning soldier might actually be working as a spy for his or her old gang. It is also not easy to find foster homes for these children, who are considered too violent to take in.

**So, most former child soldiers** go straight from the ICBF temporary homes to other orphanages. Most of these are run by small, local NGOs, financed by international charities, such as Bread for the World and terre des hommes. These orphanages, where former child soldiers live alongside young refugees, provide schooling, resocialization programmes and psychological care.

But it is not easy to get the former fighters accustomed to a normal life. A Human Rights

Watch study found that young people who spent years fighting with guerrillas in the jungle have a tough time getting used to living in an urban environment. They also miss their comrades and struggle to find their place in this unfamiliar social structure. Former paramilitary fighters usually bear deep psychological scars and are often addicted to drugs.

UNICEF is therefore concentrating its efforts on prevention, and is targeting villages in civil war zones largely ignored by the Colombian government. By offering children and young people in these areas education and leisure opportunities, it hopes to give them a better home environment and thus make them less susceptible to the allure of armed groups.

In these days of economic crisis and money shortages, programmes like this are having a particularly hard time of it. “Colombia’s poor are likely to be much bigger victims of the crisis than the armed groups,” says Paul Martin, UNICEF’s representative in Colombia. “They

will continue to offer the children money, and the children will feel that their perspectives are even worse than before the crisis. This will make them much easier to recruit.” Martin therefore expects the number of child soldiers to increase. He also mentions that several young defectors have returned to their troops in despair.

**José Javier, however, is determined** not to go down that road. But he is just as certain that he does not want to go into an ICBF temporary home and then onto an orphanage. He is too old for that, he says. He wants to return to his village, to his parents, his brothers and sisters. And if his girlfriend has waited for him all this time, he would like to start a family with her. When asked how he expects to get home, with no money and no help, he shrugs. “I’ll walk,” he says. “I should be able to manage it in three or four days.”

«





**HELPTHEWORLD** **now!**  
INTERNATIONALES CHARITY-NACHRICHTENMAGAZIN

## GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN

# Five steps to a better world

An initiative is gearing up for the fight against poverty, pollution and economic disadvantage. Its strategy: cooperation on all levels



Great visions need a host of visionaries:  
The Global Marshall Plan Initiative is getting there

■ ■ By *Anja Christina Lohmann*

**It was the idea of one George C. Marshall that helped Europe** get back on its feet after the catastrophe of World War II. The generous funding supplied by the European Recovery Program – the scheme known colloquially as the “Marshall Plan” – helped rebuild the Western European economy and thus prepare the ground for political stability. It was an act of humanitarian assistance after a time when inhumanity reigned. It was also an unparalleled success – a success Marshall’s spiritual heirs would dearly

like to repeat, albeit with other means and to other ends, although the challenge they face is immeasurably greater.

The “Global Marshall Plan” does not aim to rebuild, it aims to bring about something altogether new: no less than an end to poverty, efficient and practical ways to protect our environment, health, justice and equality for everyone in disadvantaged regions of the world, all tied in with a global economic miracle. In short: it wants to create an “ecosocial market

economy” encompassing the entire planet. It is an attempt to realize the eternal dream of a “world in balance”, an ambitious project that serves as a beacon for countless activist groups that pursue its aims the world over, in different ways but ultimately guided by the same idea.

The movement’s roots lie in Europe, in the Global Marshall Plan Initiative. The initiative was established in Frankfurt on 16 May 2003 by representatives from 16 NGOs with the aim of creating a global network of organizations



that would disseminate the idea of a Global Marshall Plan and spark a public debate on its goals. It has made considerable headway since then, with numerous local and regional initiatives blossoming all over Europe. The idea has also fallen on fertile ground in the US, where environmentalist and former Vice President Al Gore had advocated the need for a “global Marshall Plan” in his first book back in 1990 – an idea the Global Marshall Plan Initiative has now turned into a concrete programme.

### **Ambitious programme**

The first point in the programme – and the most important in the medium term – is implementing the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Although some progress has been made in the more than eight years since the UN member states committed themselves to achieving the MDGs, there is still a long way to go. By 2015 the number of people suffering from hunger and living in extreme poverty, i.e. on less than one dollar a day, is to be reduced by half. Further goals are: ensuring that children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education; reducing the mortality rate of children under five by two-thirds; improving maternal health; halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and

malaria; integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; and developing a global partnership to support the development of disadvantaged countries.

These are ambitious goals whose realization will require a great deal of idealism and considerable political and financial commitment. And indeed, the second point on the agenda of the Global Marshall Plan Initiative is the provision of \$100 billion in addition to the funds already earmarked by the UN. Raising this kind of money will take a concerted effort, and the initiative is currently focusing its efforts on appealing to organizations and individuals around the world for assistance. Of course the support of prominent personalities is always welcome, but even more important is generating a strong grassroots movement. For change in the world can only be effected if all levels and parties get on board – and work has only just started on building the ark that might save humanity. ◀◀

### **The goals of the Global Marshall Plan**

1. Implementing the globally agreed UN Millennium Goals by 2015
2. Raising the additional US\$100 billion a year required to achieve the Millennium Goals and enhance worldwide development
3. Raising these necessary resources fairly and in a competitively neutral manner, for instance by burdening global transactions
4. Gradually establishing a worldwide eco-social market economy with an improved global policy framework through the inter-linking of established rules and agreed-upon standards for economic, environmental and social issues (WTO, ILO and UNEP standards)
5. Directing funds to the grassroots level and transparent application of such funds to innovative development concepts (e.g. by granting micro-loans) while at the same time fighting corruption



**Prof. Franz Josef Radermacher is a founding member of the Global Marshall Plan Initiative, Scientific Director of the FAW (Research Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing), Vice President of the Ecosocial Forum Europe and a member of the Club of Rome**

### **Why do we need a Global Marshall Plan?**

The global problems we face are so enormous, and the interests of various states so divergent that a programme of concerted cooperation offers our only chance of shaping the future positively.

### **What do you think a Global Marshall Plan Initiative can achieve that other initiatives haven't managed to do?**

Each of the elements in our proposed compromise package is being discussed individually. We want to emphasize that addressing all these topics together holds the most realistic chance for the future.

### **How do you plan to get everyone around a single table?**

We want to call attention to the fact that pursuing the individual goals as a package will have a greater impact. Nevertheless, there are many who refuse to work with others as a matter of principle, and I doubt we'll be able to reach them.

### **The whole concept sounds rather theoretical – can you give us an example of a concrete project?**

If our concept sounds theoretical, that's because much of it is. A concrete project we're supporting in connection with our goal of addressing the issue of worldwide environmental justice – in cooperation with the United Nations – is “Plant for the Planet”.

### **An international conference on the Global Marshall Plan is planned for 2010. What are your expectations of it?**

I hope it will provide a broader view of the issues and produce a consensus among partners around the world on the priorities for the future. And I hope it will lead to the creation of a wider base for our initiative.



**His plan to rebuild Europe served as a model: General George C. Marshall**



BURMA AFTER THE CYCLONE

# “The real work starts now”

The world may have shifted its attention elsewhere, but no news from Burma is not good news. Six months after Cyclone Nargis hit the country, thousands of people are still in need





Because they can dig no graves, survivors in the isolated village of Myasein Kan in the Irrawaddy Delta have attached photos of cyclone victims to the ruins of their homes





11 May 2008, Haing Gyi Island – Survivors of the tropical storm stand on what remains of their homes, shocked at how quickly everything they had was washed away

■ ■ By *Philipp Maußhardt*

**There were two catastrophes in Burma on 2 May 2008.** The first was a cyclone by the harmless name of Nargis. When it smashed into the Burmese coast it laid waste to an entire region of the Southeast Asian country. The Irrawaddy Delta, a fertile area of rice farms and countless tributaries, was lost in the floods caused by the cyclone, along with many thousands of

its inhabitants. The second catastrophe had already been there for decades – the government of Myanmar, as the unelected military regime has named the country. And it was this government that prevented international aid agencies from acting quickly to help the victims.

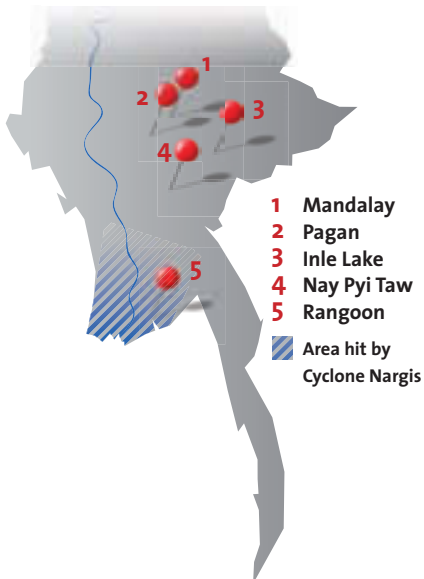
Gradually, days later, the full scope of the disaster leaked through to the world. The leaders of the politically isolated state played down the situation at first, probably to calm the people in the country and save face with the international community. It was not until satellite images were taken of the area that people outside Burma were able to see just how badly the delta had been hit. Places where houses, villages and towns had been were now nothing but water. Winds with speeds of almost 200 kilometres per hour had uprooted nearly all of the trees and blown away people's bamboo huts like leaves. The view was even more shocking on the ground, with smashed chunks of fishing boats wedged between the ruins of houses. Traumatized survivors wandered about aim-

lessly, having lost everything they had, in many cases even everyone they knew. Today we know that these floods took the lives of 138,000 people. Thousands of bodies were never even recovered, having been carried out to sea with the receding water.

The authorities in Burma were not ready for such a horrible natural disaster. They had neither the personnel nor the supplies and equipment needed to get help to the 2.5 million people in the delta as quickly as it was needed. Yet the military government, which resides in the centre of the country, far away from the disaster area,

## 138,000 people died in the floods

refused to accept the assistance immediately offered by the outside world. In its false pride, ignorance and fear that having foreigners in the country might induce political protests by disgruntled Burmese, the government prevented the international community from doing what it has done after other disasters; there was thus no fast, coordinated effort to give medical help to the injured and provide survivors with basic necessities.





### Junta blocks humanitarian aid

The first foreign aid workers were given permission by the junta to enter the delta around two weeks after the storm and only as a result of extreme political pressure. It was already too late for those that had needed immediate assistance; they were dead. Doctors, nurses and emergency personnel were, however, able to distribute medicine, food and clean drinking water to help people in the delta survive. The greatest success of the mission, say aid organizations, was that no epidemics broke out following the flooding.

Calm returned to Burma a few months later. In the meantime, many organizations have moved their aid workers to other disaster areas. Yet some of the greatest challenges still lie ahead. Burmese who fled the area are gradually returning home to start over. They need to build houses and replant rice fields. The seawater has made many fields unfertile, which may seriously hurt rice harvests for years to come. About 2,000 schools were destroyed, and they



This ad was posted in the *Daily Jakarta Post* on 25 June 2008 by Hollywood stars like George Clooney and Brad Pitt and by Asian politicians in protest at the Burmese junta's blockade of foreign aid

have not reopened to this day. Chris Kaye, the World Food Programme's country director for Burma, says that months after the cyclone "the majority of families simply don't have enough to eat." The rice they had stored was destroyed in the floods. Many of them are living hand to mouth and surviving on one meal a day. To make matters worse, the storm destroyed over 40 percent of the region's fishing boats. And rice and fish are the staples of the delta.

Some members of the military regime dealt yet another blow to the victims by getting rich off the financial aid that came in from abroad. The fact that generals were taking a cut of several cents from every dollar donated for flood victims made many people unwilling to contribute. Those aid agencies that did help were forced by the junta to convert their money at the official rate, which was significantly lower than the black market rate. While the people starved, the government thus got fat on the difference.

### Seventy percent of victims were women

More women and children died in the disaster than men because they were too weak to hold on when the wind and water roared through. According to the UN, women made up more than 70 percent of the dead, and in some villages almost no women survived at all. Many children lost one or both parents. UNICEF does not know exactly how many orphans the storm created, but UNICEF spokesperson for Burma, Zafrin Chowdhury, estimates the number to >>



Saltwater ruined the soil of many rice fields, so new ones have to be planted elsewhere. The rice harvest is under serious threat





and forced the refugees to return to their ruined villages.

#### **Aid agencies in action**

German aid agencies such as Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) were among the first to bring medical supplies and clean water to the delta. Some organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Malteser International had the advantage of being able to draw on the workers and contacts they established in the country before the storm.

Media interest in the situation has since faded, but a few agencies are still there to help. Malteser International, for instance, is on the delta's Middle Island, providing around 50,000 people with clean drinking water, distributing insecticides to combat the spread of malaria and rebuilding medical facilities. Assistance has also come from Care, World Vision and The Johanner, which have provided generous donations of food, building materials and household items.

One major problem has always been how to transport these supplies to the people who need them. Many streets were destroyed and many

Above: **Repairs have begun on the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon – one of Burma's most famous landmarks**

Below: **Novice monks at a Buddhist monastery near Rangoon. Monasteries were the first place of refuge for many survivors of the storm**

be at least 2,000. No one knows much about these orphans. The government has refused to allow aid agencies to find adoptive parents for the children but official records only show 112 of them at government shelters. And the rest? Some are living at Buddhist monasteries or with relatives. Many are believed to have gone to the cities or to the north of the country to look for work.

The hundreds of Buddhist monasteries in the delta were a veritable life preserver for many. They opened their doors immediately after the cyclone and welcomed all who had lost the roof over their head – to the great displeasure of the military, which fears the influence of the dissenting monks. Two weeks after Nargis the government stormed several of these monasteries





**Burma (Union of Myanmar)**

1948	Independence from Britain
Capital	Rangoon, Centre of government: Nay Pyi Taw
Area	678,500 km <sup>2</sup>
Neighbours	Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Thailand
Population	47–54 million (exact population unknown)
Religions	Theravada Buddhist (89%), Christian (5%), Muslim (4%), Hindu (1%), Animist (1%)
Life expectancy	62.9 years
Government	Military regime, currently no parliament
Head of state	Senior General Than Shwe (since 23 April 1992)
1988	Opposition party <i>National League for Democracy (NLD)</i> founded. Party leader Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 and has been placed under house arrest by the junta several times since 1989
GDP	\$14 billion
GDP per capita	\$260

Sources: Federal Foreign Office, World Fact Book

bridges swept away. Boats have been the only way for aid workers to get to remote areas. As a result, very few workers reached these areas and survivors moved to nearby towns, where they live in refugee camps to this day.

Handing out saws, hammers and nails is not exactly what Doctors Without Borders was created to do. But since its people were among the first aid workers to arrive at the scene, in many cases they were the only ones who could help. Fortunately, they were willing to go beyond providing medical services and lend a hand with reconstruction efforts. They have since returned to what they do best, with a team of around 40 doctors and nurses from around the world providing medical treatment and psychological counselling. The people they counsel have often have lost their entire family. Helping them recover from the psychological damage of the storm is one of the greatest challenges these medical professionals face.

**Traumatized survivors**

One person who finds it hard to think about the future is Shwe Tun from the tiny village of Zee Phyu. The 37-year-old fisherman lost his wife and all three of his daughters on that day in May. The only reason he survived was because he happened to be sleeping in another village a few kilometres away the night the water rushed in. When he returned home nothing was left of his family, not even their bodies. “The floods were three or four metres deep. They took everything.” A new school year has just begun in Zee Phyu, and Shwe, a slight man with a thin moustache, can hardly bear the sight of the children in their blue uniforms. “My daughters would have been going to school with those >>



Above: **Protesting the junta's blockade of humanitarian aid in front of the Burmese embassy in Hong Kong on 14 May 2008**

Below: **Monks recycle the wood from houses flattened by Cyclone Nargis**







A boy walks to a temporary school in Ohnpinsu village in the Irrawaddy Delta

kids,” he says sadly, “but I wasn’t there to protect them.” Shwe blames himself for their deaths. “If I had stayed home, I might have been able to hold on to them.” And then, “I really ought to be dead now too.”

Shwe’s story is one of thousands like it. He and people like him carry their trauma around with them every day, and they rarely have anyone who will listen to them. They also lack the motivation to start their lives afresh. “For what?” asks Shwe.

### Long-term aid is needed

“The situation has improved a lot in recent months”, says Claudia Kaminski of Malteser International. “But the real reconstruction work begins now.” Emergency shelters need to make way for permanent housing; fishing and agriculture need to resume. Thousands of wells that have been contaminated by the salty floodwaters need to be cleaned and put back into operation.

“It would be a big mistake to say that no more help is needed here,” says Angela Schwarz, who works for Germany’s Welthungerhilfe in Rangoon. If food were to stop coming in now, a new disaster would follow. Schwarz estimates that several years will pass before people in the

delta can properly provide for themselves again. Before the floods, the region was Burma’s rice basket, producing more rice than any other part of the country, and most families lived off the fish catch. But now, with brackish soil and no boats or nets, farmers and fishermen suddenly

have to rely on the generosity of strangers. Those who are searching for evidence that things might be starting to look up in Burma may take a bit of comfort from the fact that some travel agents are now offering tours of the devastated region. <<



Temporary water storage at a location run by German aid agency THW. Each water containment bladder holds 10,000 litres of drinking water





**HELPTHEWORLD** **now!**  
INTERNATIONALES CHARITY-NACHRICHTENMAGAZIN

BURMA

# Rangoon Rap

Even the military junta listens to hip-hop in Burma – in order to censor it. But J-Me, a rapper from Rangoon, knows how to incorporate subtle criticism of the regime in his music and still remain true to himself

■ ■ By *Stuart Deed, Rangoon*





**Like it or not, rap music** and hip-hop are synonymous with conspicuous consumption, drugs, violence and promiscuity. But in a country like Burma, where even a Toyota Landcruiser costs upwards of US\$200,000, where Cadillac Escalades and Hummers are almost non-existent, hand-guns are banned and song lyrics are censored by the state, what becomes of the rapper? You get artists like J-Me – he’s one of the country’s best-known rappers but does not drive an SUV or carry a Glock pistol, although he probably would if he could get his hands on one.

J-Me represents a strong departure from US rappers in a lot of ways: He’s a practicing Roman Catholic who can be found at his church in downtown Yangon every Sunday; he doesn’t come from the “hood”; and he does not always think about himself. Together with a number of his contemporaries J-Me has even founded an organization to protect hip-hop’s integrity in Burma. But he’s not perfect either and shares a few traits with the US rappers he listens to.

American rappers like 50 Cent typically spring from socio-economically disadvantaged city areas characterized by extensive poverty and high crime rates, commonly called “the hood”. But J-Me is at least middle-class – his mum’s a teacher and his dad’s a moviemaker who spends most of his time in Bangkok, Thailand, “brokering and hustling” in J-Me’s words.

Nor did he receive a poor education: He’s articulate and speaks good English, tinged with an indefinable North American accent and a colourful ghetto-inspired vocabulary. J-Me is only 23 but he’s been rapping on stage since late 2001, and like many performers he was nervous

before that first show. Nervous enough, in fact, to seek some liquid courage in the form of Hennessy V.S.O.P – the rapper’s drink of choice. “I was drunk. I was so nervous that I didn’t have the balls to get up on stage sober. My vision was sideways,” he says with a chuckle before continuing: “I’m still scared though every time I go up, and the less that I prepare the more scared I am. It’s like going to an examination.”

What made him want to get up on stage that first time is a surprise – it wasn’t any desire to emulate Snoop Dog, Jay-Z or any of the American rappers. Instead, the inspiration came from a homegrown rock ‘n’ roll hero, Zaw Win Htut, lead singer of Emperor. “The first concert I went to as a kid was a Zaw Win Htut show and he rocked that stadium,” he says. Just like most rappers, J-Me has also adopted a stage name: His Burmese name is Khint Zin Ko. He says he chose “J-Me” from his Roman Catholic birth certificate, which lists his name as James Patrick.

#### Dealing with state censorship

Of course, US rappers only have to worry about selling albums, while J-Me has to deal with state censorship, which he says can be a baffling experience.

“It can happen anyhow. They might ban a whole song from an album or they tell us that we have to change a line because it concerns the government, or drug racketeering. So I say to them that my rhymes, my content or my lyrics are not meant in that way. They just have guilty consciences. They made me drop a song from one of my last albums, so the next time I wrote the purest language and the frankest lyrics that I could. They didn’t say anything about that, even though there’s a line in one song where I talk about smoking weed.”

Music piracy is a revenue-draining problem for musicians everywhere, and Burma is no exception, although the tactics and method are very different. In the West, bands like Metallica have famously waged war on the illegal

downloading of their music. But in Burma, piracy takes a much less sophisticated path: People simply burn CDs and sell them on the street.

While he admits that piracy is a problem, J-Me says it’s not something that gets too deeply under his skin.

“I’m not worried about it because my true fans, the ones who like my hardcore rhymes, will buy the real album. That’s what I believe.”

And while his attitude to piracy might indicate a blasé attitude to making money, J-Me reveals a level business acumen seemingly beyond his years. “It depends on you and how you move. There’s a Jay-Z line in a song from his

**“They made me drop a song from one of my last albums”**

American Gangster album: ‘It doesn’t matter how many rocks [as in diamonds] are on your watch, it’s how many rocks [of crack cocaine] you move while you’re on your watch.’ “When you hustle, work hard and bust your ass,

it’s a question of how many shows you can perform in the whole country in a month and how many albums I can sell too. It’s a strange industry here though. If I am booming [popular], then I can mention whatever price I want to a promoter, although I don’t really think I deserve it,” he says.

#### Against commercial pop-rap

It’s unlikely that any rapper in the US would create an authority to oversee the development of hip-hop. But J-Me and several of his friends have, inking tattoos onto their backs to remind them of what J-Me saw as near disaster for the industry. “We have them [the tattoos] because it’s like we raised hip-hop from the dead. Back in 2000, Acid [Burma’s first hip-hop group] came up and the whole country was pumping this music. It was pretty hot days for hip-hop. “But then Sai Sai [another popular Burmese rapper] came up and started releasing all of this sissy-ass, bitch-ass, commercial pop-rap onto the whole scene and hip-hop’s street credibility disappeared.

“Crowds started booing when rappers got on stage, so me and a group of guys formed ourselves into this commission called the MHA – the Myanmar Hip-hop Association or Myanmar Hip-hop Army. “We called a meeting and decided that we should be true and real to hip-hop. And make sure that we’re producing real hip-hop and not just commercialized music.” ◀◀









# Bad news for Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its geography also makes it particularly prone to natural disasters. Tropical storms and the flooding that follows in their wake are becoming increasingly frequent and severe as a result of global warming. This seems especially unfair in light of the fact that Bangladesh produces fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (about 37 million tonnes annually) than almost any other country in the world. For comparison purposes, Germany produced 890,000 tonnes in 2006, the US 6,469 million tonnes and China 5,841 million tonnes.

A particularly dire threat posed by global warming is the future inundation of Bangladeshi coastal regions due to rising sea levels in the Bay of Bengal and the resulting surge of water into the gigantic delta, whose rivers – the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna – reach far inland. The images of the devastating monsoon floods of 2006 gave an idea as to just how much land could disappear if sea levels rise further. Over 600 people died and eight million people lost their homes in the 2006 floods, which left an area the size of Switzerland covered in water for two entire weeks.

It is estimated that around ten million people worldwide inhabit areas that are less than three feet above sea level. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Bangladesh stands to lose approximately one fifth of its total area if sea levels rise by just one metre. Forecasts predict a rise of up to 59 centimetres by the year 2100; many experts put the number even higher if one takes the probable melting of continental ice in Greenland into account. If the sea level were to rise by 1.5 metres, Bangladesh would lose about more than 20 percent of its total land area, turning around 17 million people into environmental refugees within their own country. The coastline would extend to the capital city of Dhaka, which currently has a population of 11.5 million. In addition, the surge produced by storms would be even higher than it is today, dooming the Sundarbans along the coast – the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest – which sustains ten million people whose livelihoods depend on fishing. Even today, storm surges of five metres and more are not unusual in Bangladesh.

A study conducted between 1967 and 1997 shows that soil salinity levels are increasing in many parts of the country; a further rise of sea levels would exacerbate this trend, increasing the salinity of the soil much further inland. Higher concentrations of sodium chloride in the soil and water would not only have far-reaching effects on agriculture, but on the health of the population as well: They would inevitably lead to the spread of cholera and other diseases, since the pathogens that cause them thrive in warm, damp environments with moderate salinity.

**Photo: Farmland around the Brahmaputra, a river that flows into the Bay of Bengal, was flooded by heavy monsoon rains**





Roma children posing in front of a rubbish dump in Stolypino, Bulgaria. In the background, the derelict apartment block they call home. Seven to eight people share a room here and the electricity supply is sporadic



## THE ROMA IN EASTERN EUROPE

# Living on the edge

The festering rubbish dumps of Eastern Europe are populated by rats, insects – and people. In Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia and many other countries there are numerous slums housing the poorest minority in Europe, the Roma

■ ■ By *Kristina Salaba*

“The gypsies are here!” was the cry that would ring out through the school corridors during the hot summers of my childhood. No more was needed to unleash a wave of excited curiosity. Back in 1979 the word “gypsy” was not generally deemed an offensive term, although it was often used as one. My friends and I weren’t really allowed to go down to the caravan site and talk to the gypsies, but go we always would. We found it fascinating to watch the Roma women washing clothes in the river and to see the men standing round in groups next to the flashy Mercedes that they used to pull their caravans. Sometimes they gave us a nod of recognition, and we nodded back. The aura of romance that surrounded them usually lasted until three of them would ring the doorbell at lunchtime trying to sell carpets. That’s how things were back then.

## The poorest people in Europe

When I look at the Roma in Eastern Europe today, the nostalgia fades as quickly as it came. Unfortunately. For Brazilian-style *miséria*, complete with garbage-dump scavengers, is a reality in our own backyards. Living conditions in the

### Estimated Roma population in Eastern Europe

Albania: 90,000 to 100,000

Bosnia-Herzegovina: 40,000 to 50,000

Bulgaria: 700,000 to 800,000

Croatia: 30,000 to 40,000

Czech Republic: 170,000 to 300,000

Hungary: 400,000 to 500,000

Kosovo: 36,000 to 40,000

Macedonia: 220,000 to 260,000

Montenegro: 20,000

(incl. Ashkali and “Egyptians”)

Romania: 1,800,000 to 2,500,000

Serbia: 450,000 to 500,000

Slovakia: 400,000 to 500,000

Slovenia: 7,000 to 12,000



The photographs from page 25 onwards were taken by Munich-based photographer Daniella Hehmann, who plans to donate all proceeds from the pictures to the poverty-stricken Roma families she visited during her trip to Romania in 2008: Loredana Hoca (11) from Turda lives with her parents, grandparents and siblings in a 15 m<sup>2</sup> adobe hut – eight people in total. She is doing very well in school and wants to be a doctor when she grows up

ramshackle Roma estates, slums and ghettos are nothing short of shameful, inspiring indignation and revolt among any who witness them. Here, any romantic notions of campfires, stirring music and a thrilling, exotic way of life are entirely out of place. These are places of darkness and despair. The conditions in which the Roma in southeast Europe are condemned to live are the very definition of poverty. Statistics from the study “At Risk – Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe”, published by the United Nations Development Programme in Bratislava in 2006, and from a 2007 UNICEF report confirm what many of us had already guessed: far more Roma live below the poverty line than the bulk of the population in southeast Europe. Their poverty is also more crippling, they have less access to healthcare and they have fewer

chances of finding employment. About half of the total Roma population in southeast Europe live in poverty – on less than 4.30 dollars a day. Every fifth Roma has to get by on even less: no more than 2.15 dollars a day. The little money these people have is often spent entirely on food. They have nothing left to purchase clothing or to pay for medicines; the idea of buying a book must seem preposterous. Roma children are traditionally obliged to contribute to the family income from a very early age. The burden of responsibility on such very small shoulders can be particularly onerous if an adult in the family falls ill. Many Roma also suffer from crushing debt, mostly for rent, electricity and water. More than half of the Roma in southeast Europe have no access to sanitation facilities; two thirds have no toilet or bathroom. >>



**Valer Varga lives with his girlfriend Rita and their four-year-old son in a semi-legal Roma settlement in Klausenberg, Romania, a few feet from the rubbish dump. This is where he earns his living of between two and seven euros a day. The couple sold their carhorse to buy painkillers for Valer's father, who has lost a leg and also lives from selling things he finds on the dump**

Twenty percent of Roma children are ill, compared to seven percent of non-Roma children. The unhygienic living conditions and lack of healthcare open the door to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and polio. The hardships suffered by the Roma are intensified by the fact that they have little or no chance on the job markets in Eastern Europe. Roma who manage to do well in school and gain a foothold in bigger cities are in a much better position. But this progress often comes at the price of leaving behind their identity, their traditional clan-based lifestyle and their long-standing customs and values. As for the rest of the Roma population, they are by and large condemned to living and dying in poverty.

#### **Education is a human right**

The Roma have been at home in Europe for the past thousand years. Numbering between eight and ten million people, they are Europe's largest minority group with no state of its own. They are difficult to count, difficult to unify and difficult to integrate. The issue of integration has become a matter of urgency since the accession of Eastern European states to the EU and the changes this has brought to the job market and educational system. Lack of schooling is one of the main factors that prevent Roma people from breaking out of the poverty trap. But education is costly. And which government has ever thought that the Roma were a sector of the population worth spending money on? Roma children

are systematically excluded from primary schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. No school buses drive past their settlements, no books or meals or kindergarten facilities are provided; all these children receive are constant complaints about the inferior state of their clothing and taunts about their family background. Home is a cold, crowded, rundown place where it is almost impossible to do homework. That is why Roma children often end up in special-needs schools, or are entirely excluded from the education system, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where 80 percent of Roma children never go to school at all. This situation contrasts starkly with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements that define education as a human right and that have been recognized by many of the countries in question. Small wonder then that so many Roma turn their backs on the education system. But in so doing they are sounding the death knell to their chances in life. EU-funded programmes like PHARE and the Roma Education Fund do what they can, but cash is not the only thing needed to alleviate this complex problem.

#### **The Roma are different**

The discrimination, marginalization, physical attacks, lack of justice and enduring prejudices that the Roma population face paint a desultory picture of the majority populations whose social and economic opportunities are so much better. The main reason why the Roma have been victim to such persistent discrimination is that they have always been different to the rest of society. They fall outside the scope of both Christian and Muslim definitions of how one should live, and they don't fit into modern European ideas of female emancipation. Their traditions jar with accepted economic practices in both East and West. First and foremost, Roma people care about their family, their clan, their traditional

## **The story of the Roma in southeast Europe**

### **Origins**

They came from India and Egypt, and could be found all over Europe from the 15th century onwards. In the 14th century they carried letters of protection, explaining their nomadic lifestyle as a form of Christian penance.

### **Excommunication**

In 1427, the Roma were excommunicated by the Archbishop of Paris, provoking a dramatic change of attitude towards them. Individual countries began to expel, torture or execute Roma.

### **The Holocaust**

By 1945, the Nazis had murdered about 500,000 Roma in concentration camps. In the Eastern European countries occupied by the Germans, many local authorities supported the genocide.

### **Communism**

Under the Communist regimes of post-war Europe, the Roma were forced to change their ways and to settle. In many places Roma women were sterilized against their will.

### **Perestroika**

When the Cold War ended and the Eastern bloc collapsed, the Roma were the first to lose their jobs. Expulsions followed. Failed integration often resulted in open racism.

### **Yugoslav wars**

The Roma were caught between the firing lines. In Kosovo, both Serbian and Albanian groups hounded them as "traitors". Tens of thousands fled; approx. 257,000 sought refuge in Montenegro.





Despite their cheery grins, Maria Adam (left) and her friend Mirabela Drafi (both aged 11) live in constant fear of losing the little they possess. Maria would like to live in a home surrounded by flowers and nice people, rather than squatting as she does in a stable in Campi Turzii, Romania

roles and their own laws. They prefer not to mix with outsiders and view even well-meant attempts at integrating them with distrust. These neighbours of ours are complete strangers, and there is a cultural gulf between them and the rest of European society. According to many newspaper articles, policy papers and police reports, this gulf is “insurmountable”. The feature common to most of these reports is their overt cultural racism.

#### The scapegoats of Eastern Europe

In many places in Eastern Europe where the change from a planned to a market economy failed to bring the hoped-for improvements, local frustrations were often vented on the Roma. Over two dozen Roma were murdered in racist attacks in the Czech Republic during the 1990s. The situation in Romania is the worst by far. The most barbarous attack on a Roma community happened in 1993 in the village of

Hadareni when three Roma were killed and 170 forced to flee their homes. The government offered the affected families little or no compensation for the injustice they had suffered,

leaving them to seek a humiliating refuge elsewhere. The newspaper *Romania Libera* even defended the attacks, citing the above-mentioned cultural and social differences. It described the events as a “conflict between honesty, hard work and godliness on the

one side against thieving, arrogance and shameless aggression on the other.” The European Court of Human Rights went on to find Romania guilty of transgressions against several stipulations laid down by the European Commission of Human Rights.

#### Face to face with reality

Munich-based photographer Daniella Hehmann travelled to Romania in May 2008, where she was given permission to take pictures in several Roma settlements. She reported on how >>

#### DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION

### Much ado about nothing?

In 2005, the World Bank and the Open Society Institute declared a Decade of Roma Inclusion. The ten-year action plan is designed to improve the standard of living for the Roma population across national borders with targeted measures to improve access to education, housing, the job market, and health services. The governments of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro and Slovakia are responsible for implementing these measures within their own countries. So far, absolutely no improvements are visible.



Top: Roma settlement in the Poiana district of Turda, Romania. Over 1,500 Roma live in this unhygienic, dilapidated 50-year-old settlement. Bottom: Razvan Vitan (41) from Hungary has spent much of his life on Romanian rubbish dumps. He volunteered to help lay water pipes as part of the “Children Smile” aid project in Pata Rat in the city of Campia Turzii

the conditions there were nothing short of catastrophic: “I saw kids who had been abandoned by their parents playing in the rubbish. I also met a woman with a broken hip who was trying to get hold of a wheelchair. Her daughter had been buried under a mountain of rubbish when it collapsed the week before. The woman’s face was a picture of despair and I found it difficult to meet her gaze. I felt deeply ashamed. Another old lady took us to her hut to show us how the roof is gradually falling in. A rotting beam was already protruding deep into the room. The residents were very suspicious of me at first, but eventually they thawed and their mistrust faded.” Daniella Hehmann plans to

donate the proceeds from her pictures to help the Roma families she met.

Most of the Roma settlements in Eastern Europe are situated next to rubbish dumps. Two such can be found in Lovanja in Montenegro and in Prokuplje, Serbia. Here, the Roma delve through stinking heaps of refuse to retrieve scrap metal and plastic, which they try to sell. Most Roma are unemployed because of their lack of schooling and professional qualifications, and because of the overt discrimination. They are trapped in a vicious circle.

#### What needs to be done?

Helping people to help themselves is a tried-

and-trusted method. Providing loans to help people get education and training is one area where this can work. But what about the far more complex issue of promoting mutual respect and a willingness to live side by side, of removing prejudices and encouraging people to care about one another’s fates? Effecting a change in the attitudes of the majority population, not just of the politicians and the Roma associations, is beyond the reach of the law. It is a long and wearisome process that requires great determination and clarity of mind on both sides. It also demands a certain generosity of spirit that can accept differences and tolerate seemingly odd behaviour or customs. We don’t have to produce countless statistics on the Roma or attempt to understand every detail of their lives, nor can we throw all our prejudices overboard when we hear negative reports – shedding centuries of preconceptions is hard – but we should try to get closer to these people, to try to understand them and to reflect on our attitudes. If we can at least achieve this then maybe episodes like the one that happened in Rome in July 2008 can be prevented, when the whole Roma community was punished because one of their number had committed a murder. At that time the police officer heading the campaign cheerfully announced that “the Roma settlement will be razed to the ground. We’re going to leave them with nothing but their underwear.” Stamping out vicious prejudices like this will not be easy, but it is a task we must undertake. <<

#### SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION

### A gypsy village

With the help of EU projects and Swiss aid organizations, the Bulgarian village of Dolni Tsibar has managed to become an impressive pioneer of Roma integration. The mayor, two finance professionals, six kindergarten teachers, the deputy head of the local school, 13 teachers, the only policeman in the village, engineers and several medical and social workers are all Roma. Although the unemployment rate of 60 percent shows that life in the village is still far from easy, this development is clearly a great step forward and shows that the Roma are willing to integrate and to get involved in society. It also demonstrates how important education is.



TED - VISIONS ON VIDEO

# 18 minutes for a better world

## Visitors to the online forum TED.com can listen to over 200 speakers ranging from Bono and Al Gore to chimp researcher Jane Goodall expound on the environment, politics, technology and science

■ ■ By Kristina Salaba

Jane Goodall's talk on Africa, "her" chimpanzees and their habitat is based on scientific research and hard facts. And yet watching the Englishwoman on the computer screen is a profoundly emotional experience. She speaks for about 18 minutes, and it is so compelling you find yourself riveted to the screen the entire time. And if your mind is still thirsting for more, you can listen to what Al Gore has to say about the environment or hear Brian Greene explaining string theory – all just a click away on TED.com.

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design and goes back to 1984, when professionals from these three fields came together at a conference to exchange ideas. Meanwhile TED has grown into a platform for people from all walks of life who have something important to say. Every year, "the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers" are invited to Long Beach in California to give the talk of their lifetime. TED Global takes place at a different place each year, usually in developing nations. The event is attended by over 1,000 people every year and is invariably booked up a year in



British primatologist and ethologist Jane Goodall has been studying the behaviour of chimpanzees in Tanzania since 1960

advance. The event and its speakers and discussions are more or less unanimously described as inspiring by press commentators. Over the course of four days, 50 speakers each have 18 minutes to share their visions and ideas on how to solve the world's problems, approaching them from angles as diverse as politics and art, science and the environment. The three best speakers at each annual conference are awarded the TED Prize, which is endowed with \$100,000. Those honoured in 2009 were oceanographer and deep-sea researcher Sylvia Earle, astronomer Jill Tarter and maestro José Antonio Abreu – each a pioneer in his or her field with unconven-



tional concepts for changing the world. The people behind TED believe in the power of ideas, and their mission is simple: to spread "ideas worth spreading".

### Become a member of the community

All you have to do to become a member of TED.com is register online, providing your e-mail address, name and country. Once you're registered, you can watch and listen to all the talks, post a blog, or comment and interact with other members – and perhaps most important of all, express your own views and ideas. In the era of Web 2.0, more and more people are taking advantage of this unique opportunity to get involved.

TED.com is operated by the Sapling Foundation, a private non-profit organization founded in 1996 by Chris Anderson, editor-in-chief of lifestyle and technology magazine "Wired". In his book *The Long Tail*, Anderson explains why he sees the future of the internet in niche markets. His latest book *Free!* will be released soon. And "free!" also describes the information visitors to TED.com can access, information that may truly change the way they look at the world and its future. <<



Physicist Brian Greene is one of the leading exponents of string theory, which describes the world as made up of one-dimensional, vibrating "strings" or loops rather than point-like elementary particles



The TED.com website with the 2009 winners of the TED Prize



INQUIRY

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH

# ... human rights?

Key elements of the UN's famous 1948 declaration found a vital place in Germany's post-war constitution. But what about the rest of the world? How much has really changed over the past 60 years? ■■ *By Anja Christina Lohmann*



Photos: UN Photo, Getty Images (2)





December 1948 was a historic moment for humanity as representatives from 56 countries met in Paris to debate the content of a “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. In the end, 48 countries voted in favour of the declaration and eight abstained

**Not everyone voted for the declaration** when it was passed by the General Assembly of the newly founded United Nations on 10 December 1948. But then no one voted against it either. And so the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born. The 30 articles it contains look past skin colour, religion, nationality and sex, declaring equality, justice and the rule of law for all. Although these 30 articles were not legally binding, they have nonetheless gone down in history as the foundation of humanitarian law. Yet though they have become part of the constitutions of many countries around the world, far too many people have yet to see them put into practice.

**Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”**

In 2008 no one can seriously claim equality for men and women, especially in Islamic countries. The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, passed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1990, expressly asserts the superiority of men.

**Article 3: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”**

According to Amnesty International, in 2007 a total of 1,252 people in 24 countries were put to death under the law. Most of the executions are believed to have taken place in China, where the government has not, however, released official figures. In 2008, 62 countries still allowed capital punishment.

**Article 5: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”**

In 2007, 300 people reported that they had been tortured by Turkish security forces. Amnesty International has documented instances of torture and other inhuman treatment in over 81 countries. The US military prison at Guantánamo Bay is still in operation despite widespread criticism.

**Article 7: “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.”**

Amnesty International says that in 2007 at least 23 countries had laws that discriminate against women, at least 15 had laws that discriminate against immigrants and at least 14 had laws that discriminate against minorities. The amount of unofficial discrimination in other countries remains a closely guarded secret.

**Article 11: “Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.”**

In 2007 around 270 people were being held without trial or judgement at the US prison in Guantánamo. A total of 25,000 people were illegally detained in Iraq, says Amnesty International.

**Article 19: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions with-**

**out interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”**

Figures from Reporters without Borders show that in May 2008, 130 journalists in 32 countries were in prison for political reasons. Most of them were in China and Cuba. The governments of 21 countries have sanctioned measures that dramatically limit the freedom of the press.

**Article 20: “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”**

Thousands of people were reportedly impriso-



Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the committee that drafted and approved the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ned in 2007 when Burma’s military government suppressed peaceful protests being held by Burmese monks. Amnesty International estimates that around 700 monks are still incarcerated. During the Beijing Olympics in 2008 the IOC published official guidelines for athletes that in effect prohibited all types of political display. Countless political opponents were rounded up by the Chinese police in the run-up to the games.

**Article 25: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.”**

In 2007 only 31 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS had access to the antiviral medicines they needed.