

A WORLD VISION JOURNAL OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Fourth Quarter, 2000

# Global Future



Desmond Tutu

**Africa's Century?**  
poverty, renaissance and hope

**Moving beyond Afro-pessimism**

*Desmond Tutu*

**Children: our future, our hope**

*Wilfred Mlay and Jacqueline Brown*

**Africa's future prospects**

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## Welcome to Global Future

**WELCOME** to the first edition of Global Future, a quarterly magazine intended to provide a venue for dialogue on development issues that affect the poor.

Fifty years of work in short-term emergency disaster response and long-term community development has provided World Vision with opportunities to learn from a wide array of experiences, both positive and negative. Through these pages, we will try to share some of what we have learned, and are still learning. At the same time, we recognise that our field of vision has its limits, which is why we invite others to share their perspectives here, as well.

Each quarter, we will examine a different topic. We decided to start big, with the entire continent of Africa. Of course, we can't cover everything. But we have tried to examine a handful of key topics.

Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa, was gracious enough to write an article for us. In it, he acknowledges that while Africa has numerous challenges, there is reason to believe that change is possible. In Africa, we can find not only devastating poverty and violence, but also shining examples of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Angola, Ethiopia, children, the church, economics, international policy, leadership, AIDS, the Horn, women entrepreneurs, conflict diamonds, international debt and its impact upon the continent...all are subjects covered in the following pages.

Our next edition of Global Future will focus on globalisation and its impact upon the poor. WTO Director-General Mike Moore is contributing to the discussion. We welcome your participation, too. ■

Randy Miller



# Rising to the occasion in the battle against AIDS

Moses Dombo

**THE CROWDS** had taken their seats, awaiting the arrival of the guest of honour, while the children's choir from the neighbouring school kept them treated to a series of songs. Peering through her colleagues, Jane emerged from the back row. She took the leaders' position in front, clapped once and bowed, signalling the beginning of a new song. Before long each child was rocking to the song in step. I looked around and the tears rolling down the faces of the adults said it all.

"Oh God, why have you given us up? Why have you stolen away our parents, before they could show us their love? You parents, why have you betrayed us, exposing us to permanent vulnerability because of your greed and lust? Your desire for short-term satisfaction is the price we have paid for this pain."

On and on the children went. Their innocent faces, the sweet voices and tearful eyes could never be doubted. The situation is real. One could see in the crowds people who, according to the village diagnosis process and the known history, were at the verge of departure to the unknown. Women whose spouses were known to have departed sobbed openly, while the men in similar circumstance struggled to keep back the tears. Men are not to be seen openly weeping, as this would undermine their manhood.

This is the kind of situation that has become common sight in many African villages. AIDS is reaping where it never sowed. In the prime of their lives, at the peak of achievement, men and women in Africa are perishing, with no help in sight. Does anybody care? they seem to ask. Already, more than 12.5 million Africans have died of

this pandemic. Another 23 million have been "sentenced". The hangman has fixed the noose and the execution has started, slowly, but surely. These



*In Uganda, AIDS orphans Nasaali Olivia and Peter Kizza stand next to the grave of their father.*

people's right to life has been taken away. Of these, at least 2 million are children who may never live to see their fifth birthday. And what an agonising five years of life it will be for most of them!

The development gains of the 20th century are quickly being eroded. UNAIDS, the global agency charged with halting the advance and impact of the disease, says the human impact of the disease is almost indescribable—the protracted bouts of sickness, the fractured families, the relentless ritual of funerals, and the morgues that no longer even bother to close. These human consequences are in turn wiping out health, social and economic gains, and are threatening the future of development in Africa.

Life expectancy has stopped rising and now is in decline. The World Bank estimates that in Tanzania, AIDS will kill 15,000 teachers by the year 2010, and 27,000 by 2020. In Zambia, Barclays Bank has been losing 36 employees a year out of some 1,600, ten times the death rate at most United States companies. AIDS is

depriving children of their parents at a rate never seen before in global history. Eleven % of all children in Uganda and nine % in Zambia have been orphaned as a result of AIDS alone.

But will the world sit back and talk politics while this robber of the world's most critical resource goes on a rampage? Conferences have been held all over, and good papers have been presented, but lives will continue to end until decisive action is taken by

those with the power and resources to help dry the tears of 12-year-old Jane and her peers. With very expensive drug cocktails, the West has found a way to cope with AIDS. Not so in Africa, where for lack of US\$1, millions of people still die of malaria. How much more, AIDS?

Africans themselves must rise to the occasion. African leaders should stop bickering and invest in the lives of their citizens. Those who are known or thought to have depleted national treasuries should be forced to return the loot to their countries for re-channelling into

## A look ahead

--In 13 countries with the highest prevalence rates, HIV/AIDS will cut life expectancy 17 years, from 64 to 47, by 2010-2015.

--In Botswana, Malawi and Zambia, child mortality will increase 100% by 2010.

--By 2010 there will be 22 million orphans, 16% of the children under 15, in the 19 hardest hit African countries.

health and social development programmes. Africa's trade and political partners should revisit their priorities, remembering that keeping quiet now, as lives continue to be lost, is no more helpful than burying their heads in the sand. ■

*Moses Dombo is communications and advocacy director for World Vision Uganda.*



# Moving beyond Afro-pessimism

Desmond Tutu

**OUT OF AFRICA**, something new. This was supposed to be a positive observation about the continent that used to be denigrated as the Dark Continent. Africa has given the world something called Afro-pessimism, which is not meant to be complimentary. It is something new. It describes the fatigue and disillusionment and despair generated in many in the West as they survey the news bulletins, recounting the awful mess that is happening—civil wars in the Sudan, in the two Congos, in Angola, the border strike between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the bloody dispute between Christians and Muslims in Egypt and Nigeria, the famines, the droughts, all over, the long lines of refugees escaping from man-made and natural disasters, and now the awful pandemic of AIDS—yes, enough to drive most to despair of this great continent ever really making it.

## Bleak picture

There is no doubt that the negative statistics are devastating and that the picture is bleak. But surely that is not the total picture. That is not the

**There is no doubt: the negative statistics are devastating and the picture is bleak. But that is not the total picture.**

whole story about our continent. It is so easy to get us feeling so negative that we end up as Africans who are filled with self-hatred and self-contempt, allowing ourselves to be defined by others. We need to remember quite a few important truths about Africa so that we see things in a proper perspective and are



Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

energised to deal with all the massive problems that face us, aware of our rich tradition and venerable history so that we may derive inspiration and encouragement to face our daunting challenges. Then we can participate in what President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa has called the African Renaissance and ensure that the OAU call to make the year 2000 the beginning of the African century, not to be hollow mockery.

It is important for our children and for us to remember that the Africa that has produced so many refugees was in antiquity regarded as a traditional refuge from those escaping from natural disasters and injustice and oppression. We need to be reminded that in the patriarchal period of the Bible, the family of Jacob left Palestine ravished by famine to find succour and help in Egypt, and much later, when

the Holy Family believed its first-born to be at risk from the machinations of a rapacious Herod that it was to Africa that they fled to find safety in Egypt. This Dark Continent made important contributions to the science of mathematics, which helped with the construction of the pyramids. Africans built some remarkable pieces of architecture, as can be seen in the Monomotapa ruins in Zimbabwe and the splendid artefacts that were created by the gold, silver and copper-smiths in Nigeria, in Benin and elsewhere in West Africa.

## Restorative justice

Some people have thought that rulers in Africa were usually totalitarian. But nothing could be further from the truth. The good ruler in ancient times was the one who was adept at recognising a consensus reached by the people's council, where all in the village had a voice. The ruler who frequently ignored the will of the people ended up with no followers. African jurisprudence was not mainly punitive or retributive. It was based on restorative justice, it sought to heal breaches in the community caused by the offence because we believed in







A church in rural Mozambique sits peacefully beneath the branches of a baobab tree.

ubuntu—that our humanity was caught up in one another's, that the greatest good was communal harmony—so that anger, resentment and

**I believe the task of the church should be to call Africans to the realisation that they are not God's stepchildren.**

revenge were seen as corrosive of this, and forgiveness and reconciliation as greatly sought after.

We are not always aware that the African church produced some of the greatest giants of the early church: Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, etc. And have we noted that the man who helped Jesus carry his cross on the first Good Friday was one Simon, an African from Cyrene? Of course, we should not over-romanticise or be melodramatic, and yet we should take some action to counteract all the current negativism about Africa. Indeed, democracy was developed in the West, but some of the most vicious political ideologies the world has known were spawned by the sophisticated, civilised Christian West. Communism, Fascism, Nazism are products of the West, which gave us

two world wars, the Holocaust, dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and gave us some of the most shattering examples of bloody violence. The conflict in Northern Ireland is not between pagans but between two white factions claiming to be Christian. The awfulness and excesses in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya are being committed by Europeans. Thus there is little room for smugness and arrogance on the part of the West as we survey the serious problem that Africa faces.

### African renaissance

I believe there is a great deal to be said for President Thabo's call for the African renaissance. Africa can claim that it has amazed the world in how apartheid was ended, to be followed, not by the much feared orgy of retribution and revenge wreaked by blacks on whites, but by the extraordinary Truth and Reconciliation Commission process of forgiveness, amnesty and reconciliation. Africa can boast that it is the home of the most revered statesman in the world today

in the person of Nelson Mandela, held in awe because he has demonstrated remarkable magnanimity and generosity of spirit in his willingness to forgive his tormentors and the oppressors of his people, so that today he is regarded as an icon of forgiveness and reconciliation in a conflict-ridden world where these qualities are so much sought after.

Therefore, I believe the task of the church to be one that should call Africans to a realisation that they are not God's stepchildren, that God did not make a mistake in creating them black, that they are sons and daughters of God with a rich legacy as members of the kingdom of God. That they should enter into their legacy—the glorious liberty of the children of God—and behave like who they are. ■

*Desmond Tutu, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, retired as Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, in 1996. He is active as a lecturer throughout the world and currently is a visiting professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. He is also the author of No Truth Without Forgiveness, published in 1999 by Doubleday.*

WINNIE OGANA



# Decades of war leave Angolans facing an uncertain future

Robert Michel

**PORTUGUESE COLONISTS** saw Angola as the jewel of their overseas colonial empire. A good climate with a rich, fertile soil that delivered superior export crops, the country also boosted mineral wealth and oil. That, used in the right way, should have guaranteed the African nation a

prosperous future. Reality, however, played itself out differently.

In the 1950s and 60s, former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's famous "Winds of Change" words blew all over Africa, and while most French and British colonies gained their political inde-

pendence, Angolans were involved in a struggle for independence with their Portuguese colonisers. After 13 long years, Portugal pulled out in a hurry in 1974, and the country became independent the following year.

## In the midst of conflict

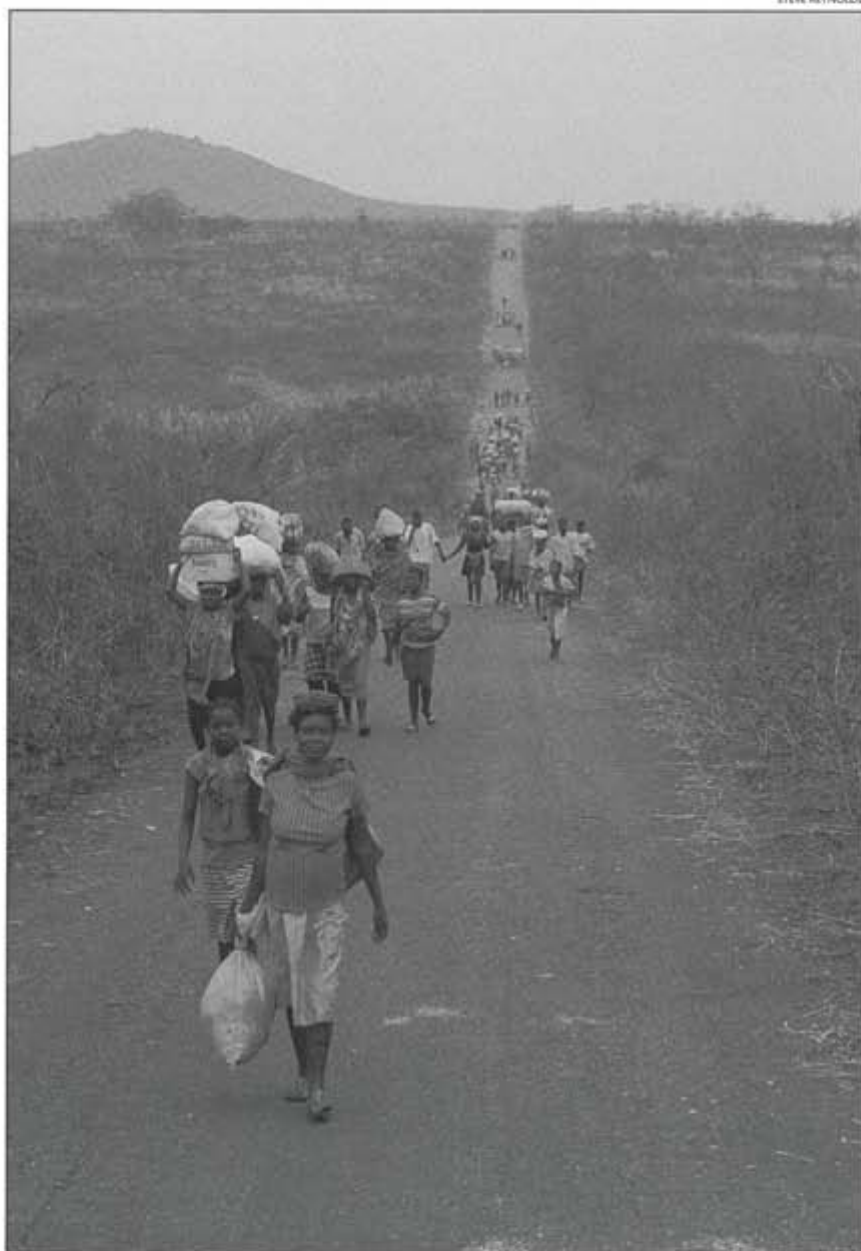
At independence, Angola found itself in the midst of the East-West conflict of the day, with the governing Marxist MPLA supported by the Soviet Union and thousands of Cuban soldiers, and the pro-Western UNITA liberation movement backed by the United States, South Africa and others. At one point, the CIA had even encouraged South African troops to invade Angola on behalf of UNITA, and it is no wonder that Angola has seen everything from full-scale war to terrorist insurgency and four years of supposed peace with intermittent

**Forgotten by most of the outside world, Angola is currently on the brink of a major human disaster.**

fighting for the better part of the past 40 years.

A peace agreement signed in 1994 by the MPLA and UNITA has collapsed, and both sides are again locked in an all-out war. The war is largely financed on government's side by oil sales, whereas UNITA oils its war machinery by the illegal sale of the country's rich diamond deposits and the smuggling of ivory.

Diamonds can literally be picked from fields, and almost any crop would grow on the lands. Yet, landmines are everywhere, believed to equal the country's 12.5-million-strong population. Angolans are among the poorest people on earth; some 200 Angolans die daily as a result of malnutrition. And while ordinary people die, arms traders, UNITA and some officials skim off millions of dollars from legal and not-so-legal deals.



STEVE REYNOLDS



In the eyes of the international community though, Angola's war is a largely forgotten one that has frustrated not only mediators, but has also driven away the international media. Non-governmental organisations have been heavily curtailed in their operations in a country that accounts for 3.7 million people affected by war. Two million of those are internally displaced, and hundreds of thousands of others have fled fighting to swell the ranks of refugees in neighbouring countries.

While more and more nations are banning the use of landmines, an increasing number of Angolans are dying by landmines as mine clearance programmes have been curtailed when donors stop funding them at the renewed outbreak of fighting.

### The worst place in the world

Forgotten by most of the outside world, Angola is currently on the brink of a major human disaster. According to a special United Nations report, Angola is currently "the worst place in the world to be a child", considering that 292 of 1000 children—or almost one-third—will die before the age of 5. Almost half of the children under 5 are underweight, and the number is on the increase.

Decades of fighting have forced millions of people off fertile land into towns and cities in their desperate search for security. Luanda, Angola's capital, was originally planned to house 400,000. It can no longer cope, as it has now reached ten times as many people. Because of this, drinking water is not safe in Luanda. Malaria, polio, meningitis, measles and diarrhoeal diseases are daily occurrences that mainly affect children and the elderly. Given the sanitation problems and lack of safe drinking water, immunisation has become a major priority. However, the current polio campaign, aimed



at vaccinating some 200,000 children, is hardly more than touching the tip of the iceberg.

Undoubtedly, war has made some people rich, and with the spread of the Angolan conflict to the Congo, it even led to a rift between the states in Southern Africa. In Angola itself, with oil and diamonds still plentiful and some 110 000 males reaching military age annually, the war could continue for another few years. And while international sanctions against UNITA

may have some effects on their warfare, it would be unrealistic to expect a 5,198 km-long border to be controlled effectively.

The United Nations, NGOs, and the regional power South Africa, therefore, see negotiations by the Angolan protagonists as the only way out of the crisis. Constant pressure by the international community on both sides should be applied to bring them to the negotiating table. And, as one South African analyst has suggested, rather than further isolating UNITA, offer their leader Jonas Savimbi exile and relax travel restrictions on those UNITA leaders who are close to Savimbi.

All this has little or no bearing on the poor and destitute in Angola at the moment, though. The majority of the displaced, most of whom have nothing to do with the marauding war, do not even have essential items such as blankets, plastic sheeting, pots and kitchen utensils. It is on all of us to focus our attention on the plight of these people, victims of a forgotten war. ■

*Robert Michel is communications manager for World Vision's Southern Africa Regional Office.*



*Displaced children at the Comunal nutrition center receive high-energy milk from a staff worker.*



# Dawn of a new era in EU-Africa relationships

Jane Backhurst

**THE EUROPEAN** Commission does not have the easiest of jobs—managing policies and programmes with a constant watchful eye on the reactions of 15 member states of the European Union<sup>1</sup> and their individual interests.

This is no less the case for its relations with Africa. The EU is Africa's most significant trade and aid partner. At a time when the EU, as a supranational power, tests the strength of its emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy and develops a European Security and Defence Initiative, it also must reform its institutions and procedures, prepare for enlargement of the EU, and implement the new African-Caribbean-Pacific-EC Partnership Agreement.<sup>2</sup>

## Kick-start major changes

Pessimists may balk at the symbolism of the recent military coup engineered by George Speight in Fiji, the capital of which, Suva, was to host the signing of the new trade, aid and political Agreement between 71 ACP

countries and the EU. But the signatories are determined to keep to a tight deadline to kick-start major changes in trade and aid relations between the EU and Africa over the next 20 years. Within less than two weeks another host country had been found—Benin—and the signature ceremony took place on 23 June.

The traditional dichotomy between discussions on aid and trade arrangements was enhanced in these negotiations, as non-reciprocal preferences were dressed down. However, the EU was adamant that this must be the way forward if ACP states were not to be marginalised in the globalisation process. Indeed, as on one side they battled with the United States over bananas within WTO, on the other side, they encouraged the ACP states to agree to WTO-compatible Regional Economic Partnership Agreements. They did this in order to promote "the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy."<sup>3</sup> The ACP countries were sceptical. Rightly so, when you consid-

er that most are already marginalised and evaluations of EU aid<sup>4</sup> and trade leave room for major improvement. The ACP states' share of the EU market decreased from 6.7% in 1976 to 3% in 1998, despite non-reciprocal trade preferences. Sixty % of their exports are still concentrated in only 10 products. The ACP states have battled hard for more market access, and the response is yes to "essentially" all goods, as the EU has to yield to pressure from agricultural groups in the EU, too.

## Avoid contradictions

The age-old coherence question rears its ugly head and does not seem to be close to resolution, despite efforts by NGO lobby groups in Brussels to advise on how best the EU should avoid contradictions between, for example, its agricultural export subsidies and programmes to promote the other main aim of the new Partnership Agreement: it will be "centred on the objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty". Past aid is impressive, but evaluations point to a need to put more emphasis on institutional and policy contexts in individual countries. The EU has not been without response—the overall reform of its institutions has also brought with it reflection on an EU Development Policy Statement, presently being considered by the member states of the EU, and reform of external aid management.<sup>5</sup> The latter is crucial if it is not to be faced with statistics showing a backlog in disbursements totalling US\$18 billion and delays in implementation of programmes of up to eight years.

As the principle of "respect for democracy, the rule of law and order and good governance", one of the linchpins of the new Agreement, lingered menacingly in the air at the beginning of negotiations, it finally had to be broached head-on in discussions, bringing with them no uncertain consternation from the ACP states. The EU accepted that it also had to put its own house in order and

DAVID WARD





promptly planned to draw up its own White Paper on Good Governance within the EU by 2001.

### Non-state actors

Good governance issues were linked to discussions on the participation of non-state actors within the ACP signatory countries. However, whilst NGOs have been encouraged by the inclusion of a chapter on the actors (including non-state actors) in the Agreement's texts, they are wary of the fact that this may stay rhetoric rather than be put into practice, despite the work already undertaken in the direction of civil society participation. Indeed, NGOs had a hard time obtaining any accreditation at all during the ACP-EU Ministerial negotiations, let alone having their views

**There is a need to put more emphasis on institutional and policy contexts in individual countries.**

heard on an effective post-signature NGO consultative mechanism. The ACP Civil Society Forum is a potential mechanism, as are the regional follow-up seminars being set up. In any case, the reform of the ACP-EU institutions and the drafting of the Compendium of Reference Texts,<sup>6</sup> should entail agreement on an effective NGO participatory mechanism and ensure that responsibility lies squarely with the ACP countries in the definition of their Country Support Strategies and National Indicative Programmes.

### More direct support

The budget of the first five years of the Agreement is set at 15.2 billion EURO. It is not clear how much of that will be available for NGOs to be involved in "the design, implementation, and evaluation of development strategies and programmes", at a time when the Commission has indicated that it would like to see Southern NGOs receiving more direct support,



and has challenged European NGOs to consider whether they are "developing local NGOs' capacity or retarding it". Increasingly, it will devolve power to its delegations and has stepped up its encouragement of decentralised co-operation among development stakeholders. The European Commission has warned European NGOs that they should prepare themselves as the EU reinforces its relations with Southern NGOs. It would find a useful exercise in studying the structure of international agencies which work on the principle of decentralised co-operation and partnership, indeed where there is no one headquarters.

Increasing demands are being placed on the Commission: co-ordination with other donors, achievement of coherence in the EU's policies, management of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the EU's enlargement, the list goes on. It must have the support of the EU's member states to respond to these. It will be under tremendous pressure to deliver on its rhetoric about Africa. We will certainly be watching that space. ■

1. Building on the European Economic Community, the European Union (EU) was established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. Development co-operation policy

competence is shared with the member states; the treaty gave competence to the European Community in development co-operation policy.

2. The new agreement replaces the Lome Conventions, successive agreements over 25 years, representing the largest trade, aid and political co-operation framework between North and South, and is based on five pillars—a comprehensive political dimension, participatory approaches, focus on poverty reduction, economic and trade co-operation, and financial co-operation.

3. Text of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement. Fifty-five ACP states are WTO members, 38 are LDCs.

4. Evaluation of European Union aid managed by the Commission to African, Caribbean, Pacific Countries, November 1998.

5. Communication to the Commission on the Reform of the Management of External Assistance, 16 May 2000.

6. The Compendium of Reference Texts will put flesh on strategies and policies providing mechanisms for programming of funding, operational guidelines and detailed objectives.

*Jane Backhurst is European Union liaison for World Vision.*



# Africa's children: Our future, our hope

Wilfred Mlay, with Jacqueline Brown

**NELSON MANDELA** wrote in his book, "Long Walk to Freedom", "The curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts you even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only a ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that song gives you hope..."

At the close of the century, a distant melody could be heard in Africa...some called it an African Renaissance. A new brand of leaders; promising economic growth rates; budding democracies and bold civil society movements. But that was years ago.

## Silenced by wars?

Have the melodious songs of hope in Africa become a cacophony of noise against the backdrop of rapacious massacres in Angola, DRC and Sierra Leone? Have they been silenced by egotistical wars in Eritrea and Ethiopia? Or the sceptre of massive famines in the Horn? Politically instigated violence in Zimbabwe over land distribution? And the ravaging effects of HIV/AIDS on the continent? What

is there to sing about as one looks to the future of Africa? Plenty!

The rest of the world may despair of this "Hopeless Continent". But Africans have not lost hope in themselves. World Vision's experience in working with the poor in the continent has been bolstered by the tenacity of the African spirit: An undying hope in tomorrow is the bedrock of life in every village community and shantytown across the continent. And the African child is the symbol of this hope.

**At the close of the century, a distant melody could be heard in Africa...some called it an African Renaissance.**

There are 500 million children under 18 years in Africa, about 60% of the continent's population. Against

great odds, parents are sacrificing to feed, clothe and educate their children, tomorrow's Africa. Today, literacy rates have risen threefold, compared with colonial times, a mere 50 years ago! Although children have borne the brunt of the continent's wars, disease



Wilfred Mlay visits a feeding center in rural Ethiopia.

and poverty, a new generation of tomorrow's leaders is emerging from among them. They are unshackled by the colonial past, better educated and more informed about the world around them. And as Calisto Madavo, the World Bank vice president for Africa, ascertains, "the African environment around the African child is being transformed."<sup>1</sup>

80% of Africans are fighting poverty rather than each other.

Private investments in Africa are picking up and regional institutions are growing stronger.

Communities are organising and pooling resources to create wealth with help from micro-enterprise programs run by non-governmental organisations like World Vision.

## Yardsticks

Good governance, transparency and accountability are no longer mere slogans but yardsticks against which the electorate measures its leaders.

World Vision projects throughout the continent can attest to the changing environment for the African child...our future, our hope.

On a recent visit to Rwanda, I was able to observe firsthand an urban vocational training project in Kigali,





where teenage heads of households are learning to make energy-efficient stoves. Their families will profit from the business, which will also help the environment by preserving trees. This project is making an obvious difference in the lives of these families; it helps the Rwandan environment and has a strong element of Christian witness. This sort of work gives us "a reason to sing". New hope is bursting forth in Africa.

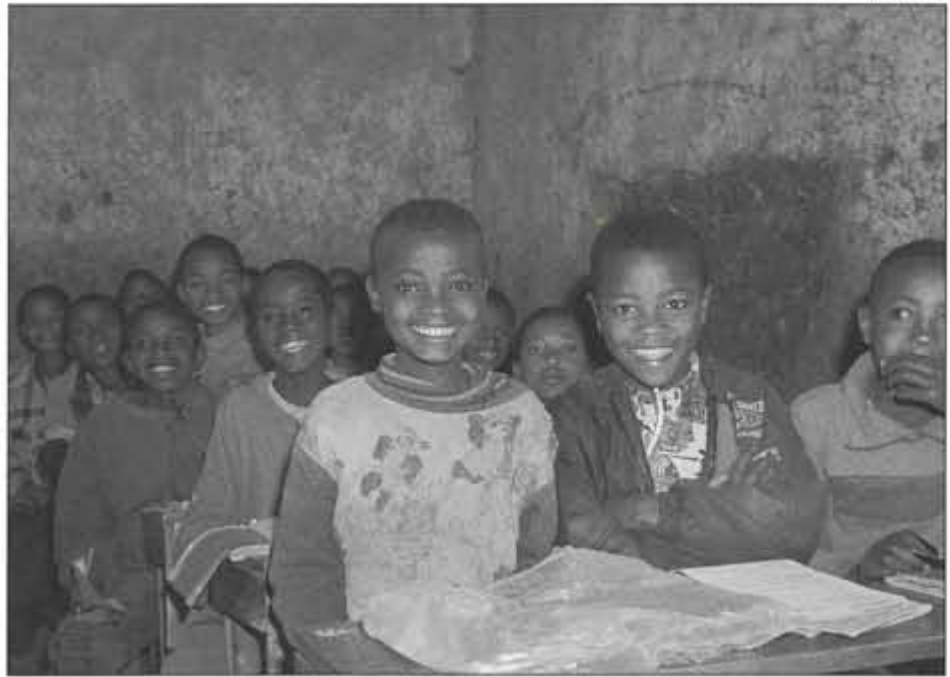
The devastating floods in Gaza Province in Mozambique left thousands of children without parents. I met one of these children, named Chitikamezo. She was obviously traumatised, looking around for some sign of familiarity, some sign of hope. While her parents cannot be found, there is a glimmer of hope that she will be nourished and cared for at the World Vision distribution centre outside the sub-district of Chibuto.

### **New classrooms**

Three primary schools in Migori District, Kenya, were presented with nine of 14 new classrooms in January of this year. In addition, the local communities have constructed additional classrooms on their own. A total of

### **A quality education for Africa's children has the power to transform societies in a single generation.**

500 pupils who have been learning in dilapidated buildings can now benefit from the improved, safe environment of new classrooms. UNICEF's publication, *The State of the World's Children 2000*, postulates, "...the fulfilment of a child's right to education offers protection from a multitude of hazards, such as a life consigned to poverty, bonded labour in agriculture or industry, domestic labour, commercial



sexual exploitation or recruitment into armed conflict." A quality education for Africa's children has the power to transform societies in a single generation.

In northern Uganda, the renewed rebel attacks earlier this year forced former child soldiers back to the Uganda Children of War Centre. As a result, an emergency relief fund has been established by World Vision Uganda which will enable them to provide psycho-social counselling to 1000 children. World Vision Uganda is one of only two agencies requested by the Ugandan government to assist in the counselling of children. In Rakai, Uganda, AIDS has left entire villages with no middle generation. Children have been left in the care of grandparents, and others are being cared for by older siblings. The World Vision program in Rakai District provides care for several thousand AIDS orphans, and provides foster families with vocational training, medical care, agricultural and housing support.

### **Challenges remain**

These stories and many more attest to new songs of hope, bursting forth in villages and homesteads throughout the Africa continent.

Nevertheless, to secure Africa's future, many challenges remain:

Gains in political participation need to be translated to cessation of conflicts where they now exist and to better governance in more and more countries in the region.

To build on the community and civil society organisations by investing in Africa's priority resource, its human capital and its institutions.

To find a niche for Africa in the global markets and attract the investments needed to jump-start and transform its economies.

These challenges can be overcome.

There is already a lot to sing about, and as Calisto Madavo observes: "In offices and factories and fields, a new generation is applying knowledge denied to their parents and opening new opportunities for their children."<sup>3</sup> ■

1. Stand Back And Take A More Positive Look At Africa, IHT, Paris, Tuesday, June 6, 2000.

2. *ibid.*

*Wilfred Mlay is World Vision's vice president for Africa. Jacqueline Brown is executive assistant to the vice president.*



# Africa and international policy: less fire-fighting, more action

Alan Whaites

**THE 20TH CENTURY** has been the bloodiest in African history, unparalleled in the ferocity with which civilians have paid the price of political and diplomatic failure. Conflict does not, however, occur in a vacuum. It is instead part of a political and economic environment produced by internal dynamics and international neglect. Recent studies have suggested that macro-economic policies are integral to the deteriorating political processes heading towards conflict.

The link between macro-economics and conflict is critically important in a continent in which 30 states are forced to spend more on debt repayments than on education. For much of the last two decades macro-economic policies have been determined within the framework of structural adjustment programmes, tightly constraining the ability of states to deal with underlying problems.

## Steady erosion

The conditionality of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have played a major part in the steady erosion of the capability of African states. Pressures towards fiscal balance have driven the best of the civil service into other occupations and closed those very government services that ensure positive contact between states and their people. Some political scientists have linked conditionality and adjustment to increased corruption. Jean Francois-Bayart has gone further and argued that the processes involved have contributed to a process of criminalisation for some African states.<sup>2</sup>

Macro-economic crisis robs the

state of the resources it needs for investment in human and social capital: the keys to an inclusive society. Yet debt alone is not to blame for the link between stagnant development and political instability. Equally important has been the failure of OECD states



Children's impressions of war, on a wall in Kapoeta, Sudan.

to invest in the development of Africa, through either Overseas Development Assistance or the foreign direct investment of major corporations. The provision of resources is integral to any chance for Africa of achieving the human development targets the OECD has itself adopted (the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa last year said that these targets were unrealistic due to lack of aid). It is also essential to the prospect for security in the region and the wider world. James Wolfensohn has stated that:

"Without equity, we will not have global stability. Without a better sense of social justice, our cities will not be safe, and our societies will not be stable. Without inclusion, too many of us will be condemned to live separate, armed, frightened lives. Whether you broach it from the social or the economic or the moral perspective, this is

a challenge that we cannot afford to ignore. There are not two worlds, there is one world. We share the same world, and we share the same challenge. The fight against poverty is the fight for peace, security, and growth for all of us."<sup>3</sup>

## Conflict prevention

From an NGO perspective, World Vision has shown at the micro-level how development assistance can work to prevent conflict. Indeed, experience in several states suggests that a commitment to the prevention of conflict can be built into development programmes. Research on building peace through Area Development Programmes (published by World Vision UK in 1999) and the use of Local Capacities for Peace in Sudan are examples of ways to play a constructive role in the midst of local tensions. But the failure of global investment to build peace is exacerbated by the fire-fighting approach adopted by the OECD towards African issues.

NGOs have largely been left to struggle with the consequences of the rich world's lack of long-term commitment to building peace and promoting development in Africa. As the consequences of this neglect evolves into further state erosion and growing conflict, we see international policy makers falling back on three standards responses to the post-Cold War. The choice of tool often depends more on location than on the scale of the human suffering involved (note the response to a European conflict such as Kosovo and the reaction to the appalling tragedy of Angola).

## Sticks, rather than carrots

The three tools, sticks rather than carrots, can be summarised as:

1. Sanctions—punitive economic action taken against rogue states have become a knee-jerk reaction for Western policy. They are a blunt



instrument, more effective against civilians than states. Sanctions have a poor record of achieving political objectives.<sup>5</sup>

2. **Arms-length Intervention**—Somalia continues to cast a long shadow over thinking on OECD country involvement in Second and Third World conflicts. The introduction of limited force can not guarantee rapid compliance, and yet gives the abusive state the freedom of the condemned—even a war criminal can decide that it is as good to be hung for a sheep as a lamb.

3. **Proxy Intervention**—The lack of willingness for rich country troops to be directly involved in interventions aimed at defending Third World civilian populations has led to an enthusiastic welcome for those third parties able to take their place. This can in some cases raise questions of its own. The success of military efforts to protect civilians and solve humanitarian crisis depend largely on the discipline, ethos and understanding of military law on the part of the soldiers involved.

### Long-term change

Each of these three tools has over recent years become a replacement for real policy by the UN Security Council and OECD states. A longer-term and more serious engagement with the problem of stalled development in Africa is needed. Long-term change and durable peace come through the creation of common bonds and mutual interests on the part of the people involved. This inevitably means development and the process of mutual change. Just as church leaders in Rwanda had to face their own guilt and prejudice before finding new paths to unity, so also many states must be helped to lay down old hostilities in order to overcome common enemies, including poverty itself.

Recently the World Bank and IMF

have frankly admitted in the background documents for PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) that real progress towards goals will not be made without increased aid and the liberalisation of northern markets. The World Bank's World Development Report for 2000 picks up on the results of the "Voices of the Poor Research" to highlight the ways in which poverty, insecurity and weak state structures feed off each other in keeping the poor vulnerable.

The failure of OECD states to



Former MPLA Angolan soldiers, victims of landmines.

respond to these dynamics is symptomatic of a failure of global values—a willing acceptance that gross inequality, wasted opportunity and conflict are simply the way things are. Non-governmental organisations share their part in this malaise. The failure to build a constituency for aid and development in the North has allowed governments the room to pursue a policy of neglect. If NGOs are willing to learn the lessons of the past, then taking up the challenge of distorted values should be a common theme for both faith-based and secular NGOs alike.

### Commitment to the poor

Building such a constituency will mean uniting with churches, unions, political parties and all those with a commitment to the poor in the North. It is an old truism, but an

important reality nevertheless, that a genuinely broad-based movement will be needed if rich countries are to abandon ultimately self-destructive economic policies. Public concern is the only means that could secure economic co-operation, the provision of resources for peace and the removing of poverty-creating burdens such as debt (a point that Jubilee 2000 has done much to underline). The cost of building peace will always be less than the enormous expense of war, yet tragically Overseas Developed Assistance figures suggest little commitment to the cheaper, better path and to the international humanitarian ideal. ■

1. "Poverty, Conflict and Development Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa", Pyt Douma (Netherlands Institute of International Relations), The Hague Netherlands published by The Global Development Network, World Bank 1999. See also "Poverty, Development and Conflict in South Asia", GH Peiris, Global Development Network, The World Bank 1999.

2. Jean Francois Bayart et al (1999) "The Criminalisation of the State in Africa", Indiana University Press.

3. See the OECD-DAC report: "Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation", Paris 1996 and also "Economic Report on Africa 1999: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction and Sustainability", UNECA, Addis Ababa 1999, chapters 1 & 2.

4. World Development Indicators, 1998 p. 9.

5. See "Still Stacking Up the Bodies: The Failure of Humanitarian Windows", Briefing by World Vision UK, 1998.

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# Africa's prospects in the new millennium

Samuel Ofori Onwona

**AFRICA HAS ENTERED** the 21st century with a heavy load. The renaissance of the 1990s was short-lived. Whatever gains made then are being threatened by rampant civil and ethnic strife in many countries. Political instability, coupled with the problems of high debt burden, low-income growth, weak, fragmented economies, major endemic diseases like AIDS and malaria, as well as weak democratic institutions and armed cross-border conflicts, have brought on renewed Afro-pessimism.

What are the underlying causes of Africa's woes? Why does Africa seem to have defied practically every solution proposed by development practitioners? Development strategies that seem to have worked in Asia and Latin America have failed woefully in Africa.

## Infant democracies

In trying to understand Africa today, it is useful to consider where it has come from. Africa's infant democracies are less than 50 years old. They inherited democratic structures devoid of the multi-ethnic socially and politically sustainable structures that existed for thousands of years before the onset of colonisation.

Soon after their political independence, the young African states set out for economic independence with massive public sector-driven programs, a good number of which became white elephants. A little more than a decade following independence, Africa's fragile and infant economies were rocked by the oil crises of the mid-1970s.

By the mid-1980s, the continent was undergoing massive structural reforms in an attempt to reverse the wrong market signals engendered by the deliberate pursuit of poor macro-economic policies. And so the era of

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) was born. Still, the issue of governance did not reach centre stage until the last decade of the past millennium. Even then, the emphasis seems to be economic governance as opposed to political governance. If economic governance is difficult, political governance is even more challenging and complex.

African leaders have probably heard enough from the development community at large about plausible solutions to the problem of economic governance, but very little on political governance. The two are highly inter-related and must be addressed concurrently.

a revolutionary change in the attitudes of its leadership. Good, servant leadership, backed by an effective democratic process, and a general environment that fosters the rule of law and respect for human rights, are the socio-political foundations upon which Africa's future prospects lie.

## Why does Africa seem to have defied nearly every solution proposed by development practitioners?

Poverty, which has become the focus of the international community, is only symptomatic of a more serious and deep-rooted problem.

Bad governance and general corruption are real cancers that can utterly destroy the continent if lasting solutions are not found soon. This



*Africa tops the world in "brain drain" from the continent, which, the author claims, could drive 30 percent of Africa's management staff to Northern countries if trends continue.*

Despite the heavy debt burden (Africa's external debt is estimated to have reached US\$336 billion in 1999), the growing incidence of poverty, and the danger that endemic diseases like AIDS and malaria pose for Africa's development effort, what Africa needs most today is not development aid and grants, per se—although they are important. Rather, what Africa needs is

cancer is gradually eroding Africa's most important resources, namely its human and financial capital-base. These represent the economic pillars upon which Africa's future development stand. Furthermore, it is estimated that close to 40 % of private African wealth is held abroad. If Africans themselves have little confi-



dence in investing in their own economies, how do African governments expect to convince external partners to invest in Africa?

Africa tops the rest of the world in "brain drain" from the continent. According to a recent study, Africa lost one-third of its management staff between 1960 and 1987, with an average of 23,000 academics and 50,000 other management staff leaving the continent every year. The study forecasts that the brain drain could drive 30 percent of Africa's management staff to Northern countries if current trends continue.

Then, there is also the voluminous displacement (both internal and external to the continent) of the active rural labour force of Africa, engendered by intermittent and recurring ethnic strife, as well as natural disasters like drought, earthquakes and floods. It is estimated that between 1960 and 1970 alone, about seven million lives were lost because of conflicts. Today, Africa accounts for roughly 30 percent of the world's refugees, and a whopping 60 percent of internally displaced persons worldwide.

### Two-pronged approach

The net effect is that Africa is the most deprived continent in terms of capital availability. Given the strong association between the level of development and the availability of human capital, the weak capital position of the continent would tend to explain why Africa remains in the low level of development.

A two-pronged approach is needed to adequately redress the dual problem of economic and political governance. As already pointed out, the two must be addressed concurrently in order to achieve lasting results.

#### A. Getting the economic fundamentals right

To ensure effective take-off of their economies, African countries need to commit themselves to creating a level playing field for domestic

and international economic activity that will attract potential investors into their economies. Fiscal and monetary discipline must form the basis of a sound macroeconomic foundation for African countries. Boosting investor confidence to attract foreign capital is essential, but even more important is the need to adopt policies that discourage domestic capital flight.

Given that the structure of growth is key to poverty reduction, African countries need to focus more attention on the determinants of growth that have direct bearing on the poor. Empirical evidence indicates that rural and agricultural growth is more effective in reducing rural poverty than urban growth's effect on reducing rural poverty. In this regard, agriculture is far more important in reducing poverty than manufacturing growth.

Apart from agriculture, targeted programs must also include investments in key social sectors, such as primary health care, primary education (especially for girls) and civic education for the general public. Raising incomes of the poor requires public action. Hence, African nations need to pay particular attention to the composition of public expenditures. The decline in foreign aid (due to aid fatigue) has adversely affected resource allocations to the agriculture sector, against a backdrop of a marked urban bias in the development plans of most African countries. Consequently, substantial public expenditure on



*Rural and agricultural growth is more effective in reducing rural poverty than urban growth's effect on reducing rural poverty, claims author Onwona.*

rural infrastructure and technology generation and dissemination, as well as attention to institutional development, are necessary prerequisites for rapid agricultural growth and effective reduction of poverty. Over-taxation of agriculture is probably the most dominant constraint to achieving quantum jumps in supply response, and hence, sustained growth. Thus, as a matter of necessity, African countries need to eliminate such policies that still discriminate against the source of sustenance of the poor, if lasting results are to be achieved.

#### B. Concrete actions to redress bad political governance

As has been already pointed out, getting the economic fundamentals





*"An advocacy group for Africans should be fully independent and include civil society representatives like Archbishop Desmond Tutu," shown in this photo with Nelson Mandela.*

right is only one side of the coin. To effectively address Africa's development challenge, this must be backed by socially legitimate political structures that engender sustainable democratic processes. In order to ensure this, the following concrete actions are necessary:

#### *1) Redress political instability*

First, the underlying cause of Africa's political instability needs to be identified and redressed. Webster's dictionary defines democracy as "a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held elections." The central theme here is effective representation of the masses in the exercise of the power vested in them. Herein lies the root cause of Africa's political instability—how to ensure effective representation in multi-ethnic societies.

In a relatively homogenous society, majority voting rule necessarily entails and assures effective representation of the masses. However, in the multi-ethnic societies of Africa, effective representation cannot necessarily be

derived through majority voting rule. In such situations, either majority or minority rulership is dangerous and unacceptable. Today, many Africans seem to discount ethnicity as a major cause of Africa's woes. However, African history, backed by empirical evidence, has demonstrated over and over again that failure on the part of African governments to explicitly recognise and factor ethnicity into the democratic process has been the underlying cause for the recurrent political unrest in the continent.

#### **Multi-ethnic societies**

Africans should not feel shy to admit that they are a multi-ethnic group of societies, and as such, multi-ethnic representation should form the basis of a true and lasting democratic structure. Majority voting rule should be modified to recognise the ethnic groups that make up African societies. Two feasible options can be considered, namely, proportional representation or ethnic inclusiveness.

Some would argue that proportional representation and coalition governments are less stable than majoritarian governments. However,

in the context of Africa, majoritarian governments, no matter how stable they may seem for the moment, will eventually be challenged by minority pressure groups that feel dominated by the majority. Implementation of proportional representation can be very difficult when there is multiplicity of ethnic groups, as is common in many African countries.

Another feasible alternative is the principle of ethnic inclusiveness. Unlike proportional representation, ethnic inclusiveness can be limited to the main ethnic groups in order to engender representation by aggregation of smaller ethnic groups under the umbrella of relatively larger ethnic blocks. This can be achieved through broad-based consultative and participatory negotiations among the dominant tribal groups.

#### *2) Keep the right pace in the development effort*

Secondly, the international community needs to be patient with African governments. To make real progress, development practitioners and all stakeholders must take time to work with African countries to lay

***Africa stands at the cross-roads of its destiny at the dawn of the 21st century, but still trailing the rest of the world.***

solid foundations that derive their strength from client-driven, home-grown, sustainable development process. Thus, African governments must be allowed to move at their own pace and even make some mistakes in their attempts to develop home-grown solutions to development problems.

#### *3) An advocacy group for Africans*

Thirdly, there is a need for collective action from both the general African public and the international community in the creation of a strong advocacy group. African masses need a group to spearhead the kind of action



that is necessary to keep African leaders on their toes. The OAU, no matter how well meaning it may have been in the past, has failed to play this role effectively. The advocacy group can serve as the lead voice in negotiating peace agreements among member states of the OAU and in mediating in ethnic situations across the continent. The group is not meant to interfere in the national politics of African nations, but rather would help bridge the missing link between democracy and poverty reduction by speaking openly and objectively to development issues on behalf of the poor masses and vulnerable groups of society. It should consist of eminent, well-respected, non-controversial, elderly state persons of integrity.

### Greater accountability

To be effective, it should be fully independent and should enjoy strong financial and moral support from African masses as well as the international community. It should also receive official recognition at the United Nations as well as the OAU. To enjoy the credibility that such a group would need, membership should cut across all the regional blocks of the continent, and include civil society representatives like Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

#### 4) Ensure responsibility and greater accountability

Fourth, the primary responsibility for redressing Africa's development problems must lie squarely with Africans themselves, not the external development community, although they also have a crucial role to play. African governments must take full responsibility for the destinies of their nations, and Africa's leaders must be held responsible for every action they take.

In order to achieve lasting results on all of the above, the international community has two important roles to play, namely:

\* Pressuring international banks that store the stolen wealth of Africans to release such funds. Surely, debt reduc-

tion and debt forgiveness are needed and must be supported. But this article contends that repatriation of Africa's stolen wealth is probably the most sustainable solution to Africa's mounting debt crisis. To be effective, the international community must have, and also exercise, the will to support such an action (It has been done before for the Philippines, and it can be done for African countries as well.); and

\* Restricting their assistance to only those African countries that are practising good economic, political and administrative governance in an environment where there is rule of law and respect for human rights. In this regard, conflicting signals from the international community to Africa's leadership as to what is acceptable or unacceptable is not helping matters at all, but only exacerbating the problem of bad governance in Africa.

#### 5) Africa must unite

In his famous declaration on Ghana's Independence Day (March 6, 1957), the late President Kwame Nkrumah clearly foresaw the necessity for Africa's unity in a globalised world economy. He said, "The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent."

### At the cross-roads

Almost half a century later, Africa is still fragmented into several nations with relatively weak economies, the bulk of which that cannot singularly compete effectively in an increasingly globalised world market. The world system is getting more organised into relatively viable economic groupings and trading blocks such as the European Union, NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement) and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations). Africa cannot afford to do otherwise. To this end, the regional economic communities need to be strengthened to facilitate intra-regional as well as inter-regional trade.

Africa stands at the cross-roads of its destiny at the dawn of the 21st

century, trailing the rest of the world in practically every area of human endeavour. Despite the seemingly dismal picture, there is hope because the continent is fairly well endowed with skilled manpower (internally and abroad), and with natural resources that can be harnessed to ensure real development progress in the years ahead. But this cannot be achieved



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without identifying home-grown solutions that recognise the dual problem of bad economic and political governance. Enough ideas and suggestions have been proposed and tried on the economic front over the past 40 years with unsustainable progress. What is needed now is action on the political front, which everyone seems to be shying away from. ■

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# Unchaining Africa

Bill Walker

**EIGHTY PERCENT** of all poor countries with "unsustainable levels of debt, referred to as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)," are in Africa. African HIPCs owe US\$230 billion to their creditors (cf). In 29 African countries, repayment of loans far exceed annual health spending.

The reasons for these levels of debt are complex and interlinked. Understanding them requires historical analysis. High levels of absolute poverty are both a cause of and a reason for unsustainable debt, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. High levels of indebtedness in many African countries in relation to exports, GDP and basic social spending have built up, particularly over the last decade because of both poor lending and poor borrowing practices. Loaned funds were too often misused on arms and inappropriate projects. HIPCs were not able to generate sustainable sources and levels of revenue for repayment, so the debts ballooned. The poorest people, although not responsible for these problems, are the losers. They pay the highest price—with their health, their jobs and their lives, and those of their children.<sup>2</sup>

## Bound to feudal lords

As Sir Sridath Ramphal, former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, has written:

"The debt bondage that ensnares hundreds of millions of the world's poorest people, particularly in Africa, provides clear evidence [of feudalism between states]. As though bound to feudal lords, their lives and labour have been mortgaged to rich country banks and governments, often by leaders they did not choose, to finance projects that did not benefit them. Debt, like an oppressive political sys-

tem, strips them of their rights. And its tyranny is particularly painful now, with sub-Saharan Africa in the grip of an unprecedented calamity as AIDS spreads remorselessly."

**"Debt is tearing down schools, clinics and hospitals and the effects are no less devastating than war."**

—Former UN Under Secretary-General Adebayo Adedji

The impact of repayments being made on high levels of national debt in African countries is devastating. At a time when countless Africans live on less than a dollar a day, and the ravages of HIV/AIDS threatens even further the very fabric of many local communities, societies and economies, HIPCs continue to have desperately needed resources drained from them to repay creditor countries and institutions which by comparison are fabulously wealthy. Over a decade of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in Africa have failed to bring about anywhere near the level of economic improvements expected or needed.<sup>4</sup>

Peter Henriot<sup>5</sup> has argued that Africa has undergone four successive and overlapping "waves" of impact from the West: slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation. Though mixed in their impact, all have contributed to and continue in varying ways to add to Africa's impoverishment and indebtedness.

Responses to Africa's debt crisis have included rescheduling and the provision of new loans. However, these have not been effective in reducing Africa's debt burden. In 1996, the World Bank, on behalf of official

creditors, launched an agreement called the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative, "designed to help the poorest, most heavily indebted countries escape from unsustainable debt". It failed dismally in achieving this objective.

## Increased debt relief

At the G7 Summit at Cologne in June 1999, it was replaced by the enhanced HIPC Initiative (HIPC2). Here, major creditors pledged a large increase in the levels of debt relief to HIPCs: to over US\$100 billion,<sup>6</sup> and faster, deeper debt relief for more countries. By July 2000, seven African countries had begun to receive mostly modest levels of initial debt relief under HIPC2. The World Bank expects that about 20 mostly African countries will benefit from debt relief under HIPC2 by the end of 2000.

At Cologne, debt relief was firmly linked to poverty reduction in an attempt to ensure the proceeds were well-used. The mechanism for this is Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs),<sup>7</sup> which are now the condition both for HIPCs to receive debt relief under HIPC2 and also for new concessional lending. Each HIPC has to prepare an interim PRSP as the basis for initial debt relief and, in consultation with civil society, a complete PRSP in order to achieve its full package of debt relief. Unlike structural adjustment programs, PRSPs are intended to be country-owned and driven, widely participative, and to make poverty reduction central not only to debt relief but also as a country priority. While PRSPs provide an opportunity for impoverished countries to tackle poverty, it remains to be seen whether they will achieve this.

There are, however, still fundamental flaws in the assumptions underlying HIPC2.

## Utterly phoney

As Jeffrey Sachs has written, "The current targets of debt reduction are based on an utterly phoney 'Debt Sustainability Analysis' that couldn't



pass muster in a first-year economics class."

Sustainable debt-to-export levels are set arbitrarily at 150%.<sup>8</sup> Estimates of future export levels appear to be overly optimistic assumptions. No allowance has apparently been made for the devastating social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS in many African HIPC's and other African countries within the next 10 years. Funding levels for the debt relief pledged to date remains inadequate. Too many of the root causes of high debt levels in Africa are yet to be addressed. All in all, it is very doubtful that HIPC2 will deliver, as it promises, an exit from unsustainable debt levels for most African HIPC's.

As well as much deeper and faster debt relief, ways need to be found to avoid future debt traps.<sup>9</sup>

Much more needs to be done to address the high levels of poverty in Africa. Deeper, faster and wider debt relief for Africa is an essential step towards unchaining Africa.

### Why the hesitation?

Almost a year ago, Pope John Paul II stressed the urgency of prompt and decisive action on debt relief for the poor:

"We have to ask, however, why progress in resolving the debt problem is still so slow. Why so many hesitations? Why the difficulty in providing the funds needed even for the already agreed initiatives? It is the poor who pay the cost of indecision and delay.

"I appeal to all those involved, especially the most powerful nations, not to let this opportunity of the Jubilee Year pass, without taking a decisive step towards definitively resolving the debt crisis. It is widely recognised that this can be done."

As the poor of Africa's most impoverished countries wait on us to do what we can to relieve their hunger, their homelessness, their destitution, their powerlessness and vul-

nerability, justice demands that we act, and act now. ■

1. HIPC's are the poorest countries which 1) are only eligible for highly concessional assistance such as from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (formerly called Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility), and 2) face "unsustainable" levels of debt even after the full appli-



cation of traditional debt relief mechanisms.

2. For stories on the human face of debt, see <http://www.jubilee2000uk.org/features/humanface.html>.

3. S. Ramphal, "Debt has a child's face", in *The Progress of Nations*, UNICEF, 1999, <http://www.unicef.org/pon99/debtcom1.htm>.

4. For an analysis by African economists of why SAPs have not achieved sustainable development and poverty reduction, see Mkandawire, Thandika and Soludo, Charles C. (eds.) "Our continent, our future: African perspec-

tives on structural adjustment", CODESRIA/AWP, 1999.

5. Henriot, P. "Framework of globalisation: situating the challenges for the new millennium, with Africa as a focus", <http://www.jctr.org.zm/globalisation.html>.

6. Because much of this debt is not being serviced and is for pragmatic and moral reasons unpayable, the cost of debt relief is estimated to be only a fraction of this amount.

7. Examples of some, mainly African, PRSPs can be found on the HIPC website at <http://www.worldbank.org>.

8. Except for "very open economies" which have additional conditions set.

9. As World Vision has argued in a submission to the World Bank and IMF, this could be done by:

a. Helping each HIPC to develop a sustainable diversified export sector so future loans can be repaid.

b. Greater transparency and accountability in loan-making by creditors.

c. Transparency and accountability in borrowing, as well as in governance more generally.

d. Countering corruption, and strengthening governance and civil society to reduce loan losses due to grand theft, misappropriation or waste.

e. Creating processes for international insolvency or bankruptcy for countries in severe financial trouble.

f. Avoiding problems associated with unplanned exchange rate shifts or declining terms of trade by appropriate debt management provisions.

g. Debt rescheduling that returns the burden of repayment from the public purse to the private sector stakeholders (borrowers and lenders) who were responsible for incurring the debt obligations.

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# Conflict diamonds: an incentive for war, solutions

Rory Anderson

**THERE ARE** various nuanced definitions of the term "conflict diamonds". This article seeks to encapsulate potential as well as current situations where the sale of diamonds are used to sustain violent conflict.

As defined here, conflict diamonds are those which originate from areas under the control of forces that are in opposition to democratically elected and internationally recognised governments,<sup>1</sup> or diamonds used by state institutions or non-state forces to

easily smuggled. To the untrained eye, rough diamonds look like mere pebbles, which can innocuously be wedged in a shoe, sock, or any kind of body orifice, and can go undetected through most metal detectors or x-ray machines.

## Perpetuation of violence

Sierra Leone and Angola are two countries where it is recognised that conflict diamonds have been critical to the perpetuation of violence and instability. Within the current deliberations on conflict diamonds there have been fewer references to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), yet diamonds from this area are equally problematic. Several warring factions, including the rebel government and multiple international armed forces who all desire access to the DRC's mineral resources, have brought about a humanitarian crisis that is quickly outpacing the

enormity of the Sudan. This factor, coupled with gross human rights abuses committed among all factions, warrants the label of conflict diamond for any stone originating from the DRC. In Sierra Leone, two inseparable factors have enabled the violence to perpetuate. A legacy of decades of official corruption—much of which was rooted in the diamond trade—has left remnants of a weakened state, unable to defend its territory from internal and external threats, and has resulted in the breakdown of law and order. This absence of national security has expanded the economic opportunity

of conflict diamonds. In Angola, political power implies a license for kleptocracy over the country's resources. Rather than accept the 1992 elections which foreign observers judged free and fair, UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) rebel leader Jonas Savimbi simply resumed his war by seizing control of the Cuango River

**Many critics of the term conflict diamonds argue that diamonds don't kill people, rather, people and guns kill people.**

Valley, Angola's richest diamond territory. UNITA began a major mining operation that made them the richest rebels in Africa. Diamond money paid for UNITA offensives that in the 1990s elevated Angola's civil war to a new plateau of savagery, killing more than half a million, displacing 4 million, and maiming 90,000 as a result of land mines.<sup>3</sup>

## Dominant incentive to war

In all three of these cases, guaranteed access to the diamond mines has been a dominant incentive for war, and, ironically, war has enabled the diamond industry to prosper. Because conflict diamonds can move so easily and quickly, a dealer can buy low, sell high and reap windfall profits, particularly during the height of a war. For the seemingly intractable wars of Sierra Leone, Angola and the DRC, the point of each of these wars may not be to actually win them, but to engage in profitable crime under the cover of warfare. Over the years, the informal diamond mining sector, long dominated by what might be called "disorganised crime", has now become increasingly influenced by organised crime and by the transcontinental smuggling of diamonds, guns, drugs, and vast sums of money in search of a laundry. Each of these smuggled items has become critical components to warfare, and thus, vio-



Human skulls on display at Rwanda's Genocide Memorial

fund campaigns of human rights abuses against civilians. Many critics of the term "conflict diamonds" argue that diamonds don't kill people, rather, people and guns kill people. But diamonds are lucrative stones. In 1998 the diamond industry produced an estimated 115 million carats of rough diamonds with a market value of US\$6.7 billion. At the end of the diamond pipeline, this was converted into 67.1 million pieces of jewellery worth close to US\$50 billion.<sup>2</sup> At both ends of the diamond pipeline—from mine to finger—there are huge financial incentives. Further, diamonds are



lence becomes central to the advancement of those with vested interests.<sup>4</sup>

But the very term "conflict diamond" is contrary to the industry's marketing of diamonds as the unique symbol of love and commitment. Growing scrutiny by NGOs, the media, and international institutions are now making conflict diamonds a real threat to business. One senior DeBeers executive explained that diamonds are a luxury item, which people buy out of choice, not necessity. There are real industry fears that conflict diamonds will scare consumers from buying diamonds altogether, instead, choosing imitation diamonds or other gems. This possibility is also a threat to legitimate diamond producing countries like South Africa and Botswana, who not only monitor their industry, but depend upon their "prosperity diamonds" for economic development.

Combined public pressure coupled with industry fears became incentives for solutions. On July 19, 2000, the industry laid out a proposal for oversight, accountability and specific actions to track the flow of rough

**The very term "conflict diamond" is contrary to the industry's marketing of diamonds as the unique symbol of love.**

diamonds imported into cutting centres. The proposal requires each accredited rough diamond-importing country to enact "redline" legislation prohibiting the importation of any parcel of rough diamonds unless such a parcel has been sealed and registered in a universally standardised manner by an accredited export authority from the exporting country. Further, any dealer caught trading in



*Domingos dos Santos Luis, 9, saw his brother, sister and her baby slaughtered by a UNITA patrol when they were fleeing through the bush to government-held territory.*

conflict diamonds will be expelled from the industry. In addition, the proposal calls for the following: 1) that rough diamond exporting countries implement an accredited export system; 2) polished diamond consuming countries should enact supporting legislation forbidding the importation of polished diamonds from any cutting centre that does not have these rough controls; 3) compliance to the rough control system be monitored and audited by an International Diamond Council comprised of industry, governments, and key civil society stakeholders.

#### **Made in good faith**

I was part of the NGO delegation at the World Diamond Congress in Antwerp, Belgium, in July when this proposal was made. It was a proposal made in good faith, but it is a proposal still. The diamond industry has an incentive to eliminate conflict diamonds by better monitoring the flow of rough stones. However, much of the success of these initiatives will have to come from importing and exporting governments and international trade regimes. Given the present attention, there has been a lot of

movement at government levels to address the issue of conflict diamonds. It is essential that civil society in diamond importing and exporting countries watch the industry and their governments and hold them accountable on this issue. No system is perfect, but no system means war. As long as greed exists, conflict diamonds won't entirely go away, but co-operative and consistent action can help to minimise the economic incentives for war. ■

1. "Conflict Diamonds: Possibilities for the Identification, Certification and Control of Diamonds", Briefing document by Global Witness, June 2000, p. 1.

2. Smillie, I., Gberie, L., Hazelton, R. *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone Diamonds and Human Security*, Partnership Africa Canada, Ottawa, Canada: January 2000, p. 1.

3. "Africa's Diamond Wars", Harden, B. *The New York Times* on the Web, [www.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/040600africa-diamonds.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/040600africa-diamonds.html).

4. Smillie et al, p. 1.

*Rory Anderson is government relations manager for World Vision United States.*



# The future of the church in Africa

Zac Niringiye

**IT IS COMMON** practice among some internal and external observers of the happenings on the continent of Africa to speak and write about them as though Africa was a homogeneous unit. Without denying that there are things that may be referred to as "African", it is much more complex than is often portrayed. The same is true about the church in Africa. Its variegated character makes it difficult to speak of the future of the church in Africa as though there were one future. One would rather speak of many futures of the different streams of the church; for they are different theologically, historically, geographically and culturally. Perhaps the more comprehensive way to categorise the churches in Africa would be historical, since each history is a composite story of theological, ecclesiastical, cultural and geo-political roots and shoots.

Historically, the church in Africa may be divided into at least five

streams. The first are the Coptic churches in North Africa and the Horn, whose historical links go back to the early church fathers in the third and fourth centuries. The second are the Roman Catholic churches that

***The churches have given us people of integrity who have devoted their lives to the transformation of African society.***

sprang up on the west and east coasts as a result of the work of the early European explorers in the 15th century. Literature on these two strands is scanty, therefore little is known about them.

## **Missionary movement**

The third stream—the Protestant and Catholic churches across all of Sub-Sahara Africa and South Africa,

which were born out of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th century missionary movement from Europe and North America—has attracted a good deal of attention. These are associated with the colonial era, and initiated by missions linked with the established denominations in Europe and North America, such as the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches.

The fourth stream consists of the African Independent churches emerging out of the period of turmoil against foreign domination in the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, such as Dini ya Roho, or Church of the Holy Spirit, in Kenya; the Musama Disco Christo Church, in Ghana; and the Church of Aladura, in West Africa.

Fifthly, are the Pentecostal-charismatic churches, most of which were born in the second half of the 20th century, rooted in both African and Euro-American Pentecostal and evangelical revival missions, and televangelist ministries, such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Deliverance Churches in East Africa, and charismatic churches across Africa. Both the fourth and fifth streams have forms and leadership that are more indigeneous than those of the first three.

Each of these strands presents a complex story of decline and growth, with unique contextual challenges and opportunities. By decline and growth we refer not only to numerical strength, but to a more complex picture that takes into account other dimensions, such as worship forms and their impact on African societies.

## **Four characteristics**

There appear, however, to be four common characteristics among churches that are growing: 1) commitment to the Bible: translating, preaching and teaching; 2) dependence on the Holy Spirit, reflected in various forms of



DAVID WARD



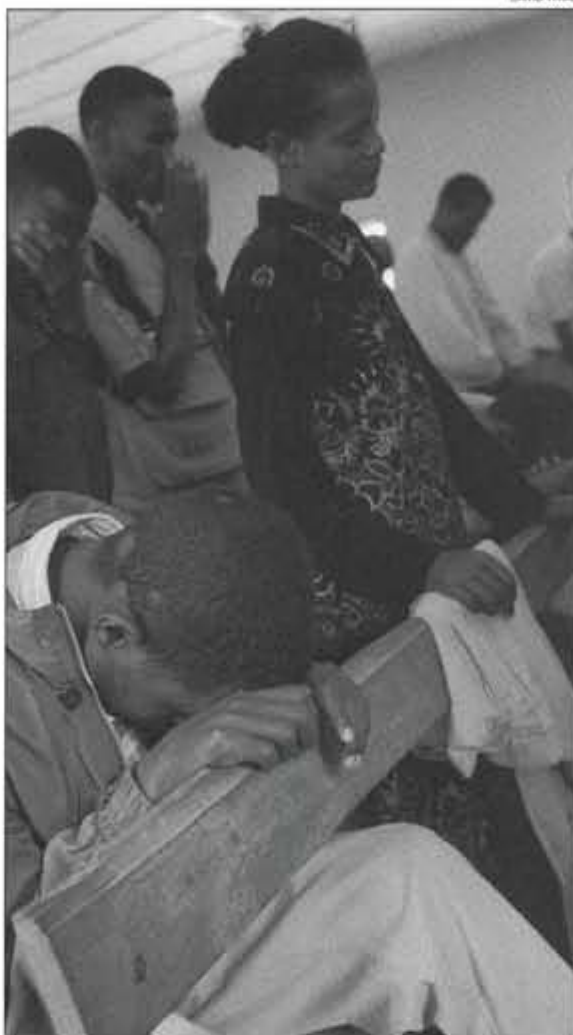
prayer; 3) contextual mission, reflected in creative programmes of holistic evangelism and missions; and 4) indigenous leadership at all levels of mission praxis.

### **Essence of a church**

The essence of a church lies in its worship and mission. Dr. John Stott has rightly described the church as the "only co-operative society that exists for its non-members". Rather than attempting a discourse on the future of the churches in Africa, we need first to reflect on Africa—the context for which the churches exist, and which gives form to the church's worship and mission—and then draw a portrait of a church that will be truly the church of Christ (not the denomination) in that context.

Prognosis of the future of Africa is dominated by what has come to be known as "Afro-pessimism"—the view that Africa is disaster-prone and presents a hopeless case scenario from all dimensions: socio-economic, cultural and political. This is the view captured in the title of the cover story of *The Economist* magazine of May 13-19, 2000: "The Hopeless Continent", in which, after the author surveyed the plagues of the continent—floods, famine, poverty, HIV/AIDS and other epidemics, state-sponsored thuggery, and endemic civil strife—he concluded, "More than anything, Africa's people need to regain their self-confidence. Only then can Africa engage as an equal with the rest of the world, devising its own economic programmes and development policies."

Notwithstanding the fact that Africa has immense problems, as do other continents, there are many signs of hope within Africa. The one critical dimension that is missing in the *Economist* story, as in several other



analyses of the so-called African crisis, is the place and role of the churches. And yet the churches in Africa offer hope for a brighter Africa because one of the places to find Africans who have regained their confidence is the church.

### **Part of the crisis**

Lest I am misunderstood, I need to clarify that I am not positing the churches as the answer to the so-called African crisis. In fact, as internal players, they are part of the crisis and have contributed in no small measure to it. However, reflecting on their short history and mission praxis, they give us hope. The churches have given to Africa men and women of integrity, people who, inspired by their vision of the kingdom of God, have given their lives to the transformation of African

society. These would include Aggrey of Achimota in Ghana, Ajayi Crowther of Niger Delta in Nigeria, Janani Luwum of Uganda and Desmond Tutu of South Africa. Churches and church-related agencies have been major players in relief and development, health, formal and civic education, advocacy and other strategic initiatives. We therefore must reject Afro-pessimism—as well as the opposite scenario of naive optimism—and argue for hope and realism.

However, for the churches to be to Africa what they should be, they must provide leadership beyond the church. Needed are more confident men and women with vision and commitment who will defy the tide of negative forces that bedevil the continent. I am not arguing for more activists, but rather more leaders: people who will reflect and provide new paradigms, born in the African experience of Christ, from an African hermeneutic of the Bible. As it was so it shall be, that the church of the future must be biblical in its

worship, preaching and teaching; contextual in its mission: serving the poor (rural and urban), advocating for justice (political and social-economic) and practising love (breaking ethno-political barriers) and building bridges. But, in addition to this, the church of the future must think beyond Africa, and develop strategies to "go out to the nations"—Europe, Asia, the Americas and Oceania. ■

*Zac Niringiye is secretary general of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, English and Portuguese-speaking Africa.*



# Untapped strength in Africa's Horn

Mulugeta Abebe, with Nigel Marsh

**THE HORN** of Africa is synonymous with poverty, deprivation and political instability. But for those who know and love the region, this picture is superficial and, to a great degree, man-made.

For the Horn carries within itself the seeds of a brighter, positive future, if only they could be planted in fertile soil.

Much of the water that flows into the Nile River originates in Ethiopia, a nation whose people are currently suffering from drought. Let this stand as a picture for us of a region that in development terms seems barren and exhausted, but which in reality has the capacity to rejuvenate itself, if we only knew where to carry our buckets.

## Stories of hope

Stories of hope are easy to find, for those who have the ears to hear.

Ethiopia, the nation that for two decades has defined drought and hunger, is also home to some impressive examples of irrigation and climate-sensitive cultivation. What is not widely recognised around the world is that much of the relief food currently sustaining the drought-stricken population in the country was grown in other parts of Ethiopia. And some of the places that were most devastated in the drought of the mid-1980s now look like oases, largely thanks to a decade of careful development.

Likewise Somalia, globally known as an anarchic and chaotic land without government, is also home to some of Africa's most dynamic and hard-working entrepreneurs. Mobile phone companies and internet service providers operate not only in

Mogadishu, the capital, but in other up-country towns, too. These are a people who have grown used to adversity and hardship, and won't necessarily wait for the rest of the world to help them catch up.

The great untapped strength of the Horn of Africa lies in the intelligence and skill of its people. These are populations with cultures and histories that stretch back unbroken for three millennia, tribes who have grown accustomed to co-existence with one



*The greatest natural threat facing the Horn is drought, as evidenced here in this empty water catchment in Somalia.*

of the hardest environments in the world.

The greatest natural threat facing the Horn is drought. People have grown used to a periodic cycle of dry years and failed crops, and they have traditional lifestyles that adapt to cope. In recent years, however, the pattern of drought has changed, with serious dry spells becoming more regular and more severe. We may blame that in part on the local phenomena of deforestation, over-population and unsustainable land use; but increasingly there is evidence that the effect is linked to the world-wide problems associated with the warming of the atmosphere as a by-product of richer

civilisations doing their thing.

With vigorous and good governance, the problems of the past could be mitigated and the effects of lack of water and food reduced. But the great weakness of the Horn of Africa lies in the nature of its leadership over the last generation. Power-hungry people of limited world-view have ruled for narrow selfish or ideological gain, bringing already fragile societies to the edge of disaster. The violence that is associated with the politics of the Horn is one glaring symptom of this opportunistic rulership.

## Overcoming threats

If the Horn is to take the strong place in the modern family of global powers to which it is entitled, its marvelous people will have to work together to overcome the threats of drought and violence.

To do that, we need a new breed of leaders who can take a broader view of the needs and opportunities in the Horn. We need men and women who are able to work for the good of their people, while recognising that what is good for the wider region is also going to benefit the constituency at home.

It might seem over-enthusiastic to suggest that a region that includes a country like Somalia, which cannot even form a national government, should be considering alliances to give itself a regional level of authority.

But if the rich nations of Europe cannot face the future without forming an international collective, there is no reason to suppose that Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti—some of the poorest nations in the world—can survive without doing so too. ■

*Mulugeta Abebe is regional director of World Vision's East Africa Sub-Regional Office.*

*Nigel Marsh is a World Vision journalist based in Sudan.*



# Women entrepreneurs take charge in West Africa

Kate Scannell

**IN WEST AFRICAN** society, women are well known for their skills as entrepreneurs, mostly as traders and merchants in the informal sector. But with roles traditionally assigning women the sole responsibility of feeding the family and managing the home, how has this talent for business developed?

A young woman typically marries at 15, begins having children within the first few years. By the end of her childbearing days, she may have four or five children still living.

Most women get involved in small business activities for one simple reason: they cannot survive on their husbands' income alone. Yet with a day's worth of household tasks to take care of, paid work, demanding long hours away from home, is not an option.

## Braiding hair

So women across West Africa use their resourcefulness and initiative to provide for their families, starting small business activities using what they have at their disposal. For some,

**Most women get involved in small businesses because they cannot survive on their husbands' income alone.**

this means offering a service to others in their village, such as traditionally braiding hair, preparing food for travellers, or drying tomatoes to sell at the local weekly market.

The African proverb "We are, therefore I am", reflects strong traditions of community, so it's not surpris-

ing that women choose to work together with their neighbours in business ventures. Fatoumata Harouna, a 35-year-old mother of five from Tacherene, on the edge of the Sahara in northern Mali, is part of the 50-strong village women's association. Her husband grows rice and sorghum, but bad rains in the last few years have meant insufficient harvests. She says, "We have just about enough to feed our family, but it doesn't last for the whole year. What my

husband grows doesn't meet all our needs."

The association's latest venture is growing henna, with plants provided by World Vision, used for adornment on hands, feet and face, particularly for the Muslim Ramadan celebrations. With medicinal properties, it's also used to protect the skin from infections, and from the harsh desert winds. Henna bushes are very productive, continuing to produce leaves after being cut. They produce their first harvest after six months, then every six months after the first. The women's group decided that instead of buying henna elsewhere, they would grow their own, and sell it, as dried leaves or ground into a paste, to make a profit.

This project follows a long line of initiatives

that the Tacherene women's group has undertaken to ensure that they have what they need to take care of their families.

## Market hub

Home to 7,000 people, Tacherene is the hub to which surrounding villagers come to market, therefore providing enough local demand for such products. The regional market in Gao, the nearest town several kilometres across the bush, provides further sales opportunities.

Women in West Africa don't lack business sense. What they do lack is access to education and to credit. Across the sub-region, NGOs are now partnering with women's groups to support their entrepreneurial skills, offering literacy and numeracy classes, and access to credit through revolving loan schemes. ■

Kate Scannell is West Africa regional communications manager for World Vision.



A full-grown henna bush



Four-year-old Mohammed watches as his mother, Fatoumata Harouna, plants henna seedlings in Mali.



# Country profile: Ethiopia

Compiled by Alison Preston

**THE CRUSHING ROLE** of dependence once again faces the proud, self-reliant people of Ethiopia. Few countries are so closely associated with food deficit. Early warning systems indicate that sparse rains, insufficient water and animal fodder, and poor harvests in many parts of the country, will leave up to 12 million people at risk of starvation this year.

Even in the best of times, Ethiopia struggles against poverty, preventable diseases, and child mortality. With a population of 60 million and a per capita income of about US\$110, it is one of the five poorest countries in the world. Some 1,300 children under 5 die every day, the average life expectancy is 43 years, and stunting among children due to poor nutrition, at 66%, is the highest in the world, according to UNICEF. The AIDS epidemic is spreading swiftly.

Ethiopia is culturally and ethnically diverse, evident in the nation's close to 100 languages. About half of the population are Orthodox Christians, but many in the south are Muslims. Others are animist, Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Ethiopian Jews.

Only about 20% of Ethiopia's population has access to safe drinking water in normal circumstances, while

80% of disease in developing countries can be attributed to inadequate or contaminated water supplies. Only Afghanistan, Micronesia and neighbouring Eritrea are worse off, according to UNICEF.

At 1,112,000 kilometres, Ethiopia is about the size of the UK and Germany combined, with high mountain peaks and some of the lowest val-



leys in the world—several below sea level. These diverse regions experience different weather cycles, from almost constant drought in the south-east, to regular grain surpluses in some communities in west and central Ethiopia.

While significant droughts that lead to malnutrition, and deaths have occurred roughly every ten years in the last few generations, the cycle appears to be becoming more regular.

In the 1990s, significant droughts occurred in 1991, 1994 and 1997. For the past three years, especially, none of the short and long rainy seasons have met expectations.

Displacement camps pose a great risk to people weakened by starvation and the long distances covered on foot. Most of the estimated half-million people who died during the 1984-85 crisis did not die of starvation, but were victims of disease and epidemics that spread like wildfire in the camps.

The approaching food deficit is indicative of an increasing lack of water across East Africa. By 2025, nearly 200 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to face water scarcity. Ethiopia is expected to slip into the category of "water scarce", with fewer than 1,000 cubic metres of fresh water available for each person every year.

At a time when 12 million people urgently need food aid, the closure of Eritrean ports to Ethiopia due to the current conflict is a tragic limitation on the world's ability to respond. World Vision's vice president for Africa, Wilfred Mlay, has urged the international community to continue to help Ethiopia and Eritrea to establish a cease-fire. The humanitarian need in both countries adds a new imperative for peace. More than 300,000 Ethiopians have been displaced from the north by the conflict, adding a burden to the communities that are now hosting them. ■

## World Vision's response

ETHIOPIANS are facing the current crisis on a platform of significant development work following the major crisis of 1984-85. World Vision has been working in Ethiopia since 1971, and a number of communities are now radically better equipped to cope with drought, particularly following large-scale irrigation projects. In some areas, farmers are now enjoying two harvests a year, regard-

less of rainfall levels.

In 1984, the Antsokia Valley was a mix of dust bowl and swamp. Now, after 15 years of World Vision-funded irrigation programs, Antsokia is an oasis, with the swamp reclaimed for fertile farmland. The valley is playing host to at least 30,000 Afari nomads and their cattle who have sought out the water and grasslands because of the current drought.

Projects have also focused on improving crop varieties and farming

methods, and diversifying the economy from complete dependence on subsistence farming. More than 2 million people benefit from World Vision's health, education, agricultural and training programs.

World Vision is caring for the most acute children brought to the Gode Hospital. Milk powder is being flown in for therapeutic feeding of children, and high-energy food is being distributed throughout the surrounding area. ■



# Christianity in Africa

Bryant Myers

**THE GOSPEL** of Jesus Christ is not a set of propositions, nor a framework for living. Rather the Good News is an invitation to be in a relationship, a relationship with the son of the living God. This gospel of relationships means that the Christian faith is a message lived out in a community, and that community is called the church. So when one talks about the Christian faith in Africa, one must talk about the church in Africa.

It is unarguable that the church has brought spiritual life and hope in much of Africa. Africa is the home of the fastest growing Christian church in the world and has been for a long time. Africa has even birthed its own Christian tradition in the form of the African Instituted churches.

## A letter from South Africa

In the history of the African church there has been good news and also not so good news. Archbishop Tutu and Dr. Niringiye have dwelled on much of this and I'll not repeat it here. But there is a comment that needs making.

I received a letter from a dear friend from South Africa a number of years ago. He is a younger Christian leader with a huge social conscience. "I am deeply pained that in the same

continent that has seen such growth in the Christian church, that we also find poverty, corruption, AIDS, tribalism and every other form of social ill. What kind of church are we making?" Two comments on this and then an apology.

First, there are times when the answer is a positive one. When researchers went into Uganda recent-

**Africa is the home of the fastest growing Christian church in the world, and has been for a long time.**

ly to determine why the Ugandan fight against AIDS had been successful enough that the life expectancy is now increasing again after years of decline, the researchers drew two conclusions: First, the government had acted quickly and made AIDS an acceptable topic of public discourse. Second, the three largest Christian churches in Uganda had very early on done what they were best able to do. From their pulpits they called for "zero grazing", or faithfulness in marriage, and for delayed teen-age sexual experience. When the church does its job of dis-

cipleship and shapes values and behaviour of its congregations, good social things happen.

Second, there are times when the answer is not so positive. Sadly, many African churches, reflecting the pietism and other-worldliness of their American and European missionary origins, practice a spiritualised gospel and eschew social engagement. They ignore the poor, the corrupt and the power-hungry. These churches act as if God only cares for Christians and spiritual well-being. The world is seemingly left to the devil.

## A note of apology

Now the apologetic note. Becoming a social force, demanding that the rich and the governments seek the well-being of all and enact policies that favour life and abundance of life—this is the challenge of the church, but not just in Africa. The irony of an American writing this commentary is that the church in America suffers from the same cultural captivity.

The church in America is full on Sunday mornings, as one in four people gather for worship. Yet American culture reflects rampant individualism and aggressive consumerism. Our poor are ignored and our political discourse is starving for substance as it is driven by money and influence. Americans must also ask, What kind of church are we making? ■

*Bryant Myers is vice president for International Programme Strategy for World Vision.*

**WORLD VISION** is a Christian relief and development partnership which serves more than 70 million people in nearly 100 countries. World Vision seeks to follow Christ's example by working with the poor and oppressed in the pursuit of justice and human transformation.

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World

Vision works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that

poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures, which constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people are able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. ■





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