

# interact

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

## Living 'land to mouth'

The big contribution of small-scale farmers

**Also in this issue:**

Why the G20 must Put People First  
Community work in Yemen  
Young people in Somaliland



# Firing the imagination

**H**ERE IN EAST TIMOR, where I am a Progressio development worker working with the environmental organisation Haburas, one of the greatest threats to the natural environment is the felling of trees to provide wood for cooking fires. This practice is endemic, with more than 95% of the country's energy requirements being met by wood fuel – meaning almost the entire population rely on wood fuel to cook on a daily basis.

Mangrove, eucalyptus and other native trees are being felled without apparent consideration for the future. The people's need for cooking fuel and income-generation (from selling wood fuel), coupled with weak laws and policies on natural resource use and inadequate law enforcement, has created a social environment where unsustainable resource use is rife.

The main environmental impacts of unsustainable tree felling are: loss of biodiversity; increased susceptibility to land slides (East Timorese terrain is commonly on a slope of 40° or more); soil erosion and reduced soil quality; sedimentation of coral reefs, threatening fish populations and marine biodiversity; and increased susceptibility to invasive species.

To add insult to injury, in households where wood for fuel is collected, family members can spend up to 15 hours a week searching for and carrying the

wood back to their home. For households that live within Dili and other towns (and therefore cannot search the countryside for their own wood), the cost of buying wood for fuel can be as much as an average daily wage.

This situation cuts to the core of my role, which is to address unsustainable resource use and promote sustainable livelihoods in East Timor, including building the capacity of local staff to identify, address, advocate and lobby on these issues.

So, after researching the history, sociology, biology and economics of the fuel wood market in East Timor, I set about identifying a sustainable alternative solution that would utilise appropriate technology and would be likely to be accepted by the communities.

Research led me to Africa, where conditions can be very similar to East Timor, and where I found bio-briquettes.

Fuel bio-briquettes are made from almost any organic material, but most commonly from one or more of three ingredients: coffee husk, rice husk or sawdust. In East Timor, and particularly in Dili, these raw materials are in abundance, and a huge proportion of it is dumped or wasted. There is therefore a great opportunity to utilise these waste products for both social and environmental benefits, if a feasible production, marketing and distribution

process can be designed.

I have recently secured a medium-size funding package from AusAid, which will enable Haburas and myself to instigate the pilot Briquette Project. We will train 10 groups of six people to collect, process, produce and sell briquettes within Dili. We will also be providing business and book-keeping training. Because many of the participants are likely to be semi-literate and have poor numeric skills, this training will be tailored to their specific needs and the needs of running a small business.

The project aims both to produce a product and create a market for it. Future growth of associated businesses and further product demand will grow organically once the merits (economic, social and environmental) are obvious.

From an environmental and natural resource perspective, briquetting can tangibly reduce the negative impact of fuel wood collection on East Timor's forest and marine ecosystems. From a socio-economic perspective, the project will empower marginalised groups (such as youth groups, who will be involved in the pilot); encourage independent income generation; and promote sustainable livelihood strategies.

Let's hope we have a win-win project in the making...

*Nick Molyneux is a Progressio development worker in East Timor.*

The global financial crisis could open the door to a new, people-centred vision of development, writes **Christine Allen**



# Putting people first

**W**ORLD LEADERS from the G20 countries are gathering in London in early April. They meet at a time when the global economy is in crisis. Even governments admit that reliance on the market has failed. Confidence has evaporated and governments have had to step in to prop up the international banking system.

The summit of the G20 leaders will consider what measures are needed to address the causes and consequences of the current crisis. They are conscious that global coordination is required, as the crisis, whose immediate impact is being felt in the rich North, will play out its greatest effects in the countries of the South and in the lives of those who are poor and marginalised.

Foreign direct investment to Southern countries is set to plummet, and as money is directed to shoring up the home economies of the North, there will be greater pressure on aid budgets. This economic crisis follows on the heels of the recent fuel and food crises that have already exacerbated poverty levels for many in the South.

For the world's 1.4 billion small-scale farmers, the vagaries of the market, the collapse of banks and the billions being poured into rescue packages may seem of remote interest. But in practice, small-scale farmers will feel the repercussions only too harshly. The costs of their tools, fertilisers and seeds have risen; securing credit is often an impossible task; they may face losing land to large-scale, intensive agriculture or due to commercial pressures – or just because, as people who are poor and powerless, their contribution is simply ignored by the policy-makers.

Yet small-scale farmers also hold some of the solutions. They have protected and improved the security of food

production and they contribute to national growth in a sustainable way. Furthermore the cultural element and achievement of personal pride and identity in farming can provide additional benefits if recognised.

This is not to romanticise smallholder farming. Much more needs to be done, especially on how small-scale farmers can work together to generate communal benefits and how they can access better trading opportunities (whether locally, nationally or internationally).

But small-scale farming is a good illustration of the wider fault-line running through the current paradigm of development, which seems to be that 'big is better'. Large-scale projects have their place, but to be fully successful they need to have good governance, the full support of the local community, and be sustainable – not just for the long-term benefit of a community, but for the planet as a whole.

In the early 1970s, E F Schumacher used the phrase 'small is beautiful' in his

discussion of economic models and sustainable development. Yet in the last 30 years the dominant model has been the exact opposite: big was beautiful and greed was good. Now the bubble has burst and confidence in that dominant economic model is at an all-time low. People are looking for other ways.

It's not just the person in the street, but the policy-makers and politicians that are also looking for a new 'narrative' or paradigm. Between the lobby for the G20 and the DFID white paper consultation process (see pages 9 to 11) there are opportunities to feed into the thinking about a new development story.

As far as we are concerned, it's not a new story – it's about understanding those principles that we have been working to for many years. Principles based on the desire to see full human development, where the dignity of the human person, especially the poor and marginalised, comes into play; a development model that is sustainable, and does not create additional dependence; a development process that listens to, empowers and skills-up the people in the community not just to identify their own solutions but to be able to put them into practice.

The recent economic downturn has shown the folly of policies that have put the market and profit before people and sustainability. In the search for the new story of development, we could do worse than reflect on the simple message of the lobby for the G20: Put People First.

*Christine Allen is Progressio's Executive Director.*



*A small-scale farmer in Honduras.*

# LIVING 'LAND TO MOUTH'

**Small-scale farmers can play a key role in helping to feed the world's people**

**T**HE RECENT FOOD CRISIS is a symptom of fundamental flaws in the food system which has taken root over the past three decades. Two billion tonnes of grain are grown every year – more than enough to feed everyone on earth. But millions of people go to bed hungry every night. Why? Because growing food has become an industry that's more concerned with profit than with feeding people.

The vast majority of the

world's farmland is given over to large-scale commercial farming: agro-export crops, biofuels and transgenic soybean. Most of these cash crops go to feed the lifestyles of people in the rich North. Meanwhile, 70% of poor countries are net importers of food.

## Against the grain

Going against the grain of this system are the world's small-scale farmers: 1.4 billion of them, supporting with their produce 2 billion people – a third of humanity.

There are an estimated 450 million small farms around the world. In Africa alone, 33 million smallholder farmers account for 80% of the continent's agricultural outputs. Nine out of ten poor people in rural areas are smallholder farmers who depend on plots of less than two hectares for their food. The articles in this section of *Interact* aim to give a brief insight into their lives.

## Lives depend on it

Progressio believes that small-scale farmers can play a key role in helping the world to feed itself. "These farmers are real professionals," says Progressio's Environmental Policy Officer, Petra Kjell. "They have to be – their lives depend on it. And given half a chance, they could play a key role in solving the global food crisis.

"Not only do they produce food to feed 2 billion people, many do so in a sustainable way – providing sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families, and a sustainable environment for future generations."

## Call for support

As the G20 leaders meet in London, Progressio is warning that small-scale farmers – and the negative impact the global financial crisis is having on world hunger – must not be

Innocent Bidong Ogbaba/Progressio



## Skill and practice

Mary Gerald is a 40-year-old farmer from Chiola village, near Lilongwe in Malawi.

Mary, her husband and their family have an organic farm near a river, which provides an ideal source of water (carried by hand in buckets) for her chillies, tomatoes, aubergines, lettuce, and maize. The plot produces enough food to feed a household of nine people.

Mary's children help out on the farm and together they are able to produce a small surplus of vegetables, which they sell at the local market. It is hard to make much profit because the market is made up of equally poor people, but the cash they earn enables them to buy basic necessities like soap, salt, and sugar.

Mary has been growing organically since 2002. As her family grew in size, Mary and her husband decided to try organic farming to reduce the cost of expensive fertilisers. The farm now relies on manure made from waste products like animal dung, groundnut husks, and maize and bean stalks. "You don't need to buy expensive fertiliser," says Mary. "You can make your own organic fertiliser, which is free and better for the environment."

Thanks to the introduction of winter cropping, Mary and her family now have enough food to eat all year round. "Winter cropping is a must," she says; "growing vegetables all year round takes a little extra skill and practice, but is well worth it."



### Self-sufficiency

Michael Nyirenda (34) from Chiola village, near Lilongwe in Malawi, is married with two children. Michael started farming organically in 1997, after he got married. Suddenly, he had more mouths to feed and the high cost of chemical fertilisers forced him to look for an alternative. A friend advised him to grow organically, and he has not looked back. He has even been able to build a permanent brick home, to replace the grass hut that the family formerly slept in, with the proceeds from maize and nut cultivation.

Michael and his wife do most of the work on the farm but, since their family is quite small by Malawian standards, they draft in labourers when there is too much to do. Thanks to their hard work and dedication, they now have enough food to eat all year round. "Unlike many families who won't have sufficient food during the lean months, I and my family have enough food to take us up to the next harvesting season," he says proudly.

forgotten. "Big farms are not the only solution," says Progressio Policy Manager, Tim Aldred. "Small-scale farmers deliver the food that feeds a third of humanity – we simply cannot afford to ignore them."

Progressio is calling on governments to take action in three key areas:

- Provide more investment and support for small-scale farmers (instead of overlooking them in national spending plans and overseas aid budgets)
- Review national and international policy to ensure that it benefits small-scale farmers (instead of undermining them)
- Help build the capacity of small-scale farmers to enable them to contribute to policy-making at local, national and international level (instead of ignoring their voices and concerns).



### Don't ignore our expertise

Don Faustino Reyes Matute (52) lives with his wife, Aracely Casco (43), and their five children in the San Marcos community, in the municipality of La Masica, Honduras. They first came to San Marcos in 1974 from the Department of Yoro, drawn by the plentiful natural resources. Today, Don Faustino and his family are full-time farmers, producing food for the whole family and enough surplus to sell in the local market and across the municipality. On their two hectares of land, they grow corn, beans, tomato, onion, leeks, papaya, sweet chilli, hot chilli, bananas, lettuce and coriander as well as rearing guinea fowl and pigs.

A total of 10 people depend on the produce from the farm – not only Faustino, his wife and their children, but also Faustino's grandchildren who help him out on the plot.

Faustino passionately believes that we are slowly destroying the planet owing to our lack of knowledge about how to use the land properly. "This is particularly true when the deep-rooted knowledge about how nature works and the growing practices of generations of small-scale producers is ignored," says Faustino.

### Green tips from the developing world

On the first day of Spring (21 March), Progressio launched a series of 'growing tips' from subsistence farmers in the global South. As Guy Barter, Head of Advice at the UK Royal Horticultural

Society, says:

"Growing your own food is seen as an enjoyable activity in Britain, but elsewhere it can be a matter of life and death. The ingenuity of people in this position can be inspiring and their advice helpful."

Tips range from using aromatic plants (or garlic water) to deter pests, to how to make organic fertilisers (feathers, skin, fingernails and hooves are recommended ingredients in Honduras!).

To see the full range of tips, go to [www.progressio.org.uk](http://www.progressio.org.uk)

**"Consider the soil as a living being which needs to regain all of the nutrients it has given to us via fruit and vegetables if it is to produce healthy, nutrient-rich produce"**

*Thanks to Progressio development workers Marvin Zavala (in Honduras) and Innocent Bidong Ogaba (in Malawi) for these case studies.*

# A FARMER'S LIFE

Pictures and interviews by **Gospel Mwalwanda**. Gospel is a senior journalist with the Malawi News Agency, for which he has worked for 26 years.

**G**ERALD KACHIDEKHWE farms a small *dimba* or wetland garden in rural Mpingu, around 28km west of Malawi's capital Lilongwe. He embraced organic farming two years ago, with help from Progressio partner organisation MOGA – the Malawi Organic Growers' Association.

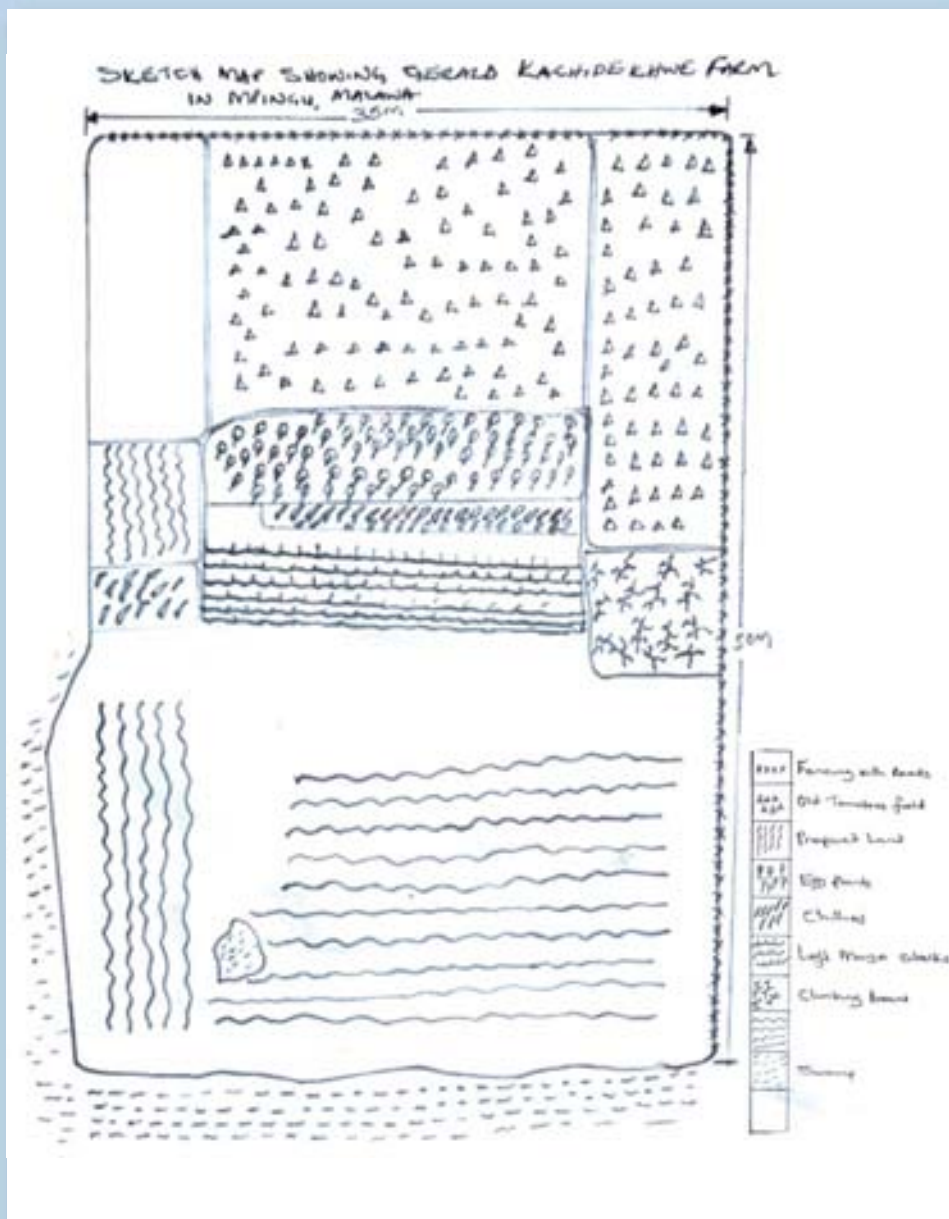
Agriculture remains the backbone of Malawi's economy. 85% of the population of just over 13 million people live in rural areas, and most depend on small-scale farming. Plots are small, with many farmers cultivating less than half a hectare of land (about half the size of a football pitch: one hectare is 100m x 100m or 10,000 square metres, roughly equivalent in square metres to the area of a football pitch).

Gerald Kachidekhwe's plot measures 50m x 35m – less than half a hectare.

MOGA supports around 200 smallholder farmers in the Mpingu area, and has around 3,200 members countrywide. It promotes organic farming because it is a sustainable way to meet people's food needs: farmers are less reliant on external inputs such as fertilisers, which cost money; soil quality is not depleted but replenished.

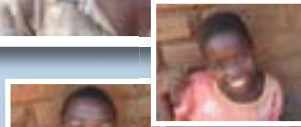
Initially, MOGA supplied farmers with seed for maize, green vegetables, onion, garlic, egg plant and other crops. "Crops grew well," says Stanley Chidaya, MOGA's Executive Secretary. "The fertility of soil is improving. If the organic farmers can do the right thing, the environment will be regenerated, and water and land management practices will be done correctly.

"It will be like bringing back the good old days."





Gerald Kachidekhwe (far right) and family. Gerald turned to organic farming as the only way to ward off hunger in a household of nine people. "Organic farming is cheap and sustainable," he says. "I use composite manure, ash, agricultural waste and green leaves. Everything is available locally. I spend very little money nowadays on farming."



Gerald and Mary Kachidekhwe, with four of their children, and Mary's mother, Mrs Lesina Matisara.



Progressio development worker Innocent Bidong Ogaba (right) examines chilli peppers with Mary Kachidekhwe.



Gerald Kachidekhwe and his wife Mary picking egg plants. Women perform about 70% of farm work in the smallholder sector in Malawi, sharing with men most farm-related tasks such as clearing land and digging out grass. They also are involved in harvesting, threshing and winnowing, and carrying produce to local markets.



The Kachidekhwe family leave for home after a hard day's work in their dimba gardens. Gerald Kachidekhwe, now aged 49, remembers when trees were in abundance in their village. He says the soil was very fertile and helped households to harvest bumper crop yields: "That was the time when we used to have plenty of rain. But then we started cutting down trees, and the good soil got washed away and land became less productive." Chemical fertilisers were seen as the answer – but in the long run, they made things worse. "The chemical fertilisers have done more harm than good to the soil," says Gerald. "They don't replace soil nutrients."



The Kachidekhwe family harvest chillis.



The Kachidekhwe family preparing their maize garden for winter cropping. "I wish you were here when we were harvesting so that you could have seen the wonders that manures [organic fertilisers] can do," says Gerald Kachidekhwe. "The manure gave me seven bags of maize from that piece of land [measuring 15m by 15m] and I have since stopped using chemical fertilisers."



The Kachidekhwe family work in their bean garden. As they work, Mr Kachidekhwe speaks about the virtue of hard work, telling his children that he does not want to see any one of them sitting idle. He urges the family to work hard so that they can finish early.



The Kachidekhwe family shelling beans (nyemba in the local language) at their home. "Be thorough," Mary Kachidekhwe tells her children; "do not leave any pods unshelled."

# FARMERS NEED MARKETS

**O**N MOST SATURDAY MORNINGS during the harvest season, Thomson Makuta would leave his Chiola village near Mpingu, about 28km north of Malawi's capital Lilongwe, and head for the market, carrying on his bicycle a bag of fresh cobs of maize, and another containing sweet potatoes, *writes Gospel Mwalwanda.*

Thomson grows organic maize, green vegetables, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, beans

and aubergines. Before he started harvesting his produce, the 27-year-old farmer had high hopes that his crops would fetch him a lot of money, knowing that organic products are highly prized all over the world.

But he found out that he was wrong: he got a paltry 6,000 Malawian kwacha (about £30), a far cry from the 20,000 kwacha he had hoped for.

"The money we get from our crops is very little," he says. "I have two children to educate, feed and clothe, and also have to help orphans of my relations. I have no other means of earning income."

It's a sentiment echoed by Gerald Kachidekhwe. "The lack of markets is our biggest problem," he says. "I carry tomato to the market three times a week, but it fetches very little money. We feel exploited. We need money to pay school fees, and to buy

medicines and clothes."

The challenge for MOGA (the Malawi Organic Growers' Association) is to create a demand for the healthy produce grown by these pioneering organic farmers. According to MOGA's Executive Secretary, Stanley Chidaya, the way to create demand for organic produce is to raise public awareness about the health benefits – and ensure that people buying organic can buy with confidence.

That's where Progressio's development worker, Innocent Bidong Ogaba, comes in. Innocent, an agricultural economist and organic farming specialist from Uganda, is supporting MOGA in developing standards for the production of organic crops, which they hope will be adopted by the country's regulatory body, the Malawi Bureau of Standards.

"For a consumer to pay a premium price, they have to be sure that the product is truly organic," says Innocent. The adoption of organic standards, followed by a process of certification and verification, will promote awareness of and confidence in organic produce – and hopefully lead to a viable market for the crops of farmers like Thomson Makuta and Gerald Kachidekhwe.

*Gospel Mwalwanda is a senior journalist with the Malawi News Agency.*

*Thomson Makuta (left) prepares organic fertiliser for his fields – "good farming practice," he says, "with many advantages over chemical fertilisers". One advantage is that this home-made fertiliser does not cost them anything: the ingredients are waste products from the farming process. Once crops are growing, Thomson uses a pesticide made from Jatropha Carcaus leaves, locally known as mtsatsi. "We can't afford pesticides, they are too expensive. These leaves work all the same," he says. "For us small farmers, this kind of farming is sustainable because every input is with us in the village."*



*Thomson Makuta and his wife Dorothy clear weeds from their sweet potato garden (above); Thomson Makuta (right); Dorothy Makuta (below).*





# No more plunder from the poor

It's time for courage from the leaders of the G20, says Progressio's Advocacy Manager  
**Tim Aldred**

**W**ITH COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE reeling from the worst economic crisis since the second world war, decisions taken at the G20 meeting in London will have far-reaching consequences for the lives of virtually everyone on the planet.

It is the poorest who have the most to fear. Here's a shocking estimate from the World Bank: an additional 200,000 to 400,000 children could die every year from the knock-on effects of the global downturn<sup>1</sup> in poor countries like those where Progressio works.

## Destitution

Why? Because when markets collapse, people see their income drop. In turn, they are less able to pay for food and other essentials, and this quickly starts

to make vulnerable people like children more at risk from disease.

One out of every four people on the planet are smallholder farmers. This group has experienced wildly volatile prices over the past year, which have made their livelihoods more precarious than ever. If you don't know whether or not you will get a fair price for your crops at harvest time, you don't know if you can afford to plant – and this increases the risk that you will fall into destitution.

## Falling aid

Governments of low-income countries have less tax revenue, and find it harder to fund services such as health care. On top of this we are seeing cuts in overseas aid applied by many donor governments struggling to balance their books.

While the UK government is loudly maintaining its aid commitments, the recent drop in the value of the pound still means that the effective value of promised British aid could fall by over £41 billion over the next seven years.<sup>2</sup> Countries like Nicaragua and Haiti are

## How the crisis is hitting the poor

100 million more people are being trapped below the poverty line of US\$2 per day due to the global financial crisis than would otherwise have been the case. Of these, 46 million are below the extreme poverty line of \$1.25/day.

This is on top of an additional 130-150 million pushed into poverty in 2008 by the food and fuel crisis.

The World Bank estimates that an additional 200,000 to 400,000 children could die every year because of the knock-on effects of the crisis.

Source: World Bank, 'Financial crisis could trap 53 million more people in poverty', 12 February 2009

Maria Margarita Sumba, a small-scale farmer in Gualaceo, near Cuenca, Ecuador.

seeing large drops in remittances sent home by their diaspora communities.

And this is without the well-reported impacts of climate change. One of Progressio's development workers in Peru, Bruno Güemes, reports that due to environmental degradation linked to a worsening climate, people are already leaving their ancestral lands.

So at the top of the list for the great and good meeting in London should be the position of the poorest. As Nobel laureate Al Gore and UN head Ban Ki-Moon said in February 2009:

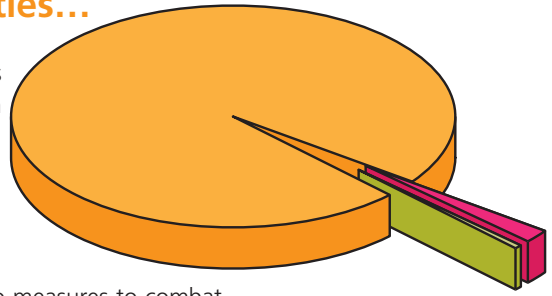
We must act now to prevent further suffering ... This means increasing overseas development assistance this year. It means strengthening social safety nets. It means investing in agriculture in developing countries by getting seeds, tools, sustainable agricultural practices and credit to smallholder farmers so they can produce more food and get it to local and regional markets.<sup>3</sup>

### Priorities

The crisis has exposed as never before the fact that failure to tackle both poverty and climate change has always

### Priorities, priorities...

- Global financial stimulus packages: \$4,100 billion
- Annual overseas development assistance: \$91 billion
- Current commitments to measures to combat climate change: \$13 billion



Source: Anderson, Cavanagh and Redman, *Skewed priorities*, Institute of Policy Studies, 24 November 2008

been a matter of priorities, not resources. According to recent calculations money spent on bailout packages is more than 40 times the combined commitments to combat global poverty and climate change.<sup>4</sup>

The bailouts are on a level which could have funded the Millennium Development Goals many times over, and also funded the steps required to counter the worst effects of climate change. The need to address this gross inequity is arguably more glaring than ever before.

### Opportunities

There is a way forward. For example, one pillar of economic recovery plans is 'fiscal stimulus' – in other words, a spending spree unparalleled in modern history aimed at kick-starting the global economy.

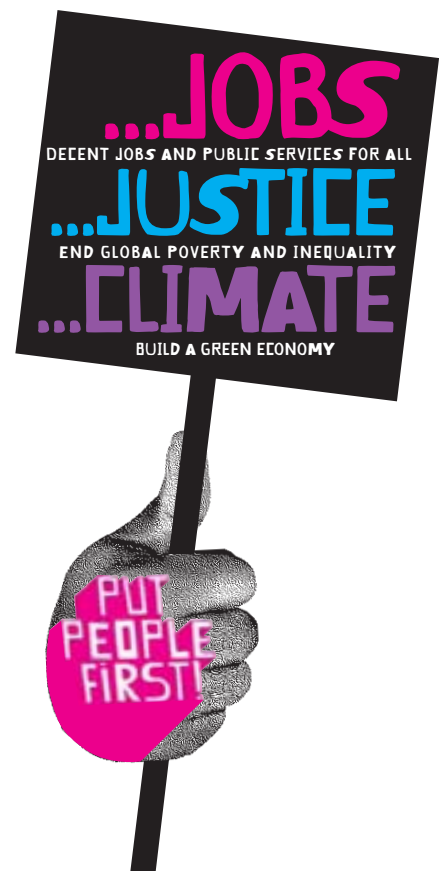
This presents a huge opportunity to take exactly some of the steps that we need to combat climate change by investing in measures to reduce our carbon emissions – from insulating our homes, to energy efficiency measures.

And the G20 must recognise that the

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

The Put People First coalition is calling on the G20 to:

- Tackle tax havens, by compelling them to abide by strict international rules and participate in systems of automatic exchange of information.
- Reform the World Bank and IMF.
- Make all financial institutions, financial products and multinational companies transparent and publicly accountable.
- Ensure a massive investment in transformative action to deliver a green new deal, with a regulatory framework that backs this up. This would create jobs in sectors such as alternative energy and energy saving.
- Invest in and strengthen public provision of essential services.
- Provide emergency funding to all countries that need it to stimulate their economies, and protect the poorest.
- Honour the commitments to deliver 0.7% of national income as aid and cancel unpayable developing country debts.
- Ensure that poorer states are allowed to take responsibility for managing their economies.
- Stop pushing liberalisation and deregulation of developing country industries while permitting protectionism in developed economies.
- Push for a good deal at the Copenhagen climate change negotiations in December 2009 which will limit global temperature increases to well below 2°C.
- Find the extra money that is needed to help poor countries adapt to climate change.



## “The plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?”

Isaiah 3.15-16

poor countries which didn't cause the crisis will also need economic help. Unlike the developed world, they can't spend their way out of trouble, and will need support.

So if we're going to spend big, let's spend it on fighting poverty and protecting the environment, and not executive pensions and coal-fired power stations.

### New vision

While this looks like a no-brainer, the message doesn't seem to have fully sunk in. The G20 must raise its game, and also give a clear signal that when we reach the UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December there will be real commitment to strike the deal on reducing emissions that the poor of the world so desperately need.

There is a crisis of values at the heart of this 'triple crunch' of economics, poverty, and climate. We cannot continue to use simplistic measures of

### Who are the G20?

The G20 are the world's largest economies, making up 90% of global gross domestic product, 80% of world trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.

The London summit meeting will in fact be attended by heads of government from 22 countries. They will be joined by representatives of the European Commission, the African Union, NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development) and ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations). The "heads of a number of global institutions" (including the IMF and the World Bank) are also invited. (source: [www.londonsummit.gov.uk](http://www.londonsummit.gov.uk))

That's quite a crowded table. But representation from low income countries – especially from Africa (South Africa is the only African nation among the 22) – is still minimal. The opportunity for the concerns of the poorest people to come through clearly around the meeting table is low.

income as the sole indicators of 'success' in development – this will perpetuate environmental damage and deepen poverty. We need to agree a new global vision, which measures success firstly in freedom from poverty, in a cared for natural environment, and the ability to live life in peace and dignity; where the global financial system is a servant of the greater good, not an end in itself.

Pursuing this new vision is at the heart of Progressio's work, both in our international programmes, and in our lobbying and campaigning work – and we're in it for the long term. As part of the Put People First coalition, we argue

that the G20 should start a transformation of our global economic priorities, asking for justice for the poor, action on climate change, and investment in jobs and livelihoods.

### Action

The stated aims of the G20 summit are to agree action to revive the global economy, reform the financial sector, and reform international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank.

Will they simply try and fix a failed model, or will they seize this historic opportunity to start building a fairer, more sustainable world?

The official website for the G20 summit states that "Plans for economic recovery cannot be at the expense of the environment or the world's poor". The summit also intends to consider progress on the Millennium Development Goals, and the impact of decisions on climate change.

The question now for the leaders of the G20 is simply this: will they just talk the talk, or will they actually walk the walk, and make the changes that could build a better, fairer world for the world's poor?

*Tim Aldred is Progressio's Advocacy Manager.*

### Eliminating World Poverty

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has launched a public consultation on the future of international development – and it is looking for your views. Progressio sees this is a great opportunity to bring our concerns to DFID's attention – and you can help!

#### Three ways to have your say

- 1 Tell Progressio what you think – your views will help us put together our own response to the DFID consultation. Look at the consultation document online, then email your comments to Progressio's Advocacy Manager, Tim Aldred, at [tim@progressio.org.uk](mailto:tim@progressio.org.uk)
- 2 Tell DFID what you think – send your comments direct to DFID via its public consultation website. (If you can, please email a copy of your comments to Tim Aldred, so we can take them up in our response!)
- 3 Go to one of DFID's regional consultation events, put questions to a DFID minister, and take part in a debate. Events are being held throughout April and May in Bristol, Cardiff, Sheffield, Manchester, Newcastle, London, Southampton, Leicester, Belfast and Edinburgh.

#### Start here

Read the consultation document *Eliminating World Poverty: Assuring our Common Future* at the DFID public consultation website:

<http://consultation.dfid.gov.uk/>

You can also post your comments directly on the DFID website, and find out more about the public consultation events. The consultation process ends 27 May 2009 – so don't delay, have your say today!

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, 'Financial crisis could trap 53 million more people in poverty', 12 February 2009

<sup>2</sup> Cafod, 'Double whammy hits UK aid budget', 3 February 2009

<sup>3</sup> Ban Ki-moon and Al Gore, 'Green growth is essential to any stimulus', Financial Times, 16 February 2009

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, Cavanagh and Redman, Skewed priorities, Institute of Policy Studies, 24 November 2008

# The fisherman's friend

A fishing village in Yemen is working with local government to tackle the community's problems, writes **Catherine Scott**

**R**AID ABSHEL does not strike me as a typical Yemeni. Towering above his colleagues at the local government offices of the Al Buraiqa district, near Aden, he must be six foot six at least – pretty unusual in this part of the world.

Yet he is a son of the soil – raised in this area, and probably for that reason, all the more determined that whilst he is in office, he's going to make life better for the local people. 45% of Yemenis still live in poverty.

Raid is one of a new breed of councillor elected under the decentralised system of governance introduced in 2002. The move from the

old bureaucratic, centralised system offers new opportunities for local people to influence and participate in the decisions that affect them. For this to happen, local civil society organisations need to take on the mantle of representing the people's interests in dialogue with local government.

## Participation

In 2007 a Progressio development worker, Joy Jako-Salem Balane, from the Philippines, working with the local Al Tadhamon development organisation, led a 'participatory rural appraisal' exercise in one of the local communities, the Al Khaisa fishing

village. It was an involved process, and engaged the community in weeks of work and analysis, unpacking the development challenges they face, and listing the issues which needed addressing if life is to improve.

Most of them were chronic development and environmental issues: the health unit lacks basic equipment and medicines; the only school in the area is overcrowded, short of tables and chairs, and staffed by unqualified teachers; the sewerage system is old and inadequate, and refuse collection is erratic.

## Fishing

Following the departure of the British colonial administration in the early 1960s, Aden experienced nearly 30 years of communist rule before South Yemen and North Yemen reunited in 1990. Many of Al Khaisa's inhabitants had government jobs under the communists, but now most have turned to fishing as the only gainful employment: three-quarters of the households in Al Khaisa now rely on fishing as the main source of livelihood and income for the family.

The numbers involved in itself has caused problems. There are fewer fish to catch, and not many of the fisherfolk can afford their own boats and equipment, so can only crew for those who can, meaning they can only eke out a living. The participatory rural appraisal (PRA) revealed other problems: contamination

*Raid Abshel, Progressio development worker Krishna Karkee, and Nasrin Sumar from the local NGO, Al Tadhamon.*



### A fisherwoman's lot

In the past, women used to participate directly in fishing, and men respected their role. At the time of the PRA, only one woman in Al Khaisa was doing direct fishing. Women's roles in fishing are now mostly supportive: sewing and mending fishing nets; making straw bags to carry and cover fish; drying fish.

Women in Al Khaisa used to work as civil servants, and several still work in the public sphere as doctors, nurses, lawyers, pharmacists. Others earn income from retailing, food vending, or producing local products such as incense, pickles and embroidery. Several women head their households or are the primary breadwinners.



Catherine Scott/Progressio

*Talking it through: fisherfolk in Al Khaisa are finding their voice under the new participation initiatives.*

of the fishing grounds by untreated sewage, plastic bags, garbage, and leaks from an oil refinery constructed in the 1980s; lack of ice or refrigerated storage means fish must be sold immediately, often at low prices fixed by traders, or thrown away.

### Planning

Raid Abshel is well aware of the problems and since the PRA was conducted, has taken up the challenge to address some of them. He has managed to put a stop to the dumping of raw sewerage into the sea, and he's addressed the problem of wastage of unsellable fish stock by getting local developers to construct an ice facility at the landing stage where the fishing boats come in.

Raid is open to working with the local community on these issues, and that's where Progressio comes in. Based on the findings of the PRA, Progressio, working with Al Tadhamon, has set up a project placing a development worker with the local community to help them put together participatory budgets and plans which they can present to the local government to consider, prioritise and fund.

Krishna Karkee started work with the community, through Al Tadhamon, in February 2009. Familiar with dealing with local government issues in her native Nepal, Krishna is optimistic that they will be able to get things done here,

even if decentralisation and local governance is still in its infancy in Yemen.

### Commitment

Community initiatives could be funded by taxes from local businesses and income from the Zekat charitable contribution collected from citizens. The local refinery has also been persuaded to give some 'payback' to the community to compensate for the pollution it causes: the company has agreed to fund projects in the local area, and to support the local hospital, for example.

Raid welcomes the impetus that the Progressio-supported project will bring – but recognises that success will bring new challenges. "People's needs will change," he explains. "Once schools and hospitals are achieved, the priorities

move on to electricity, sanitation, and so on. I want Progressio and the local community here to succeed in these participatory planning exercises," he said.

Progressio's aim in starting this project is to break the stagnation of the function of district level administration authorities and help provide a model of working which, if replicated, could move forward the implementation of decentralisation in other parts of Yemen. No-one envisages it will be easily or quickly achieved; but the enthusiasm and commitment of Raid and other officials like him offers hope that change will come.

*Catherine Scott is Progressio's Regional Manager for Africa, the Middle East and Asia.*

### The colonial legacy

**Al Khaisa's fortunes have waxed and waned over the years. Situated along a prime stretch of beach and idyllic coast line, the British in the 1950s shoved the local fishing community off to a lesser patch of land further west. They wanted the location to build well-appointed housing overlooking the sea for expatriate workers. One of the community leaders still has a copy of the 1952 letter sent by the British authorities ordering the people off their land and instructing them to go and inhabit housing constructed for them in an enclosure north of the bay.**

**In those days no-one argued with the British colonial administration. It had ample force at its disposal to back up its decrees and the local community knew it. So they moved.**

# The vision of youth

Young people in Somaliland are preparing to play a more decisive role in their country's fledgling democracy, writes **Catherine Scott**

**M**OHAMED AHMED MOHAMOUD, Executive Director of SONYO – the Somaliland Network of Youth Organisations – was late for our meeting. He'd been writing an exam on peace-building and conflict resolution, the culmination of a course run by the



*Mohamed Ahmed Mohamoud, Executive Director of SONYO.*

Mennonites for some 200 or more young Somalilanders.

"A lot of the theories they taught us," he shrugged, "are part of normal, traditional Somali ways of reaching understanding and agreement through dialogue. You can use these techniques during a football conflict!"

Somalilanders know only too well the advantages of such peace-building skills. They have used them to great effect in this enclave of peace within the war-torn horn of Africa. While their neighbours further south have endured cycle after cycle of turmoil and bloodloss, Somaliland has invested in a localised peace dividend, coupled by growth and re-construction.

## Democracy

A democratisation process has been in place for the past 12 years, and elections

have been held successfully in 2002, 2003 and 2005. Now Somaliland is gearing up for the next elections, now hoped to take place at the end of May 2009 – and Mohamed and SONYO are right in there, getting involved.

But finding a voice in their society has been an uphill struggle for young Somalilanders. For a start, you're not

**"Youth want to get across that they have ideas and policies of their own to contribute, besides their vote"**

considered a 'grown-up' till you're 35. No-one could be admitted as a candidate to the parliament and local district councils till that age either.

SONYO has been campaigning for this to change – a culturally sensitive issue, because older people are reluctant to trust the younger generation. When SONYO approached the Guurti (House of Elders) they were asked: "Why are you in such a hurry? You are the leaders of tomorrow!"

Now, thanks to their efforts, the minimum age of admittance has been lowered to 25. It's a major breakthrough, and Mohamed acknowledges they have come a long way. "Our arguments were limited two years ago," he admitted. "But now young people are feeling much more involved in democratisation."

The voting eligibility age has also been dropped to 16, so now young people can participate in various different ways. "Young people have votes, so now we are important," says Mohamed.

## Employment

But this is only the start. Now, says Mohamed, they have to tackle the issues facing young people. Many – probably the vast majority – are unemployed or under-employed. That includes most of the 700 young people who graduated from university – including 200 from overseas universities – in 2008.

Their skills must be harnessed to help build up Somaliland, says Mohamed. Some of them do voluntary work, but there are limited opportunities for paid work, and almost no recreational facilities.

Organisations like SONYO therefore organise the youth to lobby for such life-enhancing changes. Under the guidance of SONYO, young people have been preparing a youth manifesto with which to lobby the political parties during the upcoming election. "Youth want to get across that they have ideas and policies of their own to contribute, besides their vote," says Mohamed.

"We are asking the parties to pledge to reduce unemployment by 5-10%. And we need a raft of policies and systems which can facilitate inward investment from international businesses" – such as seed funds for people starting up small businesses.

Most of the investment so far in Somaliland has come from Somalis

## Tragic consequences

**Unemployment in Somaliland is not just soul-destroying: it can even be a matter of life and death. "Some simply get frustrated and lose hope," says Mohamed Ahmed Mohamoud. "And some of them die in the sea." He was referring to the boatloads of refugees boarding unseaworthy vessels at the port of Bossaso in Puntland, where they pay people traffickers to transport them to Yemen. Sometimes the boats sink on the way. For the ones which do get near to the shore, the people traffickers – in their hurry to escape the coast-guards – heave their human cargo overboard. Many cannot swim and simply drown.**

themselves – mainly those living in the diaspora who send money back home. The EC is sponsoring the elections, but there is no bilateral or multilateral aid invested by the international community because it is an unrecognised state.

### Strengths

Since Progressio first started supporting SONYO in 2003, the organisation has gained in strength, professionalism, capacity and status. Our first development worker, Yvette Lopez, spent three years with them building up basic organisational development skills. Of the cohort of students she worked with, a high proportion have moved on and are using their skills to contribute directly to Somaliland's ongoing development.

One of SONYO's strengths is to have passed leadership skills downwards so that a new generation of leaders can rise into the positions of those who move on, without setbacks for the organisation as a whole. The fact that it is organised in a democratic and transparent way, with vigorous participation, particularly at its Annual General Meeting, goes a long way to explaining this.

Progressio's current development worker with SONYO, Rita Izsák, works as a human rights advisor and brings in expertise from her previous experiences working with international NGOs, the European Union, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### Progressio to coordinate election observers

Progressio will be coordinating a team of election observers from four continents during the presidential elections in Somaliland.

The invitation to conduct the mission, issued by the Somaliland National Electoral Commission, will see Progressio working in partnership with the Development Planning Unit at University College London (UCL), FOPAG (Forum for Peace and Governance) in Somaliland and Somaliland Focus UK.

The team will oversee organisation of the election observation team and will remain in Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, following the vote to prepare a report on the conduct of the campaign and poll.

Progressio's involvement in the mission follows its leadership of the international monitoring team for Somaliland's inaugural parliamentary elections in 2005, judged by observers as "basically free and fair".

Dr Steve Kibble, Progressio's Advocacy Coordinator for Africa, said: "Following a successful mission in 2005, we are pleased to be supporting the people of Somaliland once more. Election observation is an integral part of ensuring that democracy prevails in this fragile corner of Africa."

### Confidence

In addition, international donors have given SONYO the vote of confidence: it is now the recipient of several substantial Unicef grants. A recent organisational leadership and mentorship training programme resulted in over 4,000 young people gaining valuable leadership skills, of whom 45% were women. Media skills have been enhanced so that young people can communicate on TV and radio, and write articles for newspapers and magazines. Cash support was extended to regional youth organisations to support their activities. There's a life skills programme and valuable

information on HIV prevention has been shared via peer educators. SONYO has also been promoting the creation of student unions, and forging links with student unions internationally.

It was clear to me, as Mohamed left our meeting, that they have already made great strides – and that, with such enthusiasm and determination to call on, Somaliland ought to have a bright future.

*Catherine Scott is Progressio's Regional Manager for Africa, the Middle East and Asia.*

*Queuing to vote during the 2005 elections.*





Two Peruvians constructing an earthquake-proof house (left); Progressio development worker María Eugenia Lacarra (above right) with a local leader in Ica, Peru.

# Safe as houses

An innovative 'build your own home' project in Peru has won an international architectural award, writes **Marina Lozano**

**W**HEN PROGRESSIO DEVELOPMENT WORKER María Eugenia Lacarra arrived in Ica, Peru, three months after an earthquake in 2007 that killed 550 people, she was faced with a distressing situation. More than 90,000 homes were damaged. 75,000 were completely destroyed. Reconstruction efforts had barely begun and lacked coordination and resources.

Local people, who before the earthquake had lived in adobe (mud-brick) homes, were now living in temporary shelters made of rush mat

and plastic donated by NGOs. "Children and old people were getting ill. People were desperate," says María.

"If you don't have a decent home, if your environment is not secure, the rest of your personal development is impossible," explains María.

María, an architect from Spain, set to work with the local community to design and build earthquake-resistant houses that would be safe, easy to put together and would meet the needs of individual families. "Everyone took part – women, men and children," says María.

Previously, people had believed that more expensive materials, such as bricks, would give better results. But María focused instead on combining modern architectural techniques with natural resources – such as wood and reeds – to design homes with the potential to save lives.

"When a seismic wave occurs, the ground moves horizontally. Brick houses fall because they crack and collapse. But these other materials are flexible, and though they move with seismic movements, they would never collapse," explains María.

Melania Quiñónez, one of the local leaders involved in the project, says: "If another earthquake were to happen, we are convinced that the houses would not collapse, so keeping our families safe."

Flor María Quillas, a single mother of three, also took part in the project. "I have participated as much as I could. Now I have a really nice, safe house for my children and me," she says.

The project was awarded first prize in the Social Habitat and Development category at the Biennial Pan-American Architecture competition and exhibition. The project was commended for the level of participation by the people and the simplicity of the technique.

*Marina Lozano is Editor of Progressio's Spanish-language website.*

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**Front cover** Angelina Ngoza (28), mother of six children, is a small-scale farmer in Nchisi district in Malawi.

**Photo** Marcus Perkins/Progressio