



... A year of stories



2015
European Year
for Development

our world
our dignity
our future

Development is about people

2015 was a year to tell their stories



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for Development

our world
our dignity
our future

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

PDF	ISBN 978-92-79-51759-4	doi:10.2841/659595	KN-02-15-759-EN-N
Print	ISBN 978-92-79-51760-0	doi:10.2841/078761	KN-02-15-759-EN-C
EPUB	ISBN 978-92-79-51761-7	doi:10.2841/07823	KN-02-15-759-EN-E

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Printed in Luxembourg

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

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Foreword

Development and international cooperation are fundamental European policies that affect us all. One of my priorities for the European Commission is to strengthen Europe's role in the world. Europe can only be a global player if Europeans understand how the external policies of the European Union and its Member States benefit us all in our interdependent world.

Eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development are two of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. Sustainable development is about allowing people to live a decent life while respecting our planet.

In September 2015, at a special United Nations summit, world leaders endorsed an ambitious new universal sustainable development agenda to build on the Millennium Development Goals. The new Sustainable Development Goals aim at ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice and reducing climate change by 2030.

The EU and its Member States have played a leading role in bringing about these new global commitments and are fully committed to building a better world for all. For us to be successful in this mission, we need everyone to play their part to ensure that all people everywhere can live a life in dignity.

The level of engagement and interest of Europeans throughout the European Year for Development reflects how international solidarity continues to lie close to the heart of the EU and its citizens. Development concerns us all, which is why in the European Year for Development, we invited Europeans, and especially young people, to take part in a conversation about **our world, our dignity and our future**.

Throughout the European Year for Development, we have heard the voices of the people our cooperation affects — these are their stories. Their stories demonstrate the universality of core human values of dignity, honesty, fairness, justice and resourcefulness.



Jean-Claude Juncker
European Commission President



Foreword

The European Union sent a strong message about our commitment to international cooperation by declaring 2015 the European Year for Development. 2015 was the deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals, which guided our development policy for 15 years.

The world has made great progress. Extreme poverty has fallen by half; over 90 % of children in developing countries, with boys and girls in equal measure, are now in school; there are twice as many women in parliament; child mortality has fallen by more than half and a massive 2 billion people have gained access to clean water.

With the European Union and its Member States as the world's largest donor, we can take pride in these numbers. Europe's development cooperation is helping to make a difference in the lives of millions around the world. These successes fuel our motivation for our future work and in implementing the new sustainable development agenda.

EU institutions and delegations, Member States, our international development partners, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, universities, the media and the private sector all brought their own energy and unique perspectives to the Year. I want to express my gratitude to all of our partners for their commitment to our work.

We wanted the European Year for Development to be a year of stories, stories about the people who are at the centre of our work. This has been a great success and I thank all of our partners for sharing their experiences.

The many great stories collected in this book are about the girls and boys, women and men from across the world, whose lives have been touched by our cooperation. The stories show that a better world is possible and, wherever we are from and wherever we want to go, our aspirations are the same: a stable and peaceful world, education for our children, jobs for young people and a decent life on a planet we need to protect.



Neven Mimica
European Commissioner for International
Cooperation and Development

Introduction

Development is about people and the European Year for Development 2015 set out to tell their stories.

The European Commission published a Story of the Week every week throughout 2015 and this book is a collection of these stories.

The stories portray how our development cooperation has changed the lives of girls and boys, women and men, around the world, across all areas of our work.

The stories are arranged across 12 thematic chapters which correspond to the 12 thematic months of the European Year.

1 The EU in the world



The European Union is present and active in most countries in the world. The 139 EU delegations, spread around the globe, are the EU's invaluable eyes and ears on the ground. Every day they contribute to building solid and lasting partnerships, at times in extremely challenging and dangerous conditions. Having championed the UN millennium development goals, the EU is now committed to delivering the new sustainable development agenda that will deliver lasting change and take us closer to the ultimate aim: a decent life for all.



With rainfall becoming increasingly scarce and erratic, Husen Shibot's traditional farm could no longer sustain his family.

Husen Shibot; 'I hope my children can one day return to our farm'.



Cultivating progress: farming in Eritrea

Standing amongst his coffee trees, Husen Mohamed Jimie Shibot is pleased with his current crop. 'I would not feel like a real farmer if I didn't grow my own coffee', he says.

Like over two thirds of Eritreans, Mr Husen works in agriculture. He has always lived in the Geleb region, about 100 km north of the capital Asmara, where he started to work on his parents' farm as a young man. Now, Mr Husen is himself a father and grandfather — but only he and his wife still live on their family farm in Geleb.

'I always wanted at least one of my four children to stay and take over the farm, looking after us in our old age — that is the traditional way of life in Eritrea', he says. But though the Eritrean climate has always been dry and crop cultivation a challenge, the conditions Mr Husen faces are very different to those of previous generations.

As is traditional for farmers in this area, Mr Husen depended on rain-fed agriculture, mostly planting a variety of cereals such as barley, sorghum and millet, as well as cultivating coffee trees. Global climate change contributed to worsening climatic conditions. The limited and increasingly erratic rainfall and deforestation left little water to grow enough food for personal consumption — let alone any surplus to



sell. Mr Husen's well had been dry for years, making any type of crop irrigation impossible. Variable rainfall and an overall reduction in precipitation led to poor harvests. With the farm unable to sustain the growing family, Mr Husen's children moved away long ago, taking low-paid jobs in Eritrea's service industry.

Mr Husen's story is typical for many Eritrean farmers. As the average yearly rainfall in the region is now below 300 mm (less than half that of Germany), reliance on rain-fed agriculture becomes increasingly precarious. Most of this precipitation falls in the rainy season from July to September. During these months, heavy downpours can transform the local Chemorat River into an uncontrollable torrent. Once this surface water has rushed down the valley, however, it is lost. The river is reduced to a trickle for the rest of the year.

Deforestation has reached a critical rate with the loss of thousands of trees a year. As forests slow the run-off of water and increase filtration rates to recharge underground water reservoirs, this has had a significant impact on the availability of water for irrigation. Soil erosion and declining soil fertility are also major problems. Only a very few farms in the area are mechanised, and traditional ways of cultivation and harvesting prevail. This lack of modern tools, seeds and fertilisers means Eritrean farmers are unable to enhance their harvests and leaves them dependent on worsening climatic conditions. Given the number of livelihoods depending on the country's agricultural sector, investment in better techniques and a move towards irrigated agriculture for year-round farming therefore makes a real difference.

In partnership with the government and other stakeholders, the EU has therefore supported agricultural projects worth close to EUR 50 million in recent years. Within the framework of government policies, EU support has helped to build numerous dams, hillside terraces and irrigation structures. Six million tree seedlings have been produced in tree nurseries and planted throughout the country. Since the start of the activities in Geleb, two dams have been built to recharge ground water. In order to distribute the water, a solar-driven pump has been installed in the Geleb tree nursery, so it is not dependent on expensive fossil fuels.

Mr Husen is one of the 400 000 beneficiaries of these projects, which aim to increase agricultural production by at least 10 % in the country. The construction of a dam close to his farm has recharged the ground water and he can draw water from his well once again. He has also learnt how to irrigate effectively his land and fight soil erosion.

'As there is now water available for irrigation, I can water plants throughout the year and have ventured into horticulture', he says, presenting his newly cultivated guava and apple trees, the seedlings for which he received from the nearby Geleb nursery. 'Thanks to the irrigation, I hope to harvest enough to sell the surplus on the local market and even transport some to the town of Keren'. His apples will fetch high prices in Eritrea as most apples are imported from countries like South Africa. But it is the healthy coffee

“ I would not feel like a real farmer if I didn't grow my own coffee. ”

Husen Mohamed Jimie Shibot



trees that really give him confidence. Coffee is an important part of Eritrean culture — as are family ties.

The size of Mr Husen's land may not be enough to support all his children and their families. But the initiatives supporting agriculture in the area may at least enable one of his children to return to Geleb and take over a profitable farm. 'This would make me happy', Mr Husen says. 'A family should stay together'.

A new crop of apples is ready to pick.



EU-funded activities in support of Eritrean agriculture

- ➔ Current EU support for Eritrea totals more than EUR 60 million.
- ➔ The largest ongoing EU programme is in agriculture. It aims to benefit more than 400 000 people and to increase agricultural production by around 10 %.
- ➔ Six million tree seedlings will be produced and planted.
- ➔ More than 1 000 hectares of land will be irrigated using solar-driven pumps.
- ➔ Soil and water conservation activities are implemented on around 20 000 hectares.



Reina Valladarez has sewn up success in Honduras

The company Luz Victoria, a small textile business in the Honduran town of Danli, has come a long way in a short time. Last year, its 15 seamstresses produced 180 school uniforms and 3 000 bags. It was a challenge, but the women pulled together and managed to deliver all orders on time, as founder Reina Valladarez explains. 'I celebrate it as a victory — not long ago, no one knew who we were, and now we have gained a good name and have lots of work', she says proudly. Along the way, she has found a new identity for herself: Reina Valladarez — seamstress and business woman.

Together with 14 other team members, Reina works 6 days a week trying to keep their small textile enterprise growing. 'Sometimes we finish so late that the husband of a colleague has to come and give us a lift home in his pick-up. He laughs at us, asking what kind of business women we are if we have to go home in a truck. But yes, we are business women', smiles Mrs Valladarez.

The road to business success has not been smooth. Coming from a poor family, Reina Valladarez started working straight after primary school. By the age of 14 she was already learning to sew, and at 15 she started working as a seamstress. 'I had my first child when I was 20 years old and then simply stopped studying', she recounts. 'As the

Honduran seamstress Reina Valladarez has made a success of her textile company — and altered her outlook on life.

Reina Valladarez: hard at work to meet her business' growing orders.





money my husband earned was not enough to support our family, I had to earn some extra making clothes. The marriage was complicated and I had a son with a disability. To forget all my problems, I worked more and more', she recalls. Working from home meant that she had limited contact with other working women. That was about to change.

The EU is working with Honduran NGOs and officials to develop a programme to support the launch of small local businesses. The programme aims to strengthen economic development in Danli — to help people willing to start their

own business, to accompany them in the process and to support them in forming networks that will allow them to share their experience and coordinate their workload. One day, officials from the municipality of Danli's local development unit came to Mrs Valladarez's district. They proposed to all women in the area who worked at

home that they unite and organise a small enterprise of their own. The idea caught her imagination, but there were obstacles to overcome. 'At the beginning it looked so complicated. I was going to meetings and workshops and many people gave up', she remembers. But she and her team persevered and, in 2011, managed to register their own company: 'Luz Victoria was born', she says.

The new business faced initial difficulties: capital was needed to buy materials and some of the women lacked teamwork and business-management skills. 'Then people from the mu-

nicipality came back to help us', explains Mrs Valladarez. 'We passed several courses on different topics, exchanged experiences with other small enterprises and visited big sewing factories. I guess that was when we learned how to organise ourselves and work as a team — sometimes one person's weakness can be compensated for by another's strength. And that is great', she says. Competence-focused courses like these are part of the EU-financed programme for economic development. The support also includes financial aid for material support for new businesses, which are often able to draw great benefit from very basic supplies. Luz Victoria, for instance, received a few sewing machines. These have made the company's work more productive and have allowed the team to accept bigger orders — and keep up with demand.

EU-supported local economic development initiatives such as these have already had an effect all across Danli. Now, the first thing a traveller notices in the Honduran town is the number of small shops, workshops and stalls selling food, clothes and other commodities. But economic improvement is far from the only dimension of success here. 'Before organising the company, I was totally dependent on my husband', says Reina Valladarez. 'Now I am able not only to pay for myself, but also to help my daughter cover her university costs and guarantee good living conditions for my son. And — perhaps most importantly — I see myself differently. Before the courses and training, I could not have imagined being able to negotiate, deal with government officials or business people. Now I am good at that. I guess I simply "killed off" my low self-esteem', she smiles, bright-eyed as she confides that she already has big plans for the future.

“ *Not long ago, no-one knew who we were.* ”

Reina Valladarez

EU support for economic development in Honduras

- ➔ Less than 35 % of Honduran women of working age have a job.
- ➔ Honduran women in employment often earn less than men.
- ➔ An estimated 500 000 women (just under half the female population) are under-employed.
- ➔ Nearly 60 % of the population of Honduras lives in poverty.
- ➔ Two out of three Hondurans are willing to emigrate due to the lack of opportunities and economic insecurity.
- ➔ The EU is actively helping the Honduran state to cope with economic problems.
- ➔ The EU shares best practices and expertise, and finances different programmes and projects that strengthen governmental capacities.
- ➔ EU financial assistance involves a broad programme for economic development, implemented by local NGOs in cooperation with the municipality.
- ➔ The targets of the EU project are: food producers, carpenters, bakers and other small entrepreneurs, such as small textile companies.

The Luz Victoria Team.





With the help of his community, Gul Rehman has now returned to normal life after 4 years with the Taliban.

Waging peace — communities work together against extremism in Pakistan

Gul Rehman is glad to be back. ‘I can breathe ... I feel free’, says the 22-year-old. Like thousands of boys and young men from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, Gul was coaxed and coerced into joining the Taliban in what they called their fight ‘for the glory of Islam’. He was only 18 years old. After a harrowing 4-year journey, Gul Rehman has finally managed to return: having renounced militancy, he is back with his family and his community, reconnected and respected. It has been a long road.

Gul’s home, the remote Bajaur Agency region in north-west Pakistan bordering Afghanistan, has been ravaged by war. Since 2001, militant violence in FATA and adjoining areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province has left a trail of death and destruction. The war has cost more than 47 000 lives and EUR 58 billion in material losses. It has caused social upheaval and deeply damaged the local communities. Pashtuns (the Pashto-speaking ethnic group accounting for most of the area’s population) have long-standing traditions of tolerance and cooperation. However, over a decade of violence and hatred — with militants ‘decreeing’ that women must not leave the home, hundreds of schools blown up, roadside bombs, suicide bombings



Light a symbol of peace: deradicalised youth vowing to work towards peace in their community.



and frequent drone attacks — has left communities and individuals traumatised.

The resulting atmosphere of fear has created fertile ground for Taliban recruitment. Thousands of families have lost fathers, sons and brothers to extremist indoctrination. The young men in particular are targeted. ‘Youths are inhumanly recruited and used for terrorism in our region’, says Gul’s teacher. Naivety, deprivation and lack of opportunities create openings for the extremists. ‘The younger children find it hard to refuse the terrorists, fearing for their own safety or reprisals against their families’, says the teacher.

Gul’s personal experience relates how, once recruited, the young men are taught to glorify violence. ‘During our training, the extremists told us that our mission was as simple as touching two wires together and that the resulting blast would obliterate the infidels or those siding with them — but that God would spare us from the flame and shrapnel, protecting us from any harm’, he recalls. ‘I was indoctrinated and numbed’.

Finding a way back wasn’t easy for Gul Rehman, but he was also lucky — not least thanks to his mother. She was approached by Paiman, a local NGO promoting peace, non-violent dispute resolution and deradicalisation. Supported by EU-funding, Paiman works with the local communities. One of its peace groups had identified Gul’s mother and supported her training as a *tolana* (Pashto for ‘together’). The *tolana* are central to Paiman’s strategy for creating non-violent communities. To achieve this, a mother *tolana* and youth *tolana* are set up in each community to reach out to

their respective peers. The movement offers a way for the local community to address and resolve its own problems and disputes, and is becoming stronger and more popular by the day. *Tolana* members act as volunteers to resolve local feuds through mediation and dialogue.

‘After the training I realised that my son needed to be brought out of the influence of extremism’, says Gul Rehman’s mother. She persuaded her son to take Paiman’s phased course and work through a programme of deradicalisation. It worked: ‘Paiman shattered my smug world of falsified indoctrination and gave me this positive thinking and this new life’, says Gul.

Job-related skills training for the affected young men also forms part of Paiman’s programme, helping them find their way back to normal life. EU financial support enables Paiman’s trained counsellors to work closely with them until they are reintegrated into their families and communities. The *tolana* also act as an ‘early warning’ mechanism, identifying young people at risk and alerting the community and relevant government departments to any activity that might lead to extremism. They hold sessions to raise the community’s awareness of the impact of violent extremism and act as advocates, representing their community at meetings with local administration and government departments.

“ I am now a trusted mediator in my community, whereas no one would even talk to me earlier. ”

Gul Rehman



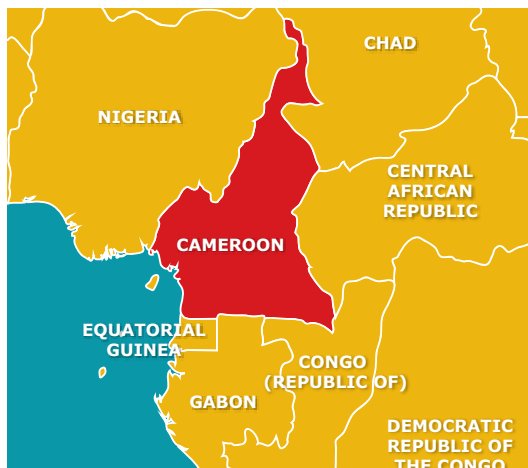
Now Gul himself is a youth *tolana*, helping Paiman reach out to other radicalised or vulnerable young people. Community elder Hazrat Kaka is full of praise: ‘Gul Rehman today is respected for his voluntary services for his community’, he says. Becoming a representative has been a significant milestone in Gul’s long journey back. Reflecting on how far he has come, Gul says: ‘I am now a trusted mediator in my community, whereas no one would even talk to me earlier’. Both he and his mother are proud of this achievement.

EU support enables crucial community work to counter radicalisation in Pakistan

- ➔ The EU supports prevention and deradicalisation programmes such as ‘Communities waging peace: piece by piece’.
- ➔ Paiman Alumni Trust is a non-profit organisation established in 2004 and works as part of the EU programme.
- ➔ Paiman provides community peace building, mediation and early warning services in FATA and KPK.
- ➔ It has reached 500 youths, 300 mothers, 150 government officials, 150 members of NGOs and the media

Women signing a ‘Charter of peace’:





Lake Nyos, Cameroon: a region recovers from disaster

In the night of 21 August 1986, in a mountainous region of Northwest Cameroon, the sudden explosion of Lake Nyos, of volcanic origin, released over a cubic kilometre of carbon dioxide gas into the air. The spread of the toxic gas to the surrounding valleys took the lives of over 1 700 people and decimated livestock in every village within a 15 km radius. The devastating effects of the tragedy would be felt by the region and its people for years to come.

In the wake of the disaster, the government and its main partners, including the European Union, launched projects to make the areas surrounding the lake safe and viable. The aim is to prevent further explosions and to reassure the inhabitants of the region by gradually releasing the gas buried under the lake. An artificial degassing system was installed in 2001 and is being closely monitored.

Martin Kiné hails from one of the villages in the vicinity of the lake. He lost his father in the disaster and is still haunted by the memory. 'On the day of the tragedy, my father had come to check on his herd as usual', he recounts. 'As it was getting late, he decided to sleep there and return home the following day. That was the last I saw of him'.

In 1986, the Lake Nyos disaster took 1 700 lives. Now, thanks to investment, the region is recovering and its people can come home.

Life coming back to Lake Nyos.





The Nyos region is still considered by the authorities as an area of high risk, but the safety measures now in place have served to reassure hundreds of displaced persons who, like Martin Kiné, are gradually returning home. 'I came back to the area last year because I realised that the government and its partners had done a lot to make sure that Lake Nyos will never explode again', he reasons.

“ *We welcome the European Union's help with open arms. Through Emida, the EU is building classrooms, drinking water points and mills and establishing communal fields. Just what the villagers need!* ”

Aboubakar Soulemane Maoko

Between 2010 and 2014, the EU spent EUR 14.5 million in the region, enabling work to be carried out to reinforce the dam, build an access road and help resettle inhabitants. It is estimated that some 10 000 people have benefited indirectly from the EU's endeavours.

'We've found a site for a new school, and officials working for Emida, an organisation that receives EU aid, are now just waiting for the go-ahead from the authorities', explains Olivier Tang Kuma, the village's crown prince.

His face lights up when he talks about what he sees as the 'rebirth of Nyos village'. For him, the array of measures taken to breathe new life into the area in the aftermath of the disaster are 'an absolute godsend'.

Aboubakar Soulemane Maoko, a dignitary from the Muslim community, shares the prince's optimism: 'We welcome the European Union's help with open arms', he says. 'Through

Emida, the EU is building classrooms, drinking water points and mills, establishing communal fields and so on. Just what the villagers need!'

'We're working to improve living conditions for local people, but also to encourage those still living in the camps set up after the disaster to come back to the villages, where there is an abundance of pasture land', stresses Claude Olivier Bagneken, Emida's executive secretary. Launched almost 6 months ago, the project is set to run for 2 years. As well as the ongoing construction of a range of basic infrastructure, it has also launched capacity-building measures for local associations and trained over 200 people in preventing violence in schools and in managing social conflict.

In 2012, thanks to European Development Fund resources, the EU launched the first phase of operations to shore up the lake's natural dam. The aim is to prevent the natural dam — which retains the water of the lake — from bursting. Grégory Tanyileke, geologist and head of the team in charge of the project, hails it as one of the EU's key endeavours in the region. 'The success of this first phase, like the scientific studies which shed light on the root cause of the 1986 disaster, gives us real grounds for optimism', he adds. His words have not gone unheard: inhabitants of the region are slowly returning to the areas around the lake despite their painful memories of the 1986 disaster.

EU support since the 1986 disaster has helped make the areas around the lake safe and viable again, giving real hope for the future

- ➔ In August 1986 a gas explosion in Lake Nyos took 1 700 lives — a terrifying warning to Cameroon and its partners.
- ➔ Work to make the lake safe is based on an agreement between Cameroon and the EU under the 10th European Development Fund.
- ➔ Phase 1: success in making the area around the lake safe and viable again has given hope to contractors and locals alike.
- ➔ Phase 2: a spillway is to be built to cope with possible breaches of the dam.

Regaining access to Lake Nyos via a newly built road.



2 Education



Education is the best possible investment against exclusion, inequality and poverty. It imparts key skills, teaches us how to be active members of society and is pivotal to nation-building. Yet over 50 million children worldwide are not enrolled in primary education and 250 million cannot read, write or do basic mathematics. That's why development cooperation is so crucial in helping everyone get a good education, pursue their dreams and contribute to society.



Life at the school has not been the same. Enrolment has increased, and even the grades of the students have improved.

Helping visually impaired students get an education in The Gambia

Ali Sallah's office tells the story of a man who is fiercely dedicated to his work. The room is full of books and boxes containing alternative learning materials for his students — 42 visually impaired children, many of them born blind. The children in the school come from many different backgrounds, but all have one thing in common: they all come from poor families.

After 9 years at GOVI (The Gambia Organisation for the Visually Impaired) School, the sign above Ali's office reads 'Head Master's Office', but he prefers to present himself as Head Teacher. Located just outside the main town of Serrekunda, Gambia's largest town.

The children are being taught English, mathematics and sport, as well as social skills such as cooking, music, art and basket-weaving. 'This is a kind of social inclusion many of the children do not experience at home', Ali explains.

Teaching methods include the Braille writing and reading method, which is used with a typewriter for visually impaired people. The school only has a few of them as they are expensive. Schools in The Gambia rely on the efforts of their teachers not just to teach, but also to raise money for building materials, wages and everything else a school needs.

Students weaving baskets — part of the school's social skills activities.



Ali and his fellow teachers have had to overcome many challenges in the school, but one of their greatest improvements in recent years was not to do with education, but rather with a more basic matter: food. Coming from impoverished backgrounds, the children often came to school hungry, which made it difficult for them to focus on their schoolwork. The teachers sometimes gave some of their own food to the students, or would even approach Ali to ask for food or money for themselves and the children.

This all changed with the introduction of the ‘School feeding programme’, which was implemented by the World Food Programme in 2010 with EU financial support. Through this programme, the school gets staples such as rice, peas, oil and salt delivered for school meals every day. Since the launch of this programme, life at the school has not been

the same. Enrolment has increased, and even the grades of the students have improved; the school came out with the second best average score in The Gambia in 2014.

Ali underlines that a daily meal for the children has much to do with this development. ‘The students can only deliver results when their basic needs are provided for. The access to daily school meals makes the children more focused and will eventually give them a better opportunity to influence their own future’, he says. The school has now made its own vegetable garden with the aim of sustainably and cost-effectively producing its own food for the children now and into the future.

“ *Children cannot learn when they are hungry. Hungry children do not go to school.* ”

Ali Sallah

The GOVI School and the ‘School feeding programme’

- ➔ The main target areas of the EU for the ‘School feeding programme’ are the Central River Region and the North Bank Region of The Gambia.
- ➔ The ‘School feeding programme’ in The Gambia is partly funded by the European Union and implemented by the UN World Food Programme.
- ➔ The European Union contributed EUR 3 178 000 to the programme from September 2012 to December 2015.
- ➔ The total number of students reached by the programme is expected to be 50 170 children, covering 186 primary schools and 72 pre-schools.

Ali stands proudly in front of the school bus, which collects and drops the students off daily.





It's not just an education in counting and reading; it's an education in daily respect for human rights.

Owen going to school for the first time.



Building an education in Zambia

Owen is 6 years old, with huge laughing eyes. Clutching a colourful notebook in his hands, he tells us that he's the luckiest child in the world. The notebook seems to be his most treasured possession. His parents don't have much more, but Owen feels lucky because he is finally going to school. Not long ago, there were no schools in his village, Itenda, with the closest one located 20 km away. The bush surrounds the village for hundreds of kilometres.

Itenda lies at the heart of the Muchinga escarpment, well over a thousand kilometres from Lusaka. Tall acacias lean towards the ground, praying for rain; not one drop has fallen for months. The rivers and creeks seem to have dried out long ago.

As we arrive in the village, scores of women and children are dancing and singing. They smile and offer firm handshakes while drums play. Someone presents us with a live chicken. There have been no cars spotted here for the last 5 months, so everyone is pleased to see us and we are immediately surrounded by a small group of children. Owen, a natural leader, quickly becomes our guide. Itenda is a cluster of some 70 small, round huts made of clay bricks and grass, four or five of them belonging to each extended family.



Proudly, Owen leads us to a large rectangular building — his new school, the most important spot in the village. He is indeed lucky: in Africa, one in four people have never been to school, as in many remote villages there simply is no school. Zambia is far from an exception in this respect. Although the constitution espouses the right to universal public education, many children are forced to forgo school in order to contribute to their families' survival.

The school in Itenda was built by the villagers. For weeks they dug for clay, formed it into small cubes, dried them in the sun and built a great semi-circular kiln, which was then fired to harden it. The school is run by a group of community leaders. Everyone has a different responsibility: one acts as a caretaker, an essential function in the midst of the African bush, where a moment's inattention can result in a devastating termite infestation. Another person tends to the school garden, the main source of school funding and of the teacher's salary.

The teacher in Itenda is Mr Kaira, a volunteer who looks to be around 20 years old. He talks about his work, surrounded at all times by a gaggle of children.

'Project managers visit twice a year from Lusaka. We can't do this by ourselves. For me, it's like a course in continuous education. We discuss new learning methods, children's rights, the best ways to improve conditions in our village. The children love being in school. Here, they have new books, maps, rulers'.

The children, indeed, don't need to be persuaded to attend. Before, none of the children were attending school, but today almost a hundred boys and girls, aged 3 to 12, study reading, writing and arithmetic, sitting in small groups on the red clay floor. The most popular of all are picture books — the children could spend hours looking through them — but now it's time for mathematics. Eagerly, the children start copying equations that Mr Kaira has written on the blackboard into their notebooks.

A multicoloured globe is the main attraction. The children finally know where in the world are Zambia, Chama and Lusaka. The confines of the village are expanding as the world flows in by virtue of everyday learning. The children find out about new worlds inhabited not just by elephants, impalas and snakes, but also by kangaroos, penguins and, in the oceans, whales as big as elephants.

The community school is a revelation, for the parents and village elders just as much as the children. 'In 2 to 3 years, the children will know much more than their parents. The parents are now well aware that even primary education has the potential to change their children's lives', says Mr Kaira.

Owen already knows as much. 'When I finish school, I will work in the city, where there are no elephants or snakes', he says with conviction.

“ *The parents are now well aware that even primary education has the potential to change their children's lives.* ”

Mr Kaira



The programme of school building in remote parts of Zambia is run by the European Union. Schools are trying to effect a profound change in rural and remote communities in Zambia. It's not just an education in counting and reading; it's an education in daily hygiene, and daily respect for human rights. The donors provide the tools. The villagers take care of the rest.

The EU has helped Dorcas Mwape qualify as a teacher in Zambia.



EU education support in Zambia

- ➔ In excess of EUR 9 million has been earmarked for support for education interventions in Zambia from 2012 to 2018.
- ➔ With the signing of additional grants around 450 community-led educational projects and other non-state actions will benefit from EU funding.
- ➔ It is estimated that on average 4 200 children will benefit from EU support for community-based schools.
- ➔ A large number of these children will be girls.
- ➔ The programme is jointly run by the EU, the Dutch NGO Help a Child and the local NGO Reformed Open Community Schools in Zambia.



Teaching in remote areas of Papua New Guinea — the story of Mathilda

Teaching in remote areas has many challenges. A shortage of primary school teachers and facilities continues to be a problem throughout Papua New Guinea, and many schools lack qualified teachers, especially in the more remote communities. Where there are no teachers, schools are simply closed, and many children cannot attend school.

The provision of well-trained teachers is essential if all children, including those from remote villages, are to have access to quality education.

‘I like to work with young people and support them. Where I come from, many schools have closed down because there are not enough teachers, and I see the need to go back and work there’, says Mathilda Patrick, a recently qualified teacher.

Mathilda Patrick is a 26-year-old woman from Iapiyu, a small village in Gulf Province on the southern coast of Papua New Guinea, 3 hours’ walk from Kanabea, the regional centre. In 2011, she was successful in obtaining a scholarship from the European Union to study at Bomana Teachers’ College. After 2 years of dedication to her studies, Mathilda graduated as a primary school teacher in November 2013.

A shortage of resources and a lack of facilities are just some of the issues teachers in Papua New Guinea have to face.

Mathilda Patrick (right) with fellow student Gloria Kuanu at their graduation ceremony.





“

I like to work with young people and support them. Where I come from, many schools have closed down because there are not enough teachers, and I see the need to go back and work there.

”

Mathilda Patrick

Mathilda is one of 220 teachers to have graduated under the scholarship programme so far, and a further 700 trainee teachers are completing their studies this year.

‘The 2 years of studies were very challenging in terms of tackling all the new knowledge and skills to be learned. Learning to be patient with children was the biggest challenge for me’, recalls Mathilda.

Mathilda is now teaching at Kamina Primary School, an isolated village

5 hours’ walk across rugged terrain from her home village.

‘It is difficult’, Mathilda tells us. ‘The lack of power is a big challenge, as is the lack of resources and teaching aids too. There are not enough teachers in these villages, so we also face the challenge of teaching multi-grade classes, for a teacher is a complex task’.

All these issues are addressed by the teacher training course, attended by Mathilda. The training also equips teachers to sensitise the curriculum to the local context and teach important human rights topics to the children, such as gender equality and conflict resolution.

Mathilda, also a single working mother, with a 2-year-old daughter, is happy that she had the opportunity to return to her region to teach and be close to her family for support.

‘I am the only one from my region who made it to the teachers’ college to study. I think the community and my family look at me as someone very particular, especially since I will be the only female teacher in the area’.

The EU has supported Papua New Guinea to develop its educational human resources for over 20 years

- ➔ The ‘Human resources development project’ is worth EUR 16.8 million and continues the EU’s strong partnership with the government in the area of education.
- ➔ About half of Papua New Guinea’s primary school-aged children are out of school.
- ➔ The shortage of primary school teachers and facilities continues to be a problem, especially in remote areas.
- ➔ Scholarships are being provided to 900 trainee primary school teachers from remote rural areas, and at least 50 % are female.
- ➔ Classrooms and dormitories in three teacher training colleges will be built in 2015.

Some of the children the EU is reaching in remote areas of Papua New Guinea.





A new hope for early school leavers in Ecuador

María Paucar is a 17-year-old Ecuadorian who left school to work and help her mother support the family. She lives in an Andean community in the province of Cotopaxi. She had barely finished primary school when she had to start working in a grocery store at the age of 13. That was the end of María's dreams. Maybe one day she will be able to get out of the shop where she's working and get a better job, but she knows that this is a very remote possibility and there is little chance of it becoming a reality.

Pedro Quiñonez is another young Ecuadorian who had to leave school. From an early age he has lived in Guayaquil, the country's biggest port, as his parents moved there in search of better opportunities for work. His father worked as a builder while his mother took care of their five children. Pedro knows that he has no future without an education. He has made several efforts to find a job, but he only just managed to complete primary school and, without a high-school certificate, he is turned down for all the jobs he applies for.

María and Pedro have visited several different schools to ask if they could enrol, but the answer has always been the same: 'You're much too old to enrol and we cannot accept you'. Both are reluctant to enrol in any other type of edu-

Education should not have an age limit. Ecuador is fighting child and teenage labour through education programmes.

Ana Mercedes Jerez, a new hope for early school leavers in Ecuador.





cation, because what they have always wanted is to attend a normal school with classmates, teachers, breaks, laboratories, sports fields and libraries. But that has not been possible for them, because the schools and colleges have always been designed for people who have not dropped out of school or who only have a little catching up to do.

Today thousands of young Ecuadorians who have been out of school for 3 or more years can resume their studies through a flexible education programme implemented by Ecuador's Ministry of Education.

“

The schools where I tried to enrol told me: 'You're too old to enrol here and we cannot accept you'.

”

María Paucar

This programme is designed for students to cover 3 school years in just 11 months. The students must attend class every day and are given materials and relevant texts, while their teachers are trained to develop a pupil-centred approach to teaching them.

Once they complete the programme, the participants can enrol in any institution they choose to continue their regular high school studies.

A project run by the DYA (Centre for Development and Self-management) with the financial support of the European Union played a key part in developing this programme and making it a reality today. The centre focused its efforts on lending technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to cater for young people like María and Pedro, mobilising local agencies helping prevent child labour and establish-

ing educational services that serve as models for teenagers and young people who have fallen behind in their schooling. Through an agreement with the Ministry of Education, the centre delivered its educational model in September 2014, and since then has supplied technical assistance to cater for 50 000 young people between 15 and 21 years old.

Children who work lose much more than they gain. Combating child and juvenile labour means giving them all access to education. This is what we can learn from Ecuador, and the proof that it works is the flexible education programme for young people who had dropped out of school. This allows them to dream, to achieve their personal goals and to fully exercise their right to education.

The EU is supporting Ecuador to prevent child and juvenile labour through flexible education programmes

- ➔ Around 30 % of young people in Ecuador have fallen severely behind in their schooling.
- ➔ Between 2007 and 2013, the EU gave EUR 75 million to the 10-year education plan through two programmes with sector budget support.
- ➔ Since 2012 the Centre for Development and Self-management has been running the project 'Investing in boys and girls: Ecuador without child labour'.
- ➔ The project has supported the development of a national strategy for educational inclusion.
- ➔ The flexible education programme is the most important initiative in the last 10 years for helping those who have fallen behind in their schooling.
- ➔ The Centre for Development and Self-management has been working since 2006 to prevent child and juvenile labour.

Ana Isabel Pilla was able to return to school in Ecuador.



3 Women and girls



In many parts of the world, the simple fact of being born a girl will already put you at a disadvantage. Many women experience discrimination throughout their lives, for example by being kept out of school as girls, by not being able to find decently paid jobs when they grow up, by not being able to access basic health services for themselves and their children and by being denied their right to social protection and inheritance in old age. Yet give girls the same access to education as boys and women the same resources and opportunities as men and the whole community will benefit. This is especially important in poorer countries and communities, where women are often the backbone of economic life. Battling gender discrimination is not just morally right — it is economically smart as well.



After a hurried visit from her relatives, three health workers travel to help a young woman through a difficult childbirth in rural Kenya.

The struggles of childbirth in a rural community in Kenya

It is 2pm on a bright Saturday afternoon in September in Mandera County in the North Eastern Province of Kenya. The medical team has just concluded a monitoring visit, in partnership with Ministry of Health staff, to supervise and mentor community health workers (CHWs). The visit took place as part of a reproductive, maternal and child health (RMNCH) project implemented by Save the Children and funded by the European Union.

As Mr Abdullahi, the person in charge of the health facility, prepares to lock up, a motorbike swerves to an abrupt stop in the compound and two anxious-looking men dismount. They immediately address Mr Abdullahi in their mother tongue, a Somali dialect. According to what the men say, a young woman has been in labour for almost 2 days and her general condition is worsening. Abdullahi calls out for his colleague, Mohamednur, a nurse. Suddenly, Halima Dabasso, a trained CHW also appears at the health facility. It is evident that the men on the motorbike and Halima have similar concerns and mission.

Mohamednur, Abdullahi and Halima (CHW) approaching the home.



The community health workers know that they need to act fast. They confer for a minute and decide that the pregnant woman must be visited at her home, roughly 5 kilometres from the health facility. The medical personnel take their

basic delivery set and leave quickly to the young woman's house.

Arriving at the village, the health workers enter the 'herio', a traditional Somali hut, to find Maryam lying on the hard, mud floor, drenched in water. She is too weak to speak but obeys commands. Maryam's sister updates them on the situation.

Maryam is only 18 years old and this is her first pregnancy. Labour reportedly commenced nearly 2 days prior. She has not been able to eat since the labour pains started. Her waters broke nearly 10 hours ago. When she fainted about 20 minutes ago, they poured water on her body.

Maryam is gently assisted to a low wooden bed, where a quick examination shows that she is hypoglycaemic. An intravenous line is fixed before the fetoscope confirms that the baby's heart is beating normally.

After examining Maryam, Abdullahi announces that she is fully dilated. Takaba district hospital is about 75 km away on a rough road. There is no delaying the birth; about 15 minutes later, the contractions become stronger. The mother, however, is already exhausted. The team consults urgently and the allocation of roles is done quickly. Mohamednur will massage the abdomen. Halima Dabasso will steady the mother's legs. Abdullahi will conduct the actual delivery.

A further 10 minutes elapse with little progress. Maryam has undergone total female genital mutilation. Because of

the scarring from this, there is no elasticity of the birth canal muscles. Abdullahi decides to assist her by giving her an episiotomy, which helps to widen the birth canal. The baby's head crowns minutes later and a baby girl is born. She is already exhausted and gives a weak cry. Most of her body is blue. She receives first aid and is warmly wrapped up. After 5 minutes, her cry becomes a little stronger. There is a huge feeling of relief amongst everyone in the hut, and the attention moves back to the mother.

Abdullahi addresses Maryam's sister. 'Had Maryam not received medical care within the next 2 to 3 hours, she may have died. Always call us as soon as labour sets in. Do not wait until it is too late.'

As we prepare to bid the new mother and her family farewell, Abdullahi reminds the family to pass by the clinic and collect antibiotics for Maryam.

We arrive back to the town and are met by Maryam's brother. He gestures to Abdullahi and asks if his sister is okay. Abdullahi smiles reassuringly and nods affirmatively. Maryam's brother smiles in relief and then asks, 'How much do we owe you?' Another smile, 'You don't owe me anything, the service is for free', says Abdullahi.

“ Had this mother not received medical care within the next 2 to 3 hours, she may have died. Always call us as soon as labour sets in. Do not wait until it is too late.

”

Mr Abdullahi



Since 2008 the EU is supporting interventions worth EUR 18.3 million focusing on enhancing maternal health, family planning and nutrition

- ➔ The Kenyan maternal mortality rate is 488 deaths per 100 000 live births and infant mortality is 52 deaths per 1 000 live births.
- ➔ The EU's support for this sector covers 21 projects in 15 counties, including areas where there are ongoing conflicts and insecurity.
- ➔ The rate of skilled delivery in Mandera is only 17 %.
- ➔ The Save the Children project in Mandera aims to reach 100 000 women, 20 000 pregnant women and 90 000 children and infants.

The medical personnel cleaning up after the delivery.





From victim to community leader — one Guatemalan woman is taking a stand against gender violence

Rafaela Cotzoyaj lives in a small Mayan community in the department of San Juan Sacatepéquez, about 30 minutes from Guatemala City. At 44 years of age, she is a survivor of both domestic and sexual violence.

Around one in four women of reproductive age are thought to be victims of domestic violence in Guatemala. In 2013 alone, 564 women were killed violently, with more than 7 000 women dying since 2000.

Fortunately, Rafaela changed her life, with the help and knowledge acquired through specialised training sessions organised by the human rights NGO CALDH (Centre for Human Rights Legal Action). Over time, and with the help of CALDH, she transformed from being a shy, abused and illiterate victim into the ‘mother of the community’ and the legal advisor that she is today.

Rafaela’s dream has always been to get an education, and today she is on her way to completing her formal studies. She has also been nominated as a member of the Department Community Council (COCODE) and has worked as a trainer and facilitator for the EU project: ‘Sharing knowl-

By promoting, protecting and enforcing women’s rights indigenous women are being empowered to stand up against violence.

Rafaela Cotzoyaj: from victim to women’s rights advocate and community leader in Guatemala.





edge and power to promote women's rights and prevent violence against women'.

“

I have learned to value myself and to make my own decisions.”

”

Rafaela Cotzajay

During the trainings on sexual and reproductive rights, Rafaela promotes the right of each woman to control her own body. She talks about her own experiences and the importance of understanding that 'to enjoy sexuality, both (women and men) are important and both have to be satisfied'.

Rafaela admits that the violence and discrimination she suffered previously made her 'hate men'. However, the therapeutic help that she received helped her to overcome this too. 'Here I have learned to value myself and to make my own decisions', she says. Rafaela also finds comfort in the knowledge and support she is now able to give other women facing similar challenges.

By helping to promote, protect and enforce the rights of indigenous women in Guatemala, the EU project has helped to reduce violence against women in 17 municipalities.

The challenge is to continue to protect and guarantee the safety of the brave indigenous women who continue the fight to eradicate violence against themselves and their families.

Campaigning against violence against women: 'It's time to talk, to report and receive protection!'



One of the EU's priorities in Guatemala is providing support to strengthen justice and security, human rights and violence prevention for women

- ➔ Around one in four women of reproductive age are thought to be victims of domestic violence in Guatemala.
- ➔ In 2013 alone, 564 women died violently in Guatemala and over 7 000 women have been killed violently since 2000.
- ➔ One major achievement of EU cooperation has been the creation of a system to ensure the protection and services to female victims of violence.
- ➔ The project has helped to prevent violence against women in 17 municipalities.
- ➔ The project has provided culturally relevant psychosocial and legal support to 520 women survivors of domestic violence.
- ➔ The project has trained 600 indigenous women in violence prevention.



Silent no more: empowering young women to speak out about sexual and reproductive health and rights in India

In some more conservative areas in India, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is considered a taboo subject, and discussing it openly particularly among young people, has taken a while to accept. However, the difficulty or novelty of this situation did not prevent these young Indian women from working as peer leaders with the action project in order to pass on information about child marriage, pregnancy, contraception, HIV prevention and care, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and other aspects of sexual health to youth in their village.

Supported by the European Union, the action project empowers young people and especially girls and young women by educating them about issues that are important to them and discussing subjects that no one has talked to them about before. Peer leaders are integral to this work, helping to spread the information to other young people, as they are more likely to listen and learn from peers their own age. The project's partner NGOs in Allahabad and Manipur train youth peer leaders on how to create groups that they then go on to mentor and teach them how to lobby for

Youth are encouraged to discuss their sexual health and to inform themselves and others, giving them a confidence they never had before.

*An action project peer group leader (centre) meets with her youth group members.
Photo credit: India HIV/AIDS Alliance*





district and state-wide policy changes on issues related to young people and sexual and reproductive health.

“ *The villagers used to criticise me because I spoke openly about sexual reproductive rights, which was something ‘nice, conservative girls’ aren’t allowed to talk about. Now other village elders ask me to get their daughters involved.* ”

Savera, peer leader

Savera (name changed), a 20-year-old peer leader, says, ‘I was completely unaware about hygiene and nutrition during menstruation, safe sex, condom use or consensual sex. I also learned so much about HIV prevention and care here’.

Remembering when she first started working as a peer leader, she recalls that ‘the villagers used to call me ‘characterless’ because I spoke openly about sexual reproductive rights, which was something ‘nice, conservative girls’ aren’t allowed to talk about. Now, however, my uncles and other village elders ask me to get their daughters involved in the project’.

An increasing number of girls are doing just that. Another peer leader who joined the action project, Divya (name changed), found the information she received to be helpful on a very personal level. The 19-year-old explains, ‘I met this boy in college 3 years ago and we began to like each other and he asked me to have sex with him. After everything I had learned from this project, I knew that I didn’t want to have sex with him, that I had the right to say ‘No’ and so I refused.

I’m happy that I had the right information and was able to protect myself from potentially ruining my life’.

It is important to note that having the right information isn’t enough if it isn’t coupled with the confidence to share the information or to search for more information. While speaking about her attendance in health camps and information-sharing meetings with doctors, Savera said, ‘I would never have dreamed of speaking to a doctor even about my own health problems. Now I can openly ask doctors questions about sexual health and other issues and I can see how amazed they are that I, being a village girl, am able to confidently ask these things’. Kavita added, ‘I used to be ashamed when they taught us about sexual and reproductive health and rights but now there is no shame and our perspectives have changed. Now I feel confident and at ease sharing information about these issues’.

With the right type of support and access to information, the action project is building the capacity of these girls and young women leaders and offering them a sense of confidence they never had before, while also empowering them to change the social landscape of their villages, one peer group at a time.

The EU is supporting India's health sector reform agenda focused on improving health systems and services, in particular reproductive health services

- ➔ India has a high fertility rate, a young marriage age for girls and increasing sexually transmitted infections (STI) amongst adolescents.
- ➔ Births in the age group of 15-19 years contribute to 17 % of the total fertility rate.
- ➔ The project supports community mobilisation and advocacy to improve sexual and reproductive health of young people.
- ➔ Peer-led discussions strengthened and empowered CSOs to advocate for more responsive policies addressing the sexual health of young people.
- ➔ Youth partnership platforms (YPPs) were developed to link youth group networks together, and youth information centres were established.

A youth group leader in Allahabad speaks to members of her group.

Photo credit: India HIV/AIDS Alliance





The Pacific has the world's lowest representation of women in parliament. A new radio drama series is helping to change this.

A Time to Stand — promoting women in parliament in the Pacific region

When Meri was first approached about standing as a candidate in the national elections, she was not sure she could do it. When she asked her husband Billy what he thought, he was far from happy.

'Your job is here... at home looking after your children. And me', he said. 'It's not right, women doing these things'.

As an agricultural extension officer, Meri had already been active in national associations, speaking out on issues related to agriculture and chairing important committees. Standing for election, however, was another matter.

'It seemed that while I had the right to work and earn money for our family, I didn't have the right to stand for office where I might help the family more, or even the community', Meri said.

Meri and Billy are fictional characters but the challenges Meri faces are real. They are at the heart of a 10-part radio drama series called 'A Time to Stand', which was created as part of the Strongim Mere project in the Solomon Islands, a joint project by the European Union, UN Women and Vois Blong Mere. It aims to encourage Pacific Islanders to engage in political participation and to encourage more



*A time to stand for women's political empowerment in the Solomon Islands.
Photo credit: UN Women*



women to stand up and have a voice in key leadership and decision-making positions. The series was broadcast in Pidgin — the local language — ahead of the Solomon Islands national elections in November 2014. It was also launched online in English.

The Pacific has the world's lowest levels of women representation in parliament, with a combined average of 5.5 % (this figure comprises the 15 countries covered by UN Women in the Pacific), while only one out of the current 50 members of parliament in the Solomon Islands is a woman.

'With this radio drama, UN Women wants to encourage Pacific societies to reflect on what a leader looks like and the roles that women can and should play in politics. 'Radio is such a powerful medium here in the Pacific and this innovative series will trigger discussions about women and leadership in every house, village and community across the region', says Nicolas Burniat, UN Women's Deputy Representative at the Multi-Country Office in Fiji.

The EU is supporting the Strongim Mere project in partnership with UN Women to increase women's political participation across the Pacific. It incorporates empowerment workshops for media and secondary and tertiary students, leadership training for women candidates and technical support for governments. It also enlists female parliamentarians to share their experiences and male parliamentarians to speak out about the need for and advantages of having women in leadership roles.

'The EU supports women empowerment and participation in politics to help the Solomon Islands make full use of their potential. This radio drama accurately depicts the challenges that women here face when they try to participate in politics in a male-dominated culture, as well as how to overcome them. The drama helps to disseminate this message to all provinces, constituencies and villages of the Solomon Islands, especially in rural areas where it is most needed', explained the EU Ambassador to the Solomon Islands, Leonidas Tezapsidis.

There is clear evidence that changes are taking place. An amendment to Samoa's constitution means that, from the 2016 elections onwards, 10 % of seats in parliament will be filled by women; Vanuatu has passed a temporary special measure that mandates a third of municipal council seats be held by women; and in September Fiji elected eight women to their parliament (16 %), one of whom was named the country's first female speaker of the house.

Cultural projects such as 'A Time to Stand' can make a big difference in changing first perceptions and then reality.

“ Radio is such a powerful medium here in the Pacific and this innovative series will trigger discussions about women and leadership in every house, village and community across the region.

”
Nicolas Burniat



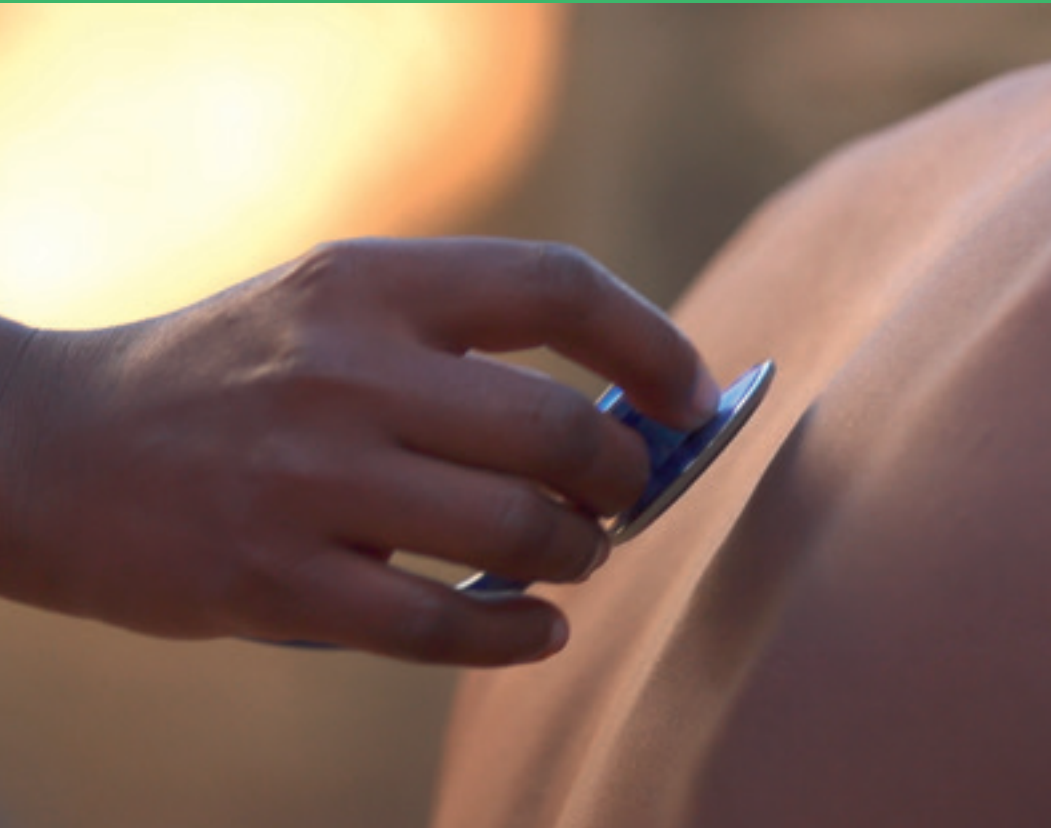
'A Time to Stand' is part of the larger 2-year Strongim Mere project aimed at increasing women's political participation in the Solomon Islands

- ➔ The Pacific has the lowest levels of women representation in parliament at only 5.5 %, while only one out of the 50 Members of Parliament in the Solomon Islands is a woman.
- ➔ The EU contributes around EUR 285 000 to the Strongim Mere project to be implemented in 2014 and 2015.
- ➔ The Strongim Mere project also includes leadership training and empowerment workshops for aspiring female political candidates.
- ➔ 'A Time To Stand' has so far reached an estimated 430 000 people through being broadcast to Honiara and more than 5 000 rural villages.

*'A time to stand' promotional material.
Photo credit: UN Women*



4 Health



Health is a basic human right. When the international community set the millennium development goals in 2000, many of them referred both directly and indirectly to health. However, progress in this field — with particular regard to women's and children's health — has been slow in many countries. So things haven't exactly turned out as planned. How can we learn from this and break the vicious circle in which poverty undermines health, while poor health compounds poverty?



An Ebola survivor sets out to serve his community with the help of the NGO ALIMA, supported by the EU.

An Ebola survivor turns to help his community recover in Guinea

Towards the end of 2014, the life of 26-year-old Sâa Yawo Koumassadouno, also known as 'Papus', was turned upside down not once, but twice.

It all started on 9 October 2014 at the Ebola treatment centre (CTE) in the town of Guéckédou in the Guinée Forésièrè region of Guinea. Two days after being admitted to the centre (run by Médecins Sans Frontières [MSF] and financed by the European Union), Papus was informed that he had tested positive for Ebola, the dreadful haemorrhagic fever devastating the country.

Having just recently buried his father, a former surgeon who had died of a disease with similar symptoms to Ebola, Papus took the news philosophically: 'I knew that if you suspected you might have Ebola, coming to the treatment centre would quickly increase your chance of survival. That's what I did, of my own accord, so I was very confident'.

The staff of the CTE took meticulous care of Papus and all the other patients. He ate well, drank water regularly, took his medicine as he was supposed to and had regular visits from his family and loved ones, which did much to cheer him up. After making an astonishingly quick recovery, Papus set about helping the centre. He did not hesitate to share

*Papus, an Ebola fever survivor returns to help his community recover in Guinea.
Photo credit: MSF*



his tent with other patients in order to take better care of them.

On 20 October of the same year, Papus' life took yet another turn. Just 13 days after being admitted to the centre in Guéckédou, the results of his third laboratory test came through: he was completely cured!

'When they told me "Papus, you're cured", I cried', he recalls, visibly moved.

A new life awaited him, although the feelings of joy at having regained his health were tempered by sadness at losing six relatives and several friends and acquaintances to Ebola.

Upon his return to N'Zérékoré, the capital of the Guinée Forestière region and another Ebola hot spot, Papus devoted all his energy to combating the disease. 'I told myself that it would be selfish to stay at home and do nothing', said the young man and father of a 7-year-old child.

With the support of the European Union, the NGO ALIMA (Alliance for International Medical Action) is running a treatment centre in the village of Loulé, some 15 minutes from N'Zérékoré. Papus took advantage of the opportunity this presented and attended all the information sessions. When rumours started to fly about the waste incinerator at the Ebola treatment centre, he managed to convince even the most sceptical village residents that the incinerator was

not a crematorium furnace and that nobody would come and steal patients' organs and blood. A survivor's word carries considerable weight — all the more so in Papus' case, seeing as he was fortunate enough to never have been stigmatised by his community.

ALIMA's Ebola treatment centre opened at the beginning of December 2014. Papus started work there as a health promoter a week and a half later. Since then, he has talked about the illness to his neighbours and raised awareness of Ebola in local radio broadcasts, churches and public places. In doing so he is honouring the wish of his late father, who advised him to 'always strive to save lives'.

At a conference held in Brussels on 3 March 2015 on post-Ebola recovery, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said: 'Ebola is a challenge that we must continue to tackle collectively, quickly and for the long term, also to help make sure that no other epidemic will have such a devastating impact in the future'.

Papus says he is thrilled to work for ALIMA and in so doing help his community and Guinea more generally to defeat the Ebola epidemic.

“ *When I see someone leaving the centre cured of the disease, I am proud of the knowledge that I played a part in helping them recover.* ”

**Sâa Yawo Koumassadouno,
Ebola survivor**



'When I see someone leaving the centre cured of the disease, I am proud of the knowledge that I played a part in helping them recover', he says with delight. He is also happy to be able to provide some modest support for the rest of his family thanks to the income he receives from ALIMA.

Having been trained as a lab assistant, Papus' dream is to enrol in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Conakry and continue his studies. In the meantime, he is devoting himself whole heartedly to the fight against Ebola.

*The EU has been supporting organisations like Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) to respond effectively to the Ebola crisis.
Photo credit: MSF*



The EU has been at the forefront of international efforts since the very beginning of the Ebola epidemic, the largest and most complex of its kind ever experienced

- ➔ The EU has contributed EUR 1.2 billion and other resources towards fighting the disease.
- ➔ MSF received EUR 2.9 million to open Ebola treatment centres in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the countries hardest hit by the disease.
- ➔ The aid sent to Guinea, Mali and Senegal was used to purchase ambulances, raise awareness and educate communities in those countries.
- ➔ Since April 2014, the EU has provided MSF with EUR 981 000 to care for patients in Conakry and Guékédou in the Guinée Forestière region.
- ➔ EU funding of EUR 4.5 million enabled ALIMA to open an Ebola treatment centre in N'Zérékoré in the far south of Guinea in December 2014.
- ➔ As of the start of 2015, nearly 1 000 patients have left the Ebola treatment centres in Guinea, cured of the disease.



Bringing clean water and a smile to people living with disabilities in Uganda

Margaret Amongo, 43, is a mother of four and a person living with a disability in Bobolo village in Amuria District in the north east of Uganda. It is an area that faced the brunt of 2 decades of civil war. For as far back as Margaret can remember, if there is one challenge that has hampered her life, it is access to water.

In many parts of rural Africa, the majority of people living with disabilities, older people and those living with chronic illnesses spend most of their lives marginalised by society and deprived of human dignity. In five post-conflict districts in north-eastern Uganda, the EU is supporting the implementation of a project delivering safe water, sanitation and hygiene education, in partnership with WaterAid Uganda under the EU Water Facility. Access to water is fundamental to human dignity and health.

‘Before there was a safe water point in Bobolo village, we could only collect water from the swamp down the valley’, Margaret says. ‘I could not push my wheelchair uphill with a big water container. As a result I would have to go without enough water for some days or wait for my children to come back from school to help me push the tricycle’.

In rural Africa, improved access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education transforms lives, especially of those already disadvantaged.

Margaret Amongo: easy access to safe water and good sanitation restores dignity and transforms lives in Uganda.





A little over a year ago, however, things changed for the better when the water, sanitation and hygiene project was launched in Margaret's home village. Through the project

run by WaterAid Uganda, a borehole was constructed in the village, bringing safe water to Bobolo. 'My life has never been the same with safe water nearby. It now takes me less than 15 minutes to collect water', rejoiced Margaret.

Margaret was also able to construct an accessible latrine and a bath shelter big enough for her wheelchair by using locally available materials. The project even helped her acquire a rain-water-harvesting tank in her compound. 'During rainy seasons I don't have to go to the village borehole anymore. The tank collects enough water to last me a long time', Margaret says.

To improve sanitation and good hygiene practices in the village, the project used a community approach, clustering the households in the village for sensitisation, capacity building and initiating actions. The village clusters then led the construction of sanitation and hygiene facilities for people with disabilities and households with other vulnerable people. Locally available materials and construction methods were used to construct these facilities. Construction methods included the use of dry grass bundles to construct curtain

“ Before there was a safe water point in the village, we could only collect water from the swamp down the valley. I could not push my wheelchair uphill with a big water container. As a result I would have to go without enough water for some days. ”

Margaret Amongo

walls for bathing enclosures and the use of four-litre jerry cans to make a hand-washing facility — better known as tippy taps — for the toilet.

Margaret is one of several people in Bobolo village who have benefited from the better sanitation. With improved access to inclusive safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, Margaret has ample time to participate in and contribute to village meetings, engage in household chores and earn a living by plaiting people's hair and mending clothes. Margaret's experience provides an inspiring example of how improved access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education can transform the lives of people with disabilities, older people and those living with chronic illnesses.

Margaret is not alone. Many community members, under the guidance of their cluster heads, are using the acquired knowledge to innovate and make their sanitation facilities accessible. WaterAid Uganda and the other project partners regularly use the lessons learned from this work to influence policymakers to make inclusive water and sanitation a reality for all in Uganda.

The EU Water Facility helps improve access to drinking water and sanitation for disadvantaged populations and contributes to improving sustainable water governance and management

- ➔ Access to safe water and sanitation is vital and is a key prerequisite for reducing child and maternal mortality and combating disease.
- ➔ 17 projects were implemented for a total of EUR 39.4 million in Uganda through the EU Water Facility.
- ➔ This project in north-eastern Uganda will last 5 years at a cost of EUR 2 million.
- ➔ It is being implemented in the post-conflict districts of Amuria, Katakwi, Masindi, Kibuku, Pallisa and Napak.
- ➔ Since the project's inception in May 2011, 100 913 more people have access to safe water.
- ➔ 231 049 more people have access to inclusive sanitation and hygiene education.

Margaret has time to engage in other economic activities.





Thanks to new emergency transport, young mother Lizzy was transferred from the village clinic to a hospital 180 km away — just in time.

High-speed delivery: life-saving ambulances in Zimbabwe

Elizabeth Moyana is happy to be alive. The slender 24-year-old from Mabeya village in Chipinge, who prefers to be called Lizzy, is the fortunate survivor of a harrowing 12-and-a-half-hour labour that took her on a knife-edge journey of 180 km from Mabeya Clinic to Chiredzi General Hospital — and ended in a big surprise.

Lizzy's home village of Mabeya, Chipinge, is in Zimbabwe's eastern province of Manicaland. In this drought-prone rural area, poverty is rife and jobs are scarce. Lizzy hasn't been able to find work and her husband had to move to South Africa as a migrant worker to earn the income desperately needed for his wife and their two children, daughter Judith (3) and son Bongai (6). Despite the daily hardships, Lizzy was elated when she found out that she was pregnant again. 'Children are always a blessing', she says.

Despite looking forward to the new addition to her family, Lizzy's previous experiences of giving birth left her feeling apprehensive. Many of the clinics in villages such as Mabeya are insufficiently equipped with instruments, drugs and skilled attendants. In an emergency, this puts both mother and child in danger, as delays in reaching a better-equipped health facility can prove fatal. 'I feared that



*Sister, Zamisa and mother, Lizzy Moyana with the quadruplets.
Photo credit: UNFPA*



something may go wrong. I don't have transport, the clinic never used to have transport and I was anxious about what would happen in case of complications', says Lizzy. Mabeya clinic, however, had received one of 63 all-terrain ambulances distributed to rural, district and mission hospitals by the European Union through a UNFPA programme on maternal health.

As Lizzy's due date arrived in June 2014, she went into labour at Mabeya clinic and everything seemed to be going well. She gave birth to a boy: a small baby at 1.8 kg, but otherwise healthy. Then things took a turn for the worse. As both Lizzy and the staff at Mabeya clinic were shocked to discover, she was carrying a further three babies yet to be delivered. The situation turned critical: Lizzy was in pain and urgently needed proper medical attention.

'I was terrified', Lizzy recalls. 'I thought I was going to meet my maker right there'. To her surprise, she was ushered into an ambulance and ferried to St Peter's Hospital at Chечеche Growth Point. 'Doctors there immediately scanned me. I saw them shaking their heads; they said they couldn't help me. I was whisked away again, back into the ambulance, and we dashed towards Chiredzi General Hospital, 180 km from Mabeya'.

Sister Langelisha Zamisa, the nurse in charge of the hospital's maternity ward, says Lizzy's condition on arrival was very serious. 'When she was wheeled in here she had lost a lot of blood and suffered postpartum haemorrhages and

many other complications because she had been in labour for so long', she recalls. Sister Zamisa had Lizzy taken into theatre right away, where doctors operated on her to deliver the three remaining babies — a boy, a girl and another boy. The outcome astonished even the experienced Sister Zamisa: 'Despite the long hours of labour, all the nurslings were healthy. These really are true miracle babies'.

Five years ago, Lizzy's story might well have ended less happily. Zimbabwe's health sector was on the brink of collapse. The economic and political crisis had led to chronic underfunding and the health sector battled with a large-scale skills flight, outdated hospital equipment and stockouts of essential medicines and commodities. The maternal mortality ratio reached an all-time high of 960 per 100 000 births.

Now a busy mother of six, Lizzy isn't too concerned with the figures. She knows for sure, though, that her life hung by a thread: 'I wouldn't be alive today without the ambulance that transferred me so speedily to the hospital and to my rescue'.

“ *Despite the long hours of labour, all the nurslings were healthy. These really are true miracle babies.* ”

Sister Zamisa



*Happy to be alive: Lizzy Moyana and her quadruplets.
Photo credit: UNFPA*



The EU supports the health sector in Zimbabwe through the funding of the Health Transition Fund (HTF) managed by Unicef and coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Child Care

- ➔ The European Union has provided EUR 75 million over 5 years to the HTF.
- ➔ The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has fallen from 960 to 614 deaths per 100 000 live births since 2010.
- ➔ The trend is positive but the figure is still too high and far from the 174 set target under the millennium development goals.
- ➔ Skilled attendance at birth has increased to 80 % which can be attributed to multiple efforts that include the revitalising of maternity waiting homes (MWH) programme.
- ➔ 63 ambulances were distributed under the MWH programme, implemented by UNFPA.
- ➔ 150 000 women in 105 health facility-based MWH benefitted from the intervention.
- ➔ As part of the programme, MWH were refurbished, training was provided and awareness-raising activities were conducted.



Fighting hunger: help for malnourished children in Pakistan

Sajjad Jatt was only 9 months old but his parents, Nathi and Ali Jatt, were scared he might not live much longer. Their youngest son, baby Sajjad, had not been eating well and had lost a lot of weight. Having suffered two miscarriages and the death of one baby at just 3 days old, Mrs Nathi was praying for better luck with Sajjad. She and her husband were doing everything in their power to help their infant son — even taking out a hefty loan to pay for 3 months' worth of expensive medical treatment. The treatment, however, had failed to make a difference.

When Merlin's nutrition experts visited the couple's village of Haji Umer Jat in January 2014, they examined Sajjad and found him to be severely malnourished. Along with a fever and diarrhoea, the condition was putting Sajjad's life in danger. They recommended immediately sending Sajjad to the nutrition stabilisation centre at a hospital in the district capital Thatta. However, this posed a real problem for Sajjad's parents, who had no one to look after their other children. Mr Jatt couldn't take time off work, as his job as a security guard brought in just 3 000 Rupees (ca. EUR 27) a month. Hardly enough for the family to get by on — especially once the repayment instalment of the loan he took out for earlier treatments had been deducted.

With an EU-funded project, Merlin is helping malnourished children like Sajjad and their families.

Baby Sajjad: getting a health check.





Fortunately, Merlin staff were able to refer Sajjad to the nearby health facility where the EU-WINS project had enabled an outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP). Here, the medical officer immediately prescribed the medicines

needed to deal with Sajjad's complications at home and provided Mrs Nathi with a week's worth of sachets of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) for Sajjad. The staff showed her how to feed the RUTF to Sajjad and how much to give him. RUTF is a highly nutritious peanut-based paste in a plastic wrapper, which requires no water, preparation or refrigeration. Two sachets per day are equivalent to 1 000 calories and are taken in addition to regular food and breast milk. Sajjad's health improved dramatically. In just a week, he gained 300 g in weight and 0.4 cm in height — rapid growth and evidence of a healthy appetite.

As Mrs Nathi had previously stopped breastfeeding, Merlin experts advised her to resume and continue until Sajjad reached the age of two. Though sceptical at first, she accepted the staff's advice on exercises promoting 're-lactation'. She's now happily breastfeeding again and says it makes her feel relaxed. After 2 months of treatment, Sajjad was looking good on all indicators and had achieved the healthy weight of 7.7 kg.

“

We had lost hope after continuous expensive treatment for 3 months, but now Sajjad is doing well. I feel so happy that he's eating properly and has the proper nutritional supplies, guidance and care at no cost.

”

Mrs Nathi

Mrs Nathi couldn't be happier: 'We had lost hope after continuous expensive treatment for 3 months, but now Sajjad is doing well. I feel so happy that he's eating properly and has the proper nutritional supplies, guidance and care at no cost. This means I can give some time to my other children and to my domestic responsibilities', she says. She also has more time for hand embroidery, an important supplementary source of family income.

Sajjad's father agrees. 'Thanks to Merlin, Sajjad is now healthy. I am very thankful to the nutrition team who are helping poor children in Thatta District. I am also thankful to God that my Sajjad is now so much more active and energetic', says Mr Jatt. Both parents are showing their gratitude by getting actively involved. Mrs Nathi is now the leader of a breastfeeding group in the village and does voluntary nutrition work. So far, she has identified five cases of severely malnourished children, all of whom have been referred to the OTP for admission. Mr Jatt is an active member of the village health committee and works as a volunteer, helping the nutrition team trace defaulters and absentees.

The EU-funded project, EU-WINS, started in 2013 and has helped thousands of children and their families

- ➔ Pakistan has high maternal and child mortality, the under-five mortality rate is 87 per 1 000 live births.
- ➔ The project has screened almost 160 000 children under five and almost 50 000 pregnant or lactating women for malnutrition.
- ➔ Almost 33 000 children screened have had severe or moderate acute malnutrition.
- ➔ Over 7 000 pregnant or lactating women were also diagnosed with moderate acute malnutrition.
- ➔ Merlin runs an OTP to treat patients locally, including vaccination and nutrition services.

Mrs Nathi holding a healthy baby Sajjad.





Malalay, a young lady suffering mental health issues, finds treatment in Afghanistan's only mental health hospital.

Psychologist Ms. Karshna Samadayar providing psychological support to patients like Malalay at the Kabul mental hospital, the only psychiatric hospital in Afghanistan.



You're not alone: tackling mental health in Afghanistan

Malalay (fictitious name to protect her identity) was born in Maidan Wardak, a province in central-eastern Afghanistan. She is one of six children and, since she was five, has lived in fear. Her father was often violent at home. Every day she would dread the moment her father returned from work, not knowing what his mood would be like.

As she grew older, she learned that he was suffering from mental problems that caused depression and erratic, aggressive behaviour, as well as psychosomatic issues.

By the time Malalay turned 13, her family moved to Kabul. Like many other Afghans that moved to Kabul from the countryside looking for better opportunities, they found themselves living in one of the many poor neighbourhoods of the Afghan capital.

By then her father's illness had been diagnosed and medical treatment had helped him. But 8 years of constant distress had taken their toll on the psychological wellbeing of Malalay. She was depressed, she was feeling constant physical discomfort and her hands and feet would often get cold without any apparent reason. While having tantrums she would mistreat all those around her, throw objects and cry.



'I feel exhausted and time does not pass. The world is tight and dark for me. [...] Life doesn't have any importance for me. Sometimes I think about suicide but then I think about my father and don't kill myself'.

Mental health problems are widespread in Afghanistan. A survey conducted in 2004, the last available, found 68 % of respondents suffering from depression, 72 % from anxiety and 42 % from post-traumatic stress disorders. Unfortunately, poor knowledge, cultural barriers and the lack

of trained professionals and adequate infrastructure often prevent those affected from recognising the problem or seeking support in due time.

Malalay, now aged 16, found her way to the Kabul mental health hospital, the only tertiary health facility addressing mental health problems in the whole country. Her doctor used to work there and, knowing about her problems, had advised her to seek professional support.

possibility for women to seek care in a country where culture still prevents many of them from seeing a male doctor.

She is already feeling better. Her path towards making a full recovery and regaining her wellbeing may still be long, but now she has professionals to talk to from whom she receives guidance and support.

'I am coming to the hospital to be cured. I am grateful to my doctor, my psychotherapist and my psychosocial counsellor who have helped me a lot. I feel I can improve a lot'.

“ *I am coming to the hospital to be cured. I am grateful to my doctor, my psychotherapist and my psychosocial counsellor who have helped me a lot. I feel I can improve a lot.* ”

”

Malalay

There she met with a psychosocial counsellor and a psychotherapist, who have been working with her ever since. They are both women. Having female doctors, nurses, midwives, psychotherapists and counsellors has greatly improved the



Ms. Karshna Samadayar, psychologist with the Kabul mental health hospital, during a consultation with a female patient suffering from psychological issues after war traumas and family loss.



The EU has contributed to the improvement of the mental health status of the Afghan population since 2007, when mental health became part of the basic package of health services provision

- ➔ A survey in Afghanistan found 72 % of respondents suffering from anxiety and 42 % from post-traumatic stress disorders.
- ➔ The EU has provided EUR 7 million to mental health programmes in Afghanistan.
- ➔ The EU supported International Medical Corps to renovate the Kabul mental health hospital, the only hospital providing psychiatric services.
- ➔ The EU supports the capacity building of mental health professionals, mainly psychologists and psychiatrists.
- ➔ The EU supported the International Psychosocial Organisation to train 140 psychosocial counsellors in 34 provinces.

5 Peace and security



Seventy years after the end of the Second World War, conflict and violence still keep countries and their people locked in cycles of insecurity and poverty, leaving any attempts at sustainable development hopelessly compromised. The best way of tackling them is to take a collective and comprehensive approach — from early warning and prevention to early recovery, stabilisation and peace-building. Development policies and programmes should address conflict, build resilience and help affected countries return to a sustainable development path so that their people can live in peaceful, stable societies.



This Filipino village is dealing with one of the most hazardous legacies of modern warfare: unexploded ordnance.

From battleground to playground in the Philippines

‘I’m so happy to see people bringing hope to our lives. We couldn’t return to our village because our houses were burned during the war and I’m afraid that there is still unexploded ordnance around. We need help to clear these dangers and to rebuild our village’, says Tantua Dikatula, a 65-year-old Muslim and former resident of Lumbac village in southern Philippines.

This follows an unexploded ordnance (UXO)-risk education session in her village delivered by the NGO Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD, Swiss Foundation for Mine-clearing in English). UXO are grenades, mortar shells, anti-tank missiles, rockets, aircraft bombs that were fired or dropped but have yet to explode.

‘After what you’ve taught me, I wouldn’t pick up an UXO even if someone offered me a million pesos’, says Mrs Mondejar, a Christian resident of the nearby village of Inudaran, following the presentation.

Both women, Christian and Muslim, belong to mixed communities affected by armed conflict. Rebels, militias and security forces in the southern Philippines have been fighting each other for over 4 decades, resulting in the loss of an estimated 120 000 lives and the displacement of over 2 million people.



Teaching local children of the dangers of Unexploded Ordnance.



In 2000, one of the main rebel groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) launched a number of attacks in the area. In response, the government declared an ‘all-out war’. Both women’s villages were caught up in the fighting.

Inudaran, which means ‘lucky’ in the local language, was turned into a bloody battlefield overnight. The fighting involved shelling, mortar bombardment, aerial bombing and ground combat. After suffering heavy casualties, MILF rebels were forced to retreat into the hills.

After the fighting ended, the destruction was laid bare. All the villagers had left the district — Inudaran had a population of zero in the official 2001 census — and most of the buildings were destroyed beyond repair. This included the only local elementary school, today a ruin, riddled with bullet holes and shrapnel marks.

This was not the only legacy. The few who dared to return soon encountered one of the most hazardous legacies of modern warfare: UXO.

One of those who came back to the village was 15-year-old Nelito Tokiro, who was seriously injured after he found a mortar bomb under a coconut tree. He dismantled it and it exploded whilst he was playing with the fuse. Having never seen a mortar bomb before, he was not aware of the dangers.

FSD teams carry out mines- and UXO-risk education to inform affected communities of the dangers and safe behaviours to adopt. As part of the process, the teams report any device found to police and army explosive ordnance disposal teams and relay requests for UXO clearance and other assistance.

Today Inudaran is making an effort to overcome its dreadful past. As the parties to the conflict have brokered a peace agreement after more than 16 years of on-and-off negotiations, peace and order have been re-established and the different religious groups live together side by side. In 2011, the village launched its new motto, ‘From battleground to playground’, as it hosted the first of its annual long-board competitions on what they claim to be the longest racetrack for this sport in the whole of Asia. At least some of the destroyed houses have been rebuilt and new buildings like a medical centre and a day care centre have been erected. However, much more remains to be done with the local school still in ruins and many unexploded ordnance leaving the population at risk.

“ *I’m so happy to see people bringing hope to our lives*

”

Tantua Dikatula



Since 2009, the EU is supporting the peace process in the Philippines. It includes direct assistance to the peace negotiations, monitoring of the humanitarian and human rights situation and confidence-building and recovery activities

- ➔ Mine-risk education is part of an EU-funded project of FSD in partnership with the Philippines campaign to ban landmines.
- ➔ There is an agreement between the Philippine Government and the MILF to jointly clear explosive remnants of war.
- ➔ One third of the 330 villages surveyed are contaminated with UXO.
- ➔ There have been 79 mine and UXO victims.
- ➔ Risk education training has been delivered to over 47 000 people.
- ➔ The project aims to benefit 122 000 people through freeing up 65 000 hectares of land that may contain UXO.

BABALAH! Warning signs in the community.





Another chance to be a child in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

'When I dance, I feel good; I feel powerful and proud,' says 16-year-old Jean Gulesa*. Jean is one of the 46 children sharing in the recreational and creative activities at a children's 'safe learning space' in Maibano village, Kalehe territory in South Kivu. 'My mother died when I was a baby and my father is a soldier; I've only seen him twice in my whole life'.

This is the heartrending story of many children in this village of some 9 000 residents in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A story of loss and struggle as a result of a war they know little about. The persistent conflict in eastern DRC has gravely affected thousands of children. Many have seen the death of parents, relatives or siblings, experienced physical and sexual violation and suffered untold emotional trauma. Millions were deprived of a 'normal' childhood, one that includes a formal education.

Surrounded by rising ridges, Maibano village is calm for now and has been since last December, when the most recent attack occurred. The population here is a mix of families displaced from villages beyond the hills. Most of the native residents of Maibano have been displaced before and many of them multiple times.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has left many children traumatised. Providing them with an education is one way to alleviate their suffering.

The EU Children of peace project implemented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo targets at least 2 000 of the most vulnerable conflict-affected children in the eastern part of the country. Photo credit: EU/ECHO/ Martin Karimi





The education system is already very weak throughout the whole country. The cycles of conflicts in the east have made education take a turn for the worse. Some schools have

repeatedly closed down due to insecurity, gravely disrupting the learning process. In Maibano, like most parts of rural eastern DRC, the schooling infrastructure is poor. It is difficult to find and keep trained teachers in these remote hotbeds of conflict.

Desire Baraka* is 17 years old and an orphan since a young age. Her only relative is her elder sister, who got married and left Maibano village. 'I live at the mercy of good Samaritans who took me in as their daughter. I help with chores and sometimes in the farm; now I've started coming to this learning centre. I never attended school when growing up, but I'm now learning how to read and write'. Desire is attending the accelerated learning programme that targets children between the ages of 13 and 18 who never had a chance to go to school.

'In emergencies and in particular in protracted crises like in the DRC, education can play a crucial role in sustaining lives and alleviating suffering by giving protection to affected children and youth', says Annabelle Vasseur, the European Commission's humanitarian aid advisor based in Bukavu.

“

In emergencies and in particular in protracted crises like in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, education can play a crucial role in sustaining lives and alleviating suffering by giving protection to affected children and youth.

”

Annabelle Vasseur, the European Commission's humanitarian aid advisor in Bukavu

'As in other sectors of humanitarian assistance, it is critical that the assistance reaches the most affected zones and populations. However, this selection can be difficult in a country like the DRC where education is also affected by poverty and weak governance'.

Through the EU Children of Peace project, the EU is aiming to give 2 000 children affected by conflict in the DRC an education. Education is crucial for both the protection and the development of all children, especially those affected by conflict. This initiative is meant to give children psychosocial support and help create some sense of normality.

'Children do not readily identify guns as a threat. They are used to seeing armed men around', says Justin Kaseke, from War Child Holland, the coordinator of the EU Children of Peace project in the DRC. 'But they easily identify the effects of the conflict on their lives and in the community'.

War Child Holland acknowledges that there are still gaping needs. 'Lack of education is a huge problem here', explains Justin. 'A very high number of children do not get a chance to attend formal education, and with the EU Children of Peace project we are only reaching a small section'.

The EU Children of Peace initiative is boosting the quality of education in four locations within South Kivu through training of teachers, providing teaching and learning material, giving children safe recreational and learning spaces, offering basic education and vocational training and facilitating

Through the EU Children of Peace initiative, the EU aims to turn children of war into children of peace. Access to education is one of the best tools to help girls and boys build a long-term future

- ➔ The initiative funds projects for children in conflict-affected regions that provide access to education and psychological support.
- ➔ To date, the EU has allocated EUR 12.7 million to Children of Peace projects around the world (EUR 1.39 million to DRC projects).
- ➔ Over 40 000 children formerly associated with armed groups, victims of violence or unaccompanied minors have accessed education in the DRC.
- ➔ Around 270 000 boys and girls worldwide have benefitted from the initiative so far.
- ➔ In 2014, the EU provided EUR 63 million in life-saving assistance to the DRC and refugees in neighbouring countries.
- ➔ In the DRC, decades of conflict have inflicted a heavy blow on education. Many schools have been destroyed or closed.

‘catch-up’ education for children who have missed school for a short duration of time.

Desire Baraka is learning the alphabet, but she will soon join vocational training where she will earn skills in tailoring. ‘Once I learn how to stitch clothes, I will work to sustain myself’, she says.

As for Jean, the soft-spoken young man hopes to complete his secondary education and become a professional musician. ‘I started dancing at the age of six. When I dance, everything feels alright; I don’t think about my problems anymore. This is what I want to do in life’.

* Names have been altered to protect the identity of the children.

*Children in the learning centre in Maibano village, Kalehe territory, in South Kivu, DRC.
Photo credit: ECHO/Martin Karimi*





Over 1.2 million people have been displaced in Ukraine; organisations like Vostok SOS work tirelessly to make their lives easier.

Reaching out to those who have lost everything in Ukraine

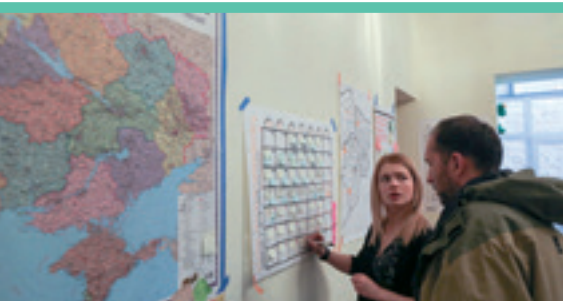
After spending weeks under constant shelling, Maryna Annenkova and her 4-year-old daughter Sofia left the war-torn eastern Ukrainian city of Krasny Luch. Located in the Luhansk Oblast province, Krasny Luch had been taken over by armed militants. Maryna and her daughter fled to Kyiv to start a new life.

Maryna is one of over 1.2 million internally displaced people registered in Ukraine at the end of April 2015, according to the United Nations.

When they arrived Maryna had no idea how they would make it through autumn without a job and no place to live. Fortunately, the Vostok SOS office was there to help.

Vostok SOS (East SOS) is a refugee support centre that helps internally displaced people as well as those still living in the war zone. The initiative was launched with the help of the European Union and began working in April 2014.

Planning at Vostok SOS office.



The Vostok SOS office became a second home for many who were forced to leave their homes. Its four rooms are piled high with boxes of clothes and supplies, and the walls are covered with maps and to-do lists.

The initiative was originally started by activists from Postup, a Luhansk-based human rights organisation forced to move to Kyiv after rebels took over the city.

‘Most of the people on our team personally know what it means to be a refugee’, explains Dvoretzka, who fled her native Crimea following the Russian annexation of the peninsula.

The team, which consists of some 35 volunteers mainly from eastern Ukraine, works around the clock helping refugees from occupied Donbas and Crimea. Since the initiative was launched half a year ago the team has helped nearly 11 000 people to find temporary shelter. They also provide assistance on how to register in a new location, which is required in order to receive government payments, and legal aid.

Maryna is thankful for the help she received. ‘They helped find warm clothes for me and my daughter Sofiia, and later for my husband’, she explains. ‘They also provided us with a care package, which included everything we urgently needed’, she recalls.

Oleksandra and her team also keep track of hostages. She says it is one of the most difficult parts of her job. Their hotline receives hundreds of calls a day. ‘People can call at 3 a.m. when they are in trouble or if they find out relatives have been captured’, she says.

She recalls they received up to 500 phone calls per day in summer when the anti-terrorist operation was most active.

Now Vostok SOS has information about some 800 hostages and stays in touch with their families. They also have people on the ground to negotiate hostage releases wherever possible.

‘Most of the hostages admit they were tortured’, Dvoretzka says, adding that all cases need further investigation. Her colleague, Kostyantyn Reutskiy, a human rights activist from Luhansk, recalled how one of their activists died weeks after he was captured by the militants of the so-called Luhansk People’s Republic.

The team members confess they became not only a service for legal and humanitarian aid, but also a ‘psychological centre’. Besides dispensing aid, the centre also reports about events unfolding in the east of the country through their ‘Informator’ website. The platform aims to gather information, photos and video material about the situation in rebel-held provinces, such as Donetsk and Luhansk, and keeps readers up-to-date on occurrences in the anti-terrorist operation.

‘It’s important to tell people what’s going on, as many of those who are living in Luhansk don’t even know what is happening in their own city’, Kostyantyn explains.

“ *It’s our responsibility to help those who have lost everything — their hometowns, belongings and some of them even their families.* ”

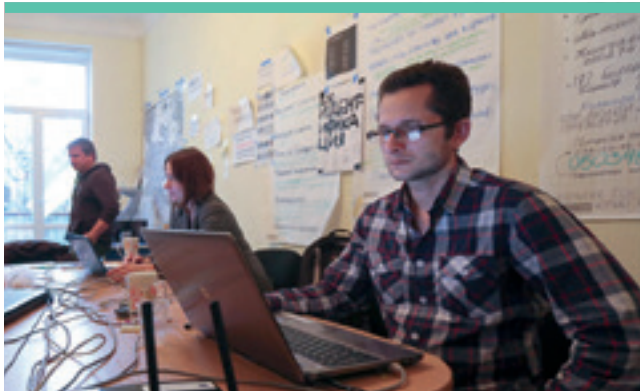
Kostyantyn Reutskiy



The coordinators admit there are people whom they have not been able to help yet and it makes them work harder to try to support all those in need.

'It's our responsibility to help those who have lost everything — their hometowns, belongings and some of them even their families', Kostyantyn adds.

Vostok SOS volunteers.



The refugee support centre is funded as part of the EU's work to support people affected by the crisis in Ukraine

- ➔ There were over 1.2 million internally displaced people registered in Ukraine at the end of April 2015.
- ➔ EU funding to Ukraine through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) amounted to EUR 365 million in 2014.
- ➔ With EU support, in 6 months Vostok SOS helped 11 000 displaced people from eastern Ukraine and Crimea to find temporary shelter.
- ➔ Vostok SOS volunteers also provide humanitarian aid and medical supplies to people who live in conflict areas.
- ➔ Vostok SOS launched a hotline for residents of the eastern regions to provide round-the-clock legal and psychological aid.



Police serving to protect women in the Dominican Republic

'I am no longer afraid at home or on the street. Thank you from the bottom of my heart'.

These are the words of Maria Santos, talking to police officers from the 'Special Department of Attention to Women and Intra-Family Violence of the Dominican National Police Force'.

Maria is 24 years old. About a year ago she was savagely attacked by her partner who struck her 14 times with a machete. She was severely wounded and terrified that he would return to finish the job, especially since having had the courage to make a formal report of this brutal crime to the special unit.

Maria has recovered well, though is badly scarred, and is slowly regaining her confidence and self-esteem. Second Lieutenant Wardi Altagracia Lebrón Cruz and Sergeant Major Lucía Jiménez Aybar, both attached to the special unit, have a lot to do with this, pushing the investigation hard. The perpetrator fled, changed his identity and went underground, but was captured and is now in prison. The health service worked on the physical wounds and the special unit helped to organise therapy and ensure justice.

A special police unit is tackling gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic, changing attitudes and saving lives.

Sergeant Major Lucía Jiménez Aybar: improving police practice and decreasing violence against women.





These are formidable women and greatly experienced, committed police officers, both tough and tender. Both expressed their deep satisfaction with the training organised by Profamilia, an NGO supported by the EU in human rights, gender awareness and practical techniques of dealing with women who are victims of violence.

Second Lieutenant Wardi Altagracia Lebrón Cruz has no illusions; she knows that such violence is part of Dominican 'macho' culture and that the fight is on many levels. However, she is clear that her own vision and awareness has changed and her practice as a police officer has improved, particularly in what she calls the 'approach' to victims. Wardi is well aware that women victims are all too often treated as the guilty party in a sexist culture.

Sergeant Major Lucía Jiménez Aybar was also impressive in her understanding of the need to reduce violence inside the police force. Lucía understands the need to unlearn deeply embedded models of violent and sexist behaviour throughout society as well as in the police force. She insisted on the need to target men, and more especially boys, in order to break down culturally rooted attitudes and deconstruct the myths of a macho masculine gender identity.

“

I am no longer afraid at home or on the street. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

”

Maria Santos

Both women have become 'facilitators' of training workshops with fellow police officers and key community figures such as teachers, reaching 1 500 people a month.

Wardi and Lucía claim to be 'contagious' and to be changing the practices of their colleagues in other units. These are realistic professionals, rooted in and aware of the culture they live in. Wardi has been in the force for 18 years and Lucía for 15. Both have 10 years' experience in units dealing with women victims of violence and both know the problem is big, pervasive and hard to eradicate, but they are refreshingly optimistic. They expect to win the battle in the long term and make a systemic contribution to improved police practice and decrease violence against women.

This programme has crossed boundaries and ignored taboos. The decision to work with the police force, which is generally speaking an authoritarian, sharply hierarchical organisation steeped in machismo and almost military in its structure and culture, was inspired. They are not 'natural' partners. The fact that the police opened themselves up to this partnership and this uncompromising training is also a very positive sign. In fact, much of the material on human and specifically gender rights developed for the course has been included in the general police training procedures. Gender awareness in police training is being mainstreamed.

These radical changes mean that women like Maria Santos can feel more secure and no longer be afraid at home or on the street.

The EU is strengthening police protection in the Dominican Republic

- ➔ The incidence of gender-based violence in the Dominican Republic is amongst the worst in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ➔ 1 805 women were murdered in the Dominican Republic between 2007 and 2014 according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- ➔ 17 % of women or girls from 15 to 49 years of age report to have been victims of physical violence and 5.5 % report sexual violence.
- ➔ The EU is committed to improve citizen security in the Dominican Republic working with the police, the judicial system and civil society.
- ➔ This project reached 790 people, including police officers, district attorneys, instructors and psychologists.
- ➔ As a result, gender rights have been integrated into the police cadet training programme.

National police station.



6 Sustainable green growth, decent jobs and businesses



The green economy has particular relevance for developing countries, as many are vulnerable to external shocks such as climate change, natural disasters or food and fuel crises. Sustainable green growth should at the same time alleviate poverty, protect the natural environment and ensure decent work with labour rights and standards, social protection and social dialogue all upheld.

Today, there are over 200 million people unemployed worldwide. Only about a quarter of the working-age population in developing countries is engaged in productive and decent employment; nearly 900 million workers are living in households with incomes below the poverty line. Businesses are job creators and lead innovation and change, they are key to ensuring decent work and forging responsible and sustainable development. At the end of the day, development is about making investment and economic activity work for everyone while protecting our planet.



Vietnam's tourism sector grew at the expense of the environment and local communities until a new sustainable direction was taken.

Vietnam's tourism industry making sustainability pay

'About 5 years ago, tourism marketing in Vietnam was for many people mainly about promotion', says Mr Le Tuan Anh, Deputy Director of Marketing at the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT). At the time, our aim was simple — to just increase tourism'.

Tourism statistics from the Vietnam General Statistics Office substantiate Mr Anh's claims. From 2000 to 2013, international visitor arrivals to Vietnam more than tripled, from 2.1 million visitors to 7.6 million, and domestic tourism from 11.7 million to 35 million.

'However, with such success, we started to realise that some of our top tourist destinations like Ha Long Bay were being loved to death by the visitors', notes Mr Anh.

'We were struggling to manage the crowds and to maintain the infrastructure such as the ferry wharfs and the trails to caves and lookouts. We also noticed more rubbish in the water and small incidents of friction starting to emerge between visitors and local communities'.

'So in terms of visitor arrivals, we were more than achieving our goals; but we were doing it at the risk of harming the environment and the relationship with the local people.



Vietnam's promotional tourism material: promoting nature-based tourism.



We clearly had to change the way we were doing business’, said Mr Anh.

‘In 2010, when the EU proposed a programme on responsible tourism to the Vietnamese Government, we knew this was exactly what we needed’.

‘To date, we have made great progress. With the help of the EU environmentally and socially responsible tourism (ESRT) programme we now have a tourism marketing strategy that still allows for growth, but also focuses on developing quality products that are based on the strengths of Vietnam’s destinations and not only considers economic benefits, but also social and environmental impacts’, adds Mr Anh.

According to Mr Anh, sustainability is also reflected in the current incarnation of the nation’s tourism logo, a vibrant lotus flower sprouting out of the word Vietnam.

‘The petals of the lotus flower reflect Vietnam’s strategic product lines: marine/beach tourism, cultural tourism, nature-based tourism and city-breaks. By sensitively promoting nature and culture in our product line, we are not only helping to preserve our natural and cultural heritage for which, as a nation, we are very proud, but we are also adding new economic value to the environment and people’s cultural heritage. Increasing demand for natural and cultural heritage products is, for example, supporting employment in rural homestays, craft villages and for performance

groups, and greater visitation to protected areas is helping fund nature conservation’, explains Mr Anh.

The work of VNAT and ESRT in bringing responsible tourism into the mainstream is, however, not just staying at the central level. Throughout 2014 the ESRT project implemented a nation-wide responsible tourism seminar series which reached more than 3 000 beneficiaries from the tourism private sector, tourism authorities at the provincial and district level and communities involved with tourism at the local level.

‘The responsible tourism seminars instil the importance and benefits of sustainability into our key sector stakeholders and arm them with practical strategies they can put into place to become more sustainable’, says Mr Anh.

‘I am very excited about the future for tourism in Vietnam now’, Mr Anh says, grinning. ‘Before, we were always worrying about the problems coming from growth. Now that we are on the pathway to sustainability our opportunities seem endless’.

“ Before, we were always worrying about the problems coming from growth. Now that we are on the pathway to sustainability our opportunities seem endless.

”

Mr Le Tuan Anh, Deputy Director of Marketing, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism



The EU is supporting Vietnam with a tourism marketing strategy that considers the social and environmental impacts of tourism alongside growth

- ➔ From 2000 to 2013, the tourist numbers increased enormously. The number of international visitors grew from 2.1 to 7.6 million.
- ➔ Tourism results in USD 6.2 billion in direct GDP (or 4.5 % of total) and 1 831 300 direct jobs (or 3.8 % of total) in Vietnam.
- ➔ The EU programme is the biggest technical support tourism programme mainstreaming sustainability into Vietnam's tourism sector.
- ➔ The EU programme resulted in the development of a strategic tourism marketing plan and a branding strategy.
- ➔ In 2014 there was a nation-wide responsible tourism seminar series which reached more than 3 000 beneficiaries.
- ➔ The EU has provided EUR 11 million for the programme, which runs from 2011 to 2015.

Vietnam's culture is a major selling-point to attract tourists.





Fishing communities netting their future and protecting natural habitats in Nicaragua

It is five o'clock in the morning and the sun cannot yet be seen through the dense tropical forest in the Padre Ramos Estuary, a protected area in the Gulf of Fonseca on the northwest Pacific coast of Nicaragua. María José Hernández is getting ready to start her shift working in the floating cage full of spotted rose snappers that belongs to her cooperative in the estuary of La Ballona's community.

Maria José was born and raised in La Ballona, about 186 km from the capital, Managua. She was left in the care of her grandmother to be raised and left school by 8th grade to get married. She now works as the secretary and spokesperson of the Marcelino Méndez Cooperative.

The cooperative is farming commercial species of fish and shellfish as opposed to the more traditional methods of fishing in the area. It is supported by the EcoPesca project, which is funded by the European Union and implemented by Friends of the Earth from Spain, and by the LIDER and Cod-deffagolf foundations. The project is working to preserve the area's marine biodiversity and improve living conditions of 46 coastal marine communities in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador, which all share the Gulf of Fonseca.

This Nicaraguan cooperative is developing sustainable fish farming, helping to protect the ecosystem and providing a living for locals.

The snapper farm on the floating cage.





The Nicaraguan fisheries census conducted in 2011 by EcoPesca found that there are 2 500 fishermen, more than half of whom work offshore and the other 1 000 in the estuaries. The census also found that 80 % of those working in the estuaries are from female-headed households. Cooperatives like Marcelino Méndez have the power to bring great change to the sustainability of these communities, which survive through fishing.

“

I'm a different woman now. At the start we struggled a lot, we worked hard and sometimes got sick, but now I work and have my own income.

”

María José Hernández

area in which they operate and commercial rights to sell at a better price. With these legal rights, the cooperative feels more empowered. 'Now all the authorities, organisations and cooperation agencies give us a prompt response. Without this recognition, it would not be the same', says María José.

Ensuring that coastal communities are interested in farming commercial species has not been an easy task. The EcoPesca project has created a strategy for the fishing sector to change perceptions around fish farming.

While feeding the fish, María José explains how she is contributing to the economic development of both her family and the community. Six months ago, the cooperative obtained legal status, the granting of the 5-acre

The cooperative members are farming snapper. An important aspect of this work is feeding, which aims to fatten the fish from 1 to 1.25 pounds. It is necessary to feed the fish three times daily with fresh shrimp heads or twice a day with pele (a nutritious food for fish). To improve the quality of life and generate more income, the cooperative also produces shell fish.

For Edwin Caballero from the LIDER Foundation and a specialist in sustainable economy, La Ballona is the best place to implement these activities, both due to the environmental conditions and because it ties in with supplying the local tourism economy. 'A single cage would generate USD 6 000. In a single harvest, they will handle five cages, generating USD 30 000 in 6 months', says Caballero.

These economic initiatives have even gone beyond improving the families' incomes; the number of children and youth in the workforce has been reduced. The project has partnered with the Ministry of Education and the Municipal Government to stamp out child labour. 'We believe that children and adolescents should be in schools, not working in fisheries', says Mr Caballero.

Moreover, the project has set the foundations for good trilateral cooperation between Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador for sustainable fish farming and ecosystem protection in the Gulf of Fonseca.

The EcoPesca project, funded by the EU, works to preserve the Gulf of Fonseca's marine biodiversity and improve living conditions of coastal marine communities in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador

- ➔ Nicaragua's economy depends mostly on its agriculture sector, including fisheries.
- ➔ In Nicaragua, more than 60 % of rural households are poor and 25 % are extremely poor.
- ➔ One of the key priorities for the EU is supporting economic development with a special focus on rural areas.
- ➔ The project is working to improve the living conditions of 46 coastal marine communities across the three countries.
- ➔ The project works also on reforestation, management and conserving and protecting sea turtles.
- ➔ The Marcelino Méndez Cooperative has five cages that contain up to 5 000 fish. One harvest is expected to raise USD 30 000.

Maria José is very happy with the work of the cooperative and all the changes that have occurred with the EU's support: 'I'm a different woman now. At the start we struggled a lot, we worked hard and sometimes got sick, but now I work and have my own income. I want to save some money and eventually buy my land'.

María José Hernández: secretary and spokesperson of Cooperative Marcelino Méndez, Gulf of Fonseca.





Local small-scale farming project: EU finances construction of onion storage and drying facility in Mboro

The taste of success - a woman is stirring up onion farming in Senegal

Sokhna Faye is a 50-year-old mother of seven. Originally from the city of Thiès in Senegal, some 100 km from Dakar, she followed her husband to the near-by town of Mboro when he moved there for work in 1985. However, the little money he was making was not enough to feed the whole family. 'My husband alone could not provide for us. I decided to get into farming to take some of the financial pressure off my husband. I've loved farming ever since I was a child. My father was a farmer too', she told us.

Sokhna Faye is confident about her future. The onion storage and drying plant will enable her to double her income.



Two years after moving to Mboro, Sokhna rented a half-hectare plot of land for EUR 11 per harvest. The field was 2 km away from her home. 'I had to walk there because I couldn't afford public transport.'

Every morning, Sokhna would make breakfast for the family, do the housework and then head off to her field. She would use water from the well in the field to water her plot. When done, she would return home to make lunch. 'As a woman, I couldn't work in the field like a man does, because I had to take care of the household chores first'.

After a while she took on a seasonal worker who helped her with the work. As a rule, seasonal workers only become



available 2 months after the start of sowing, as they are busy during the rainy season. 'Until the seasonal worker arrived, I worked the plot alone. I sowed the seeds and watered them for the next 2 months. Proper care and watering are crucial at this stage, but I didn't have time to fully dedicate myself to it because I also had all my housework to do. I lost a lot of the crops because by the time I'd arrive at the field, the sun would already be high up and the heat would dry the seeds out', recalls Sokhna.

The first year she sowed a cheaper, low-yield variety of onion. She ended up with 30 bags of the product, which she sold to a merchant for EUR 229, earning double the money her husband was making. Sokhna was overjoyed. 'The money was a real godsend for my family'.

Word about Sokhna reached Souahibou Diaw, President of the union of coastal vegetable growers, who invited her to join the cooperative. 'I was excited. With the help of the cooperative I discovered a variety of onions called Mercedes, which has the highest yields. I also took out a bank loan of EUR 150, with the cooperative as my guarantor. An importer from Spain also agreed to buy my crop of onions', she tells us, which is how Sokhna managed to sell 2 tonnes of Mercedes onions to the Spanish importer for EUR 450.

'We admire Sokhna's determination. She is the first woman in Mboro to have exported onions', the president of the cooperative proudly states. Sokhna's voice is emotional as she recalls her success: 'It was 2010, a year that will stay

with me forever. A small farmer like myself managed to export onions to Europe. It was a huge thing'.

As time went by, Sokhna got better organised and gained additional experience. Her husband retired and joined her in the fields. In 2012, they exported 8 tonnes of onions for EUR 1 200 and a year later they exported 9.5 tonnes bringing in EUR 1 425.

The whole family reaped the benefits of Sokhna's agricultural venture: 'I could afford to send my children to school and feed and clothe us all'.

In order to continue her export business, Sokhna now needs to step up her production and, even more importantly, improve the storage conditions for the product to keep longer. The European Union has helped her by financing the construction of an onion storage and drying plant. Before this, producers were forced to sell their crops quickly before they rotted. Now, though, they can dry their onions, store them properly and sell them at the best moment to make the highest profit.

“ I would encourage women to take up farming, not just to make sure they've got food but also to boost their incomes and provide more for their families. ”

Sokhna Faye, onion grower and member of the union of coastal vegetable growers, Senegal



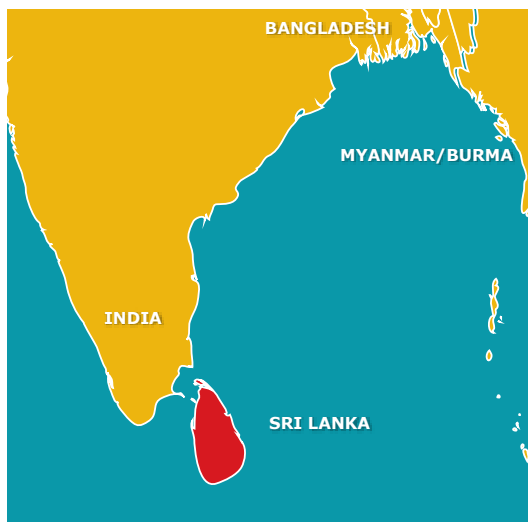
'I prefer to dry the onions at the plant and store them until the price peaks. A kilogram of onions retails at 22 cents, but when supply runs low, the price jumps up to 45 cents! I plan to double my profits soon', she tells us with a smile on her face.

The plant is used by Sokhna and 1 553 other members of the Union of coastal vegetable growers in Mboro.



EU programme for strengthening and developing commercial capacities in Senegal

- ➔ A total of EUR 3 500 000 allocated under the 10th European Development Fund.
- ➔ The EU programme aims to improve the production, storage and export of agricultural produce in Senegal.
- ➔ The Government of Senegal supports the implementation of the EU–Senegal Economic Partnership Agreement.
- ➔ The EU has financed the construction of five 100-tonne onion storage and drying plants.



Annalechchamy, a woman leading change on the tea plantations of Sri Lanka

Set in the Indian Ocean, the teardrop-shaped island state of Sri Lanka is known around the world for its picturesque landscapes, rich culture and aromatic tea. Accounting for a third of all tea produced globally, the world-renowned ‘Ceylon Tea’ was first grown by the British in Sri Lanka in the 1800s. It remains one of the country’s primary export earners and sources of employment.

Less well known is the history of Sri Lanka’s tea plantations, dating back over 150 years, which many regard as almost synonymous with colonial rule. Tamils of South Indian origin still make up a large proportion of Sri Lanka’s tea plantation workers. Their ancestors were brought to work in the sector primarily through a brutal historic system known as ‘bonded labour’. The consequences of this system are still felt, as many members of the tea plantation community find themselves ethnically, linguistically and economically marginalised.

One of these workers was Annalechchamy, a shy and unassuming young woman. Working on a tea plantation, she thought the conditions that generations of workers had experienced before her were never going to change. Like many within the plantation community, Annalechchamy

Workers on Sri Lanka’s tea plantations face difficult conditions. A new initiative is empowering women to speak up for better treatment.

Annalechchamy: picking tea leaves on the tea plantation.

Photo credit: Care International





had been deprived of even basic citizenship rights until the Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons Act was passed in 2003. She was afraid of even talking to the estate management, let alone negotiating workers' rights. That was about to change.

'Including the excluded', an initiative that works to improve the lives of the tea plantation workers, is implemented by

CARE International and funded by the EU. Annalechchamy is amongst its beneficiaries. Supported by the initiative, she has found her inner strength and confidence. With training in leadership and opportunities to participate in decision-making, Annalechchamy is now — step by step — working to overcome the parochial beliefs that discourage women from taking on positions of importance. Empowered by the project, she has become one

of the first female community-level trade union leaders. She is challenging the ways of life that had seemed set in stone.

Most importantly, she has learnt to recognise that what she has to say is important and that she can influence change. Women in estates are extremely vulnerable and often face discrimination in families, communities and workplaces. Patriarchal practices confine women and men to specific

roles, with women taking on less public and more subservient roles in their families and society despite their considerable contributions. Confined to the plucking of tea leaves, women like Annalechchamy were not only required to work longer hours and more days in a year than the men, they were also required to work in the open, often in difficult weather conditions. Anecdotal evidence has also indicated that gender-based violence is particularly high in the estates. However, abuse is rarely reported and social norms often excuse such behaviour. Limited understanding of recourse further prevents women from seeking help.

With Annalechchamy taking on the role of a trade-union leader, the rigidly defined social roles have been challenged. She hopes that more issues pertaining to women will be discussed. Annalechchamy recounts: 'I started as a volunteer, but after I received training, I am no longer scared to talk with the estate management. I speak freely!'

The estate managers have also embraced this change. Alex Samuel, then Group Manager of Carolina Estate, Watawala Plantations, said: 'By being able to talk face to face in the community development forums, both sides are beneficiaries. The workers understand our requirements better and can thus appreciate the position of the management on certain issues. Productivity has improved and labour issues are rare. From the workers' perspective, they have direct access to the management and can directly explain their needs and explore ways in which management can help them'.

“

I am no longer scared to talk with the estate management. I speak freely!

”

Annalechchamy

The EU is working to improve rural development and empowering workers, especially women, in Sri Lanka

- ➔ In Sri Lanka, 80 % of people live in rural areas and 70 % work in agriculture.
- ➔ Over 90 % of poor people live in rural areas of the north, east and on tea and rubber estates in the Central and Southern Uva provinces.
- ➔ Increasing women's access and rights in the workforce increases human capital and household prosperity.
- ➔ Tea plantation workers are usually Tamil descendants brought from India in the 19th century to work on tea and coffee estates.
- ➔ 1.25 million or 6.2 % of the population live on plantations in the Central Province.
- ➔ These communities perform badly across most development indicators with poor health and education conditions.
- ➔ Estate communities are predominantly patriarchal. There are few women in leadership positions and gender-based violence is widespread.
- ➔ The EU is providing EU 30 million a year for rural development in some of the poorest plantation areas of Central and Uva provinces.
- ➔ The EU has supported the two projects run by CARE International, working closely with local government and the private sector.
- ➔ The projects collectively benefit more than 465 727 Tamil plantation workers, a large percentage of whom are women.

*Alex Samuel, the manager of the estate.
Photo credit: Care International*





The EU has provided much-needed assistance to transform a bankrupt smallholder coffee cooperative and the lives of its members.

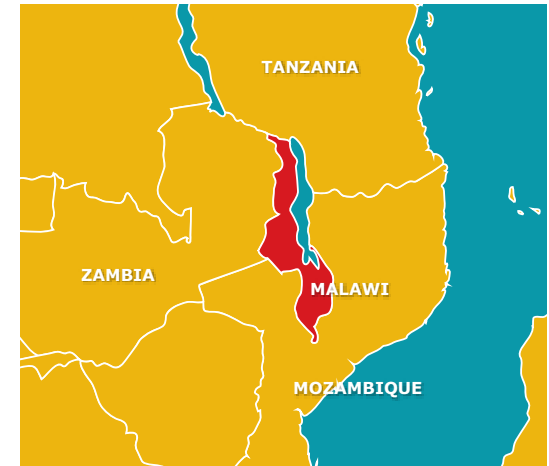
Justina of the Mzuzu coffee planters co-operative union and her child amongst the coffee plantation.
Photo credit: Robin Wyatt



Coffee farmers in Malawi cooperate and reap the rewards of mechanisation

Macdonald and Justina started growing the coffee beans in 2000. ‘I recognised this as a great business opportunity that could really improve my fortunes’, says Macdonald. ‘Before, I was a “Jack of all trades”, growing various crops with no focus and no understanding of how to manage production’. Moving to coffee was a game-changer for Macdonald. It was not long before he was able to build a house for himself and one in the town for his relatives.

However, he candidly accepts that it was not all perfect to begin with. ‘With more coffee, more problems began to arise’, he states. ‘To start with, we had a big issue with transportation, as our nearest processing factory was so far away’. After 8 years of grappling with this challenge, he and his fellow farmers approached the cooperative for assistance. Doing this secured them a processing machine, with the only stipulation that there would be a minimum threshold of production to be reached. ‘This processing machine was a godsend’, says Macdonald. ‘Almost none of us would have seen such success without it. It revolutionised our ability to process large quantities of coffee’. After



this, the community mobilised, ploughing their returns into building a processing plant.

The EU provided new, state-of-the-art machines for this, encouraging many more people in the area to get into planting. Together, the cooperative and the EU provided low-cost start-up inputs, including tools and fertilisers that allowed the farmers to engage in farming practices that were both environmentally friendly and also secured them high yields.

All of the coffee that is harvested is sent to Mzuzu Coffee, which markets and exports it; only around 5 % of the yield is sold on the domestic market. Demand is continuing to increase year after year, ensuring that the cooperative can continue to expand. Last year, Macdonald reports producing somewhere in the region of half a million kwacha worth of coffee, an amount he was delighted with.

Justina began by helping her husband, but with training and assistance she felt increasingly confident that she could manage her own farm. 'With the new factory nearby, there was no longer an excuse not to plant my own coffee', she says. Again, we see forces that lead to greater gender parity at play. As Justina concentrates on earning money for school fees, for example, her husband has been able to save towards purchasing a solar panel that now brings

electricity to their home, which lies off the national grid. Together, the couple have invested some of their income in buying a cow, which provides them with nutritious milk as well as manure for their coffee shrubs. As they get more milk than they need from their cow, they can sell some of it, giving them an additional income stream.

Thanks to the consistent flow of income, the women in the community have become increasingly involved with budgeting and other community development matters. Justina's participation has inspired her to become more active in household decision-making as well. Macdonald is profoundly positive about the way coffee farming has engaged and empowered his wife. 'If I were to die today', he says, 'I know that she would be able take care of my family and my children'. Both parents talk of how they want their children to be self-reliant and skilled and want to ensure they can find their way in the real world. Their oldest son is now looking to manage his own small coffee plantation plot. 'Seeing our friends and family who never joined, we know that our son could do a lot worse than this', says Justina. 'We are so thankful that we can look forward to a bright future'.

“ I recognised this as a great business opportunity that could really improve my fortunes.

”
Macdonald



Justina of the Mzuzu coffee planters co-operative union holding a fresh batch of coffee beans.

Photo credit: Robin Wyatt



The European Union is working to increase sustainable economic growth and food security in rural Malawi

- ➔ Sustainable economic growth leads to poverty reduction and improvements in the living standards of Malawians.
- ➔ The agriculture sector employs about 80 % of the total workforce and represents approximately 30 % of GDP.
- ➔ Coffee, together with other agricultural products such as tobacco, sugar and tea, are Malawi's major agricultural exports.
- ➔ The cooperative union works to ensure its farmers earn between USD 1 000 and 2 000 annually from 0.4 hectares of land each.
- ➔ Mzuzu Coffee and Mzuzu Honey received fair trade certification in 2009.
- ➔ 44 % of the Mzuzu Coffee cooperative union's 263 farmers are women.

7 Children and youth



When world leaders signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child 25 years ago, they promised to guarantee every child the right to life, to be educated, to be healthy, to be treated fairly and to be heard. Has the world kept its promises though? As Nelson Mandela said, 'There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children'. Can today's children look forward to a brighter future? What about the children of tomorrow?



UNRWA, with EU support, is equipping 33 000 young Palestinian refugees with the skills to succeed in Syria's challenging labour market.

Mohammad Alloh was able to earn a better wage after completing a mobile maintenance course through the EU-funded Engaging youth project.

Photo credit: 2015 UNRWA photo by Taghrid Mohammad.



Palestine refugee youth develop new skills for the employment market in Syria

27-year-old Mohammad Alloh needed to earn a better wage to support his family in conflict-ridden Syria. To work towards his aim, he attended two short courses offered by the EU-funded 'Engaging Youth' project at UNRWA Damascus training centre. The courses were designed to improve employability in mobile phone maintenance and technology. 'I came here to learn different skills to access available job opportunities', he explains.

Mohammad is one of the nearly half a million Palestine refugees living through the conflict in Syria. He, like 50 % of those who have remained in the country, has been displaced at least once.

Mohammad and his family lost everything when they fled their home 3 years ago. Syria's devastated economy compounded the family's hardship and Mohammad found that the wages he earned as an assistant at a mobile accessory shop were not enough to meet the family's needs. As the sole provider for his parents and brother, he says: 'I could



hardly afford to pay the monthly rent. Supporting a family on one income has been hard’.

To increase his wages, Mohammad needed to develop a more valuable skillset. The Engaging Youth courses on mobile phone maintenance and repair, as well as business planning, gave him practical and technical skills. He was also amongst several graduates to receive his own toolbox of mobile phone maintenance equipment as part of a pilot livelihood intervention.

Equipped with his new skills and toolbox, Mohammad negotiated with his employer to increase his wages and receive an extra commission for each mobile phone he repaired. He now receives between SYP 20 000 and 30 000 (EUR 95-142) per month. Mohammad is pleased with the outcome. ‘I enjoy the job and get along well with customers and workers’, he says.

come even more critical given the near-collapse of the Syrian economy, where unemployment is predicted to reach over 60 %in 2015. The short-term courses cover a range of professional, trade and creative subjects, including information technology, graphic and interior design, plumbing and electrics and refrigerator repair.

Mohammad’s dream has always been to go to university, but for now he is focusing on his career and providing for his family. Mohammad is an example of how young Palestine refugees are able to use the short-term Engaging Youth training as a springboard into working life and self-reliance. ‘I wanted to study translation, but right now I need to work and wait until I have the opportunity to achieve my dream’, he says.

“ I came here to learn different skills to access available job opportunities. ”

Mohammad Alloh, graduate from UNRWA Damascus training centre

EU-funded Engaging Youth courses run by UNRWA are designed to equip 33 000 young Palestine refugees with the skills to succeed in Syria’s challenging labour market. This has be-



*Engaging youth students work on graphic design projects in Damascus training centre, Damascus.
Photo credit: 2015 UNRWA photo by Taghrid Mohammad.*



EU support for the Engaging Youth project and to Palestine refugees in Syria

- ➔ Engaging Youth provides Palestine refugee youth with the opportunity to increase their skills and employability.
- ➔ This is achieved through short-term vocational courses, career counselling and business development courses.
- ➔ Today and despite the conflict, UNRWA runs Engaging Youth activities at 14 locations across the country.
- ➔ In 2014, 5 500 and 7 800 refugees respectively took part in business development and youth development activities.
- ➔ Since its inception in 2009, the EU has supported the Engaging Youth project with a total contribution of EUR 12 million.
- ➔ The project is one example of UNRWA and EU support for Palestine refugees in Syria and those displaced to Jordan and Lebanon.
- ➔ With EU support, UNRWA provides basic services to Palestine refugees from Syria, including education, healthcare and social services.
- ➔ Since 2012, the EU has contributed EUR 90.2 million to strengthen the resilience of Palestine refugees from Syria.



School garden teaches children how to grow a better future in the Comoros

Abdou Chamou, a primary school teacher, is sad to see that most of the young people in the village of Adda, where he was born (on the island of Anjouan in the Comoros), do not have a job or any way of earning a living. This is mainly due to the lack of economic activity on the island.

Family farming is the main occupation of more than 90 % of village inhabitants. Fifteen years ago, farming in Adda was easier; fields produced good harvests and Adda was the water source for the entire subregion. However, farming is becoming increasingly restricted, particularly as a result of deforestation leading to drastic erosion, the disappearance of constantly flowing rivers and the loss of fertility in soils. The young people are gradually moving out of the region.

For almost 3 years the Comorian NGO, Dahari ('sustainable' in English), with the financial support of the EU, has been helping Adda farmers to boost their income. Abdou is pleased that, in contrast to previous projects, a new dynamic has been developed. Dahari technicians stay in the village and get to know all the residents. They also recommend improved, environmentally friendly techniques and varieties of crops to farmers. Village residents have noted that the presence of these technicians has made the soil

In the Comoros, an NGO is helping to improve agriculture with better techniques as well as educating future farmers.

A student taking care of the school garden in the Comoros.





more fertile and has significantly contributed to improving yields.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the improvements, Dahari has recruited two men from the village, Ismaël and Sossona, to train farmers in Adda.

“ *Teaching farming techniques to children is important for their future.* ”

Abdou Chamou,
primary school teacher

Dahari, recognising the importance of cultivating the future generations of farmers, started to work with local schools to set up school gardens. Abdou, the primary school teacher, has welcomed the expertise of Dahari into the school in Adda. The garden is helping children to become good farmers from an early age. It also helps to generate revenue for running the school. ‘Teaching farming techniques to children is important for their fu-

ture, especially as the plot is on school grounds, making practical work easier’, commented Abdou.

Since the school garden was set up and following several practical working sessions, the children have learnt how to grow tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, onions and aubergines. Every week, Abdou has supervised the children during sowing, watering, weeding and harvesting.

Today, the garden is about to begin its second season with the planting of bananas. Abdou has been a first-hand witness of the positive results of the school garden. He is proud to see the children taking an interest in farming and says he is happy that he has been able to generate funds for the school: ‘We are very pleased that the garden has been a success with the children. The money collected from selling products has also allowed us to pay for a fence for the school’, Abdou adds.

Many people have congratulated Abdou for the time he has spent with the children on this school garden. Some parents have said they have been receiving good advice from their children on new farming techniques!

‘When I look at the primary school pupils now, I see children who are happy and engaged. I am proud to have contributed to improving education in my village’, said Abdou, as lasting change grows from the smallest of roots.

The school garden project in the village of Adda on the island of Anjouan in the Comoros is funded by the EU

- ➔ The Comoros suffers from deforestation, which has an impact on erosion, soil fertility, the disappearance of rivers and biodiversity.
- ➔ 80 % of the population of the island of Anjouan work in farming or fishing.
- ➔ The school garden of Adda, funded by the EU, was set up in 2014 by the NGO Dahari under the agricultural intensification project.
- ➔ Dahari helps the local communities with agricultural development and the sustainable management of natural resources.
- ➔ To date, three school gardens have been set up in three rural villages in Anjouan: Adda, Outsa and Ouzini.

Students in the school garden.





Empowering girls, combating HIV and protecting vulnerable children with the POWA sisters in Belize.

Empowering one girl at a time in Belize

Dangriga looks like the cover of a travel magazine: a tropical paradise in southern Belize, a place to relax under the sun and enjoy the palm trees and turquoise waters. What onlookers may not know is that it is also the district with the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in the country, HIV prevalence higher than anywhere else in Central America and a place where violence and poverty are an ever-present reality.

Kenima, 15, holds her sister's 5 month old daughter, Jahrida.

Photo credit: Unicef/Belize/2014/Caroline Bach



A group of teenage girls and women gather in the main room of a small one-story building and place their chairs in a ring to prepare for a POWA session. POWA is short for productive organisation for women in action and has been active in Dangriga since 2003.

‘Being a woman in this community is not the easiest task’, India, 19, shares. ‘We are the main targets here and you will often see older men prey on younger and vulnerable girls’.

Sitting next to her, Kenima is only 15 years old but has already been a target. ‘The men approach us with little suggestions at first: a beer, lunch for letting them hold our hands or maybe even to touch a breast... Then they take



out the big guns by offering to pay your school fees, to pay your mother's rent, to take care of the house bills... It's really not easy to say 'no' when you are in our situation'.

Young girls in Dangriga find themselves lost in a system where they are not expected to have ambitions to ever provide for themselves and where their own mother feels that they have no other choice than to encourage their daughters to accept these offers in order to save the family and put food on the table. The high HIV prevalence in Belize confirms this reality, as rates are highest among young girls and old men, many of whom unknowingly keep spreading the virus. Teenage pregnancies are the main reason for school dropouts and sexual abuse is one of those things everybody knows about but too few dare to report.

Michele Irving, the coordinator for POWA, explains: 'We work on the self-esteem of girls, on keeping them in school, on teaching them about safety and on trying to keep them away from dangers. We target girls at risk and try to support them with school stipends and by giving them practical skills that they can use to secure their own income and become economically independent. All of this to keep them away from falling victim to this horrendous abuse of power'.

POWA's initiatives have been supported by Unicef and the European Union since 2006. Under the leadership of Michele Irving, POWA runs after-school programmes for vulnerable children; literacy and school completion programmes for

women; and an HIV prevention, stigma and discrimination reduction programme. It also conducts extensive work on the empowerment of women and girls.

'Rather than thinking that you have all the answers to people's problems, you create a space where people can create trust to transform their own realities', Michele explains. Sexual abuse is so commonplace that mothers, most of whom have probably gone through the same situations, often choose not to see it. 'They will tell you to forget it and never mention it again', whispers one of the girls.

'Now, though, when the male teacher in class says something nasty in our ear or when men try to touch us, we scream, we say 'no' and we report it', Kenima shares with a confident voice. 'Nobody can tell me that it is ok'.

Michele continues, 'my passion comes from seeing lives transformed. I know I can't save the world, but I can save one, two or three of these girls and help by making their lives better, one day at a time, and by giving them the capacity to change their own lives'.

“ *Rather than thinking that you have all the answers to people's problems, you create a space where people can create trust to transform their own realities.* ”

**Michele Irving, POWA
Coordinator**



In fact, by changing the girls' lives, Michele and the POWA programme do much more. They break the law of silence, change the power dynamics and create role models for other girls to follow, allowing them to grow up to be concerned, protective and empowered women.

*Michele Irving, surrounded by some of the POWA sisters outside of the newly built POWA house.
Photo credit: Unicef/Belize/2014/Caroline Bach*



The productive organisation for women in action (POWA) is a community-based organisation that began in 2003 in Dangriga, Belize

- ➔ The HIV prevalence in Belize is 2.5 %; estimates show that one in every 10 children in Belize is affected and vulnerable.
- ➔ The Toledo district has the highest rate of violence against children in the country at 81.4 %.
- ➔ The POWA youth branch focuses on girls that are vulnerable because of their exposure to issues such as HIV and gender-based violence.
- ➔ Members receive training on HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, community outreach, self-esteem and negotiation skills.
- ➔ The relationship between POWA and Unicef focuses on supporting children in the areas of literacy, nutrition and HIV education.



Bittersweet: combatting child labour on the sugarcane plantations in the Philippines

The smell of burnt sugarcane occupies the morning air, a signal that it is time to harvest. This is the ritual on the sugar plantations in the province of Bukidnon on the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines, where farm workers cut and burn the sugarcane and collect it the following day.

The farm workers come from all around Mindanao to work in the fields and they group themselves into what is locally known as a 'tolda' or a camp. These groups spend days deep in the fields until all the sugarcane in the area has been harvested. A total of 25 people working together, including child labourers, compose a tolda and together they burn and harvest the sugarcane before loading it onto waiting trucks.

Until recently, 14-year-old Jeraldine Aboy, or 'Pitang' to her friends, worked in one of these camps. She is the second of four children. The eldest suffers from polio and cannot work. This placed a greater burden of helping the family on the shoulders of Pitang. Her family belongs to the Manobo Pulahingon, one of the indigenous groups in Mindanao. The Manobos in Bukidnon province have lost a significant part of their ancestral domain, as sugarcane and pineapple plantations aggressively encroach on their lands.

After years of working in the sugarcane plantations, 14-year-old Pitang has returned to school and can start dreaming of a brighter future.

Pitang, a child labourer from the Philippines, has returned to school as a result of an EU programme.

Photo credit: EILER





Pitang first joined her father in a camp located far from their home in San Nicolas, Don Carlos, when she was just 6 years old. Her work included harvesting and cleaning the sugarcane fields and slashing through weeds in the direct heat of the sun. During the night, she burnt the sugarcane to prepare it for harvesting in the morning. She and her

father would sleep in a makeshift cot and eat dried fish and rice provided by their employer and deducted from their pay. The sunrise signalled the beginning of another workday, but it would continue long after the setting of the sun. For this gruelling labour, she would earn a meagre 150 pesos (EUR 2.49) per day.

As brave as she is, Pitang could endure the hardship of work only as long as her father was with her, providing comfort and a sense of safety amidst the razor-sharp leaves of the sugarcane. 'Working in the sugarcane fields is inherently dangerous. One day, my knife slipped from my hand and landed on my foot, cutting a deep wound. I was so scared from all of the blood that the only thing I was able to do was cry', explained Pitang.

Things went from bad to worse when her father became ill and could no longer work with her. She was 10 years old then and since the family was in desperate need of money, she had to drop out of school in the middle of the year.

She worked in the camps for as long as a month, missing milestones supposedly allotted for any child.

However, the work and loneliness never hampered her from dreaming of receiving an education. Last year, Pitang heard of the 'Bata Balik-Eskwela, a community-based approach in combating child labour in hazardous industries in plantations and mining', an EU-supported project belonging to a Filipino NGO, the Ecumenical Institute for Labour Education and Research, Inc. (EILER). After learning of its objective to support the reintegration of child labourers to formal schooling, she immediately approached their tribal elder, the Datu, and asked permission to join the programme. Due to her excitement, she enrolled unbeknownst to her parents.

It was an uphill battle for Pitang, though. Having missed 3 years of school, she had problems with spelling and found mathematics very demanding, along with other subjects. Since she enrolled in the programme, however, she has never missed a session, always trying to improve herself. And it is paying off. According to her teacher's latest assessment, Pitang can now read in Filipino, shows improvement in mathematics and can now read a little bit of English even. Her latest achievement was writing an essay, something unheard of before.

Now, she dares to think of her next big dream: being on stage and singing in front of an applauding audience. Before she would only sing to ease some of the burden of work and cure loneliness in the fields. She can now dream bigger.

“

Working in the sugarcane fields is inherently dangerous.

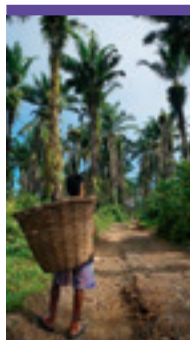
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Pitang

The EU is working to reduce child labour in the Philippines

- ➔ The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that there are 5.5 million children aged 5 to 17 working in the Philippines.
- ➔ 3.2 million children are considered to be working in hazardous environments in the Philippines.
- ➔ Six Bata Balik-Eskwela learning centres have been opened in six plantation and mining communities.
- ➔ At least 100 children are enrolled in these learning centres each year.
- ➔ The centres provide a bridge to school with catch-up lessons for child labourers to facilitate their reintegration to formal schooling.
- ➔ The project implements a livelihood support programme for the children's families and an awareness campaign against child labour.

*One million children in the Philippines have quit school to work.
Photo credit: EILER*



8 Humanitarian aid



Natural disasters, wars and conflicts can have devastating effects on civilians, depriving them from the basics of subsistence like food or electricity, sometimes overnight. Humanitarian aid ensures the very survival of the affected populations after a crisis hits by responding to basic needs such as food, shelter, clean water and physical protection. European humanitarian aid is unconditional. It is there for anyone who needs it regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age and political beliefs. It is about human dignity, not about politics.



Four years ago the first waves of Syrians left their war-stricken home. Since then, 4 million have become refugees.

*Um Alaa and her twins Sally and Sami continue to fight for a life of dignity living in the Domiz II camp that has been sheltering them for more than two years.
Photo credit: EU/ECHO/Dina Baslan.*



Between loss and hope for resettlement in Syria

I met Um Alaa in February this year in Domiz II — a Syrian refugee camp in northern Iraq — where she now lives with three of her children. She is greeted by passers-by from all corners of the camp, starting with the next door neighbour to her children’s school principal. Recycled art work decorates her inviting shelter — a mixture of concrete cement blocks, aluminium sheets and tent fabric from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Originally a household of six, the family used to lead a normal life in Aleppo, Syria. Her husband, Abu Alaa, worked at a shop 15 minutes’ drive away from their home, selling stocks of food to restaurants in the area. Every day, he would leave at three o’clock in the morning to work and would return by midday. Um Alaa used to work at a beauty salon to earn extra money to support the family. The couple had almost paid off their debt that covered the costs of education for their eldest son Alaa, who earned a degree in physics from the University of Aleppo.

Near the end of 2011, when clashes ignited across different parts of Syria, the town where Abu Alaa worked was besieged by fighters. He had to hide for cover for 2 days before being able to cross safely back home. At the time Syrians could never have imagined that those random clashes would turn into the full-blown war that has crippled the country for



years. After that incident Abu Alaa remained at home without working for a week. When he received a phone call from the business owner asking him to come back to work at 7 a.m. one morning, Um Alaa pleaded her husband to stay at home but he wouldn't listen — he was focused on making sure that he would be able to keep bread on the family's table.

Abu Alaa died in a street explosion on his way back home that day, leaving Um Alaa a widowed mother of four. 'He was a loving man, very kind-hearted', Um Alaa said. 'Even if he didn't have money, he always tried to help people'.

Since then, not only has Um Alaa managed to cross to safety with her children without the support of her extended family, but she has also constantly tried to seek opportunities to give her four children the future they had aspired to before the war. She lives with her second-eldest son Mohammad (22) and her twins Sally and Sami (14) in the camp. Her eldest, Alaa, who is now 24, lives in Erbil (160 km away) working as a street vendor to earn money to cover the cost of his dialysis — a medical service not available in the camp.

Between the jokes, exchanges of hugs and kisses, recurring cups of tea and Arabic coffee and delicious bites of homemade labaneh (strained yoghurt), the dominating topic of discussion among the family is the future of Um Alaa's children.

Mohammad had to drop out of university when the family decided to flee. He helps his younger siblings with their homework, especially mathematics, telling them that when they graduate from high school they will have the opportu-

nity to continue their education, unlike him. He is constantly applying for scholarships hoping that one day he will be accepted and be able to return to his education.

In the meantime, however, Um Alaa has set her mind on moving on and building a new life in the camp. Within the fenced area of Domiz II, Um Alaa and her children try to stay busy. She works as a child protection aid worker at one of the organisations that have set up a child-friendly space in the camp, while Sally and Sami go to school and attend different child-oriented activities. Life is monotonous except for occasions like Nawroz (the Kurdish New Year), when Um Alaa takes her children to the city for some entertainment. 'It's nice, but I miss Aleppo and my friends there', said Sally.

As a widowed mother, Um Alaa says she will not voluntarily return to her hometown in Syria, where people have turned against one another and where their lives would be at risk. She is working hard in the camp to try to make the best out of her situation, but struggles to accept the confinement of her family's aspirations and dreams. She says she will continue to fight for her children's education and for expanding the reach of her work beyond the fence of the tented camp that has been sheltering her for more than 2 years now.

Four years ago, the first waves of Syrians crossed the borders of the now war-stricken Syria into neighbouring coun-

“ *I miss Aleppo and my friends there.* ”

Sally, 14, Syrian refugee in Domiz II camp, northern Iraq



tries for protection and survival. Since then, the number of asylum seekers has swelled to over 4 million men, women and children in primarily four countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

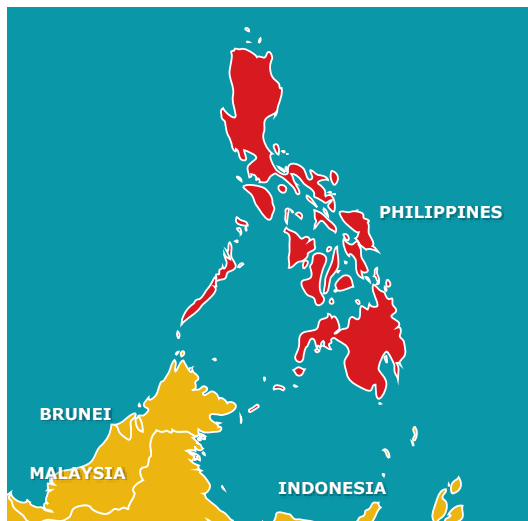
Over these 4 years, humanitarian agencies and host governments have worked towards meeting the refugees' urgent needs and helping them reach one of three possible durable solutions under the mandate of the UNHCR: voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country in situations where it is impossible for a person to go back home or remain in the host country.

*A man gazes towards Kawergosk refugee camp, Erbil governorate, Kurdistan region of Iraq.
Photo credit: EU/ECHO/Caroline Gluck.*



The EU is supporting Syrian refugees who have fled the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria

- ➔ The Syrian conflict has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.
- ➔ Over 12 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria.
- ➔ Some 7.5 million people are estimated to be displaced within Syria.
- ➔ 4 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt as well as across North Africa.
- ➔ The EU, combining the European Commission and Member States, has provided over EUR 3.6 billion for the Syrian crisis.



Resilience amidst natural and man-made disasters in the Philippines

'During Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) we were told to evacuate, so we moved to my in-laws' house up the hill. When it was over, we came back and our house was gone, completely washed away. The same thing with the crops: the bananas, cassava and sweet potatoes. We rely on these for food and they were all gone', recounts Leonila Garen, 30, a resident of Mabini village in Basey, Samar province, the Philippines.

Coping in the face of disaster

Leonila, a mother of five, recalls how difficult it was during the first few days after the typhoon, when their world was falling apart. Had it not been for the basic humanitarian goods that reached them, they would not have had anything to eat. Her family spent a few more weeks at a relative's house until her husband was able to gather enough scrap material for a makeshift shelter, using a tarpaulin as a roof.

With the crops gone, her husband — who used to earn a living farming and delivering copra, a coconut product, once a week — found himself jobless and without an income.

The village councillor, Efren Pacanas, summed up the hardship facing his community: 'The people in our village have

Resilience shines through after typhoon Haiyan struck a community in the Philippines already affected by conflict.

Leonila Garen and her family largely depend on farming for their income. Natural and man-made disasters are both constant threats.

Photo credit: ICRC / J. Aznar.





very limited sources of income, with the majority relying on upland farming for their livelihood. When the typhoon came, all the crops were destroyed. The people had nothing’.

A resilient community

“ With water readily accessible, we have more time to spend cultivating the land. ”

Rogelio Asis, a local farmer

Councillor Pacanas explained that before the typhoon, the remote village of Mabini had been facing problems of a different nature — armed conflict. ‘Upland farming is only done on a seasonal basis; it’s purely rain-fed, which is one of the reasons why it is taking longer for our community to recover completely. Also, transporting crops downtown has always been a challenge for us owing to the poor

road network. This is further complicated by the armed clashes that erupt occasionally in some districts’. The most recent incident, he said, was in February this year.

Growing up in Northern Samar province, Leonila is no stranger to armed conflict. ‘Others, especially children, still get scared when they hear gun shots, but I’m already used to it’.

In 2011, as part of the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to support communities affected by armed conflict, a water network was constructed to supply clean water to more than 1 200 people in Mabini. Before

this, villagers had to spend over 2 hours each day on paddle boats to collect drinking water from the Sohoton River.

Today, this access to water has helped the community recover more rapidly from the effects of the typhoon. ‘With water readily accessible, we have more time to spend cultivating the land’, said Rogelio Asis, a local farmer.

Building a more robust future

A year and a half after typhoon Haiyan, Leonila and her family are living in their new home — this time sturdier than the temporary structure her husband had built. ‘It would have taken us at least 5 years to build a house like this because our income is just enough to cover our most basic needs. With four of the children in school, we could only dream of having a house’, she said, adding that having been chosen as a beneficiary of the Philippine Red Cross/ ICRC shelter programme is an answered prayer. She is also very happy with the latrine that was built this year, as in the past they had none of their own and had to use their relative’s toilet nearby.

Leonila’s family is among the 4 461 households that received storm-resilient shelters from the Philippine Red Cross and the ICRC in 2014. The ICRC, together with the National Society, focused its response on Samar Island, where it has been working for years to address the needs of communities affected by armed conflict.

The European Union is supporting the ICRC in its mandate to assist and protect victims of armed conflict

- ➔ Resilience is the ability of countries to resist, adapt and quickly recover from a disaster or crisis.
- ➔ Strengthening the resilience of populations can help reduce the impact of disasters which affect millions every year.
- ➔ The EU is placing resilience as a central objective of development and humanitarian assistance.
- ➔ In 2014, 13 % (or EUR 122 million) of the European Union's humanitarian funding went to disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities.
- ➔ The ICRC constructed a water network to supply clean water to more than 1 200 people in Mabini in 2011.
- ➔ 4 461 storm-resilient houses were built by the Philippine Red Cross and the ICRC in 2014.

To complete the houses, individual latrines are being added this year with the help from partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

As the people of Mabini strive to overcome the difficulties left behind by one of the world's most powerful typhoons and continue to deal with cycles of conflict, they remain resilient, facing challenges that come their way one day at a time.

While many villagers in Mabini have grown used to the realities of armed conflict, children are still in fear whenever they hear gunshots during clashes. Photo credit: ICRC / J. Aznar.





5 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in Ukraine. Delivering help to the most vulnerable is a daily challenge for humanitarians.

Oksana with her children Zhenia, Vika, Sasha and Sergey in their house near the frontline in Ukraine.
Photo credit: Stanislav Krupar for People in Need, 2014.



Barely holding on in Ukraine

It is early July and I am travelling in eastern Ukraine with a group of journalists to see first-hand how the European Union is providing help to people affected by the ongoing conflict. Nature is in bloom and a cease-fire is 'officially' in force in this region of Ukraine that is ravaged by a conflict which in over a year has left 5 million in need of humanitarian help.

Driving east, we pass freshly-dug trenches and a burned-out tank in the middle of the street. On our way to the frontline our passports are inspected once, twice and three times at different checkpoints by soldiers in full uniform with guns casually slung over their shoulders.

With us travels Daniel J. Gerstle, the head of emergency programmes for the Czech NGO 'People in Need' (PIN) in Ukraine. He is used to this procedure. PIN's emergency response teams cross the frontline sometimes two or three times a week to distribute food and hygiene kits. They also provide building materials, help with home repairs and provide psychosocial assistance, food vouchers and cash grants for vulnerable, conflict-affected families.

To cover the needs of over 100 000 people on both sides of the frontline, the teams have to be highly mobile and maintain strict neutrality as they cross back and forth between government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas.



Despite the presence of the three big cities of Donetsk, Luhansk and Mariupol, most of eastern Ukraine is very poor, with small farms and run-down heavy industry.

When the conflict broke out in spring 2014, only a few joined the fighting. Most of the people here were more concerned about day-to-day survival. 'In some of the really remote villages damaged by heavy fighting during the winter we found some people, especially the elderly, who were afraid to leave or unable to leave because of a disability. A few died in the cold when others were evacuated. With blown-up tanks in the snow back then, one old man said he thought he'd woken up back in the Second World War', recounted Daniel while we drove through the country.

'Hundreds of thousands of people who had nothing to do with the political situation have lost everything — their homes, family members and livelihoods. They don't want this war. They are barely holding on. They need urgent help'.

We stop in Luganskoye, a small village right on the frontline, where shelling can be heard almost every night. Daniel climbs out of the car to talk to the villagers. They know him well and greetings are exchanged. Some things can be bought in the small grocery shop — soft drinks and canned goods, for example — but other daily items are scarce. Three onions and a few wrinkly cucumbers are the only vegetables found on the shelves.

'The biggest difference you see when crossing from the government-controlled side to the other is that many, if not

most, stores where people can access food and survival supplies are either closed or running out of stock. Some stores still have stock from last year, but others have used up all reserves', explains Daniel.

The people living on both sides of the frontline, but especially those in the non-government-controlled area, are seeing their local economy crumble; many are losing their jobs and income, while food stocks plummet and prices rise. 'People on both sides are suffering horrible losses and experiencing trauma; at least in the government-controlled areas there are still functioning stores and rare opportunities to find some work, which cannot be found on the other side'.

Access to people in need is not always possible. Every day PIN's teams assess the situation. First they see whether the teams and trucks can even cross the frontline. This is primarily the decision of the Ukrainian government who searches all vehicles to make sure that only food and household supplies reach the other side. Second, they assess how heavy the fighting is in the areas where there are people in need. Around the Donetsk airport and the southern town of Shyrokyne, fighting has been the worst. There has been a continuous non-stop battle over the past few months, while in other areas like Mariinka, Avdiivka and Popasna there is intermittent shelling.

“ *I believe we have a great deal of work to do to improve this world and we each need to do our part.* ”

Daniel J. Gerstle, head of emergency programmes for the Czech NGO 'People in Need' in Ukraine



Daniel J. Gerstle in Semyonivka, eastern Ukraine. Photo credit: Temur Saidmuminov.



PIN teams go in, find families and make arrangements to help them. When shelling hits in the night or the following morning they have to wait before bringing materials in. Last winter the fighting peaked. ‘Some national NGO partners got injured by shrapnel a couple of weeks ago, but so far the rest of our team has been lucky here’, says Daniel. He has been a humanitarian worker since the late 1990s and has served in 12 different conflict zones. ‘I have still not — touch wood — been caught in the middle of combat or artillery. It is overwhelming the number of soldiers, locals and sometimes aid workers who get caught in that’, he explains, ‘but I have had people trying to kill me, I have lost staff and have had partners murdered and bombed in other war zones’.

PIN is one of the dedicated humanitarian organisations working through difficult conditions in Ukraine to alleviate the suffering of those caught up in the conflict. Daniel is one of the many humanitarian workers who risk their lives every day to help people in need all over the world. Their work is often difficult, but they are driven by a passion to help the most vulnerable. ‘Out of existential curiosity, I travelled to Bosnia at the end of the war and really looked deeply into how people survived extreme hardship. After that I just couldn’t live a normal life without deep empathy for those who don’t have what I do’, Daniel explains. ‘I believe we have a great deal of work to do to improve this world and we each need to do our part’.

Every year, 19 August is World Humanitarian Day, a day of commemoration of those humanitarian workers who were killed while doing their job as well of one of celebration of those workers who are committed to helping others in emergencies and disasters.

The EU, including the European Commission and Member States, has contributed around EUR 223 million in financial aid to the people of Ukraine

- ➔ There are over 1.38 million people registered as internally displaced people (IDPs).
- ➔ There are over 920 000 refugees in neighbouring countries.
- ➔ There are an estimated 5 million people in need of humanitarian aid.
- ➔ There have been over 16 800 wounded and over 6 700 killed.

Children pay the heaviest price in South Sudan

Nyatot* lives in a small hut in Akobo, Jonglei state, with her two sons, aged six and three, and her husband. Her 3-year-old, Nhial*, is severely malnourished.

‘Since the war started we have been living in suffering; we’re just helpless. What I eat with my children is not enough. We eat just once a day. I fear that by next month there will be no food left for me and my children’, Nyatot says.

‘The war has made life very hard. We have been badly affected. My child has been ill for a long time. He got measles and then became very sick with diarrhoea. Now he’s malnourished too’, she adds.

Since December 2013, South Sudan has been engulfed in violence. Driven from their homes, over a million people are sheltering in overcrowded camps and informal settlements at the risk of hunger, violence and disease. The humanitarian crisis in the world’s youngest country is also a ‘children crisis’: an estimated 248 000 children under 5 years of age are severely undernourished and around 60 % of the South Sudanese refugees in the region are children and youth under 18.

Jonglei is one of the worst-affected states with over 200 000 displaced people and some of the highest levels

Since December 2013, South Sudan has been gripped by a violence that has hit the most vulnerable — its children — the hardest.

Three-year-old Nhial is severely malnourished and receiving treatment at Save the Children’s feeding clinic. The conflict in South Sudan has hit children particularly hard.

Photo credit: Save the Children.





“ Since the war started we have been living in suffering; we’re just helpless. What I eat with my children is not enough. We eat just once a day. I fear that by next month there will be no food left for me and my children. ”

Nyatot, mother of 3-year-old Nhial

of malnutrition in the country. In Akobo county in Jonglei, over a quarter of the children are severely malnourished.

With the help of the European Union, Save the Children has established five feeding centres providing over a thousand children with life-saving treatment.

When Nyatot took 3-year-old Nhial to one such centre, he was screened and treated by specially trained staff and provided with the medication and nutritious supplements he needs to make a full recovery.

She explains that the boy has been better since she took him to the centre — and that ‘he’s not like he was before’.

‘I was worried about him because his body was suffering and he wasn’t getting better. If there had been no medicines available at the health centre when he became sick, he could easily have died’, she adds.

Aid agencies are warning that the severe food crisis could impact millions.

Peter Walsh, country director at Save the Children for South Sudan, says that more than a third of children in the coun-

try are currently malnourished, with over 20 % suffering from acute malnutrition and 4 % severely malnourished. He describes this as ‘life-threatening hunger’.

The United Nations warns that tens of thousands of children could die if the conflict does not stop and if people cannot return to their homes and resume their livelihoods.

* All names altered to protect the identity of the interviewees.

Four years after independence, South Sudan is experiencing a major humanitarian crisis

- ➔ Since the outbreak of the civil war in December 2013, the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan remains one of the world’s biggest.
- ➔ Over 2 million people have fled their homes, of which half a million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.
- ➔ South Sudan also faces a food security crisis. The UN estimates that over 4 million people are severely food-insecure.
- ➔ Hostilities and attacks against aid workers seriously constrain access to those in need.
- ➔ The EU and its Member States have given over one third of all humanitarian financing to the country, according to the UN (EUR 215 million in 2015).

9 Demography and migration



The world's population reached 7 billion in 2013 and experts predict that there will be 9.7 billion people on the planet by 2050, with 7.8 billion living in underdeveloped countries. As of 2014, over half of the world's population live in cities.

Over half of the world's 232 million or so migrants are in low- and middle-income countries. Most are forced into migration by disaster and economic hardship and around 60 million refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) worldwide have had no choice but to leave. Migrants can make a vibrant and productive contribution to society, yet all too often they are left unaided, vulnerable and invisible, prone to exploitation and human trafficking.

In our interdependent world, international action and cooperation is vital if we are to uphold migrants' rights.



A birth registration initiative in Niger means children officially exist and can exercise their rights.

Eight-year-old Fatimata has been officially registered, allowing her to take her state school exams and claim her rights in Niger.



Giving every child the right to a legal existence in Niger

Inizdane Mohamadou knows he has a long, exhausting day ahead of him. However, he has been waiting for this day for weeks. He knows that, as the school headmaster, his pupils and their parents are relying on him — and he has no intention of letting them down.

As simple as it sounds, the task before him today is of paramount importance. He will be travelling from his village to Akbounou, the capital of his commune, where a mobile court hearing will take place to register some sections of the population whose births were never recorded.

His job is to ensure that all of his pupils have a birth certificate by the end of the day. 'This is a momentous opportunity for us. Having these documents is so important for the people of our commune', he says.

Inizdane got up early this morning. He lives in a remote little village in the Tahoua region of northern Niger. Infrastructure is limited and villagers often need to walk several kilometres to access basic public services.

Inizdane's school is one of 27 in the huge 5 300 km² commune to which his village belongs. He knows that the area in question is particularly vast: the civil registrar is respon-



sible for a population of 47 000, scattered across numerous villages.

'Because of the distance, many parents fail to register their newborn children with the Civil Registry Office by the official deadline. These mobile court hearings give them the chance to put things right', he explains.

Only three of the 104 pupils in his little school have a birth certificate. Yet without this document they are unable to register for examinations to get into high school, meaning that primary school effectively marks the end of the road for their education.

So when the authorities told him that a mobile court was coming to the area, Inizdane informed the parents and explained how important it was to register their children.

Although not all of them are able to make the trip today because they can't afford the transport or have work commitments elsewhere, the headmaster has reassured them that he won't let them down.

He hops onto his moped and rides back and forth along the 14 kilometres of track between his village and Akbounou, with children riding pillion on each trip. 'I've already done three round-trips on my moped with two kids riding on the back each time, so that's six children who have had their births registered. The village chief does the same thing', he went on to say.

However, organising transport — at his own expense — is not the only task on Inizdane's list. He helps the authorities register his pupils by pre-filling out their declarations. It's a repetitive, time-consuming task that requires a great amount of concentration. As far as Inizdane is concerned, it's only natural that he helps out like this — after all, he knows the children's names, ages and parents better than any civil registrar.

'Armed with their birth certificate, these children have a nationality and can then obtain an identity card proving that they are Nigerien citizens. That means that they can sit their exams, continue their education, work, travel and exist!' he says enthusiastically.

Sitting at his little desk in a corridor of the town hall where the mobile court has been set up, he prepares to register 8-year-old Fatimata Alhaadi, who patiently waits to give him her details so that he can fill in the paperwork.

All around them the atmosphere is celebratory — like a national holiday. The school pupils and some other children and their parents who have made the trip wait impatiently for the precious key to official existence that will finally enable them to exercise their full rights.

“ Armed with their birth certificate, these children have a nationality and can obtain an identity card proving that they are Nigerien citizens. ”

Inizdane Mohamadou



Inizdane prepares to fill out the civil registration form.



The EU and Unicef are helping Niger to overhaul its civil registration system by boosting capacity, providing materials and equipment and promoting public awareness and participation

- ➔ The proportion of children registered at birth has doubled from 32 % in 2006 to 64 % in 2013.
- ➔ On the eve of the adoption of the Civil Registration Act in 2007, the country had 2 169 civil registry centres. That figure has now tripled.
- ➔ Because of the distance between the nomadic population groups and the administrative centres, the law permits a 30-day declaration period.
- ➔ Mobile court hearings are organised to register people who have missed the legal deadline for registration, without penalising them.
- ➔ Between 2009 and 2011, over 1.6 million birth certificates were issued to children under the age of 18.



Bringing a better life to migrant domestic workers in Argentina

'Why do other workers have rights, but not us?' Maria Perez remembers asking herself when she first arrived to Argentina from Paraguay 25 years ago to find employment as a domestic worker. Today, after labour organising for decades, Argentina has a new national migration policy, including a new law on domestic workers, which demonstrates a strong commitment by the Government of Argentina to regularise and formalise the domestic work sector for nationals and migrants alike.

'I'm very optimistic. I always believed things could be better. Many people thought it was our destiny to be exploited, but I never lost faith that things could improve for us workers', said Maria.

Around the world, at least 53 million people — over 83 % of whom are women — earn their living as domestic workers, and this number is increasing steadily in both developed and developing countries. They clean, cook, look after children and take care of the elderly, among other tasks. Domestic workers make invaluable economic, cultural and social contributions to their countries of origin, transit and destination, but their contributions are often overlooked. In consequence, they are excluded from the protection of na-

A programme seeking to promote the human and labour rights of migrant domestic workers worldwide finds success in Argentina.

'We have to keep demanding respect and make sure all domestic workers have a contract.' —

Maria Perez.

Photo credit: ILO





tional legislation, work for excessively long hours, with little pay and with almost no access to social protection.

“

Many people thought it was our destiny to be exploited, but I never lost faith things could improve for us workers.

”

Maria Perez

In order to address the specific challenges that migrant domestic workers face, the ILO, with funding from the EU, embarked on a ‘Global action programme on migrant domestic workers and their families’ in 2013. The programme seeks to promote the human and labour rights of these particularly vulnerable workers worldwide by addressing the factors that put them at risk of exploitation and abuse. This global action is paving the road to change for millions of domestic workers in Argentina and across the world.

‘I work now as a live-out domestic worker from Monday to Friday. I have a contract and I know my rights. After many years of working in Argentina, I will be able to retire and have my pension paid in Paraguay’, explains a satisfied Maria. She has also joined the Domestic Workers Union (UPACP) and enrolled in the vocational training course ‘Servicios en casas particulares’ (service in private homes), which UPACP provides to its affiliates, free of charge. ‘I received a diploma. I framed it and hung it on my wall. I feel so proud of myself’.

Following the adoption of the first migration law in 2004, the government of Argentina passed yet another progressive law in March 2013 to regulate employment relationships for private home workers. This is a significant advance in the application of the principles promoted by the ILO’s convention on decent work for domestic workers in terms of complete equality between the rights of domestic workers and other workers. The law updates and expands domestic workers’ labour rights by recognising maternity leave, paid holidays, a minimum wage, a yearly bonus and compensation in case of layoffs or firing. It restricts working hours to 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week.

‘Since the passing of the laws, I have made sure to tell all my friends from Paraguay who also work as domestic workers to request a work contract from their employers and claim the new benefits. Most of them are now part of the formal economy’, explained Maria.

‘We have to keep demanding respect and make sure all domestic workers have a contract, as it is about our future and the future of our children’.

The EU is backing a global action project on migrant domestic workers, implemented by the ILO

- ➔ At least 53 million people, over 83 % of who are women, earn their living as domestic workers.
- ➔ In 2011, the international labour conference of the ILO adopted the Domestic Workers Convention (No 189).
- ➔ Bilateral agreements have been signed between trade unions in countries of origin and destination in three migration corridors.
- ➔ Legislation for domestic workers was passed in Paraguay and the first domestic workers' union in the Arab world was founded in Lebanon.
- ➔ Argentina has recognised maternity leave, paid holidays, a minimum wage, a yearly bonus and compensation for layoffs or firing.
- ➔ Argentina now also restricts working hours to 8 per day and 48 per week for domestic workers.



Less than 1 month after returning to Moldova, Vera had set up a profitable business thanks to the help of a migrants' initiative.

Vera Craciun was supported on her return to Moldova to set up her own flower business.



Returning home to plant a new life in Moldova

The residents of Basarabeasca, the capital of one of the southern districts of Moldova, were quite astonished to see a floral shop opening in their small town, one fine summer's day. They were even more surprised to learn that the shop was run by a family from their town who had returned home after 12 years of working abroad. 'I was very surprised too, but I am so happy that my dream came true after so many years', confessed Vera Craciun, the 41-year-old owner of the shop.

Vera is one of 44 000 Moldovans who have returned home since 1992 after working abroad for more than a year. Currently about 370 000 Moldovans (11 % of the population) work abroad as long-term labour migrants, with 59 % intending to return permanently to Moldova. Another 56 000 intend to leave the country in search of a job.

While many Moldovans still expect to pack their bags and seek their fortune abroad, Vera and her husband returned home and in less than 1 month had set up a profitable business.

'When we decided to come home I still had worries about opening my small business. I had no idea on how to begin, what legal procedures I needed to follow to register a com-



pany, how to open a bank account or where to go for tax and social registrations. I am sure that my dream would not have come true so quickly without the thorough and kind help of the Cahul NEXUS service centre', said Vera.

She heard about the NEXUS service centre in Cahul from a short news video on a local web portal popular among Moldovan migrants. Vera was impressed and decided to visit the centre. 'There, at NEXUS, I received not only the information and guidance I needed, but they actually accompanied me to the registration chamber and other public institutions dealing with business registration. I expect it would have taken me months, and far beyond the peak period of flowers, to complete the registration process without the help of NEXUS', she said.

NEXUS in Cahul is one of three pilot centres opened in February 2014 in three district towns, within the broader NEXUS Moldova initiative. The fourth flagship centre in the capital Chisinau and the online virtual service centre www.nexusnet.md were launched in December 2014.

The NEXUS service centres, along with their partners from the public, private and civil society sectors, provide a broad range of useful information and quality services for its clients. NEXUS clients are Moldovans interested in labour migration and related issues; that is, people intending to leave to find work outside Moldova, those already working abroad and those who have returned.

In addition, NEXUS helps members of migrant families, like children left at home, parents, other relatives or even neighbours taking care of migrant family members.

'Since the migration phenomenon is so prevalent in our society, migrants are too often perceived negatively. We at the NEXUS service centre are working to change this perception by offering relevant services to those who have decided to go abroad for a job, helping them prepare for taking this important step in their lives, or to those who have returned and want to efficiently reintegrate back into their home community. Vera is a very good example of the latter and we are proud of what she has accomplished', explained Carolina Cartofeanu, Director of NEXUS Cahul.

Only a couple of months have passed since launching their floral business and Vera and her husband are already planning to expand their business into floral decorations and flower delivery. They are not sure what resources and skills they will need to succeed at this, but at least they are sure where they will go for advice.

“ *When we decided to return home I still had worries about opening my small business. I had no idea how to begin.* ”

Vera Craciun



By supporting NEXUS, the EU is helping Moldovans reach their personal migration goals from pre-departure to return

- ➔ NEXUS Moldova is funded by the EU and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It is being implemented from 2013 to 2015 by a consortium of partners led by the Austrian NGO IASCI.
- ➔ Four pilot NEXUS service centres were created within the broader NEXUS Moldova initiative.
- ➔ The initiative also includes a virtual service centre (www.nexusnet.md) to provide access to services online from anywhere at all.
- ➔ Partnerships with local and national public authorities and service providers from private and civil sectors have been established.
- ➔ NEXUS benefits destination countries by preparing migrants on entry conditions, language skills, legal and labour issues and culture.
- ➔ NEXUS contributed to the creation of the specialised government entity Bureau for Diaspora Relations.



Bringing vital family planning services to rural women in Zambia

During her first pregnancy, Judith Muntahli was bitten by a snake. By the time she got to the hospital, the infection had set in and her leg had to be amputated. With no access to contraception, Judith carried nine more pregnancies on one leg using crutches. Sadly, her tenth child died when he was just 1 month old.

After hearing that Marie Stopes Zambia (MSZ) was going to visit her village to run a family planning clinic, Judith decided she'd like to hear more about how she could avoid becoming pregnant again. Together with her husband, Judith met the MSZ outreach team to find out more about the different methods of family planning. Convinced her body couldn't handle yet another pregnancy, Judith decided to undergo female surgical contraception, which was carried out by one of MSZ's mobile clinical outreach teams.

Afterwards, Judith said: 'Since I had the procedure, I don't worry about falling pregnant again and my sex life has improved'.

Judith is one of the 26 000 women in Muchinga Province who will be using modern contraceptive methods by 2016 as a result of MSZ's innovative family planning project, financed by the European Union in Zambia.

Meet Judith Muntahli, born in Muchinga in the north of Zambia. She and her husband are subsistence farmers with nine children.

Judith Muntahli and the Marie Stopes Zambia mobile health team.





Zambia has one of the youngest, most rural populations in the world, with 46 % of its population under the age of 15 (2010 census). Rates of use of modern methods of contraception have improved greatly over the past 2 decades. However, lack of access to family planning services is a major contributor to the 16 % of births which are reported as unwanted and the estimated 30 % of maternal deaths caused by unsafe abortions. Close to one in every two girls in Zambia has given birth before the age of 19, and this age group also accounts for an estimated 80 % of unsafe abortions carried out. So the need for accessible contraceptive services in Zambia — particularly for unmarried adolescent girls — is profound.

MSZ's EU-funded 'Maternal and sexual-reproductive health rights' project is carried out in five districts in Muchinga Province and works closely with government district medical officers to plan and deliver outreach services across 45 rural health facilities.

These five districts are among the most under-served in Zambia both in terms of contraceptive services and health-care. One of the biggest challenges to delivering these services in Zambia is dealing with the huge distances between communities and facilities. Mpika District alone is the size of Denmark.

“

I don't worry about falling pregnant again; the procedure has given me and my husband a chance to take care of our nine children and to give them a better life I never had.

”

Judith Muntahli

To address this challenge, MSZ uses the 'camping model'. From its bases in Muchinga Province, a customised MSZ Land Rover — stuffed with equipment and manned with specialised medical staff — travels up to 200 km into some of the most rural parts of the province. At these mobile clinics, the team provides group and individual counselling, HIV testing, contraception and advice on follow-up.

Overall, demand greatly exceeds what the project and government health facilities can supply. There is an appointment system in place, yet on some occasions more women turn up for services than can be seen that day, with many of them having walked up to 25 km. When that happens, the team adjusts its schedule and stays for an extra night so that the remaining clients can be seen the following day.

MSZ Country Director Adrienne Quintana said: 'The high uptake of our services is a reflection of the significant need for family planning in this area. With support from traditional leaders, many husbands and wives now understand how family planning contributes to the development of their communities, positively impacting on health, education and livelihoods'.

Speaking about the impact on her and on her family, Judith says that 'the procedure has given me and my husband a chance to focus on taking care of our nine children and giving them a better life'.

The EU-funded MSZ 'Maternal and sexual-reproductive health rights' project supplements the efforts of the Zambian government to provide underserved rural communities with choices in contraceptive methods

- ➔ In Muchinga Province, MSZ estimates up to 65 % of women have no access to family planning services.
- ➔ Zambia has one of the youngest, most rural populations in the world, with 46 % of its population under the age of 15.
- ➔ The project aims to avert an estimated 49 000 unintended pregnancies, 6 700 unsafe abortions and 120 maternal deaths in Muchinga Province.
- ➔ The family planning services provided will save families and the public health system EUR 2 515 140 in direct healthcare spending.

The customised MSZ Land Rover enables the health teams reach remote areas.





Women sit on a bench in a small room, babies tied on their backs, waiting patiently for a precious document.

Not just another day at the office — registering asylum seekers in Uganda

Several women sit on a bench in a small room with babies tied on their backs. All are silent with glazing eyes and expressionless faces. They are waiting, patiently. It is their second time here at the Base Camp at Nakivale, Uganda's largest refugee settlement. These mothers are seeking a precious document that would grant refugee status for their babies and provide some security in a land hundreds of miles away from home. In Nakivale, waiting has become a routine for the estimated 72 000 refugees currently located here.

Margaret Kyomugisha, Head of the Registration Office at Nakivale.



Margaret Kyomugisha has genuine compassion for the people who pass through her office every day. She is the Head of the Registration Office at Nakivale and has been registering asylum seekers for the last 8 years. 'They are mainly fleeing war. At night they hear gunshots', Margaret says.

Her day starts at around eight in the morning and continues until six in the evening, often without a lunch break. Up to 150 people come to the base camp every day to have their refugee status determined.

For decades Uganda has experienced a high level of refugee migration and, influenced by its own history, has al-



ways applied a generous asylum policy. While the majority of refugees originate from neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the diversity of nationalities and ethnicities make the group varied and often complex to manage. All have escaped a bleak fate. However, the uncertainty of a new life in a land distant from home is a small price to pay for many seeking refugee status in Uganda.

Continuous fear of imminent attacks from armed groups has characterised several countries in East Africa for years. It has forced millions to leave behind their lives, families, homes and belongings in search of some stability and security. However, the journey to acquiring refugee status requires a great amount of patience and waiting.

Each person Margaret comes across has their own unique story and different needs. 'The work is interesting, I learn so much from the people', she says. Work is not always easy. Margaret sees women who have lost children and husbands, people with disabilities and traumatised, unaccompanied children. Each case is treated individually and she gives it her best every time. 'You do your part and you refer them, but it can be difficult', she says.

Before Margaret receives them, the asylum seekers have been through government registration, where their nationality is verified. It is then up to Margaret and her team to ensure that they receive an asylum seeker's certificate while they wait for their refugee status to be determined. The certificate gives them the right to basic farming equip-

ment, a small piece of land and some non-food items. Most importantly it gives them 3 months of food rations.

'Before, it could take between 7 and 10 days before newcomers to the settlement got their food ration. For those with no family in the camp, those days can be very difficult', says Dedan Tugaine, senior registration officer from the United Nation's refugee agency (UNHCR).

The main difficulty in Nakivale has been clearing the backlog of pending applications. Now the waiting time has been cut to between 2 and 4 days thanks to an EU-funded programme implemented by the UNHCR in cooperation with the Government of Uganda.

The aim has been to facilitate a faster process so that the refugees will be able to regain their livelihoods and get back to a 'normal' life. Besides reinforcing the capacity of government departments and training staff, the EU support has helped refurbish and expand the refugee status determination centre. These improvements 'make the process for the asylum seekers more humane and the process more orderly', says Dedan.

The women who sit patiently are now treated with more dignity in this home away from home that may be no more.

“ *They mainly flee from war. At night they hear gunshots.*

”

Margaret Kyomugisha, Head of the Registration Office at Nakivale



Nakivale was established in 1958 and is the oldest and largest refugee settlement in Uganda

- ➔ The camp stretches over 185 km² with three zones: Rubondo, Base Camp and Juru, covering a total of 67 villages.
- ➔ For many of the refugees, the possibility of returning home anytime soon is not an option.
- ➔ The EU is funding the UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister to strengthen the protection of refugees at Uganda's borders.
- ➔ 'Addressing challenges of mixed migration flows in Uganda' was funded by the EU and ran from 2011 to 2014.
- ➔ The EU is working with the police, the army, civil society and the Refugee Department of the Office of the Prime Minister.
- ➔ The EU funded the refurbishment of the Kabazana reception centre for asylum seekers and equipped a vocational training centre.

Refugees at the base camp at Nakivale, Uganda's largest refugee settlement.



10 Food security



Undernutrition kills more than 3 million children every year and leaves millions more mentally and physically scarred for life. Moreover, every day one in nine people go hungry because they can't find or afford enough nutritious food.

Hunger and undernutrition are enemies of human development and can cause conflict. When people cannot create wealth, their countries' growth potential is stunted. For countries striving to climb the development ladder, this is a particularly harsh blow. It's clear, then, that we need to make feeding an ever-growing global population a key development priority.



Micro-irrigation increases local socioeconomic development and food security for rural communities in Cape Verde.

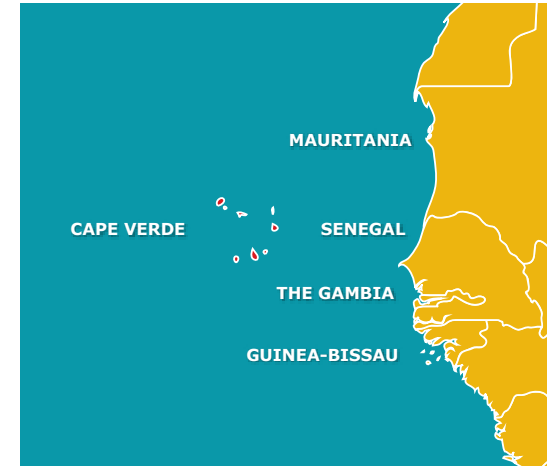
Sharing the fruits of our labour in Cape Verde

In preceding centuries, Cape Verde's horticulture sector was a substantial source of nutritional and economic sustenance in this resource-poor archipelago. Banana production in particular allowed local farmers to secure income and provide for local communities. Unfortunately, according to Nora Silva, Head of the National Institute for Agricultural Research and Development, most plantations succumbed to drought, pollution and disease in the 1990s.

At the dawn of the new millennium, the outlook for the sector's recovery appeared bleak — threatening livelihoods, socioeconomic development and food security. 'These fields were once replete with banana trees', Silva maintained while on a field visit in Santa Cruz, 'now there is nothing'.

Seeking to reverse this trajectory, the European Union financed the development of water irrigation systems on Santiago Island to promote the sector's recovery. This entailed constructing large water reservoirs and installing silos close to new plantations where a network of hoses could then disperse water at regular intervals.

With the system in place, it was now up to newly empowered farmers like João S. F. from Santa Cruz — one of the project's beneficiaries — to do the rest. Through the



João and his sister, Maria, monitoring their plantations.



project he proceeded to till the soil and planted banana stems imported from the Canary Islands and Brazil. Subsequently, along with his staff, he maintained and monitored the crops until the trees matured sufficiently for harvest.

As João explained, ‘the primary crops grown in Cape Verde today are beans and corn’, which are used for Cape Verdean staples like *katchupa* and *feijoada*. ‘However’, he continued, ‘these are difficult to grow due to a lack of rainwater and they can only be harvested once per year. The advantage of bananas is that they can be harvested year-round, with yields ripening every 4 months’.

With the recovery of banana production, João began diversifying his crops by adding mango, pineapple and sugarcane. These are among just some of the varieties produced with the help of the irrigation systems and technical assistance provided. Nearby, other farmers are growing dragon fruit, blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, macadamia and litchis, among others. Moreover, horticulture research financed by the EU is helping João optimise his production capacities, ensure high-quality standards and implement strategies to reduce his crops’ exposure to diseases and safeguard their longevity.

The project has already permitted 178 farmers, 43 of them women, to grow their own crops. By supporting João and the other farmers to reseed the fields and to expand and manage their crops independently, the programme is facilitating rapid cultivation. ‘The project is very sustainable’, EU

Ambassador José Manuel Pinto Teixeira maintained, ‘because stems can be used for new plantations’.

The newly resurgent agribusiness is having a large impact on local economic development and food security. While João’s produce is primarily destined for local markets, he has also begun exporting to other islands, particularly those with significant tourism. ‘Production capacity and quality are very high’, he explained, ‘if we continue at this rate, soon we can begin exporting beyond Cape Verde’.

This increased supply of local produce also benefits communities, as it lowers prices and provides essential nutrients. Bananas are particularly advantageous since they contain high amounts of fibre and potassium. Fibre, for example, helps regulate the digestive system, which mitigates dehydration arising from diarrhoea, a leading cause of infant and child mortality. By reducing extreme poverty, malnutrition and child mortality, the programme is reinforcing Cape Verde’s success in locally contributing to the global millennium development goals.

The fruits of our labour are beginning to show and, given the bottom-up approach, gains are primarily concentrated among farmers and local communities. With more plantations under development, the importance of micro-irriga-

“ *The advantage of bananas is that they can be harvested year-round, with yields ripe for harvesting every 4 months. Now with bananas, no one goes hungry!* ”

**João, farmer from Santa Cruz,
Cape Verde**



tion projects for socioeconomic development is evident and epitomises the EU's commitment to promoting global food security, sustainable environments and inclusive growth. As João exclaimed: 'Now with bananas, no one goes hungry!'

The EU project is relaunching banana and horticulture production on Santiago Island, Cape Verde

- ➔ The low-cost, high-impact initiative mobilised EUR 2.47 million and was implemented in cooperation with local partners.
- ➔ The project has already helped 178 farmers — 43 of them women — to grow, manage and expand their own crops.
- ➔ 22.2 hectares of new fruit plantations resulted from the project.
- ➔ The agribusiness sector has led to the development of the local economy and promises to be an important source of growth for Cape Verde.
- ➔ The project exemplifies the importance of micro-irrigation projects for local socioeconomic development and food security.

EU-financed water irrigation systems.





SmartFish — Sustainable fishing in Madagascar

Mahajanga is close to Madagascar's second-largest commercial port. We are actually in a fishing village near Namakia. It feels as if we are in the Amazon rainforest: muddy water, dense woodland and an atmosphere laden with humidity all characterise the natural habitat of the *Scylla Serrata*, or 'mangrove crab'.

Crab catches have substantially increased in recent years, but the incredible potential offered by the resource could be undermined if it is not managed well.

Julienne Razafindrafara, who has been crab fishing for the past 5 years, is acutely aware of what is at stake.

Madagascar has 325 000 hectares of this type of ecosystem, which accounts for a potential fishing yield of 7 500 tonnes of crab (still largely under-exploited).

Crabs are one of the most sought-after products on the international market and have the potential to generate substantial and sustainable revenues for Madagascar's coastal communities. Asian markets have a preference for larger species of live crab, which fetch around twice as much per kilo as frozen crab (which is mainly exported to Europe).

The EU's SmartFish programme is promoting sustainable fishing in Madagascar.

Julienne, crab fisher, lives among the mangroves of Mahajanga.





Developing this resource diversifies fishing activities, thereby contributing to the food security of Madagascar's entire population. This is where Julienne's story fits in. Since

2012, she has been paying very close attention to innovative but inexpensive methods of improving storage and transport conditions, which help to dramatically reduce the mortality rate of the crabs.

Julienne lives in one of the pilot villages of four regions chosen by the regional SmartFish programme run by the Indian Ocean Commission and financed by the European Development Fund. The programme provides support at every stage in the production chain. The aim is to keep the mangrove crab alive and intact from capture to market.

'Just a year ago we lost almost half of our crab catch', says Julienne.

Today Julienne works with some 60 fishermen. She has given them new traps in order to catch the bigger crabs without damaging them. She has also provided them with tanks to preserve their catch and has built two boats with shelving for transporting the crabs to Mahajanga. Julienne explains that the cost of these investments was recouped after the very first month.

“
The new equipment
has dramatically
reduced our losses.
”

Julienne Razafindrafara.

Speaking of the new methods introduced through the programme, she says: 'The new equipment has dramatically reduced our losses. I was a crab fisher myself and I can confirm how much difference this has made to our lives'.

It is nightfall in the village. Tomorrow the crab fishermen will be back in the mangroves, toing and froing as they collect the large crabs caught in the custom-made traps, under the watchful eye of Julienne, also playing her part in ensuring the sustainable management of the resource.

Since 2011 the EU has contributed a total of EUR 21 million to the Indian Ocean Commission's SmartFish programme to boost sustainable fishing

- Despite its abundance of natural resources, Madagascar is one of the least developed countries in the world.
- 70 % of the 19.7 million-strong population live below the poverty threshold.
- In Madagascar, this programme supports innovative methods using local materials in the areas of the mangroves being exploited.
- In the areas targeted, the mortality rate of the crabs caught has been reduced by 22 % and as much as 50 % during the rainy season.
- Furthermore, the fisheries agreement between the EU and Madagascar intensifies cooperation in the field of fisheries governance.
- The EU support helps strengthen food security through Malagasy fisheries products.
- Financial support for the Malagasy fisheries sector boosts efforts to track and combat illegal fishing.
- The EU support provides a real opportunity to improve living conditions for the inhabitants of the fishing villages.

Julienne holding up a freshly caught crab.





The EU is providing rural Nepalese communities with the resources to improve their food security and nutritional status.

Creating new livelihoods in rural Nepal

Laxmi Tharu, a mother of four, took it upon herself to transform the fortune of her family.

Her husband was working in the Middle East, sending some money every month to support the family. 'I was living with my in-laws together with my four children. I had no decision-making power in the family. Every month, my husband sent USD 110 to my father-in-law. Most of the money went to pay for the education of my children. My father-in-law managed the money and I never questioned him'.

Laxmi had no experience in any agricultural work. Her in-laws owned a small pond that was covered in weeds and that no one took any notice of. Nor would anyone have suspected that it would be the seed to change her life.

Laxmi is very much involved in her local community. 'I like to organise and participate in group activities, so I started to volunteer in social development projects in the village. I became a member of the sanitary latrine promotion group. I am also the chairperson of the community forestry group'.

This is how she became aware of the 'Agriculture and nutrition extension project'. 'When the project first came to our village development committee, the project officers approached me because they knew me through my social



*Laxmi Tharu and her husband.
Photo credit: World Fish*



work. When they told me about the project, I was really interested because I thought I could get some technical knowledge and skills in agriculture and maybe find a way to make a living from it. After discussing the issue with my husband on the telephone, I decided to join the project’.

‘I communicated with the project staff and then helped them organise a group meeting in my village development committee. As the project focuses on aquaculture, all the members were supposed to have a pond, so I started cleaning up the old pond that was never used. My children helped me. I prepared the dike according to project specifications and planted vegetables’, recalled Laxmi.

With this, Laxmi started cultivating fish and growing vegetables and people started to take notice. ‘They began to realise that I had the technical knowledge and skills to do aquaculture and dike cropping. This made me feel confident and happy’.

So with Laxmi’s hard work a pond that was once sitting idle started to make a big contribution to her family’s livelihood. ‘With new methods and improved practices, we produced 217 kg of fish in the last production cycle, and we were

eating fish at least once a week. Income from the pond increased to USD 375’.

With this extra income and food for the family, Laxmi told her husband that she wanted to pursue aquaculture more seriously. ‘He supported me fully and agreed to come back and help me’. She became confident in her new venture as she found that fish culture was more profitable than rice or wheat.

Laxmi kept learning and improving, ‘I took part in several visits organised by the project and learned from the successes of commercial farmers in other districts. I proposed to construct a new pond on our land and my husband fully supported the idea. We dug a 0.61 hectares grow-out pond and a 0.03 hectares nursery pond and stocked them with fingerlings. I mainly look after the pond but my husband always helps me when I need it. My husband and I have decided that we will construct another pond of 0.34 hectares next year’.

From an overgrown pond and with the right knowledge and support, Laxmi was able to take control of her and her family’s life. She is now an example to others in her community, with the village development committee recently appointing her as trainer on fisheries.

“*They began to realise that I had the technical knowledge and skills to do aquaculture and dike cropping. This made me feel confident and happy.*

”

Laxmi Tharu



*Investing in small-scale farming and fisheries in Nepal is paying off.
Photo credit: Bimala Rai Colavito, IDE Nepal*



The agriculture and nutrition extension project is increasing the food security and nutritional status of Nepalese communities

- ➔ Around 70 % of Nepalese have agriculture-based livelihoods, including many subsistence farmers.
- ➔ 21 209 poor households living in Nepal have improved income, food security and nutrition.
- ➔ Average annual household income has increased by EUR 400 for people taking part in the programme.
- ➔ Vulnerable farming families have increased the number of food-secure months from just 4.6 to 11 months.
- ➔ The prevalence of underweight children has decreased from 37.5 % to 17 % — a very significant drop in a short period of time.
- ➔ Communities have been linked to government services to sustain and expand the gains made in food security, nutrition and income.



Speaking up for the next generation of farmers in Niger

54-year-old farmer Amadou Ousmane, known as Belko, stands before a tomato patch, contemplating the events of the day and planning for the following day. When he was a very young boy, seeing his parents farming and helping them harvest tomatoes, he could not have imagined that he would one day be leading the national network for collaboration and dialogue among producer organisations, known as the CDD-G9. He has just concluded another meeting focused on preparing a common position on the draft framework law on agricultural policy, which will shape the future of farming and food security in Niger.

Born and raised in Niger's capital city of Niamey, Belko spent his youth helping his parents on the farm. He soon began cultivating traditional Nigerien crops (millet, cowpea, sesame and rice) and fresh vegetables as well as raising livestock and poultry. Today, he continues to farm lands in the metropolitan area of Niamey, as well as in the region between the towns of Guélado and Say.

In Niger, where 80 % of the population is rural, family farming is the rule. Belko stands out, nevertheless, for his strong activism within producer organisations, his dedication to family farming and his readiness to engage as

Small farmers are the key to the food supply for rural populations, they need to have a say in policies that regulate them.

Amadou Ousmane (known as Belko) stands out for his strong activism within producer organisations.

Photo credit: FAO





a leader and representative of needs and interests of rural men and women.

“ Things are evolving very rapidly and in a very positive way. A number of organisations came together to solve a number of local issues and the situation at the community level is much better.

**Amadou Ousmane,
President of the CCD-G9**

Thanks to his having joined Nogaré's market vegetables cooperative in 1985/1986, Ousmane developed his skills and increased the productivity of his farm. This first experience in a cooperative taught him about the potential benefits of collective action for small-scale producers and the country's agricultural development, poverty reduction and food security policies.

Strong in his convictions, Belko carved out his path in the cooperative movement in Niger, and in 2008 became president of the council for farmers' action and solidarity in Niger (Caspani). This position allowed him to actively work on the issue closest to his heart:

enabling producer organisations to serve as the collective voice of farmers and other actors in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and laws. In fact, the producer landscape in Niger is rather fragmented and characterised by a lack of unity and coordination. Additionally, women, who make up a significant proportion of members, remain largely under-represented in decision-making and leadership positions.

Over recent years, Niger and other countries have increasingly recognised that developing sustainable agricultur-

al policies cannot happen without small-scale and family farmers communicating their concerns and providing input on the policies, laws and programmes that will affect them.

Joining forces with FAO and the EU

In March 2013, Ousmane's path crossed with the European Union and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, when the two partners brought producer organisations together to support their dialogue with government.

They identified the most appropriate ways to strengthen the participation of producer organisations, specifically in the implementation of the national strategy on food security and rural agriculture. Belko and his fellow leaders were able to present the views of the CDD-G9 network. The common platform for dialogue and collaboration for small-scale and family farmers in Niger had come to fruition and was now to be part of a rich partnership with the EU, FAO and other partners.

After this first founding step and more than a year of support from the EU and the FAO, Belko's network strengthened. It has been engaging other organisations, formulating proposals and influencing the formulation and implementation of national policy and legal instruments that will affect thousands of small producers — and, in turn, food security — throughout the country.

As a result of EU-FAO support, not only does the network provide a way for farmers to get their voices heard at the national level, it also ensures information and capacity de-

Engaging farmers in lawmaking processes

- ➔ Niger is a landlocked, least-developed, low-income and food-deficit country in the Sahara–Sahel belt, with a population of over 16 million.
- ➔ 80 % of the population of Niger live in rural areas.
- ➔ 2.5 million people in Niger are chronically food-insecure and unable to meet their basic food requirements.
- ➔ In Niger, women constitute 60 % of total producer organisation membership but less than 20 % participate in decision-making.
- ➔ Pursuing social and economic goals, producer organisations play a critical role in reducing poverty and improving food security.

velopment reaches back to the farmers. Women's participation and leadership within the CDD-G9 network and its member organisations is also improving. The Maradi Regional Chamber of Agriculture is presided over by Ms Tchima Ibrahim, the treasurer of the women union of producers.

One catches a glimmer of the very young tomato farmer in Belko, who has so quickly been able to shape the network that first sowed in him the seeds of advocacy and activism into a powerful cohesive platform that provides a voice to the next generation of independent farmers to ensure their livelihoods and food security in the future.

Women onion producers, Union of Mada Ben, commune of Falwel, Region of Dosso.

Photo credit: FAO



11 Sustainable Development and Climate Action



Sustainable development is about improving people's lives without depleting the natural resources and ecosystems on which economies and human societies depend. Eradicating poverty, preserving the planet, creating sustained and inclusive economic growth and fostering social inclusion all reinforce and depend upon each other.

Since 2000, the world has made great progress in reducing poverty. But great challenges remain in all areas, and one – climate change – is among the gravest. If left unchecked, it threatens to undo development achievements of recent years and undermine future progress. It's a particular threat to developing countries, as their economies often depend on climate-sensitive natural resources. But we are all in this together. The future of our planet depends on our actions now, and only together we can find solutions.



The EU project in Vietnam aims to keep the country's forests standing by providing incentives and slow climate change.

Protecting forests for a sustainable future in Vietnam

Pham Hong Luong's father was a forester, and growing up in northeast Vietnam, Pham Hong wanted to be just like his dad. He studied forestry and, after graduating, went to work in Vietnam's oldest national park, Cúc Phương National Park on the Red River Delta.

'When I worked there, everyone was motivated to protect the environment and the forests in particular', he says.

Now, 20 years later, Pham has the chance to do just that. He works for the Government of Vietnam overseeing an innovative national programme called 'Payments for forest ecosystem services', or PFES.

Forests play a crucial role in preventing soil erosion, maintaining the water cycle and fighting climate change. They also provide timber, food and fuel for poor rural communities.

Since 2010, the PFES programme has recognised forests' importance by requiring those who rely on forest environmental services — water supply companies, hydropower plants and tourism operators — to make payments to the communities and individuals that own and look after the forest.



Mr Luong with villagers in Ta Dung Natural Protected Area, Vietnam.



Each year, the programme collects around USD 60 million, 75 % of which is distributed to forest owners. In exchange, they must not cut down any trees.

Vietnam is the first country in Asia to trial a nationwide programme like this — and Pham says that there is a lot to figure out and many questions to be answered.

How much do you charge — and if you have a fixed rate of payment, what happens when there's inflation? Which areas count as forest? Who counts as a forest owner? What about people who have customary rights to land but no legal title? Are the payments enough to ensure people do not clear the forests?

An EU-funded project of the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) is helping Pham and the Government of Vietnam answer some of these questions — particularly those related to how the benefits of schemes like PFES are distributed and how they are perceived by the local people who receive them.

'Our research aims to bring local perspectives to the forefront of policy design', says CIFOR's Grace Wong. 'If people don't see these schemes as fair, they may not be willing to engage in the forest management activities and conservation'.

CIFOR research in Vietnam and five other tropical countries examines and analyses benefit-sharing mechanisms like PFES and offers advice for policymakers on how to design

their systems in the most efficient, effective and fairest way possible.

Vietnam's experience also offers important lessons for other global programmes that are seeking fair ways to share benefits among rural people — such as REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation), which aims to tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions from deforestation.

'These studies are very useful and helpful for us to ensure the most effective system for conservation', says Pham.

For example, to make incentives more effective, CIFOR is exploring ways to structure PFES payments based on local preferences and combine them with other sources of revenue, like REDD+ funding or forest certification. That could make the payments substantial enough to ensure people do not lose out if they stop clearing trees to plant crops.

'If the benefit-sharing mechanism is adjusted, villagers will get more money to ensure their livelihoods, which helps them to protect our forests', Pham says.

'That is a sustainable way to ensure we keep our forests in the future'.

“ *That is a sustainable way to ensure we keep our forests in the future.* ”

Luong Pham Hong



Mr Pham Hong Luong.



The EU-financed project conducts research to provide guidance on ways to improve the design and implementation of schemes such as REDD+

- ➔ REDD+ stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
- ➔ People receive incentives for not clearing forests or through reforestation, thereby reducing carbon.
- ➔ Devising equitable and legitimate ways of distributing the costs and benefits of these initiatives are crucial to their success.
- ➔ The research focuses on six countries — Vietnam, Indonesia, Peru, Brazil, Cameroon and Tanzania.
- ➔ CIFOR has held over 20 consultations and workshops and produced 15 publications since the project began.



There used to be a slum here... Urban renewal in Argentina

‘Such a big change has not taken place for over 200 years’, says Javier Elorrio while the boat passes by a nice, clean, open green space with newly planted trees on the banks of the Matanza-Riachuelo River, which flows through Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. There used to be a slum here once...

Javier, 52, works at the Directorate-General for Cleaning Buenos Aires City, which is part of the Ministry of Environment. Javier has overseen some small but radical improvements to the environment along the river to the south of Buenos Aires city.

The 60 km river and its basin are widely considered to be among the most polluted areas in Argentina. Moving up the river, one gets the impression of watching a procession of worn-out factories. Some of them have been shut down, but many others are still operating in what is a heavily industrialised zone and major source of chemical waste.

The factories alternate with tiny rickety houses, most of which have nothing more than a thin metal plate for a roof. The slums appear to float among garbage. ‘They are built on litter’, explains Javier. The lack of adequate sanitation infrastructure enables the discharge of unfiltered sewage

Buenos Aires is addressing environmental and social issues, tackling polluters and cleaning up the rivers.

Javier Elorrio explains how the environmental situation was, just a few years ago.





directly into the river, making the stench almost unbearable at some points. Because of groundwater, air and soil contamination and the precarious living conditions, local dwellers face significant health risks.

However, the situation is gradually improving, with the relocation of residents to better housing, the clearing of slums and dumping grounds and the creation of parks. 'It's faster to clear a slum or make a park or biking trail. Water

will take more time', Javier explains, as he details the long history of environmental and social problems in the river basin.

Local residents have played an important role in ushering in these changes. 'People pushed positively', continues Javier, referring to grassroots movements of local residents who gradu-

ally began voicing their demands for better environmental and living conditions.

Providing residents with a platform to express their concerns was an important step in the process. An EU-funded project for the social monitoring of sanitation efforts in the area has enabled the creation of '¿Qué pasa, Riachuelo?', an open and free online platform through which people can signal cases of suspected contaminating facilities.

By mapping them, along with illegal settlements and dumping grounds, the platform aggregates relevant information which is not readily or easily available. Following citizens' alerts, 347 of the 1 073 industrial sites that have officially been declared as polluting have so far cleaned up their production.

'Pollution is not very visible, it's hidden. We give it visibility', explains Andrés Nápoli, director of one of the NGOs implementing the project.

Javier agrees. 'Cleaning the riverbanks, moving people out of the riverbanks and taking them to decent dwellings are probably the most visible parts of the process. The least visible part is controlling the pollution from the industries'. While acknowledging that a lot of work remains to be done, Javier cannot hide his pride for the results achieved so far. 'It's a very important historical moment. There are generations who died without seeing this'.

'Look over there', Andrés says, pointing at a family of turtles in the river. This is not what most people would consider an extraordinary event, but their presence is a sign that Riachuelo's environment is slowly improving.

Owing to the difficulty of accessing the dumps by road, the piles of litter are taken away by boats that run on petrol. However, according to Javier, the boats' motors are soon to

“ *Pollution is not very visible, it's hidden. We give it visibility.* ”

Javier Elorrio

Cleaning the Matanza-Riachuelo river basin

- ➔ The project is empowering local residents to monitor and control the progress of sanitation efforts in the area.
- ➔ The Matanza-Riachuelo basin is home to close to 5 million people, or 12.5 % of Argentina's population.
- ➔ The estimated number of families living in conditions of high environmental risk and in need of relocation is nearly 18 000.
- ➔ The EU has contributed more than EUR 200 000 to the social monitoring project.

be replaced with new electric ones. Although the positive effect of this upgrade on the environment will be minimal, for Javier it is important to convey a clear message. 'We want to clean without polluting', he argues. 'It is a small gesture'. Yet small steps may also bring about big changes.

'That is a sustainable way to ensure we keep our forests in the future'.

A newly reclaimed space near Puente Alsina, Buenos Aires.





The EU project helps protect not just the wildlife in Zakouma National Park, but also the people dedicating their lives to the park.

Protecting wildlife and supporting people in Chad

Babakar Matar Bremé gets up at 4 am each day. After saying his morning prayers, he gets to work by 6 am, ready for another day as assistant director of Zakouma National Park in Chad.

A water and forestry engineer, Bremé is seconded by the Chadian Ministry of Environment to Zakouma, where one of his main tasks is to ensure good relations between the park management and local communities.

Community support is vital for the park, one of the most important protected areas in central Africa and home to migratory populations of elephant, gazelle, giraffe, crane and ostrich. The government has been committed to protecting the park even through many years of conflict.

‘I spend a lot of time working to maintain relations between the park and those living nearby’, Bremé explains. ‘It isn’t always easy. Poaching has been a big problem and there has been disagreement concerning the park’s boundaries. However, we have made a lot of improvement: we’ve trained guards on how to question detainees, how to conduct investigations and how to draw up charges’.

Zakouma was set up by the Government of Chad in 1963 to protect giraffes from poaching. The EU began supporting the



*Babakar Matar Bremé, assistant director, Zakouma National Park, Chad, at an elephant collaring operation.
Photo credit: Yves Stranger.*



park in 1989. Elsewhere in the Salamat region, the once-plentiful wildlife has been all but wiped out. Zakouma survived, but at considerable human cost: over the years some 25 guards have died protecting the park from poachers.

When a new wave of poaching between 2002 and 2010 saw 4 000 elephants killed, with armed groups coming from as far as Darfur in Sudan to slaughter the animals for their tusks, the Government of Chad and the EU approached international conservation NGO African Parks Network, led by director Rian Labuschagne, to take over the management of the park.

African Parks put in place a robust security regime and fit GPS collars on elephants in order for staff to monitor herd movements, even when they range far beyond the park's boundaries, and to deploy anti-poaching patrols to where the animals are. They introduced a radio system to keep patrols in contact with an operations centre and have two planes for surveillance and aerial monitoring. They even built airstrips to allow guards to reach elephants during the rainy season, when most roads are impassable.

The results have been remarkable: not one known elephant has been poached in the park since 2011 and the population is increasing. New-born calves have been observed for the first time in many years — 40 have been born since 2013.

Bremé and his staff of teachers and community workers were always aware that security was only one aspect of their work and that they needed the support of local com-

munities if their conservation efforts were to be a success. They worked with local communities and were successful in getting them to agree to create wildlife migration corridors to ensure the free movement of migratory herds. This also permits certain types of land use, such as grazing and grass and wood collection within the park boundaries, for the locals, but not agriculture or settlement.

'Until recently, the park was seen as something that belonged to white people. But now, thanks to greater awareness and the involvement of the authorities, that perception has changed', says Bremé, who lives in the park while on duty, far from home, his wife and their three young sons. 'People now see it as part of their local, national and global heritage, especially since the government nominated it as a Unesco World Heritage Site. Thanks to the role played by community leaders, the people understand its value and the opportunities it offers'.

The park is also helping to provide for the social, education and health needs of the local communities. A school-building programme began in 2013, with seven schools planned over a 5-year period. More children attend school now and people's quality of life has improved thanks to healthcare provision. A new village radio system was set-up and has improved communication links between the park and its neighbours and a campground is available free of charge

“ *People now see the park as part of their local, national and global heritage.* ”

Babakar Matar Bremé, assistant director, Zakouma National Park, Chad



for Chadian nationals and school groups on environmental field trips.

'I am happy to be able to use my experience and skills for the cause of Zakouma and the memory of those who gave their lives for the park', reflects Bremé.

*A herd of elephants at Zakouma National Park.
Photo credit: Yves Stranger.*



Zakouma National Park is one of the last remaining intact Sudano-Sahelian ecosystems in Africa

- ➔ The park was founded in 1963 by the Government of Chad and the EU has supported the park for over 15 years.
- ➔ The park became a public-private partnership in 2010, run by African Parks Network and the Government of Chad.
- ➔ Not one known elephant has been poached in the park since 2011 and the population is increasing.
- ➔ The park has the largest single population of Kordofan Giraffe, a species that was under serious threat when the park was created.
- ➔ African Parks Network manages eight national parks and protected areas in seven African countries through partnerships with governments and communities.



A new stove is benefitting businesses, the environment and people's health in Laos

Sommay Khamhoung, a mother of two, opened her small restaurant in 2010 selling spring rolls, crepes and desserts in Haisok village at the heart of Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

She wakes up early every morning, before sunrise, to go to the local market to buy meat, fruit, vegetables and other commodities and to prepare for the day that lies ahead. At home, Sommay's younger sister and her mother, who is in her seventies, help set up her stove, using traditional fuels such as firewood and charcoal.

Sommay attracts customers, mainly office workers in the city centre, by offering tasty warm meals cooked on the spot. For this, the stove must be kept burning the whole day. This constant use meant that Sommay had to buy a new stove every 5 months and at least four sacks of charcoal (25 kg each) every week.

Her business routine followed the same path for nearly 3 years until the constant increase in the price of charcoal, coupled with her dependence on low-quality and perishable traditional stoves put the survival of her business at risk.

A renewable energy project providing better cooking stoves brings change to the kitchens of Laos.

Sommay serves her customers.





'As a small and family-run restaurant with a tiny income, we could no longer afford such increases in charcoal prices', remembered Sommay.

With no other options, Sommay approached her longstanding provider of cooking stoves to see if something more durable and efficient was available. It was then that she

was introduced to the 'improved cooking stoves programme'. Her choices were limited: either try something new to save her business or go bust. Going out of business was not really an option as she had to earn enough money to be able to send her two kids to school and look after her family. She decided to go for it.

The stove bought by Sommay is part of the improved cooking stoves programme, a renewable energy project

supported by the European Union and implemented by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Oxfam Novib and the Lao NGO Normai. The initiative works to improve the quality, efficiency and safety of stoves in Laos. Currently, many of the traditional stoves being used are inefficient and last only a few months before they break into pieces.

Sommay and her family have not looked back. The new improved stove is still functioning well after 2 years of constant use. The stove cost only 15 000 kip (EUR 1.50) above the average price of the traditional one, which had to be re-

placed regularly. Most importantly, it consumes much less charcoal and produces better heat — a win, win, win!

'I am so happy to have found this stove because it is not only durable, but also very efficient. I have been able to cut my charcoal bill in half!' says Sommay, smiling.

In Laos, over 96 % of the population uses traditional biomass fuels for cooking and heating purposes. This high dependence degrades the local environment, demands considerable time in fuel collection, is costly and creates indoor air pollution. According to the WHO, this air pollution causes the premature death of 2 600 people each year. The burning of coal and wood also adds considerably to greenhouse gas emissions.

This EU-financed initiative has recently registered the 10 000th stove sold. The programme aims to replace 25 % of the national stove market by the end of the fourth year.

Meanwhile, Sommay, who recently bought her fourth improved stove (three for her restaurant's kitchen and one for her family's cooking purposes), has become an active promoter of the stove by sharing her first-hand experience and convincing many of her relatives, neighbours and clients to replace their kitchen stoves. The good thing is that they don't need too much convincing!

“ I am so happy to have come across such quality stoves because it is not only durable, but also very efficient. ”

Sommay Khamhoung

The improved cooking stoves programme is financed by the EU and is part of the EU's 'switch Asia programme', which promotes green economy across Asia

- In Laos, over 96 % of the population uses traditional biomass fuels for cooking and heating purposes.
- Traditional biomass stoves degrade the local environment, are more costly, create indoor air pollution and increase greenhouse gas emissions.
- The WHO estimates that 2 600 people die each year in Laos as a result of air pollution from traditional stoves.
- 15 local SMEs are sustainably producing 100 000 stoves to supply the market.
- 150 SME retailers are actively promoting the improved cooking stove programme.
- It is expected that the improved cooking stove will eventually supply over 50 % of the market.
- Energy savings of 50 000 tonnes of wood, 14 000 tonnes of charcoal and 125 000 tonnes of CO₂e reduction is expected in Laos as a result.

Sommay, using an improved cooking stove to cook her spring rolls.



12 Human Rights and Governance



Democracy and human rights are the European Union's guiding principles and we promote them vigorously in our international cooperation. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Human rights are the cornerstone of inclusive, vibrant societies in which governments work in the people's interest and to which all are free to contribute.

When governance fails and human rights are violated, it's the poorest and most vulnerable who suffer most. So overcoming the obstacles that perpetuate human rights violations – combatting discrimination, ensuring the rule of law and building fair and inclusive institutions – is crucial if we are to uphold human dignity, combat poverty, and champion equality and prevent conflict.



Village courts are allowing people to get a fair hearing that is less expensive and much quicker than the formal courts.

Village courts providing justice in Bangladesh

Mostafa Khatun is 50, a housewife with five sons, four daughters and two grandchildren. She was married to a distant cousin at the age of 14 and did not receive any education. She is a devout Muslim like many women in Cox's Bazaar district.

A dispute was sparked one day when her neighbour, Abdullah, her husband's cousin, cut down a bamboo tree near their house. As Abdullah and his three sons dragged the tree away, a number of mahogany saplings that Mostafa had been growing were destroyed.

Mostafa's husband and his cousin, Abdullah, stand together. Both are grateful that the village court resolution has allowed them to move on and rebuild their relationship.



Mostafa's husband had purchased the saplings 2 years prior for 15 taka each with the intention of selling them once they had grown. These trees were an investment and were hoped to provide much needed supplementary income to the household, as each tree could fetch EUR 200 (BDT 20 000) within 20 years.

Mostafa ran outside to see what was happening. Her husband and children were not at home but there was a heated exchange with her neighbours, during which Abdullah and his sons destroyed 10 more saplings. They attacked Mostafa, pulling her hair, tearing her clothes and pushing her down into the mud, bruising her back and arms.



On hearing her cries, several other neighbours came to her rescue and took her back to her house. 'It all happened so quickly, I didn't have time to think, but afterwards I was in a lot of pain and was afraid', Mostafa recalled.

On returning to the village, her husband took her to the dispensary where she received medication for her injuries at a cost of EUR 22 (BDT 2 200). He then went to the village elders to lodge a complaint about Abdullah's actions. When the defendant refused to respond to the request of the elders, Mostafa's husband reported the matter to the police station, 8 km away.

The police referred the case to the district court, 25 km away. Two years and 15 visits later, there was still no conclusion to the case. Finally, the district court Magistrate recommended that the case be referred to the village court. Mostafa recalls, 'My husband used to go to the police station and district court to follow-up on the case. He became upset and spent a significant amount of money without any results. We were always worried that they would harm us'.

The village court registered the case and — following usual procedure — a panel was formed comprising of representatives from both parties. The jury heard the details with evidence and declared that the defendant was guilty of destroying the saplings and of injuring Mostafa. A EUR 50 (BDT 4 920) fine was imposed as compensation for the destroyed saplings and for the medical expenses from Mostafa's injuries.

The defendant paid the compensation in accordance with the judgment within 3 months. Mostafa and her husband used these funds to contribute to their children's education. They believe that the village court's decision was a fair one and prefer it to the district court because it is closer, faster and less expensive.

For Mostafa's husband, the apology the family received from the neighbours at the village court was as important as the financial compensation. Mostafa said: 'My cousin said that what he did in the quarrel was wrong and I am honoured that he apologised'.

Abdullah, the defendant's story

Abdullah had got angry when Mostafa had shouted at them and that's when they destroyed her trees and pushed her into the mud. Abdullah was scared when he heard that Mostafa's husband had lodged a complaint with the police, as he knew that he could face being arrested. He and his sons hid over the course of 1 month. The case was also weighing heavily on him in financial terms, as it cost him EUR 650 (BDT 65 000) in lawyers' fees and transport costs associated with visits to the police station and the district court. Abdullah had to take loans from relatives to cover the legal costs: 'We are poor and work in the brick-field to meet family needs. We didn't have enough money and so I had to borrow from others'.

“ Abdullah said that what he did in the quarrel was wrong and I am honoured that he apologised.

”

Mostafa Khatun



Abdullah believed that the village court provided 'proper justice' and that it came to an impartial and sensible decision. He shook hands with Mostafa's husband and was grateful that he could rebuild his relationship with his neighbour and cousin again.

Village courts, comprising a panel of five persons (local government and villagers), deliver jury trials for petty disputes

- They aim to reduce the pressure on district courts and provide easy access to justice for vulnerable groups.
- Partnership between the EU and UNDP has ensured that village courts are working in 351 union councils.
- The average time to resolve a complaint in a Village Court is 28 days compared to 5 years in the formal legal sector.
- A total of 128 000 individuals and their families have accessed justice through the village courts since 2010.
- EUR 1.6 million has been recovered as compensation since 2010 and provided to victims.
- In the next phase of the project, the EU will help the government introduce 1 000 additional village courts.



A new chance for prisoners in Brazil

In a country like Brazil, where human rights abuses against prisoners in the prison system are still very common, it is possible to find cases like Jelletly Aron, an example of recovery and rehabilitation.

With a troubled childhood and adolescence filled with financial difficulties, as well as a disruptive family life, Jelletly began stealing small things at school: a pencil, an eraser; things he did not have. After a while, he no longer wanted to go to school and began stealing from supermarkets and from people's backyards, eventually going further with crime, using firearms and getting involved in drug trafficking and drug abuse.

He was caught six times, but as he was a minor, he did not remain in custody for long. When Jelletly entered the prison system, he met other people involved in more serious crime and emerged from prison immersed in this criminal world.

After being sentenced for more serious crimes, Jelletly was transferred to APAC (*Associação de proteção e assistência aos condenados* — Association for the protection and assistance of the convicted) located in the city of Perdões, where his mother used to live. This is one of 40 existing APACs in Brazil that practice an alternative methodology

New rehabilitation methods are successfully reforming criminals in Brazil. This is Jelletly's story.

Jelletly Aron outside the APAC facility, a testament to the possibility that another life is possible.





of incarceration and rehabilitation, humanising the punishment and preparing offenders to re-enter society.

Without the presence of the police or weapons, prisoners learn to act with APAC staff on a more equal footing and to recover the meaning of some essential values such as society, family, dignity and work. APAC is a pioneering

methodology in Brazil and it is nowadays a reference worldwide as an alternative to the traditional penitentiary model. According to Jelletly, APAC helped him in the most difficult time of his life, and it was there that he entered as a criminal and left as a recovering human being.

Jelletly reports that he did not know much before being arrested, nor did he have any interest in learning, because he felt that crime gave him what he needed. His only work experience had

been to plant and harvest tangerines, but he had chosen crime instead, as it had offered a better financial return.

Jelletly enrolled in a professional course on civil construction, which was offered inside the APAC prison unit. He was one of 300 convicts who graduated in the training courses offered by the project.

Upon his release from prison, Jelletly, with his new skills, was able to find work in civil construction in his city and says, 'I changed my life completely. The hands that once destroyed now build houses; those hands that once stole, trafficked and killed the dreams of other people are the same that received the trust of APAC to carry its own cell keys. I learned a lot, from laying bricks to making dough, painting, etc.'

'I learned much more than that too. I now understand that building is an art and know how to create instead of destroy. That work also carries something more valuable than money: the ability to help other people accomplish their dreams, for example by building someone's first home'.

Jelletly finished serving his sentence but keeps going to APAC. Only now he goes to the prison unit as a volunteer, preparing other convicts to face the labour market and society's prejudice beyond the prison's walls.

“

I changed my life completely. The hands that once destroyed now build houses.

”

Jelletly Aron

Through European Union support, a project implemented by AVSI Foundation is helping to rehabilitate prisoners in Brazil

- ➔ Brazil is fourth in the world-ranking of prison population. In 2013, the Brazilian prison population consisted of 584 000 prisoners.
- ➔ Poor and overcrowded structures and human rights violations hamper the rehabilitation possibilities of inmates.
- ➔ The recidivism rate is around 70 %. Among the issues that affect this rate are the lack of education and training.
- ➔ The appreciation of the human being and its capacity to recover is a key factor of APAC's methodology.
- ➔ Treatment is based on strict discipline, family and community participation and the importance of education and work.
- ➔ The project has helped 3 000 detainees so far, and partners include the Court of Justice and the State Government of Minas Gerais.

'Here enters the man, the crime remains outside.'





Volunteer teams are helping promote knowledge about older people's rights in Thailand.

Seniors know their rights and fulfil their dreams in Thailand

Fulfilling the dreams of older people requires specific support from society and institutions, especially the economic and health sectors. Fulfilling those dreams also requires knowledge about older people's rights. An EU supported project, that is building capacities for promoting older people's rights and income security, implemented by the Foundation for Older Persons' Development and HelpAge International, is helping to fulfil these dreams in Thailand.

Mae Janfong Maha-mai president of a volunteer team — realising and accessing rights brings an important change for older people.

Photo credit: Foundation for Older Persons' Development



If people are not aware of their rights, they cannot demand these rights through legally established processes and institutions.

In cooperation with the Older People's Group (OPG) in Banthi District, Lamphun Province, the project organised a team of volunteers called 'older people's rights promotion volunteer team of Banthi'. The team is working to increase knowledge about older people's rights and to encourage, monitor and protect those rights. The volunteer team also works with government agencies in the 10 pilot areas to raise their awareness about the rights of older people and their duties to protect and promote these rights.

Mae Janfong Maha-mai is the president of the volunteer team. 'Gathering a strong group of older people brought



us the power of negotiation with key organisations such as municipal offices', she said. Workshop-style meetings were held in various villages to educate older people about 13 critical rights and entitlements for older people in accordance with Thailand's Older Persons Act 2003. The workshops also helped to strengthen Older People's Groups, placing them as invaluable sources of knowledge on the issues that affect their lives and their communities.

In the past, older people lacked useful knowledge and information that could assist their daily lives, especially knowledge of their rights. This meant a lack of knowledge around access to health services and access to the Elderly Fund provided by the government, among other important issues.

The Older Persons Act was a start but there is still a gap between the act and its implementation.

Mae Janfong Maha-mai holding a workshop.

Photo credit: Foundation for Older Persons' Development



Since the volunteer team was established a few years ago, Mae Janfong Maha-mai and her Banthi OPG team have been distributing information at monthly meetings, covering topics related to the rights and services available for elderly people. They also raise the awareness of the public at large.

Realising and being able to access their rights brings an important change for older people, such as access to comprehensive healthcare. For example, they can request shorter waiting times to visit a doctor.

'I would like to make organisations aware of older people's rights so that the elderly can access their benefits and make us visible in society', said Mae Janfong Maha-mai.

“ I would like to make organisations aware of older people's rights so that the elderly can access their benefits and make us visible in society. ”

Mae Janfong Maha-mai

EU promoting older people's rights and security in Thailand

- The project is implemented by the Foundation for Older Persons' Development and HelpAge International.
- Thailand's Older Persons Act 2003 was enacted establishing rights for elderly people.
- While rights exist, the lack of awareness of these rights prevents elderly people from exercising them.
- Volunteer teams have been established in 10 pilot villages.



A new law is improving citizen's rights in El Salvador, fighting corruption and improving democracy.

Overcoming the culture of opacity in El Salvador

Marco Tulio Quintanilla is a small business owner who sells surgical instruments to hospitals and to the Salvadoran Institute for Social Security (ISSS). Up until recently, he could not participate in public tenders because he did not have key information that would allow him to compete with other companies. 'I needed to know the technical specifications, price references and the criteria used', Marco Tulio says. 'When I requested this information, it was repeatedly denied. I found out through the media about the existence of the Institute for Access to Public Information and I went there'.

The Institute for access to public information (IAIP) is protecting the rights of citizens to access information.



Like other Latin American countries, El Salvador faces the challenge of fighting corruption and improving the quality of its institutions. Despite certain advances, the country continues to get a failing grade in Transparency International's corruption index.

A new law, the Transparency and Access to Information Act, has opened up a channel for improving transparency. State agencies must now provide up-to-date information on their websites and people have the right to request information. Since February 2013, the Institute for Access to Public Information (IAIP) guarantees this right.



Citizens have started to file complaints when information is denied to them. Marco Tulio is one such case. 'Thanks to the IAIP, the ISSS had to give me the information free of charge'.

The culture of opacity in government agencies, combined with citizens' indifference and lack of knowledge, are significant obstacles. Making progress involves raising awareness and strengthening institutions. Eurosocial, the European Union cooperation programme for social cohesion, has joined this effort.

Other Salvadorans are following in Marco Tulio's footsteps. Before the Transparency and Access to Information Act it was difficult to take cases of poor public management to court. Now, institutions are aware that the citizen has this tool, which has a deterrent effect.

recover her son's medical record, which had been classified as non-existent.

'We all have the right to know and to have access to our own information, but it is generally denied. Thanks to the institute, I was able to exercise my rights. We're still fighting, but I feel 100 % supported', Claudia says.

The road continues to be arduous but, little by little, Salvadorans are managing to defeat the culture of opacity and make public institutions work for all citizens.

“ *We all have the right to know and to have access to our own information. Thanks to the institute, I was able to exercise my rights.* ”

Claudia Reyes

Thanks to the IAIP, another citizen, Claudia Reyes, is taking steps to sue for the death of her son due to an alleged medical error. The IAIP recently obliged the ISSS to give her the name of the sedative used on her son, information they had previously refused her. Likewise, the IAIP has resolved that the ISSS must do everything in its power to



Businessman Marco Tulio Quintanilla.



The EU's Eurosocial programme is working to improve the functioning of public institutions in El Salvador

- ➔ Since 2013, Eurosocial has been strengthening the capacities of the IAIP.
- ➔ In 2014, El Salvador earned a score of 39 in Transparency International's corruption index (0 = highly corrupt, 100 = very clean).
- ➔ Between 2013 and 2014, the IAIP closed a total of 262 cases, levying fines totalling USD 60 315 on civil servants.
- ➔ In 2015, Eurosocial is promoting the issue of the right to access public information in school curricula.



Improving prisons and reintegrating ex-prisoners in Tajikistan

Ismoil*, a 41-year-old man, sits in a hot, sunlit room in the busy city of Dushanbe at the service desk for ex-prisoners — an EU-funded initiative implemented by the German adult education association (DVV International). His hands are marked by the years of hard work that have prematurely aged him.

When Ismoil graduated from school in 1992, he got his driver's licence, hoping to find work as a driver. However, that same year, the civil war started and he was forced to take up arms and fight. In 1998, when the war was over, Tajikistan was devastated and Ismoil was imprisoned for having participated in the war.

During his time in prison, conditions were dismal; prisoners were tortured and those who managed to survive did so only because of the food they received from their families. Ismoil had to work in prison and spent his days blowing glass, which eventually gave him lung problems. During his 9 years in prison, Ismoil worked for 7 years and earned a total of 37 Somoni (approximately EUR 6).

While in prison, Ismoil was visited by a group of Iranian human rights observers looking to interview former soldiers from the civil war. During each interview, prison guards

After 9 years in prison, Ismoil is being helped by an EU-funded initiative to deal with the legal and psychological consequences of incarceration.

Zarrina Alimshoeva, psychologist at the BHR service desk for ex-prisoners in Dushanbe, counselling a client.





were present, so no one dared speak about the conditions they were enduring in prison. However, thanks to administrative changes in 2004 in Tajikistan, the prisoners' living conditions improved.

Ismoil was released after 9 years in prison. While leaving prison meant freedom, it also meant being unemployed. Is-

moil had to deal with his lack of professional experience, education or social network to rely on. On top of that, as an ex-convict, Ismoil was an easy target for police harassment.

Through a friend still in prison, he heard of the services provided by the Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR) at the service desk for ex-prisoners in Dushanbe. The project operates in four Tajik cities, providing free legal and psychological counselling for former convicts. It also refers

clients to centres providing treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, which is a common problem among ex-prisoners. The project also works to improve the capacities of prisons, targeting both prison staff and convicts in Nurek Women's Prison, with the aim to improve conditions in prison and to prepare prisoners for life on the outside.

At the service desk, a lawyer and a psychologist are at hand to provide their services for ex-prisoners. Zarrina Alimshoeva, the centre's psychologist, says that clients who come

to her are often traumatised, afraid and lack self-esteem. They do not know how to deal with what they have experienced in prison or whom to contact for help with such issues and legal concerns. The centre combines psychological support with legal advice, if requested by the clients. The Government of Tajikistan has no system of social services for ex-prisoners. Instead, the centre relies on good relations with prison staff for referrals to the service desk of prisoners who are about to be released.

For Ismoil, the services of Zarrina and her colleague changed his life. 'When I came to Zarrina, I felt like I could stretch my wings. Whenever I face any challenges, I pass by or call them', says Ismoil.

The lawyer at the centre has managed to help Ismoil deal with groundless indemnity claims from authorities and Zarrina has helped him restore his self-confidence.

As a result of this support, Ismoil was able to find a job as a forest ranger, therefore providing for himself. After contacting the BHR service desk he does not feel so lonely. 'After I was released I had no friends. But now I have a lawyer and a psychologist, and I see them as my friends', says Ismoil.

**Ismoil is a fictional name used to protect the identity of the person.*

“

After I was released I had no friends. But now I have a lawyer and a psychologist, and I see them as my friends.

”

Ismoil

Transforming prisons and supporting ex-prisoners in Tajikistan

- ➔ With EU funding, the German NGO DVV International has delivered legal and psychological counselling for 600 ex-prisoners.
- ➔ Services are provided in the cities of Dushanbe, Khorog, Khujand and Kurgantube.
- ➔ The project provides vocational skills, civic education and personal development programmes in Nurek Women's Prison.
- ➔ The project also works to improve the capacities and sensitisation of prison staff.

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