

the Globetrotter

Global vs. Local

You don't care about this newsletter full of global topics? You think, the U.S. doesn't need all this international crap and has enough to offer on its own? Well, you're lucky, because you can't read this without considering the global stuff. It starts with

When I was nine, my teacher made my class read Cinderella. This is not unusual - including fiction in a curriculum. However, we didn't read just one version. We read about twelve. They came from different countries, with different names and different arrangements. But they all had the same basic structure and the same ending. Her point was that not every fairy tale comes from Disney, however, the bigger picture was that fundamentally we have the ability for inter-cultural communication. Different cultures may have different takes on the world, but there are always common themes. With the rise of the hyper-local it can be easy to forget this simple truth. However, it can be countered with communication. The world is no longer an isolated place. Just as my class of nine-year-olds learned that the stories of other cultures were our stories too, can we not learn that events in other countries are local?

-Aerin Curtis

-Carolin Biebrach

Editors' Notes

the reports that consist of letters of the Roman alphabet. The screen you're reading this newsletter on belongs to a computer that was invented by a German in the early 20th century. Even if you decide to print a document, you would maybe do that with your Japanese Canon printer. Probably on paper that was originally papyrus from Egypt several thousands of years ago. And finally you'd use ink, produced in India. You're lucky that you don't care about the global stuff. So delete this newsletter lay back and breathe your clean U.S. air. But make sure that you don't get a sniff of that global Canadian air accidentally.

Congolese drum up unheard voices

by Veronica Norton



Photo of Papa Wemba from thiswayplease.com

It all started with rumba. The percussive rhythms, stylized piano and innovative dance; it was only a matter of time before the music made famous in Cuba swept through Africa and perched itself in the heart of it all- the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Of course, the Congolese adapted the rumba to a new style. Guitars took the place of piano and the polyrhythmic backbone of Congo music infiltrated the Latin sound to form soukous- the style that thrust the DRC into the limelight of world music.

Originally the name of a popular dance, soukous became the Congolese staple of the 1960s. Big bands of sometimes 30 or more colored with brass, strings, percussion and voice packed dance halls and invigorated a region. "It's simply wonderful music, full of life and joy with stunning guitar, sophisticate horns, and soulful singing; one of the great classic forms of popular music that appear every so often around the world to lift our spirits and bind us together as humans," says Dj Jack Daw, a popular European musician and dedicated soukous fan.

It's that innate joy and bond with the music that can bring the powerful together, including politicians. Franco, the leader of beloved landmark OK Jazz, was a personal favorite of President Mobutu during his rise to power in the 60s. According to band mate Simaro Lutumba, "the president had told him to stay at his side. 'With me in power, you will go far. I will have need of you.'" Music has always been an outlet for the oppressed and a means of protest, but in the case of soukous, the government used the music to propagate publicity and garner affection, almost "fandom" from citizens.

Today, the new Congolese musicians are calling upon this influence to educate and spread awareness. Werra Son is the name

in Congolese music today. He plays a form of soukous that has progressed into using synthesizers and electric instruments that call upon the earlier sounds of rock n' roll in the west. "With us, there's been a change in the mentality," he says, "there are love songs, educative songs, songs for children... there's a song for peace...we are there to educate the masses."

Musicians stand at the apex of society; they come from the community and rise above to speak for their neighbors whose voices cannot be heard. It is a great responsibility that musicians take on to take lyrical protest from the ground to the government. For many years while soukous was emerging, the government was censoring everything around it, but because the music remained fairly apolitical, it was left untouched- until now.

With a strong hand of oppression garnering great minds, leaders and liberators from freedom of speech, it is now the musicians who are, as Werra Son put it, choosing to educate. Protest music has always been prevalent, soulful African melodies have haunted listeners long before gospel and blues, but it is this unique outlet of protest music that is slipping past governmental oppressors and rallying the world. Werra is selling out in Paris and London and influencing street performers in New York. He just won the Kora award for Best Central African Artist and Best Male Artist for all of Africa; there is a change in the mentality, a change towards moving forward.

"Yesterday is not today. Yesterday was yesterday. Today is today. We must progress. We can't just live in the past," says Papa Wemba, an innovator to rumba style. The lyrical style in Congolese music today is to draw from the past but write for the future; always moving forward. 🌍

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ZOOMING IN...

QATAR

MUSEUM BRIDGES THE GAP

By Sally Ann Cruikshank



Photo courtesy Museum of Islamic Art

The building rises out of the bay, its unique angles carving a new shape in the Doha skyline. It is the new Museum of Islamic Art, and it represents not only a change in the aesthetic of the Qatar city, but also a shift in the country's future as a cultural hub of the Middle East.

The \$300 million Museum of Islamic Art, commonly referred to as MIA, opened its doors to

the public in December, and one visitor calls it a "treasure of ancient Islamic history." The MIA's design is the work of renowned Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei, who designed the glass pyramids that are now part of the Louvre in Paris, France. No expense was spared, and the Museum sits on a man-made island in Doha Harbor, because Pei did not want any other

structures to compete with it. Pei's task when designing this project was to blend the Islamic traditions of the past with modern architecture. Nesma Adb Elaziz, an editor for IslamOnline.net who visited MIA to cover its inauguration, says Pei has succeeded. "In every corner you will find both styles going side by side," says Elaziz.

It is that blending of Islamic tradition and modern ideals that Qatar is hoping will translate into a learning experience for visitors to MIA. Inside the Museum, more than 14 centuries of Islamic art and culture are on display, a collection over a decade in the making. Philip Beech, the editor of the Qatar Visitor website, says the country's Emir and his wife want to

emphasize Islam as a humanitarian religion and "emphasizing the artistic and scientific achievements of Islam adds another facet to this."

It is a notion that struck Roxanne Piper Davis, a U.S. expatriate living in Qatar, when she visited MIA for the first time. She calls the Museum a "unique place that allows Muslims and non-Muslims to appreciate their religion and culture at the same time." Beech agrees. "One of my favorite pieces is a picture of the Virgin Mary with Arabic Calligraphy written at the top: 'There is no God but God,'" Beech says. "There's speculation that this is meant to emphasize the similarities between Islam and Christianity."

The opening of MIA could mean more people

will get to experience those similarities. The Museum is the first step in Qatar's plan to become a tourist destination. Elaziz says it is a plan that's working. "The museum has already attracted the attention of the whole world, with its grand design and extravagant inauguration," she says. For now, however, it is the world-class MIA that has all eyes on Qatar. Already the curators are working to make the Museum even more appealing, by partnering with the British Museum and other museums around the world to display rare works of art. The Qatar Museums Authority has also announced plans to open a library inside MIA next to an educational center. Piper Davis says it all could lead to a greater understanding between the East and West. "We obviously cannot expect MIA to solve major conflicts, but perhaps it will contribute at least to a small level of understanding and tolerance." 🌍

end, and yet the Mafiosi, although fugitives, continue to succeed and gain their respect," Fiorelli said.

Another young Italian, Francesco Carnali, 21, is not friends with or in any fan groups of Italian Mafiosi on Facebook. Carnali is from central North Italy, and his view of the mafia stems from a lack of work ethic in Southern Italy. "People in Northern and central Italy want to work and they don't want to make money from the jobs of other people through extortion and violence," Carnali said.

He also mentioned that the victims of extortion don't want to fight back because it's too dangerous. They prefer to keep their mouths shut and live day to day, he said.

The development of a positive sentiment toward the mafia can be partially attributed to the media glamorization of the mafia lifestyle through television and film. American creations such as *The Godfather* trilogy and *The Sopranos* emphasize the attractive elements of organized crimes. This portrayal of the Mafia has seeped into the Italian media as well, particularly by way of the television miniseries, *Il Capo Dei Capi*, or Boss of all Bosses, based on the life of Toto Riina. According to the International Herald Tribune, Provenzano was arrested while watching an episode at his girlfriend's home in Palermo.

Young Italians like Francesco Carnali can only hope that the media spotlight on the mafia is showing young people what not to get into. "These kinds of movies and shows like *Il Capo dei Capi* are, I hope, just to let people know how dangerous and unlawful the mafia is. Maybe the only reason is just to tell everyone the story and hope that no one will do anything like it," Carnali said.

And some Facebook users are reacting to the positive attention the mafia has received with dismay. In response to mafia fan groups on Facebook, other users created anti-mafia groups that call for the removal of the fan groups, and one of them, "Abolizione del gruppo fan di Bernardo Provenzano," has nearly 9,500 members.

Despite large numbers of young Italians joining antimafia groups - on and off Facebook - there still remains a number of sympathizers. One young man from Palermo, Sicily, the heart of Cosa Nostra, put it this way, "In the end, the mafia will win." 🌍

ITALY

EVEN FROM PRISON, MAFIA GAIN SUPPORT

By Natalie Cammarata

In December Italian officials conducted a massive sweep on the Sicilian Mafia, what officials called the "decapitation" of one of Italy's most powerful organized crime rings. But the captured men's legacies—and their business—live on through the hands of some of Italy's youth.

Just days after the arrests, fan groups dedicated to Sicily's Cosa Nostra mafia bosses appeared on the social networking Web site Facebook. The groups are dedicated to two former Godfathers of

Cosa Nostra: Salvatore "Toto" Riina and Bernardo Provenzano who are both currently serving multiple life sentences. Riina was arrested in 1993 and Provenzano in 2006. The current Facebook groups include "Salvatore Riina," which has 861 members and "Santificazione di Provenzano," which has 417 members. Other groups were taken down after receiving press attention including, "Toto Riina, the Real Boss of Bosses" and another that called for the beatification of Provenzano.

The two Mafiosi even have their own Facebook profiles, with pictures and descriptions of themselves.

Young Italians are joining fan groups and "friending" the Mafiosi, but the reasons why vary. One young Italian from Sicily, Veronica Fiorelli, 21, is friends with Bernardo Provenzano on Facebook, but said she does not necessarily support the mafia.

"I am fascinated by (the mafia's) organization, in the sense that the politicians' positions should give them the power to bring mafia activity to an

SOUTH KOREA

PLASTIC SURGERY:

Try to lure international patients

By Richard Jung Lee

The once crowded waiting rooms in plastic surgery clinics are empty. 20 out of 80 clinics in the so-called "Beauty Town" were closed after the economic downturn last year. The rest are struggling with strategies to survive.

The plastic surgery industry took off after South Korea recovered from

the 1997 economic crisis. As Koreans became wealthier, pursuing beauty became one of the priorities on their to-do list. Plastic surgery is very popular in South Korea. Even the former President Roh Moo-hyun did a double eyelid procedure in 2005.

"More than half of my girl friends in college had undergone some kind of plastic surgery. Nose jobs and double eyelids surgeries are most popular ones," said Alice Park, a 22-year-old student at Korea University. "Cosmetic surgery is no secret here."

Plastic surgery is the number one winter break activity for high school graduates because they are going into

college or preparing for job interviews. A large percentage of Koreans believe that good looks equal greater opportunities. "I think parents support their children to do plastic surgery because beauty is very important for getting a decent job or finding a good husband," said Jungshan Sea, a 24-year-old Korean.

However, with the economy facing particularly unsettled times, plastic surgery industry in South Korea is certainly not immune. According to ARA Marking and Education, a consulting company based in Seoul that specialized in the cosmetic surgery industry, the number of customers has plummeted 40% since last

September.

Since poor economy sharply cut the demand of plastic surgery, South Korea government is trying to help the clinics stay in business. The Seoul Metropolitan government is planning to launch a project of building an international medical institution Complex for luring more foreign patients. The project emphasizes on plastic surgery and there would have multilingual counseling staff for international patient service. The government knows these medical tourists will not only bring money for clinics but also help the economy by shopping and sightseeing. 🌍

IS IT REALLY FREE TRADE?

By Cristina Mutchler

A new year, a new president committed to re-engaging the international community, and a new trade deal with Colombia? Not so fast. The Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that was introduced during the Bush Administration is still waiting for Congressional approval. And it hasn't been the most popular trade deal around.

As a Democratic Senator, President Obama opposed the ratification of a U.S./Colombia trade agreement, concerned about Colombian human rights and violence against union leaders. But has the recent reduction in Colombian violence pushed President Obama to change his mind? Colombia Reports journalist Garry Leech, who works in the most dangerous regions of the country and was once held captive by the FARC revolutionaries, seems to think so. Leech says the pact will most likely be approved by the U.S. Congress this year, after human rights and environmental "safeguards" are inserted into the agreement text.

Former President George W. Bush said that one of the biggest disappointments of his second term was not winning approval of trade agreements. Despite past set-backs, Colombia Reports Editor Adriaan Alsema agrees with Leech, saying, "The approval bill came at the wrong time

when former President Bush had very little support. My guess is in the end (the president) will think the trade pact or keeping Colombia as an ally serves the U.S.

But how will the FTA affect current global economic concerns? On the brink of the economic crisis this past November, some reports were pushing for the trade pact, emphasizing that it would be positive for both the American economy and its workers. Further, the agreement may enhance U.S. foreign relations and competitive markets, says El Colombiano journalist Diego Gómez. Leech says the principle benefits would be for U.S. companies who want to export manufactured goods and agricultural products. Leech also thinks America may experience some economic growth as a result of the trade agreement, but says, "These gains could be offset by companies that take advantage of that country's cheaper labor and resources, similar to what has occurred under NAFTA with manufacturing jobs moving to Mexico. In this case, Americans would lose decent-paying manufacturing jobs and Colombians would not benefit as the transplanted jobs would pay poverty-level wages in Colombia."

Will the entire Colombian economy be affected? A recent Reuters report says that

the FTA can expand market opportunities for small and medium-sized firms and help the local economy. Ricardo Romero of the Bogotá Cambridge University Press doubts that the pact will help his country as it will the U.S., saying, "The free trade pact will mainly benefit the U.S., as the infrastructure, competitiveness, and quality assurance in Colombia is not 'there' yet." Leech agrees that the benefits for Colombia will not be instant. "The agreement could prove economically devastating for rural Colombians as the importation of heavily subsidized U.S. food crops would ruin the livelihoods of many Colombian farmers. The consequences of this will not only be increased poverty levels in Colombia, but also higher numbers of farmers turning to the cultivation of illegal drug crops in order to survive," he says. Union leader Francisco Gómez Cuellar says the impact on his country will be large: "The import of goods to the U.S. will result in a Collapse of the Colombian agricultural industry."

Will the proposed benefits reach the citizens of each country? Cuellar says that the impact on people of both countries will include more unemployment, an increase in the economic recession, and the closing

COLOMBIA

of manufacturers. Alsema isn't so sure that the benefits will be plentiful for either of the two countries, and says there may just be benefits for private parties. Romero thinks that the FTA will impact the pharmaceutical and agricultural areas, and that Colombia has the possibility to sell generic medicine, something that has been restricted in the past. However, he suggests that Colombia should set its sights further than just the U.S. "In my opinion, Colombia should go more for the constant seek of multinational agreements rather than restricting it to the U.S. This would provide us with the possibility to have more and interesting choices for products and services," Romero says.

Colombian opinion regarding the pact seems to vary, but Romero says that the popular vote will likely go towards the agreement. In his experience, around 25% of the population sees the FTA as a threat to Colombia's autonomy and the general wellbeing of peasants and workers at large. Alsema also finds that some are skeptical of the agreement, and says, "The majority of people I spoke to about it find it difficult to believe that the U.S. as such an economic monster would be giving

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HOT TOPIC

Why they hate us:

Where does anti-American sentiment come from? Journalism students respond.

Media coverage of anti-Americanism isn't lacking in superficial acknowledgement; Americans are inundated with videos of protestors burning American flags and effigies in the streets, yet a deeper understanding of the reason for this hatred and its implications is seldom investigated. -David Flores

Hopefully by placing this problem at the forefront of American media, U.S. citizens will recognize cultural diversity and understand it is not a bad thing - the entire planet should not be reformed to reflect American values. -Jeff Bennett

I feel that the United States has placed itself on a pedestal, claiming a position of world power which no other country dare to touch. The resentment which has resulted can be attributed to the anti-Americanism that is found in many countries, as well as to events such as 9/11. With this tragedy, the United States was forced to acknowledge its global reputation and finally address the question "Why do they hate us?" -Halle Tansing

I feel that "why they hate us" is the wrong question, just as "I don't blame you for hating us" is irresponsible. 9/11 saw the worst attack on innocent civilian life in American history. Why are we expecting that there's a rational explanation for those terrorists' actions? Asking "why they hate us" is ignoring the fact that we were the victims and instead assumes the position that we apparently did something to provoke the attack. -Maria Fisher

While it's certainly not true of every U.S. citizen, much of the population knows and cares to know little about the rest of the world. People visit foreign countries with ignorance about the different customs of the country they are visiting. Rather than thinking about their way of behaving as just one among hundreds, they view their way—the American way—as the only correct way. -Taylor Mirfendereski

Do first world countries hate us or are they frustrated by some of our policy and ideology? The French may hate that McDonald's is taking over their country one street corner at a time, but I don't think they'd retaliate with violence. -Michael Hess

It is very challenging to be an international correspondent that reports one culture back to his/her own country...We have to help the audience in our own country to understand the foreign culture with respect. -Yilei Cheng

International correspondents should shoulder the responsibility to provide people with information of what is going on instead of ignoring it. American people have the right to be well-informed and decide what to do independently to eliminate misunderstandings and work with the rest of the world toward a better future. -Lu Tang

Though the media enjoy freedom of press and independence, ethnocentrism in the American and Western press forces reporting to be fixated on one specific culture, which is contrary to the goal of international correspondence. American and Western international correspondents need to ask those tough questions in which the responses might sometimes demonize their own country, government or culture. Patriotism shouldn't blind a journalist from wanting to know the answers to those questions. -Michael Barajas

Instead of focusing as heavily on news regarding military and governmental actions in the Middle East, I think it's important for reporters to stay in touch with how U.S. foreign policy affects the regular people in these countries, not just how it affects U.S. interests. -Megan Mcnamara

After Sept. 11, I think the media definitely addressed the idea that many countries hate us. There was some speculation about why people might hate us, but for the most part I don't think many media organizations truly addressed the question or found many honest answers. I think many people asked this question in the sense of "how could anyone hate us?" rather than actually looking for an explanation. -Jacqueline Best

Americans are proud of themselves and for what they have achieved. To some cultures Americans therefore might seem self-centered. The US is one of the largest countries and a big (if not the biggest) player in world politics. Where power is, there is also envy and vigilance. Some other countries may simply not agree with the American way of life. -Carolyn Briebach

It may have started a long time ago, the first gulf war did little to increase love for America in the Middle East, and the return of a constrictive government in Iran did not help our cause. There is a vast difference between many of the ideals we, as Americans, hold and those of more conservative countries. When there is such a discrepancy between the politics and policies of two cultures it becomes much easier to see, if not understand, how a country, like ours can become the enemy. -Aerin Curtis

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FREE TRADE

presents to a developing country like Colombia. It never has in the past, so why would it do so now?" Leech shares this same approach, as a Colombian poll last year showed that more Colombians were opposed to the free trade agreement than supported it. Another factor to consider is the under-presentation of the rural population in opinion polls, a sector that is overwhelmingly opposed to the FTA.

Alsema elaborates on these underrepresented groups, saying that some who are opposed believe the FTA will threaten Colombia's small farmers and make the cost of health insurance unaffordable for many. "It ignores the rights of indigenous and minorities and threatens Colombia's wildlife," he says. Cuellar also says that the gains of the FTA are at the cost of detrimental conditions for the majority of the poor population, and forces the displacement from the farm lands to the city.

In the wake of the U.S. and world economic crisis, do the pros of the Colombian Free Trade Agreement outweigh the cons? It may depend who you ask, and what national interests are at hand. Gomez's own model of thought shows that an increase in income, employment, and social development would all be positive impacts on the people and economies of the U.S. and Colombia. This promising attitude is countered by activist Cuellar, who says that accepting the pact would be "suicide" for the Colombian economy and prolong the U.S. economic recession. One thing is for sure, though. The costs and benefits for the people of each country must be weighed by not just those who will be subject to the FTA, but by those who have the power to enforce it, as well.

By Natalie Jovonovich

For hundreds of years, the region of Kosovo-Metohija has been a hot topic for the Serbian people. The issue remains relevant today as the Serbs fight for "The Cradle of Serbia."

The Cradle of Serbia is home to Serbian legends, history, and a slew of Orthodox Christian religious monuments, or what's left of them. In 2006, Bishop Artemije of the Gracanica Monastery in Kosovo-Metohija wrote a letter to former United States President Bush.

"You have carried the heaviest of crosses: the leadership not only of the United States but of the whole civilized world in the global struggle against jihad terrorism, which threatens not just America but peaceful people of all faiths and nationalities. That is why we who live in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija find it difficult to understand why so many voices of influence in Washington, including some in your own Administration, support a course of action that would hand to the terrorists a significant victory in Europe."

Bush chose to ignore the bishop's plea for help and in February 2008, Kosovo-Metohija received recognition as an independent nation-state from the United States and many of its Western allies.

Read more of this story and others at <http://scrippsij.blogspot.com/>

CRADLE of SERBIA

SIERRA LEONE

THE CHILD SOLDIER: Lost generation

By Emily Mullin

Ravaged by a decade-long civil war, the small West African country of Sierra Leone is finally emerging from a dark period in its history. Sierra Leone's domestic conflict erupted in 1991 after government corruption and mismanagement of diamond resources reached a head. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), formed to fight political corruption, forced the recruitment of thousands of child soldiers.

The conflict ended in January 2002, killing more than 50,000 people and displacing hundreds of thousands more.

The country has since established a new government and in 2007, held presidential and parliamentary elections. Gradually, the war-torn country of Sierra Leone is beginning to make progress.

But for some, the nightmare of war isn't over.

Ishmael Beah, a former child combatant and author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, remembers life before the war.

"Sierra Leone had always been painted as a country of senseless violence," he said.

But when he was growing up, Beah said Sierra Leone was a peaceful place to live. He said he used to read Shakespeare and listen to hip-hop music. He had a love for language and poetry – and most of all, learning.

Civil war broke out in 1991 and changed the peaceful country Beah once knew. He was 11. Two years later at 13, Beah was enlisted into the war. His immediate family had been killed, and the other child soldiers he met became his new family.

With the RUF, Beah and others like him were instructed to shoot machine guns, take drugs and carry out atrocious crimes. Violence became normalized, Beah said. And it became a way to be a part of his new family.

"The group that we had feared became our family. It had replaced the community we had lost," he explained.

But what kept Beah going, he said, was the hope that someday the war would stop. Beah fought in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war for nearly three years before he was rescued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a permanent arm of the United Nations.

Beah fled his home country in 1998. Now 28, Beah works for Human Rights Watch in New York City.

But Beah's story is unique. Many child soldiers in Sierra Leone had a much different fate.

Murtala Mohamed Kamara,

a reporter for AfricaNews in Freetown who has reported on child soldier issues, explained that former combatants went through a program called Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Most of these fighters, said Kamara, were reintegrated in society while others underwent special skills training.

"A large number of these youths still remain unemployed roaming the streets of Freetown," Kamara said. "Some of the child soldiers lost both parents during the war and they are left to fend for themselves."

Currently, non-governmental organizations like Children Associated with the War (CAW), are aiding in the rehabilitation process of former child soldiers.

Established in 1993, CAW is a Catholic mission program that is still in operation. "Right from the beginning of the program, it was decided that the children has been hurt in Sierra Leone, and therefore they should be cured best by Sierra Leoneans," a CAW report states.

According to CAW's Web site, more than 4,000 war affected youth have been given support since the organization's inception.

Kamara said that access to education for former youth combatants is a major concern because a large segment of Sierra Leone's population is still illiterate.

Beah agreed that education is the most important step on the path to recovery. Because of his own education, Beah was able to earn a college degree and write a novel of his memoirs. He now travels to universities world-wide to share his story.

"I learned about myself because of education," he said. "Before I was conditioned to think I was only capable of violence."

Beah regularly visits Sierra Leone and said he hopes the government can further the rehabilitation of former child soldiers.

"It is difficult to recover," Beah said. "It is long-term. But it is possible." 🌍



Photo of a child soldier in Sierra Leone by AP

SPECIAL REPORTS

ON THE BRINK: Cambodia's oil wells

By Celia Shortt

Cambodia sits at the brink of a financial gain so significant that it could revitalize the entire country. Unfortunately, it must overcome many hurdles before a revitalization will be possible.

In 2005, Chevron announced it struck oil in four of its test wells off the coast of Sihanoukville, Cambodia. In the last few years, the estimates on the amount of oil in those wells have fluctuated. Despite the fluctuations, there still seems to be a substantial investment opportunity. With the large dividends that this investment could bring in, speculations about the profit and its effect on the economy have run rampant in the country. To combat the speculation, key government officials have promised to manage the revenue.

"The government is committed to effectively managing the revenues from the exploitation of the minerals, oil, and gas," said Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen in December, 2008.

Most people, however, still remain wary of this promise because of Cambodia's reputation for internal corruption.

One Cambodian, known as Khmerization, created a blog to expose the mismanagement and misrule the present Cambodian government is forcing on its people. He is hesitant to completely believe this promise made by the Prime Minister Hun Sen.

"The international community and the Cambodian educated class . . . are skeptic[al] about the PM's promises, because he ha[s] promised many things in the past and they were all broken," Khmerization said.

Cassie Baumgarner, an American citizen living and working in Cambodia, is doubtful that the revenue will reach the lower classes due to the corruption in the country, but still has hopes about how it could be used.

"If the financial increase would trickle down to the lower classes, it would allow them to have improved living conditions and possible job opportunities."

Cambodia has also been warned by oil industry experts that they need to demolish their corruption or risk losing their potential gas and oil revenues.

eral election in seven years was a breakthrough in returning to democracy; 70% participated. No proper democracy yet

"It is true that Bangladesh is yet to get the proper democracy, but we are in the process," writes Muhammad Aminul Islam, senior staff correspondent at the Dhaka-based daily newspaper New Age. But he warns that it is yet too early to judge the new government. "Absolute power means absolute corruption," he says.

"I am concerned whether this government can control its members." He is bruised by the past. Mr. Islam says that between 2001 and 2006 the BNP-led alliance enjoyed a similar majority but crushed the people's hopes with "unabated irregularities by the ruling party men." Violence after the recent election by AL rulers and its student wing, he says, has brought back the fear that this government might be a déjà-vu of the BNP rule.

Self-Censorship, Torture, and Freer Expression

Dr. Kazi Anis Ahmed, Director of Academic Affairs at the University of Liberal Arts

in Dhaka, hopes that the people will be freer to express themselves. Under the rule of the quasi-military interim government, Dr. Ahmed says, "a great deal of self-censorship" was going on among citizens but also writers, intellectuals, and journalists. After some riots had started at a university campus "on very flimsy ground" but spread countrywide, he says, thousands of people including students and a few prominent professors were arrested and allegedly handled quite roughly.

One of them was human rights activist and independent journalist Tasneem Khalil. He says that during the 22 hours in captivity he was repeatedly verbally abused and beaten. A photo in the report shows a dinner-plate sized purple-red bruise on his left lower back. Mr. Khalil says he would "love to see" the free press as the main weapon to fight hunger and poverty this time. The overwhelming victory of AL was no surprise to him, he says, since he predicted such a victory already two years ago if back then free and fair elections would have been held. "People power has once again

In addition to the corruption in the country, Cambodians are still recovering from their not so distant past. The Cambodian people have lived through many terrors and are still dealing with the aftermath of their civil war. Another American citizen, Rachel Brugger, also lives and works in Cambodia.

"There are obviously people still alive who lived through the Pol Pot Era and witness[ed] the terror of Khmer Rouge," she said. "The country is still feeling the after effects of civil war."

If revenue is brought in through this project, she hopes that it will be directed into the country's educational system. She thinks that improving the educational system could help eliminate some of the corruption. Currently, students are buying off teachers and administrators to secure their degrees despite poor grades.

Another concern with this oil well project is the fear of the "oil curse." This "oil curse" is a

misfortune that frequently hits underdeveloped nations that are rich in resources. The African country, Nigeria, fell victim to it when billions of dollars of oil revenue just disappeared.

"Cambodia could be susceptible to it [the oil curse] if the oil extraction does not happen on a large scale," said *Phnom Pen Post* reporter, Brenden Brady.

To combat the corruption problems, local and international development groups have attempted to drive the government to create revenue-intake mechanisms in order to guarantee that money goes to economic or social developments. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell whether or not those are working.

Cambodia's economy and country could be greatly improved with the revenue from this oil well project. Many hope the corruption in the government and the people's fear will not stand in the way of that improvement. 🌍

BANGLADESH NEW HOPE

By Stine Eckert

Change. That was not only the buzzword for the recent U.S. election and President Barack Obama, but also for Sheik Hasina, the president of the Awami League (AL) party in Bangladesh. Just as in the United States, the promise of change brought an overwhelming victory in Bangladesh's general election on December 29, 2008. The AL party-led alliance won an absolute majority by taking 258 of 294 parliamentary seats against its main opponent, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Before, a quasi-military government ran the country during a state of emergency. During these 23 months, citizens' fundamental rights were suspended. For Bangladeshis the first gen-

won the battle for democracy, something to be excited about."

Everything possible, even reelection

Dr. Ahmed warns, "a certain tendency of partisan administration in public academic institutions will persist but needs to be kept within limits." He hopes the urgent help needed for the economy is really coming as the AL-led alliance seems to be more "economically aware" than previous administrations. If the government keeps its own members in check and insures that the opposition does not leave the parliamentary process, he suggests, "it may become the first to get re-elected in five years."

But Bangladesh needs to take one step at a time. "Only the struggle for a democratically elected government," writes Mr. Islam, "can ensure that the people will get the proper democracy one day." Whereas Mr. Mosharof is enthusiastic that "everything is possible in Bangladesh," Ms Naomi remains pessimistic: "Neither this government nor [its opponent] BNP can do anything for our country." 🌍

UGANDA NEW FEARS:

Uganda's fight against AIDS

By Ellen Schnier

The number of new HIV infections worldwide in 2007 was 2.7 million people, and of those, 1.9 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the UNAIDS Outlook Report for 2009. Two thirds of all people living with AIDS are in Africa. The crisis in Uganda reaches nearly every family and orphans many children. AIDS is responsible for more deaths each year than war, famine, and any other disease. After aggressive efforts to address the disease, Ugandan officials have been hailed for their success in reducing the infection rate in Uganda from 30% in the 1980s and '90s to around 6%.

Sandra Kiapi, Executive Director of the Action Group for Health, Human Rights, and HIV/AIDS (AGHA), says the government sponsored a massive campaign through the media and in schools to educate people about how HIV is contracted and to promote behavioral change and abstinence. One of the reasons Uganda has been successful, she suggests, is because some people living with AIDS came out openly, declared their status and served as a living examples. Kiapi says, "If the public is aware about the facts, they will know how to deal with it."

According to Dr. David Serwadda, Dean of Makerere University School of Public Health in Kampala and specialist in AIDS research, political leadership has been the key to Uganda's success. Other countries have not been as successful without the commitment of the government to reach all four corners of the nation.

Wary of seeing many people infected, Kiapi says, "We need to ensure that future generations are HIV free." While HIV/AIDS is a relatively new disease, young people in Uganda have been touched by the virus their whole lives. They cannot remember a time when there wasn't AIDS. To eradicate the deadly virus, messages of prevention target the younger generation.

Seth Kibet Kigen, a Kenyan who studies Computer Science at Makerere University, says there are several tactics aimed only at young people. Organizations use peer counseling groups because young people are more receptive to their peers. Government-sponsored sporting events reach out to the youth to educate them about the virus, and some music and films encourage young people to practice ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful, and use a Condom).

When HIV became an epidemic, the demographic with the highest infection rate was single adults. In the past few years, the pendulum has swung, and the prevalence of

new infections of HIV is highest for married couples and people in long-term relationships. According to the Uganda AIDS Commission, approximately 43% of new infections are occurring in these groups, what were once considered "low risk."

Dr. Serwadda says this is rooted in the cultural expectation that married couples will be unfaithful, and this demographic is not being targeted with educational messages. "The messages and the programs are not keeping pace with the changes, and in the process, a lot of people are getting infected."

There is a stigma associated with contracting HIV, according to Florence Ntakarutimana, who counsels East African women with AIDS with the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI). "Many people have fear to do the blood test because once they are known as HIV positive, they are rejected by their families, communities, and jobs. They are hated." Even married people shy away from being tested, for fear of the implications of their results.

Awareness campaigns have been extremely successful in reducing the infection rate of HIV in Uganda. There are new fears, however, that the virus could become more widespread. With the development of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), people who contract HIV live longer and much more comfortably. The drugs are now widely available in Uganda and other African countries, meanwhile decreasing some of the fear associated with getting AIDS.

"[Fear] was one of the factors that contributed to the reduction of the infection rate because people were frightened by the effects of the disease," says Kigen. Without that fear, many Ugandans have relaxed their practices of prevention.

"There are people who say HIV is no longer a problem since there are the ARVs. They say to

have HIV is a way of being rich," comments Ntakarutimana. The health care system in Uganda is insufficient, and many people cannot afford to get treatment. People with HIV, however, receive basic care (along with AIDS treatment) from aid associations.

In addition to the increased use of ARVs, the message of prevention has been replaced by information about getting tested and treated. Dr. Serwadda says, "As more financial resources have become available [from the United States and other nations] to treat HIV, less is available for HIV prevention." The focus of the message has shifted, which leaves many fearful there will be a new surge of infections. Without the knowledge of how HIV is contracted and effective measures of prevention, Ugandans are at greater risk of infection.

Many point to political intervention as an explanation for this shift in focus. For example, PEPFAR, The U.S. President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief, was established in 2003 and is the largest monetary commitment by any nation to combat a single disease. This money has been used very successfully to treat people living with AIDS, including access to ARVs. Specific funds, however, are specifically allocated to promote abstinence, and some fear the message of prevention has suffered.

HIV/AIDS is still a very serious health risk in Uganda, and most people who research or treat those infected believe the government has weakened their message of prevention. This could reverse the current trend. In continuing to lead other Sub-Saharan nations in their fight against AIDS, Ugandan officials must refocus their efforts on reducing the number of people infected. 🌍

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