AFRICA RENEWAL

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Bilderberg / Hans Madej

Also inside

Reintegration of ex-combatants

When war ends: transforming Africa's fighters into builders

By **Ernest Harsch,** *Freetown and Monrovia*

Haja Sheriff wants to be a farmer. Like several hundred other former soldiers at the Duport Road agricultural training site on the edge of Monrovia, Liberia's capital, she hopes to get a piece of land on which she can grow rice and vegetables and possibly raise goats, chickens or pigs.

Just a couple of years ago, Ms. Sheriff was a volunteer with a pro-government militia during the country's recent civil war, she told *Africa Renewal*. But now she is learning new skills alongside the former rebels she once fought. A beneficiary of the disarmament and demobilization operation carried out by the UN Mission in Liberia

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UN / Martine Perret

Former fighters surrendering weapons and ammunition to UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi.

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Niger: a famine foretold

Early UN appeals met only a belated reaction from donors

By ***Michael Fleshman***

The seasonal rains returned to southern Niger in June, coaxing the green millet stalks from the dry earth and signalling an end, hopefully, to a food shortage that has left some 2.4 million Nigeriens — including 800,000 children — vulnerable to malnutrition. International relief workers have also started to arrive to distribute the emergency rations needed until the harvest is in.

But neither the millet nor the aid came soon enough for Fassoma Abdoulsalam. The one-year-old died on 10 August, one of some two dozen children to succumb to malnutrition in the village of Birgi Dangotcho in the hard-hit Zinder region.

It was not an uncommon tragedy in a country where malnutrition, child mortality and poverty rates are high even in good times. What distinguished her death was that the world knew it was coming almost from the moment of her birth, yet failed to prevent it.

'Deafening silence'

Experts place part of the problem with the localized nature of the food shortages, which drove up regional food prices and led the government, the UN and relief groups to view the situation as one of chronic poverty and distorted grain markets instead of as an emergency. The non-governmental Médecins sans frontières (MSF) criticized the UN for coming too late, with too little, and for failing to sound the alarm soon enough.

But in fact, the UN and other monitors began reporting that southern Niger was slipping into crisis as early as November 2004, following a poor harvest due to drought and locusts. The following month the government of Niger issued an emergency appeal for over 78,000 metric tonnes of food aid, with the support of the UN World Food Programme (WFP). That appeal, and the ones that followed, noted the head of UN humanitarian operations, Under-Secretary General Jan Egeland, were met by a "near-deafening silence."

The efforts of the UN and other relief groups to alert the world to Niger's impending crisis were numerous (see chronology below).

But only in mid-July, after the UK's BBC broadcast images provided by the UN of dying Nigerien children, did donors finally begin responding. WFP received more pledges in the 10 days following the broadcast than it had in the eight previous months. "The fact that the world can be moved only by the images of graphic suffering is nothing to celebrate," lamented WFP Executive Director James Morris. "Many of the children who featured in the news reports are already beyond help."

Fixing an 'irrational' system

In the view of many observers, the preventable deaths and suffering in Niger underscore the need for fundamental reform of the headline-driven global emergency response system — a system MSF Executive Director Nicolas de Torrente recently denounced as "completely irrational." Most proposals call for an emergency fund large enough to permit immediate responses to humanitarian situations

UN / Evan Schneider

before they become crises. Currently, the WFP and other agencies may borrow only limited funds from the UN emergency fund or other operations for rapid responses — and then only if they have received donor pledges of repayment.

"Imagine if your local fire department had to petition the mayor for money every time it needed water to douse a raging fire," Mr. Egeland remarked. "That's the predicament faced by anguished humanitarian aid workers when they seek to save lives but have no funds to pay for the water — or medicine, shelter or food — needed to put out a fire.… These delays are deadly."

To speed lifesaving responses, Mr. Annan has proposed a tenfold increase, to $500 mn, in the UN emergency fund. He has also called for greater international efforts to combat the long-term causes of hunger. With over 4 million people in Africa's Sahel region in need of food aid and over 10 million people now at risk in Southern Africa, the needs of the hungry cannot wait. ■

Numerous alarms over Niger's developing famine

December 2004
The U.S.-based Famine Early Warning System declares that Niger requires "urgent attention." A UN assessment reports 3 million people at risk.

January 2005
WFP reports in detail on Niger's food requirements.

February 2005
WFP launches an emergency feeding programme for 400,000 people.

March 2005
UN and government agencies in Niger appeal for $7 mn at a donor's conference.

May 2005
With government and WFP food stocks dwindling, the UN issues a "flash" emergency appeal for $16.1 mn. But only Luxembourg pledges $320,000. Mr. Egeland warns that 150,000 children face imminent death.

June 2005
The WFP describes the situation in Niger as "very dire." WFP Executive Director James Morris reports to the UN Security Council that only 11 per cent of required funding has been received.

July 2005
UN agencies issue a new appeal for $30 mn in emergency aid for 1.2 million Nigeriens, but initial pledges reach only $10 mn. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan visits Niger to highlight the need for urgent action.

What the World Summit means for Africa

Commitments on aid, debt relief and MDGs are reaffirmed

Since early in the year, many in Africa had been looking forward to the 2005 World Summit in New York, anticipating decisions that could greatly influence their continent's future. The 14-16 September gathering lived up to some of those expectations. Yet many of the 43 participating African leaders went back home with a sense that much more should have been achieved.

Africa recognizes that it bears the primary responsibility for its own development, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo told the summit on behalf of the African Union (AU). But, he added, it also "needs genuine partnership in order to overcome its numerous challenges and problems." He welcomed the pledges already made to help Africa, and then reminded the world's leaders "to fulfill their commitments."

UN / Evan Schneider

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo discuss key issues at the African Union meeting in July.

Those comments echoed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's address to an AU summit in Libya two months earlier. Noting the recent pledges of the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries to double aid to Africa and to cancel the multilateral debt of more than a dozen African countries (see page 8), he affirmed that Africa would be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) "if the long-promised global partnership is truly mobilized. No new promises are needed to make this happen — just a follow-through on existing ones."

Promises 'locked in'

During the intense negotiations that preceded the World Summit, some delegations objected to aspects of the sweeping reform proposals that Mr. Annan had advanced. Discussions on overhauling the Security Council, for example, were postponed. The US initially suggested, among other points, that references to the MDGs and to specific targets for aid increases be eliminated from the summit's "outcome document."

But in the end, those elements were left in. The document expressed a strong and unambiguous commitment by all governments to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Donor pledges to increase aid worldwide by an estimated $50 bn annually by 2010 were welcomed. "By your agreeing on the outcome document," Mr. Annan told the delegates at the summit opening, "these achievements will be locked in."

Other decisions also will have important implications for Africa. The summit agreed to establish a new standing police capacity for UN peacekeeping operations in Africa and elsewhere and to create a new Peacebuilding Commission to help countries undergoing the difficult transition from war to peace. The UN's humanitarian emergency fund will be strengthened so that relief aid arrives more quickly and reliably when famine or other disasters occur.

The document also included a clear and unambiguous acceptance by all governments of an international responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. When peaceful means fail to prevent such acts, governments have pledged "to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner," to authorize forceful measures by the Security Council.

Spotlight on Africa

The summit document highlighted Africa's specific needs. It welcomed the "substantial progress" African countries have made in fulfilling their own commitments and emphasized the need to continue implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It welcomed the decisions by the G-8 and the European Union to increase aid to Africa by an additional $25 bn per year by 2010. The assembled heads of state also agreed to:

- strengthen cooperation with NEPAD
- support African efforts to ensure that all children have access to basic health care and to quality free and compulsory primary education by 2015
- support the establishment of an "international infrastructure consortium" involving the AU, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, with NEPAD as the main framework, to facilitate public and private infrastructure investment
- promote comprehensive debt relief, through the G-8 proposal for 100 per cent cancellation of multilateral debt for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs), as well as significant debt relief for other heavily indebted countries "on a case-by-case basis, where appropriate"

see page 6

Translate words into action, Africans demand

Dissecting the G-8 and World Summit pledges

Africa speaks

More than any other recent year, 2005 has seen Africa emerge as a prominent topic on the international agenda. From the UN Millennium Task Force's January report on the steps needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to the March report of the UK's Commission on Africa, to the July summits of the African Union (AU) in Libya and the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized countries in Gleneagles, Scotland, to the 2005 World Summit in New York in September, the continent's challenges, needs and aspirations have received unprecedented attention. Yet the particular views and expectations of Africans have received less exposure than the numerous promises of the presidents and prime ministers of the developed world. Here we present selected excerpts from some of the African perspectives.

Alpha Oumar Konaré, *chairperson, African Union Commission, AU summit, Sirte, Libya, 4 July*

A wind of commitment for Africa is blowing over the world which is not simply due to the latest fashion or pretence. It is the expression of a new conscience of solidarity towards Africa and the affirmation of new ethics in cooperation. Our sincere gratitude goes to all those throughout the world today who have Africa's interest at heart and intend to support African policies, artists, athletes, businessmen and -women, media practitioners and civil society organizations.

Too many promises have been made to us at too many major meetings, but they have not always been kept....

At the present rate, the Millennium Development Goals to be attained by 2015 will not be achieved before a century, if at all. However, let us welcome today's promises with more vigilance as partners, as a responsible Africa in the spirit of NEPAD [New Partnership for Africa's Development].

Total cancellation of the debt of 14 ... African countries ... is an important step.... We must ensure that the effects of this initiative are not undermined by conditionalities.

We must also ensure, in our opinion, that collectively the principle of debt reduction for all African countries is firmly laid down, since it is all African countries that are crushed, under similar conditions, by this debt. Releasing the countries known as "the poorest," without the others, does not release the continent's energy because the driving force of others is blocked....

Today, Africa needs massive funding for which neither total debt cancellation, nor doubling official development assistance, or even a combination of the two, will suffice.... We need other resources, and to this end, we must address the issue of adequate remuneration for our raw materials, and indeed the guaranteeing of resources from our raw materials.

The issue of subsidies should be appropriately and urgently addressed, and the opening up of the global agricultural market is a political as well as moral requirement. In this battle, we should all stand firmly behind the cotton-producing countries which, in their struggle, have succeeded in making cotton the symbol of the inequalities of the world trade system.

Olusegun Obasanjo, *president of Nigeria, AU summit, 5 July*

We are fully aware of the extensive media coverage Africa is receiving in G-8 countries and welcome the intimations of further commitments to cancel debt for more African countries and the doubling of aid to Africa. We must now see words or commitments translated into action in support of poverty alleviation.

We too are committed to strengthening our own capabilities to review the effectiveness and progress of these initiatives. A further priority as we stabilize our governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism must be to encourage international support and commitments to strengthen the African Union's peace and security capabilities.

Tajudeen Abdul-Rahman, *general secretary, Pan African Movement, Kampala, Uganda, 7 July*

It is difficult to know how to react to this sudden show of concern for a people that have been so marginalized and humiliated for such a long time. It is like being offered a handkerchief by the same person who is beating the hell out of you.... The whole world is now programmed to look up to eight white men in dark suits meeting in faraway Gleneagles, Scotland, to save Africa. None of them is an African.

Yet a much bigger assembly of another powerful group of people, all of them heads of state from across Africa, were meeting in the Libyan city of Sirte deciding on the future of Africa, without a similar focus in the global media....

Significantly, the AU summit did not dwell so much on aid but rather called for the abolition of unfair trading rules that rig international trade against Africa and asked for a clear timetable for the abolition of these subsidies. One can see that African leaders are not taken in by various pledges on aid and rather want us to trade our way to prosperity instead of being aided to remain dependent.

UN / Paulo Filgueiras

John Kufuor, president of Ghana: "This is the moment to strengthen UN institutions."

Africa speaks

Bamanga Tukur, *president, African Business Roundtable, and chairman, NEPAD Business Group, July 2005*

2005 looks like being a watershed year for Africa, with unprecedented commitments to cancel debt and increase aid. However, without a commitment to dismantle trade subsidies and market-access barriers in industrialized countries, this historic opportunity risks being squandered. Without more commitment to free trade from the G-8 and industrialized nations, Africans will continue to be denied the opportunity to trade their way out of poverty.

John Moru, *ActionAid International-Nigeria, opinion article in* This Day*, Lagos, Nigeria, 17 August*

There are some worries for us to consider in our quest to make Nigeria different from the past. First is the fact that ... since the announcement of the debt relief for Nigeria, there has not been a comprehensive analysis of the implications of the package for Nigeria in real terms. For instance, what is the role of the international financial institutions — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) — in the negotiations that would take about six months? What do we understand by the Policy Support Instrument by which Nigeria must be guided in order to meet the criteria for debt relief?

Second is the lack of a national framework of action that would clearly stipulate in unambiguous terms where such monies if eventually freed by the Paris Club would go to.... However, the debt relief package to be negotiated for Nigeria is one veritable ground for civil society and grassroots movements to seize the moment and contribute to social change in Nigeria once more. The strategy to be utilized is ... [to] constitute an independent body for the monitoring of monies freed by the Paris Club to boost both the social and productive sectors of the economy.

Gregory Chikwanka, *assistant coordinator, Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, Zambia, 31 August*

Developed nations should take a leading role in trade issues, because there is a consensus that only trade will help poor countries to develop and attain the Millennium Development Goals. There is need to promote good policies that will open more markets. Issues of tariff escalation, where there is a difference between raw and processed copper, to help promote industries should be addressed. It is difficult to increase industries with a limited market....

There is this tendency where developed countries reduce aid after debt cancellation. This should be discouraged. As more markets are being opened, aid should also be encouraged. 2015 is not far from 2005 and it would be a shame for Zambia if no impact is made on the poverty situation, let alone reverse the social indicators....

As multilateral institutions meet to review the decision by the G-8 countries, they should not place stringent conditionalities. There is enough evidence that Zambia had difficulties meeting

Annan: 'Grasp the opportunity' for Africa

The past year has brought an "unprecedented mobilization of international public opinion in support of Africa," notes UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "The central challenge is to grasp the opportunity and maintain the momentum."

In two reports to the General Assembly, Mr. Annan outlines Africa's key achievements over the past year, including progress in reducing armed conflicts and further steps towards implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union's development plan.

When the Secretary-General in 1998 issued his landmark report on the causes of conflict in Africa, 14 African countries were afflicted by war. Since then, he reports, the number has declined significantly and today "only three African countries are engaged in major conflict" — Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan. However, these three conflicts "have resulted in great and horrific loss of life, brutality and human dislocation," while a number of other countries are experiencing civil strife of lower intensity.

While the UN is fielding a number of major peacekeeping operations in the continent, Africa is enhancing its own capacity to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts, such as by establishing the African Union's Peace and Security Council in 2004.

On the economic and social fronts, African countries are developing concrete projects to advance NEPAD's vision. These projects include building a West African gas pipeline, increasing agricultural productivity, introducing more computers and other technologies into schools and stepping up actions to combat HIV/AIDS.

Donors and creditors have agreed to increase aid and debt relief for a number of African countries, but those initiatives need to be expanded — and accompanied by action to improve Africa's trade prospects.

Mr. Annan urges Africa's international partners to honour the commitments they have made. "Slow or delayed redemption of pledges can hinder the pace of implementation, distort priorities of partner countries and lead to loss of faith in international support."

What World Summit means for Africa

from page 4

- initiate programmes to increase African countries' trade capacities and help them restructure, diversify and strengthen the competitiveness of their commodity sectors
- support African efforts to increase agricultural productivity, as outlined in NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
- back initiatives by the AU and African sub-regional organizations to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts, with assistance from the UN
- work towards achieving a goal of universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment in African countries by 2010.

The world's governments declared: "We reaffirm our commitment to address the special needs of Africa, which is the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015, to enable it to enter the mainstream of the world economy." ■

the previous conditions tied to aid and debt cancellation, and if we will be given the same conditions ... we stand to lose out.

Yoweri Museveni, *president of Uganda, World Summit, 14 September*

While Africa's historical economic role as a supplier of raw materials to the world may have contributed to her economic growth in the past, it is now clear that that role has left Africa in deep poverty and underdevelopment. There is now a need for financing industry in Africa to add value to her raw materials. The industrial processing of Africa's agricultural products such as coffee, cotton, palm oil, et cetera, offers investors opportunities to supply both domestic and regional markets as well as international markets.

UN / Paulo Filgueiras

Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda: "There is now a need for financing industry in Africa to add value to her raw materials."

Abdoulaye Wade, *president of Senegal, World Summit, 14 September*

The review of the state of the Millennium Goals shows that there still are many handicaps on the road to their achievement. Of course, some obstacles lie within our countries: the absence of peace, poor governance, the AIDS pandemic and other shortcomings. But let us also note that the developed countries have never respected their commitments, notably the target set for development aid in the 1970s, by which 0.7 per cent of their GNPs would be transferred to developing countries. It is the same today regarding financing for NEPAD.

John Kufuor, *president of Ghana, World Summit, 14 September*

This is the moment to strengthen UN institutions. The General Assembly needs to be revitalized to enable it to assume fully its rightful place as the most representative and deliberative organ of the UN....

Above all, the Security Council must be restructured and expanded to reflect the increased membership of the UN and also enable it to carry out its Charter obligations more effectively with the full confidence of member states. This reform must be based on the principles of democracy, sovereign equality of states and equitable geographical representation, among others.

In this regard, we reiterate the African Union's position . . . on all aspects of the reform of the Security Council, especially its claim for two permanent seats.

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, *president of Algeria, World Summit, 14 September*

Only a globalization with humane goals would capture the spirit of the United Nations Charter. It would not countenance islands of prosperity in oceans of misery, nor an omnipotent centre with its increasingly marginalized peripheries.

Africa speaks

Benjamin Mkapa, *president of Tanzania, World Summit, 14 September*

For too long there has been an unnecessary debate about whether the solution to poverty in Africa and elsewhere is more money. Of course it is not simply a question of money. But without money, few strategies, if any, would succeed. Likewise, good governance is necessary, but alone it would not eradicate poverty.

The developing countries are not blaming the rich and industrialized countries for everything that is wrong or unfulfilled. What they are asking of them is a new commitment to keep their word....

Aid is not charity; it is investment in peace, security and human solidarity. By not addressing the causes of poverty, we are institutionalizing the business of charity. It does not make political sense; it does not make economic sense; it does not make ethical sense.

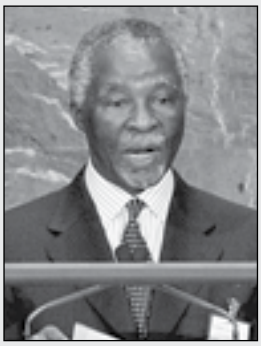
Paul Biya, *president of Cameroon, World Summit, 14 September*

It would be advisable to speed up the trade negotiations of the Doha round so that the countries of the South, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, can at last play a significant role in world trade.... A strong gesture is also expected of our partners, by dismantling agricultural subsidies, specifically to benefit African cotton, which is a major source of revenue for millions of our farmers.... In general, it would be welcome if the North opened its markets more to our products, to allow us to better integrate ourselves into a globalized economy.

Thabo Mbeki, *president of South Africa, World Summit, 15 September*

Our approach to the challenge to commit and deploy the necessary resources for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals has been half-hearted, timid and tepid....

We firmly believe that the reason we have not made the progress we should have, during the last five years, is precisely because we have not as yet achieved what the outcome document described as "a security consensus." We have not achieved that security consensus because of the widely disparate conditions of existence and interests among the member states of the UN as well as the gross imbalance of power that define the relationship among these member states....



UN / Joshua Kristal

Thabo Mbeki president of South Africa: "We have not achieved the required scale of resource transfer ... to empower the poor."

Because of that, we have the result that we have not achieved the required scale of resource transfer from those who have the resources, to empower the poor of the world to extricate themselves from their misery. ■

Industrial countries write off Africa's debt

But will the G-8 deal be hobbled by new conditions?

By **Gumisai Mutume**

Rich nations of the Group of Eight (G-8) have formally acceded to a long-standing demand of poor countries by offering to write off $40 bn in debt to multilateral institutions. The decision, taken at the G-8 Summit in July, covers the debt that 18 countries — 14 of them African — owe to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and regional development banks such as the African Development Bank. Anti-debt campaigners, however, have criticized the move as too little relief, too late and worry that it will be riddled with many new conditions.

"It isn't the end of poverty in Africa," acknowledged UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose government played a lead role in the plan. "But it is the hope that it can be ended. It isn't all everyone wanted, but it is progress — real and achievable progress."

For the fifth consecutive time, Africa was high on the agenda of the G-8 summit. This year, members reviewed progress under the G-8 Africa Action Plan, launched at Kananaskis, Canada, in 2002, in a bid to refocus attention on the continent before the 2005 World Summit at the UN in September and the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in December. The G-8 summit primarily addressed a triad of economic issues concerning Africa — debt relief, trade and aid.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo described the G-8 summit as a "great success," while Tanzania's Central Bank Governor Daudi Balali welcomed the G-8 debt plan as providing an opportunity to "expand health and education services" for his country. "We will also be able to expand our infrastructure."

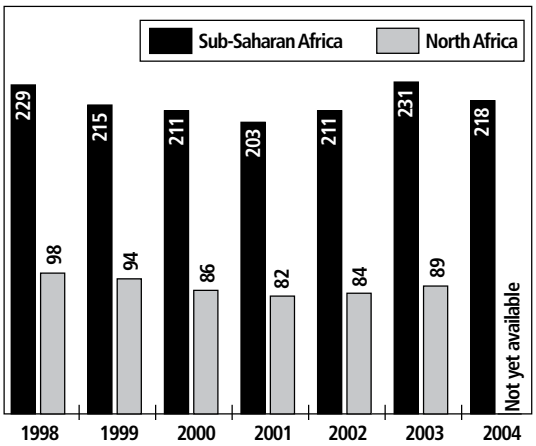
An analysis of the G-8 plan by the anti-debt movement Jubilee USA Network says that despite its shortcomings, the deal will save lives in Africa. "The agreement, in addition to setting the important precedent of 100 per cent debt cancellation for some nations to some creditors, will release close to $1 bn annually in resources poor nations can use for development." The Zambian government has said it will use debt relief proceeds to provide anti-retroviral drugs to 100,000 HIV/AIDS patients.

The last time the G-8 made a key decision on African debt was in Cologne, Germany, in 1999, when members offered up to 100 per cent relief on bilateral debt owed them by poor countries. However, this offer fell short because multilateral debt, owed to institutions such as the IMF, received only partial relief. This time multilateral debt will also be forgiven.

To qualify for the G-8 programme, a country must first complete the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. HIPC was launched in 1996 by the World Bank and IMF to provide relief to poor countries from excessive debt burdens. Because of the slow pace of delivery, the plan was "enhanced" in 1999, but it has still not produced a lasting solution to the debt crisis. HIPC identifies 38 countries, 32 of them in sub-Saharan Africa, as potentially eligible to receive debt relief. It has so far provided countries debt relief that will amount to $54 bn over time.

The countries benefiting from the most recent $40 bn write-off are Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Africa's foreign debt
US$ bn



Source: UN Africa Renewal, from data in World Bank, Global Development Finance, 2005.

'Tiny steps'

"What Africa needed from the G-8 was a giant leap forward — all it got was tiny steps," charged Ms. Caroline Sande Mukulira of the Southern African office of the non-governmental ActionAid. "The deal that has been announced falls way short of our demands. We have some aid, but not enough; some debt relief, but not enough; and virtually nothing on trade. Once again, Africa's people have been short-changed."

To obtain relief under the G-8 agreement, the countries deemed eligible have to meet HIPC targets for good governance, curb corruption and fraud, open up their economies and liberalize trade. To take effect, the agreement needed to be endorsed by the full IMF/World Bank board at its annual meeting in late September. Although it passed, some board members proposed amendments to the original agreement demanding more conditions before full relief is provided.

Austria's representative on the IMF board, Mr. Willy Kiekens, proposed that the relief be provided not all at once, but over time. This, he said, would enable the IMF "to continue having active policy dialogues with poor countries, monitor their policies closely and provide financial support in a phased manner and on condition of the implementation of adequate policies." Those in favour of more conditions argued that they would be the only way to

AFP / Getty Images / Rajesh Jantilal

Anti-debt campaigners have long pointed out that cancellation could free up government funds for health and other vital services.

ensure that the debtor countries do not slip up.

Some anti-debt activists charge that conditionality violates the sovereignty of borrower nations and imposes programmes that may be unsuited to the economies of poor countries. They also feared that adding more conditions to the G-8 agreement would only hold up the programme.

In the past, the frequent delays experienced under HIPC were caused by "over-rigid fiscal and macroeconomic frameworks," argues Debt Relief International, a non-profit organization funded by the UK and six other industrial-nation governments. The process was further complicated by "insistence on executing 'left-over' structural conditions from past programmes" and the "proliferation of new poverty reduction performance criteria."

During the period leading to the G-8 summit, the African Union, the continent's political organ, called for a sweeping programme of debt write-offs throughout the continent. "We request the developed countries and development partners to expedite the process of total debt cancellation for Africa by the year 2007," African leaders noted in a resolution issued on the eve of the G-8 summit.

The G-8 plan, however, will only be extended to the 38 countries currently eligible for HIPC, bringing the maximum relief on multilateral debt to $55 bn. It is also not clear whether new conditions will be introduced to the G-8 plan as the World Bank and the IMF begin moving towards implementation.

Where is the money?

"Intentions and actualization are not the same thing," says Kenyan Finance Minister David Mwiriria. "We would like to see a situation where there is money now." Kenya maintains that it, like a number of other African countries, needs debt relief, but is left out because it does not meet HIPC's qualification criteria.

Nigeria, one of the most indebted African countries, also does not qualify for either HIPC or the G-8 plan. Before the G-8 summit however, Nigeria secured an $18 bn write-off of the bilateral debt it owes to members of the Paris Club, an informal group of rich lender nations.

Also on the sidelines of the G-8 summit, Russia announced that it would cancel $2.2 bn in bilateral debt that poor countries owe it. Russia's deal only applies to countries undergoing HIPC.

If the original G-8 agreement stands, it is still unclear how quickly HIPC countries other than the initial 18 will benefit. According to the World Bank, nine more countries are likely to reach the HIPC completion point in the next 12-18 months, allowing them to qualify for G-8 relief: Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, São Tomé e Príncipe and Sierra Leone.

Africa's total debt stands at about $300 bn. Jubilee South, a global network of anti-debt NGOs, said that the amount of debt to be cancelled by the G-8 is a "minuscule" part of this total. Any "debt cancellation must be unconditional," the coalition added in a statement.

The European Network on Debt and Development calls the plan limited because countries such as Kenya, Angola and Haiti are excluded. It calculates that 62 countries are paying $10 bn each year in debt servicing that must be cancelled if they are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at alleviating poverty.

"While the G-8 agreement is a step forward and sets an important precedent, we have long advocated 100 per cent cancellation of debt to multilateral creditors. Our campaign for freedom from debt for impoverished nations has only just begun," said Mr. Neil Watkins, national coordinator of the Jubilee USA Network. "We will continue to build pressure on G-8 nations to cancel debt for all impoverished countries and countries in crisis." ■

Associated Press / Sayyid Azim

Workers' remittances: a boon to development

Money sent home by African migrants rivals development aid

By **Gumisai Mutume**

Every day, thousands of Africans living abroad line up in money-transfer offices to wire home the odd dollar they are able to save. From the US, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and France — the top sources of remittances to developing countries — some of the money finds its way deep into the rural areas of Africa. There, it may send a child to school, build a house or buy food to sustain those remaining at home.

Over the years, some of the money has made its way to the Kayes region of Mali. There, the World Bank reports, contributions from Malians living in France have helped build 60 per cent of the infrastructure. About 40 Malian migrant associations in France supported nearly 150 projects, valued at €3 mn over a decade.

Yet most of the money sent home by migrants is unrecorded, and therefore does not enter many countries' national statistics. Development planners increasingly stress the importance of tracking this money. That will help governments try to increase remittances as a source of development finance and better channel them into productive sectors.

Throughout the continent, financial and monetary policies and regulations create barriers to the flow of remittances and their effective investment. "For a capital-poor continent like Africa, you can't ignore this source of income," says South African Institute of International Affairs researcher Mills Soko. "In Africa it's not accorded the attention it deserves."

A number of developing countries, including Brazil, Mexico, India and the Philippines, offer incentives to attract such transfers into local savings and investment funds. A private firm, Bannock Consulting, reports that these countries have set up migrant pension plans, offer preferential loans or grants for business ventures using remittances and provide access to capital for recent returnees. As a result, they are reaping rewards from having a large pool of citizens living abroad.

All too often, policy debates on migration have focused on the loss of skills and labour from poor to rich nations. An estimated 3.6 million Africans are living in the diaspora, some of them highly trained professionals. The migration of such workers has caused the loss of skills and labour in vital areas of the economy. Agriculture, a key sector in many African countries, has suffered because of losses from the rural areas. As a result, African governments have often tended to discourage migration.

Today, more people are living outside their countries of birth than ever before. In 2000 an estimated 175 million people worldwide (one in every 35) were living outside their native countries. With the advent of globalization, these numbers are set to increase by a projected 2–3 per cent annually. Remittances offer an opportunity for developing countries to look at ways of benefiting from their citizens who have chosen to live and work abroad, rather than focusing on the negative consequences.

Panos / Sven Torfinn

Advertisement for money-transfer services in Mogadishu, Somalia, a country highly dependent on migrants' remittances.

Growing source of funds

Remittances are defined as the portions of cross-border earnings that migrants send home. There are two types, official and unofficial. Official transfers use banks, money-transfer organizations and sometimes the Internet. Unofficial remittances are sent through friends or migrants themselves or through traditional networks, known in some countries as *hawala* or *chiti*, which allow money deposited with a trader in one country to be paid out by a partner in the recipient country.

At $126 bn in 2004, remittances were developing countries' second most important source of foreign exchange. That same year, foreign direct investment inflows were $165 bn, while total official development assistance amounted to $79 bn.

Over the last few years there has been a surge of interest in the potential of

workers' transfers. In its report *Global Development Finance 2005: Mobilizing Finance and Managing Vulnerability*, the World Bank identifies remittances as an increasingly important source of development funding which, in some countries, outpaces official development assistance. "Remittances to developing countries from overseas resident and non-resident workers are estimated to have increased by $10 bn (8 per cent) in 2004, reaching $126 bn," the Bank reports. The previous year they grew by $17 bn, with much of the increase occurring in low-income countries. Most recipients are middle-income nations, but remittances to poor countries are significant in relation to gross domestic product, the Bank notes.

Yet the figures reported by the Bank take into account only official transfers. If unofficial flows were added, the total numbers could be 2.5 times more. "Flows through informal channels . . . are not captured in the official statistics, but are believed to be quite large," the Bank reports.

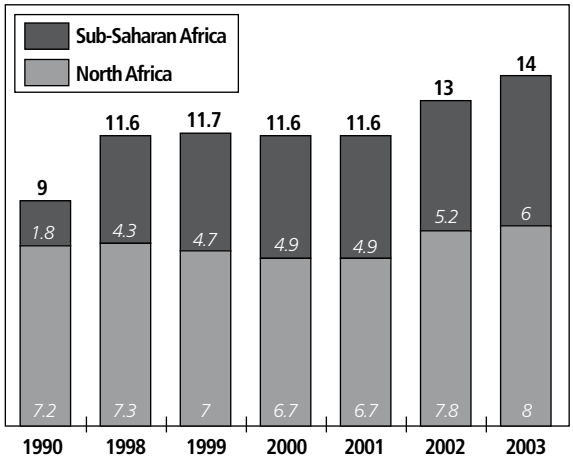
For an undocumented Zimbabwean who lives in Dallas, Texas, in the US, unofficial transfers are the best bet. "I, like many of my colleagues, rely on informal networks of friends to send money home, because I do not have proper documentation." He says that he sends a minimum of $200 each month and sometimes transfers as much as $1,000. He also prefers informal transfers because of the higher exchange rate on the parallel market, in which traders are willing to pay as much as double the official rate.

Weak financial systems

Zimbabwean economist John Robertson says that while ordinary Zimbabweans are enjoying the benefits of money sent from abroad, the central bank, desperately in need of foreign reserves, is not. The country is in dire need of official foreign exchange (forex) since the withdrawal of financial support by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank a few years ago due to the political crisis that has engulfed the country since the disputed 2000 elections. As in many other African countries, weak or nonexistent formal financial systems discourage formal transfers to Zimbabwe. The country's financial sector has been under siege over the last few years and many banks have been forced to close down.

To tap funds held by Zimbabweans living abroad as a source of foreign currency, the central bank last year launched the Homelink money-transfer system. But interest in the scheme has been lukewarm. "When the programme started, there was an enthusiastic response from those living abroad, but that zeal has lessened," says Mr. Robertson. "The main reason is that there is a huge gap between the official selling rate of forex and the parallel rate."

Worker remittance flows to Africa
US$ bn



Source: UN Africa Renewal, from data in World Bank, Global Development Finance, 2005.

Other African countries have found ways to get around similar challenges. Realizing that informal channels were being used as a way of avoiding restrictive foreign exchange rules, Sudan simply devalued its currency. As a result, clients found it more attractive to exchange money at the official rates.

Uganda has liberalized its financial market, allowing foreign denominated accounts and loosening trade in foreign exchange, among other things. This has reportedly led to an increase in remittances through official channels.

But many countries find it difficult to fix a problem of which they are unaware. Many African countries have no data on the nature or amount of flows they get. According to the World Bank, less than two-thirds of African countries report remittances. "Flows through informal channels are not captured at all," reports the Bank.

Africa lags behind

While remittances to developing countries have more than doubled in the last decade, they have grown little in Africa, the Bank notes. Total remittances to Africa amounted to $9 bn in 1990 and by 2003 had reached $14 bn, and the continent receives about 15 per cent of flows to developing countries. Over the last decade, Egypt and Morocco have been the largest recipients on the continent and North Africa as a whole received more than 60 per cent of total transfers.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is the largest recipient, taking between 30 and 60 per cent of the region's receipts. Though official figures are not available, economists believe that money sent home by Nigerians in various parts of the world now exceeds $1.3 bn annually, ranking second only to oil exports as a source of foreign exchange earnings for the country.

For some smaller economies, workers remittances account for a large chunk of national income. Lesotho receives the equivalent of between 30 and 40 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) from workers abroad, mainly in neighbouring South Africa. In Eritrea, the World Bank notes, remittances represented 194 per cent of the value of exports and 19 per cent of GDP. During the 1990s, remittances covered 80 per cent of the current account deficit of Botswana.

The challenge facing many African countries that receive substantial income from remittances is how to direct them into programmes that benefit society as a whole. At an African regional

meeting of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) held in Cape Town, South Africa, in March 2005, delegates agreed that while remittances could contribute to poverty reduction and development, countries in the region need to do more to enhance remittances' positive effects.

The GCIM, a global panel that addresses international migration issues, was launched in 2003 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and a group of interested countries, including South Africa. Its aim is to influence the development of coherent, comprehensive and global policies on migration.

The meeting also noted that countries would benefit by reducing transfer costs, ending monopolies established by certain money transfer companies that limit competition, improving their banking systems and encouraging governments to pursue macroeconomic policies that create a favourable environment for remittances from nationals living abroad.

Promoting development

According to the World Bank, the developmental impact of remittances will depend on their continued flow, and that in turn will depend on the ease with which money can be transferred. The Bank estimates that if transaction costs were lowered even by 5 per cent, remittances to developing countries would increase by $3.5 bn a year. In many countries formal money transfers are expensive and at times heavily taxed. US researchers who have examined ways to reduce transfer fees report that average costs amount to 12.5 per cent of the sums transferred, amounting to $10–15 bn annually.

It would also be beneficial for African countries to promote the use of official transfer channels. They could do this by offering incentives to recipients to save more within the formal banking sector. To make formal transfers attractive, countries would also need to offer favourable exchange rates and establish efficient banking systems. In some countries formal banks exist only in urban areas, leaving rural dwellers with no choice but to depend on the informal sector.

Some countries have adopted innovative approaches, such as setting up transfer services among large migrant communities in industrial countries. In Paris, France, three banks — the Banque de l'Habitat du Sénégal, the Banque de l'Habitat du Mali and the Banque des Ivoiriens de France — offer special incentives to their nationals at rates lower than those charged by private agents. As a result, the banks make about 400 transfers a day. In 1999, some $24 mn was transferred to Senegal through the scheme, reports the UN's International Organization on Migration (IOM). The amount transferred to Senegal was equal to about 25 per cent of total remittances to the country that year.

Panos / Sven Torfinn

Money sent back home by migrant workers can support housing construction and development projects.

Following the money

Most of the money sent home by migrants is for household consumption, notes the World Bank. Some is used for education, health and other human capital development. Some is invested in land, livestock or housing construction. "Still less is used for investments, such as savings or business, or to repay debt, such as a loan for the expenses of going abroad," notes a World Bank study, *Migrant Labour Remittances in Africa: Reducing Obstacles to Developmental Contributions,* by Mr. Cerstin Sander and Mr. Samuel Maimbo.

Yet there are also some risks for economies that rely too much on remittances to finance development, notes the IOM. Unlike aid, remittances to individual countries in Africa are highly volatile and unpredictable. Between 1980 and 1999, the standard deviation of annual transfers was 17 per cent in Egypt, more than 50 per cent in Cameroon, Cape Verde, Niger and Togo and greater than 100 per cent in Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho and Nigeria. Naturally, economies highly dependent on these financial flows can be hit hard when the flows suddenly decrease, and families can suddenly find themselves out of money.

Burkina Faso is a good example. Flows dropped drastically from $187 mn in 1988 to $67 mn in 1999, mainly due to the economic and political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, where many Burkinabè work. As a result, the contribution of remittances to the GDP declined from 8.8 per cent in 1980 to 2.6 per cent in 1999. By 2003, remittances to Burkina Faso had slipped further to $50 mn. For such countries, the challenge is managing remittances, while diversifying economies to reduce dependence on remittances for income.

Taken for a ride

A substantial amount of the money sent to poor countries does not actually get there. Instead, it lines the pockets of

go-betweens. In a March 2005 study, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) reports that 18 banks and money-transfer operators it examined skimmed up to 40 per cent of the cash consumers send abroad, including to African nations such as Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria. The DFID estimates that annual remittances from the UK are around $4.2 bn, equivalent to 78 per cent of the country's overseas aid budget.

To help people find the best deals for sending money abroad, the department set up a website (*www.sendmoneyhome.org*) that features information on transfer operators, exchange rates and transfer costs.

Discrimination

Immigrants in industrial nations also face discrimination through policies in the public and private sectors that make it difficult for them to earn decent wages, says Mr. Bala Sanusi of the UK-based coalition African Diaspora Voices for Africa's Development (ADVAD).

"Some of the current immigration policies are unfair to Africans in the diaspora," he says, because they limit the freedom of skilled workers to move in search of better opportunities. In a submission to British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa, ADVAD criticized some regulatory measures that have been enforced in industrial countries, especially since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the US. Because of tightened security, restrictions have been placed on the ability of migrants from poor countries to enter or live in industrial nations or to perform such simple daily tasks as opening bank accounts.

Often, banks will only transfer money for account holders. Yet opening an account can be difficult for many migrants, requiring evidence of formal employment, official identification and proof of residence. In the US alone, estimates of illegal immigrants range from 7 million to more than 20 million.

New or tighter "know-your-customer requirements and other regulations, adopted as part of anti-terrorism and anti-money laundering initiatives, contribute to better controls, accountability and transparency," notes the World Bank study by Mr. Sander and Mr. Maimbo. But such regulations have also "raised hurdles to using banks, both for individuals and money transfer organizations."

Developing policy

What is urgent, says South African Home Affairs Minister Novisiwe Mapisa-Nqakula, is to keep the debate on international migration open and constructive. At present, she says, the debate seems to be characterized "by an emphasis on security at the expense of development." The debate must instead be "driven by a vision that sees the interests of humanity as a whole above the narrow interests of states or groups of states."

"I, like many of my colleagues, rely on informal networks of friends to send money home, because I do not have proper documentation."

— a Zimbabwean migrant living in the US

The first prerequisite, she says, is to build a solid body of research on the issues pertaining to migration and development. Data on the mobility of professionals in and from Africa remains sketchy. The complex relationships among international migration, training, labour markets and related economic and security issues are largely unexplored. About two-thirds of countries in sub-Saharan Africa currently do not report any data on remittances. For these countries, investing in monitoring systems would go a long way towards understanding the nature and quantity of flows.

Last year, at the Group of 8 summit in Sea Island in the US, industrial nations pledged to improve flows and enhance data-collection standards in both sending and receiving countries. They pledged to work with the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, to achieve these goals.

Poverty reduction

At the national level, coherent policies on migration and development must be developed and incorporated into programmes that spur economic development, experts say. In many countries, the primary tools for poverty reduction, known as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), are silent on migration. The World Bank, which together with the IMF directs lending to developing countries through PRSPs, reported in March 2004 that PRSPs from Africa show considerable ambivalence towards migration — either not recognizing it as an important issue or not addressing it at all. The World Bank's PRSP review notes that overwhelmingly, where economic migration is mentioned, "it is seen as a negative," with many countries viewing migration as depleting them of human resources vital for development. Only Cape Verde and Senegal mentioned emigration as a positive factor in their PRSPs and both proposed strategies to promote remittances and engage emigrants in national development. Cape Verde noted, however, that restrictive policies in host countries have cut remittances.

As elsewhere in the world, in many African countries responsibility for migration is often divided amongst several ministries with different and even competing interests. Government officials dealing with other international issues, such as trade negotiations, often do not understand the implications of their work for international migration.

The World Bank forecasts that by 2020 remittances to developing countries will reach $200 bn annually. African countries cannot afford to be marginalized from this increasingly important source of financing. For starters, larger economies such as Nigeria should lead the way in developing policies to engage and use their citizens living abroad, says former US Ambassador to Nigeria Howard Jeter.

"There is a wealth of financial, technical and intellectual expertise in the diaspora," he says. "Africa needs to exploit these human and material resources to help tackle the challenges of development, environmental degradation, food security, energy supply, HIV/AIDS and equitable economic growth." ■

Transforming Africa's fighters into builders

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants

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(UNMIL), she is just finishing an eight-month reintegration course run by a local civil society organization, the Association for Development Aid.

Ms. Sheriff's hopes are similar to those of hundreds of thousands of other ex-combatants across Africa. With the number of peace agreements increasing, more and more former soldiers and rebels are taking part in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes — "DDR," as the process is commonly known. They would like nothing better than to put violence behind them. They want to build new, productive lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

UN / Martine Perret

Disarmament in Burundi: With more peace pacts across Africa, hundreds of thousands of fighters are demobilizing.

For many, giving up their guns was an easy first step. So was leaving their military faction. Successfully reentering civilian life — in countries still suffering war's political, economic and social after-effects — may not be so simple. DDR programmes across Africa show that reintegration is a complex and long-term process. It is fraught with difficulties and depends on the success of wider efforts at economic recovery and political reconciliation.

Stuck in limbo

In neighbouring Sierra Leone, where a decade-long civil war ended in 2001, tens of thousands of ex-fighters have already made the transition to civilian life and are working as carpenters, cocoa farmers, small-scale traders and electricians.

But unemployment remains very high, especially among young people. The country's school system is still struggling to recover. As a result, some ex-fighters are stuck in limbo:

- Momoh Koroma, who was abducted into the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) at the age of 16, received two months of vocational training as an auto mechanic following his demobilization. He is now "doing nothing," he says.
- Abdul Kamara — once known as "Black Jesus" for his military exploits with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) — got three months of electrical training and now scrapes by with odd jobs.
- Mohamed Karim Kanu, abducted 10 years ago into the AFRC at the age of 11, just wants to go back to school. But the whereabouts of his family is unknown and a non-governmental organization to which he was assigned after demobilization did not have the money to help him. So he is not in school and survives by "begging around the neighbourhood."

These young men, like four other unemployed ex-combatants who met with *Africa Renewal* in Freetown, expressed no desire to again pick up a gun. But without a means of living or solid ties with local communities, many young Sierra Leoneans like them could be susceptible to recruitment by criminal gangs or future armed factions. "If what's happening now continues, Sierra Leone will face another doomsday," remarks Mr. Ibrahim Bangura, a child-protection officer with a local civil society group, the Post-Conflict Reintegration Initiative for Development and Empowerment (PRIDE), which is trying to help the youths.

A new phase

How to improve African DDR programmes was the central question on the minds of participants at a conference in Freetown on 21-23 June. "Without a comprehensive DDR programme, the prospects for long-term stability will remain dim," President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone told the opening of the Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Stability in Africa. "All post-conflict programmes — be they political, social or economic — depend on DDR and how people judge its success."

The meeting was organized by the government of Sierra Leone and the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). It brought together DDR experts and stakeholders from 15 African countries and a number of UN, donor

and other international agencies. They shared experiences and ideas about ways to strengthen the design and functioning of such programmes. They agreed that DDR efforts are now entering a "new phase," in which mandates should be defined more precisely and the perspectives of African practitioners and beneficiaries should be more central.

Among many other recommendations, participants cited the need for:

- Explicit provision for DDR in peace agreements
- Addressing the specific needs of women ex-combatants (see page 17)
- Better coordination among governments and peacekeeping forces in neighbouring countries to deal with cross-border movements of fighters and arms
- More attention to small-arms collection after the completion of formal disarmament operations
- Greater coordination among international partners, to help build national DDR capacities and ensure more flexible and timely financing.

Participants felt that while there is still room for improvement in the disarmament and demobilization phases, more attention, energies and resources should be devoted specifically to reintegration. DDR should not be just "DD plus R," with reintegration as an afterthought, but a continuous, integrated process, argued Mr. Francis Kai-Kai, who headed Sierra Leone's national DDR committee. "You don't just focus on men and weapons, but on their futures as well."

Reintegration must take a more central place, in part because successfully absorbing former combatants into civilian society takes longer than their disarmament and demobilization. Moreover, DD can be funded relatively quickly when a UN peace mission is involved, through the UN's peacekeeping budget. But reintegration generally depends on voluntary contributions from a variety of multilateral, bilateral and national institutions, which often are not well coordinated and take time to begin delivering. As a result, financing has often been insufficient or late, contributing to lapses in vocational training and spreading disillusionment among ex-combatants.

There is another obstacle to financing DDR: Some donor agencies and civil society groups are reluctant to help anyone who has carried a gun. They worry that such assistance could be viewed as "rewarding" perpetrators of violence. However, argued Mr. Bengt Ljungren of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Sierra Leone, it is important for potential funders to realize that "most combatants are also victims," especially the young fighters who were "misused" by the political instigators of violence.

UN Africa Renewal / Ernest Harsch

Ex-fighters learning garment-making in Liberia: New skills are essential for returning to civilian life.

Variations on a theme

The Freetown discussions revealed wide variations in DDR experiences in Africa. The relative ease and success of such operations have been strongly influenced by the nature of the peace settlement, the "political will" of its signers and the capacities of the government, UN and other institutions.

In a few countries, especially where only regular armies have been involved, demobilization has been relatively straightforward. In **Eritrea**, for example, 100,000 troops were demobilized following a peace agreement with neighbouring Ethiopia in December 2000. Those soldiers' social reintegration went fairly smoothly, in part because most Eritreans view them as "national heroes," explained Mr. Kaleab Haile, from the country's demobilization and reintegration commission.

The dynamics are different where opposing armies faced off within the same country. There, the challenge has been orienting soldiers away from warfare and towards peaceful political activity. In **Mozambique**, often cited as an early DDR success, the government and the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) signed a peace accord in 1992. Renamo demobilized and subsequently took part in national elections.

In **Sierra Leone**, the rebel RUF initially failed to adhere to peace agreements it signed, so few took part in DDR in the 1990s. But after the group suffered serious military reverses, the rebels agreed to disarm. A survey of 1,000 ex-combatants conducted in 2004 by US researchers working with PRIDE found no support for resuming armed action, including among former RUF fighters. While many expressed dissatisfaction with conditions in Sierra Leone, the vast

majority saw their factions "as organizations from the past."

Angola experienced a similar evolution. After a decade and a half of civil war, a peace agreement was signed in 1991. But only a small portion of the UNITA rebels actually demobilized and fighting resumed. Eventually the Angolan army made major advances, which culminated in February 2002 in the death of the UNITA leader. This opened the way to a new agreement and over a period of eight months the bulk of UNITA demobilized, with some troops being incorporated into the regular army.

In **Liberia**, after the failure of numerous earlier accords, the road to peace was unblocked when President Charles Taylor agreed to leave the country in 2003. A coalition government was established that included representatives of Mr. Taylor's party and two rebel factions. The UN peacekeeping mission, UNMIL, oversaw disarmament and demobilization, which ended in December 2004.

At the Freetown conference, Mr. Moses Jarbo, the executive director of Liberia's national DDR commission, accused the UN of marginalizing the national government. While many other participants agreed that DDR processes in general should try to reflect greater national "ownership," they also realized that the capacity and credibility of the government can be a crucial factor.

According to Mr. Charles Achodo, a UNDP adviser on DDR with experience in both countries, "In Sierra Leone, you had a legitimate government on the ground. That put the government in a very strong position, where they could partner with the United Nations in doing the process." However, in Liberia, the government is an unelected transitional entity, pending the installation of an elected government, probably in January 2006. It therefore has limited legitimacy. Also, because the government is fractious, Mr. Achodo told *Africa Renewal*, "it lacked the political will to drive the DDR process." The UN Security Council, "in its wisdom," therefore gave UNMIL the central mandate to implement DDR.

"All post-conflict programmes — be they political, social or economic — depend on DDR and how people judge its success."

— President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Sierra Leone

'Plan B' syndrome

Peace settlements in some countries have not been definitive or comprehensive, with some groups reluctant to fully abandon the option of armed struggle.

Zimbabwe's General Sibusiso Moyo, now retired, recalled that in a peace accord 25 years ago, the Zimbabwean nationalist movements fighting the white minority Rhodesian regime agreed to demobilize and take part in national elections. But they did not fully trust the outcome. So they kept certain contingents and heavy armaments in reserve, a "Plan B" in case the war resumed. Participants in the Freetown conference recognized that the "Plan B" syndrome is a common one in Africa.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the government and insurgent groups signed a peace accord in 2003, but they have been so mistrustful of each other that DDR has not even begun.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC), explains Mr. Daniel Kawata, national coordinator of the DDR commission, about 10 armed groups signed the 1999 peace agreement, which established a transitional coalition government. Several militia groups, based mainly in the Ituri region, did not sign the accord, but 14,000 Ituri militia members have nevertheless joined the disarmament process.

Burundi's peace effort has also been marked by a "phased" approach, notes Mr. Isaie Nibizi, head of the national demobilization and reintegration commission. The peace agreement in 2000 involved mainly political parties, while most — but not all — of the insurgent groups only began to sign on three years later. Formal DDR started in December 2004, with the goal of demobilizing 85,000 fighters by 2008. By June 2005 about 10,000 had demobilized. There are hopes that at least some of the last non-signers will also agree to demobilize in the wake of the August 2005 electoral victory of the largest former rebel group and the assumption of the presidency by its leader, Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza.

Justice now — or later?

In several of Africa's wars, some of the factions were responsible for horrendous atrocities against civilians. In Rwanda, Sierra Leone and other countries, a number of suspected war criminals have been tried before local courts or international tribunals. But if large numbers of commanders and ordinary soldiers believe they will be immediately arrested, they may simply decide to keep their guns.

It has therefore been common for peace agreements to include amnesty provisions, as an incentive to join the peace process. The 1992 peace accord in Mozambique, for example, contained a blanket amnesty for everyone, on all sides.

A 1999 peace accord in Sierra Leone included a similar blanket amnesty. But given the scale of the war crimes there, the UN declared that it would not be bound by the amnesty provision. Subsequently, a UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was established, which has been trying those bearing "the greatest responsibility" for violations of international human-rights laws, including leaders of the various armed factions. The court has also issued an indictment against former President Taylor of Liberia, for his role in supporting the RUF.

In **Uganda**, an amnesty commission is extending immunity from prosecution to any insurgent who agrees to demobilize and reintegrate. Justice Peter Onega, head of the commission, points out that most of these fighters were originally abducted as children by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The International Criminal Court at The Hague has opened an investigation into LRA war crimes. But local communities sent a delegation to The Hague to argue that such action now could hamper Uganda's current peace efforts, including the return of their children. Observes Justice Onega: "The people are saying: This is not the right time to talk of justice."

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Women: Africa's ignored combatants

Gradual progress towards a greater role in DDR

By **Ernest Harsch**
Freetown and Monrovia

In many disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives around the world, "women combatants are often invisible and their needs are overlooked," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has observed. While the participation of women in combat has been minimal in some of Africa's recent conflicts, in others, as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women have taken part in significant numbers.

UNMIL / Eric Kanalstein

Women fighters turning in mortar shells during Liberia's disarmament and demobilization process.

Originally, some of these female fighters may have been abducted. Some admit they joined voluntarily, for many of the same reasons as male recruits. A number may operate primarily as combatants. More often, they also serve as nurses, cooks, sex workers, messengers, spies or administrative or logistical personnel. Yet when a peace settlement opens the way for demobilization, they tend to be categorized among "vulnerable groups," a broad label that includes wounded or disabled male combatants and all women and children who accompany warring factions.

In Sierra Leone and Angola, notes Ms. Béatrice Pouligny, a senior researcher at the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI) in France, women combatants were classified as "dependents." As a result, "they were precluded from receiving the benefits provided to 'combatants'."

In Sierra Leone, child soldiers — who have been a great focus of international attention in recent years* — were immediately classified as a distinct category and were quickly discharged. But women were not offered similar attention. Some were excluded from the DDR programme because they did not have a weapon to hand in — one of the criteria for participation. Many did not take part for fear they would be harassed or stigmatized. In the end, women constituted only 6.5 per cent of the participants, although a notably higher proportion were believed to have been actual combatants.

The legacy is still evident today. Many women who fought in the war — or were raped or otherwise victimized — have been ostracized by their communities and families. "Their husbands have given up on them," notes Ms. Christiana Lebbie, national coordinator of the non-governmental Friends of Africa Relief and Development Agency (FARDA). "They can't get work and it's hard to go back to their villages," she tells *Africa Renewal*. "So they engage in commercial sex work." She points to the top of Freetown's hills, where some have built shacks on vacant land, descending at night to the capital's bars, nightclubs and hotels to earn a little cash.

Ms. Lebbie reports that FARDA is currently working with about 50 young women in Kono, a diamond-mining district in the southeast with high rates of prostitution. "We took the girls from the street, and are equipping them with skills," she explains. They are being taught cloth weaving and tailoring. When they finish their training, they will get sewing machines, fabric and other materials, with the goal of organizing them into cooperatives of 5-10 women each. Hopefully, she muses, their small businesses will survive and they will not drift back into sex work.

The DDR programme in neighbouring Liberia drew on some of the lessons of Sierra Leone's experience. The criteria for disarmament were expanded to make it easier for female fighters to take part. Out of the total of 103,000 combatants who completed formal demobilization by the time it ended in December 2004, nearly 22,500 — 22 per cent — were women.

The efforts of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) "marked significant progress compared to other missions in terms of recognizing the need for separate facilities and services for women, girls, boys and men in the DDR process," according to an October 2004 report by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

"The entire process was gender-sensitive," agrees Mr. Moses Jarbo, executive

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**For more on child soldiers, see "The road from soldier back to child" and "Restoring lost childhood in Sierra Leone," in* Africa Recovery, *October 2001.*

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For Mr. Kawata of the Congolese DDR commission, the solution is to separate the worst offenders from the mass of fighters. "During the disarmament, we don't leave the heavy cases out," he told *Africa Renewal*. "If they were involved in heavy criminal business, then they need to be arrested." But the bulk are taken through the demobilization process. If some of them were involved in abuses, "we leave those cases until afterwards," he says. If too many are arrested right away, "we lose the possibility of demobilizing a whole bunch of them."

Done carefully, the combination of selective prosecutions with immunity for most rank-and-file fighters can eventually win over sceptics among the ex-combatants. A survey of former RUF fighters in the Sierra Leonean town of Makeni found that many wanted their former commanders to be held accountable and believed the Special Court would bring justice.

Cash, skills, tools

Some peace agreements include provisions for absorbing a portion of the former antagonists into restructured armed forces. Other ex-fighters simply go home after handing in their arms and uniforms, especially if they have families, farms and occupations waiting for them. For example, Mr. António Gaspar, who demobilized from the Mozambican government army in the early 1990s, had a higher education and was easily able to find a teaching position at the country's Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

But most of his army colleagues, Mr. Gaspar told *Africa Renewal*, had a much harder time. They were more typical of Africa's demobilized ex-combatants, with limited education and few skills other than fighting. For them, the most attractive incentive for taking part in DDR is the possibility of gaining some tangible help in making the transition to civilian life: several months of financial payments, tuition to go to school, a chance to learn new job skills and start-up kits for farming or small businesses.

In Liberia, about 40 per cent of the demobilized fighters said they wanted to go back to school. Most of the rest indicated a preference for vocational training, with auto mechanics the most popular choice among men and tailoring among women.

For those ex-fighters who manage to complete their schooling or vocational training, the future is not necessarily assured. Will there be jobs or other income opportunities?

About 300 former combatants are attending daily classes at the Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Centre (LOIC) in Sinkor, Monrovia. During a visit in late June, sessions were under way in garment-making, plumbing and woodworking. Student electricians were busy taking an exam. The centre also offers courses in small-business management, while six other LOIC centres in rural counties focus on agriculture for another 1,000 students.

"Because many of them cannot read or write," explains Mr. George Kpawulu, the LOIC's national executive director, "we also give them pre-vocational numeracy and literacy." In addition, he says, counselors are on hand to help with problems related to war trauma.

Mr. Solomon King, the LOIC director, notes that the students include former members of all the main warring factions, but they are encouraged to forget past allegiances and focus on working together. "They get along fine. They are young Liberians with hope for the future."

'A very fast pace'

Those in the LOIC courses are among the fortunate ones. So far, there are not enough reintegration projects for all who want them.

According to Mr. Nisar Malik of UNMIL's Special Operations Division, the gap results from the size and speed of demobilization. Initially, DDR planners expected only some 38,000 fighters, and financing for reintegration and rehabilitation (RR) was arranged with donors accordingly. But that figure proved highly inaccurate. "The faction leaders," Mr. Malik said, "did not come forward with realistic lists." So when the numbers eventually swelled to more than 100,000, not enough money was immediately available. "The DD programme went very fast," concluded Mr. Malik, "and the RR was very slow."

Women: Africa's ignored combatants

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director of Liberia's national DDR commission. In all eight of the cantonment sites, he reports, "special services were provided to include reproductive health and counseling on HIV/AIDS [and] maternal and child health."

Still, there were shortcomings, UNIFEM pointed out. Not all the cantonment sites were designed so as to fully protect women against harassment from men.

Women who completed demobilization were eligible for reintegration benefits. As of October 2004, more than 10,000 women ex-combatants had signed up for various types of vocational training, while another 6,500 were going to school. At the agricultural training project in Duport Road they were especially well represented, with 230 women out of the approximately 500 ex-combatants in the project's first eight-month session.

As women's associations become more vocal and better organized, it is likely that future DDR efforts will improve their focus on women. In October 2004, for example, women's groups from several countries in Africa's Great Lakes region met in Rwanda. Among other recommendations for women's advancement, they called on DDR commissions to address the "specific needs of women ex-combatants." A month later, at an international conference on peace and development in the Great Lakes, that demand was incorporated into the final declaration signed by 11 African heads of state. ■

Mr. Achodo, UNDP's DDR adviser in Liberia, adds that the numbers of demobilized were also high because of loose eligibility criteria. In part, those criteria stemmed from earlier criticisms that Sierra Leone's programme had excluded combatants who did not possess a weapon to hand over, especially women. So the Liberian operation accepted anyone who had either a weapon or ammunition and took in female and child combatants who had neither. That brought in more women, but also men who may not have been combatants but had managed to acquire arms or ammunition. Mr. Achodo holds up a report showing that about 22,000 males classified as "other" — not affiliated with any of the main factions — were allowed in. When that trend was first noticed, he says, the criteria should have been narrowed to focus mainly on women and child combatants. "We didn't revise the eligibility criteria as quickly as we should have," he concedes. "We ran at a very fast pace. We didn't have time for reflection."

Tensions at a Liberian cantonment site: "Ex-combatants are a volatile group," notes UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

UNMIL / Eric Kanalstein

Because of the surge in numbers, some 26,000 demobilized Liberians still had not begun receiving reintegration assistance as of August 2005. In a report to the Security Council the following month, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that since the overall security situation was "calm, yet fragile," the shortfall in donor funding for reintegration could cause problems. "The ex-combatants are a volatile group," he noted.

What future for 'graduates'?

For those ex-fighters who manage to complete their schooling or vocational training, the future is not necessarily assured. Will there be jobs or other income opportunities? Most post-war economies remain exceptionally weak. Employment is limited, and few people can afford the services of the newly trained carpenters, auto mechanics or plumbers. As one demobilized Mozambican soldier put it, they were "reintegrated back into basic poverty."

Sierra Leone's experience provides some grounds for hope — along with a note of caution. A large number of ex-combatants there were able to acquire some form of livelihood, however limited. There is some indication that those who went into farming may have done better than graduates of vocational training programmes.

According to Mr. Ibrahim Sarpee, a programme officer with the non-governmental Friends of Africa Relief and Development Agency, the group helped register about 100 ex-RUF fighters in Kailahun, on Sierra Leone's eastern border. Seventy-three of them went into tree-crop farming, and "they're doing well," Mr. Sarpee reports. The rest received training in soap making, tailoring and other occupations. "They're now skilled, but there's no employment."

In Liberia, the 500 ex-combatants at the Duport Road project and the more than 1,000 in the LOIC's six rural centres reflect some interest in farming. "Liberia is an agricultural nation," stresses Mr. Kpawulu. "We have vast lands, underutilized. We are unable to feed ourselves. So it is better to conscientize the young people to learn to farm."

At Duport Road, the young ex-fighters raised concerns about access to land once they return to their home areas. Project officials assured them that local village chiefs had already identified land for their use.

Whatever has been arranged for these particular ex-fighters, the issue of land is not a simple one, in either Liberia or Sierra Leone. In both countries, young people and women have traditionally been bypassed when village elders allocate community-owned lands. Such lack of access to land was one of the grievances that impelled many young people to join the armed groups in the first place.

In Liberia's Nimba and Lofa counties, there already have been renewed land tensions between members of local ethnic groups and Mandingos, who are viewed as "outsiders" and therefore not entitled to land. Since many Mandingos supported the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the strongest of the former rebel groups, such conflicts could ultimately jeopardize the overall peace process.

Into the communities

Because of their specific mandates, most DDR programmes concentrate on ex-combatants, and less on the communities to which they will return. This

has elicited some criticism that current reintegration efforts are too narrow and should do more to help broader community recovery.

Ms. Béatrice Pouligny, a senior researcher at the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI) in France, argues that an "approach which focuses on 'individual' incentives may miss the broader 'collective' dimension." Ex-combatants "cannot be considered without taking their families and social ties into account." She recommends "the broadening of the DDR framework" to include such factors.

She and others have stressed the benefits of a community approach: less resentment that demobilized soldiers may be receiving "privileges" denied to others, joint projects that can help rebuild trust and greater social controls over the behaviour of former combatants.

Most DDR experts and practitioners agree that war-ravaged communities require more support, both for their own sake and to help ensure that ex-fighters are able to successfully reintegrate over the long term. As Mr. David Munyurangabo of Rwanda's DDR commission acknowledged at the Freetown conference, "Civilians should also benefit," a view echoed by many other participants.

Some DDR programmes have incorporated community aspects. In the Central African Republic, for example, the UNDP and World Bank have provided $3.3 mn for a reintegration project that includes rehabilitating community infrastructure and creating income-generating activities.

Mr. Steven Ursino, UNDP's Liberia country director, told *Africa Renewal* that the reintegration of ex-combatants there is taking place "in a wider context" that includes the return of thousands of refugees and displaced people and the rehabilitation of communities destroyed by 14 years of war. At the Duport Road reintegration site, about 100 local farmers joined the 500 ex-combatants. They did not receive the same cash payments, but they were able to learn new farming techniques and skills.

In a certain sense, funds allocated specifically for ex-fighters ultimately benefit local communities, notes Mr. Achodo. Out of every dollar he spends in Liberia, between 30 and 40 cents are absorbed by "delivery costs," including salaries for teachers and vocational instructors. "Those delivery costs are a form of investment in community infrastructure." Moreover, he adds, this is true even of the cash payments made directly to the former combatants. "Who do they buy from? They buy from the community."

But there are severe limits to what DDR programmes can achieve on their own. As Mr. Kai-Kai points out, war-ravaged Sierra Leone at first had no viable communities into which the former combatants could actually reintegrate. Many refugees and displaced people were still returning home and much basic infrastructure from schools to health clinics had to be rebuilt. Helping such communities revive was an enormous task, depending on the efforts of international humanitarian and relief agencies, the government and local civil society organizations. And because many small arms were still in circulation, even after completion of the formal DDR programme, the government, with help from the UN mission, conducted a community arms-collection programme to gather and destroy thousands more weapons.

UNMIL / Eric Kanalstein

Former combatants learning basic farming skills in Liberia.

Under pressure to do more, Mr. Kai-Kai notes, "It's easy for DDR to sway into different directions." The Freetown conference recommended instead that DDR programmes should concentrate on what they do best — helping combatants make the transition to civilian life — and not become overloaded with too many other post-conflict tasks.

Simultaneously, adds Mr. Namanga Ngongi, a former UN special representative in the DRC, "reintegration cannot be separated from post-conflict reconstruction." They must accompany each other, with DDR seeing to the needs of ex-fighters, while strong relief, resettlement and rehabilitation programmes take care of other war-affected populations. In that way, it may be possible to achieve a "balance of the individual and the community."

Ultimately, many agree, the success of DDR is marked by the point at which "ex-combatants" cease carrying that label. They become identified instead as youths, farmers, workers or small-business owners, like any other members of their community. ■

NEPAD MONITOR

Enlisting business support for Africa's Millennium goals

Africa will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) unless it is able to mobilize all stakeholders, including the private sector, concluded more than 200 participants at a conference in London on 4 July. Coming on the eve of the Group of Eight summit in Scotland and on the same day as the opening of the African Union summit in Libya, the event formally launched a project of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), "Bending the Arc," which aims to encourage businesses in Africa to advance the MDGs. The meeting was organized by the NEPAD Secretariat, the African Business Roundtable (ABR) and the United Nations. It also received sponsorship from Coca-Cola, Visa International, Nestlé and other corporations.

Making Africa more attractive to business is crucial if "we are to end Africa's dependency on aid and ensure the self-sustaining growth that is needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Africa," said Mr. Bamanga Tukur, president of the ABR and chair of the NEPAD Business Group.

Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, chief of staff to the UN Secretary-General, lauded the project's aim, since achieving the MDGs "is beyond the reach of government alone." But he also cautioned against "pure private sector solutions" that may push the costs of water or information technologies out of reach of the poor. Africa needs "creative partnerships, where public guarantees, strong public regulations and, possibly, public start-up funds create the incentives and regulatory frameworks to allow the private sector to do its bit, and start to connect people to these vital infrastructures."

The conference agreed that businesses should:

- implement health programmes, including prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, for their employees and families
- institute good corporate governance and transparent accounting practices
- help build the capacity of other partners, including government and civil society, to achieve the MDGs
- pay taxes
- channel private sector support to NEPAD
- collaborate with Africa's various regional economic communities to increase competitiveness and market access.

Peer review rolls ahead

At a mid-June summit meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, on NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the panel managing the process submitted its first two national reports, on Ghana and Rwanda. "This is progress," Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said at the forum, "and it constitutes living proof of our determination and commitment to change the status quo for the better." Under the APRM process, the political and economic governance practices of participating countries are reviewed by teams of African experts.

The governments of Ghana and Rwanda will be able to respond to the reports and outline what actions they plan to take to improve their governance at the next peer review forum in November 2005. Of the 23 African countries that have so far joined the APRM, Kenya and Mauritius will be the next ones reviewed, followed by Uganda, Nigeria and Algeria.

'Fish for All'

Africa's fish sector provides livelihoods for 10 million people and food for nearly 200 million more. It is therefore critical for the continent's food security and economic development, African heads of state declared at a "Fish for All" summit meeting in August.

The summit, held in Abuja, Nigeria, and organized as a follow-up to NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme, highlighted both the opportunities and the dangers confronting the sector. There is "potential for increased benefits from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture" in order to meet the "ever-increasing demand for food fish in our countries, our region and globally." Yet there is also grave concern over "the depletion of fisheries resources, the degradation of aquatic environments and the threats to sustainable fisheries and aquaculture."

FAO / 17784 / A. Conti

Some 10 million people work in Africa's fishing sector, which helps feed 200 million more.

Among other recommendations, the assembled leaders called for:

- greater regional cooperation in fisheries and aquaculture
- empowerment of fishing and fish farming communities, civil society and other stakeholders to participate more fully in decision-making
- development of an appropriate investment climate for fisheries and aquaculture
- utilization of the entrepreneurship of small-scale fishers, fish farmers, fish traders and service providers
- conservation and rehabilitation of aquatic environments
- promotion of trade in artisanal and industrial fish products. ■

AFRICA AGENDA

18–19 October 2005, Colombo (Sri Lanka) — Negotiating on Trade Facilitation: Implications for Developing Countries, an OECD Global Forum on Trade. Contact Avril Ellis, e-mail <avril.ellis@oecd.org>, website <http://webdomino1.oecd.org/COMNET/ECH/SriLanka.nsf?OpenDatabase>

24–26 October 2005, Stellenbosch (South Africa) — Market Access for Africa's Agricultural Products. Organized by the South African Agri Academy. Contact Retha Venter, tel (27) 21 855 4472, fax (27) 21 855 2722, e-mail <reventer@netactive.co.za>, website <www.agriacademy.co.za>

31 October–4 November 2005, Nairobi (Kenya) — Management of Lake Basins for Sustainable Use: Global Experiences and African Issues. The 11th World Lake Conference. Contact George O. Krhoda, tel (254) 20 716 103, e-mail <info@ileckenya.go.ke>, website <www.ileckenya.go.ke>

16–18 November 2005, Tunis (Tunisia) — Second Phase: World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Tel (216) 71 964 551, fax (216) 71 964 547, e-mail <info@wsistunis2005.tn>, website <www.smsitunis2005.tn>

18–19 November 2005, Yaoundé (Cameroon) — Roll Back Malaria Global Partners' Forum V. Contact Billy Stewart, tel (44) 20 7023 0765, fax (44) 20 7023 0428, e-mail <billy-stewart@dfid.gov.uk>, website <www.mim.su.se>

22–26 November 2005, Kampala (Uganda) — NEPAD Conference on "Expanding Agribusiness Links with Smallholder Farmers in Africa" (Contract Farming). Contact Thaninga Shope-Linney, tel (27) 11 313 3776, fax (27) 11 313 3778, website <www.nepad.org>

25 November–2 December 2005, Dakar (Senegal) — World Tourism Organization General Assembly. Website <www.world-tourism.org/meetings/eng/meetings.htm>

28–30 November 2005, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — Conference on Civil Society, Governance and Integration in Africa. Organized by the Pan-African Strategic and Policy Research Group, Development Policy Management Forum and African Association of Political Science. Contact Abdalla Bujra, tel (251-1) 515 410 / 443 197, fax (251-1) 515 410 / 514 416, e-mail <abujra@uneca.org>, website <www.dpmf.org>

6–10 December 2005, Maputo (Mozambique) — 11th General Assembly of CODESRIA, on the theme "Rethinking African Development: Beyond Impasse, Towards Alternatives." Organized by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. Contact Adebayo Olukoshi, tel (221) 825 98 22 / 23, fax. (221) 824 12 89, e-mail <codesria@codesria.sn>, website <www.codesria.org>

13–18 December 2005, Hong Kong (China) — The Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference. WTO press enquiries, tel: (41-22) 739 50 07 fax: (41-22) 739 54 58, e-mail <enquiries@wto.org>, website <www.wto.org >

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

27–30 September 2005, Dakar (Senegal) — Second African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology. Contact John Mugabe, e-mail <john@nrf.ac.za>

10–12 October 2005, Johannesburg (South Africa) — 4th Africa Investment Forum on the theme "Partnerships for Growth: Strategies, Structures and Solutions." Hosted by the Commonwealth Business Council. Contact Jonathan Ellenor, tel (44) 207 024 8253, e-mail< jonathan.ellenor@cbcglobelink.org>, website <www.cbcglobelink.org>

10–14 October 2005, Dakar (Senegal) — SAHARA 2005 Conference on the theme, "Bridging the Gap between Policy, Research and Interventions." The Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health Research Alliance (SAHARA) is a channel for sharing of research. Contact Cheikh Ibrahima Niang, tel (221) 825 19 57, fax (221) 824 60 25, e-mail <saharaconf05@sentoo.sn>, website <www.sahara.org.za>

AFRICA BOOKS

Afrique centrale: crises économiques et mécanismes de survies, eds. Didier Pidika Mukawa and Gérard Tchouassi (CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 2005; 354 pp; $35)

Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging by Francis B. Nyamnjoh (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; 320 pp; hb £60, $85, pb £18.95, $29.95)

Citoyen et sujet – L'Afrique contemporaine et l'héritage du colonialisme tardif by Mahmood Mamdani (Editions Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 424 pp; €29)

Central Africa: Crises, Reform and Reconstruction by E.S.D. Fomin and John W. Forje (CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 2005; 272 pp; $25)

Urban Africa: Changing Contours of Survival in the City, eds. AbdouMaliq Simone and Abdelghani Abouhani (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; 320 pp; hb £55, $85, pb £18.95, $29.95)

The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria by Andrew Apter (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA, 2005; 296 pp; pb $24, hb $60)

Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa by Howard W. French (Knopf Publishing Group, New York, USA, 2005; 320 pp; pb $15)

African Voices on Development and Social Justice: Editorials from Pambazuka News 2004, eds. Firoze Manji and Patrick Burnett (Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, Tanzania, 2005; 304 pp, $34.95, £17.95)

Démocratie et développement en Afrique de l'Ouest: mythe et réalité, ed. Elizabeth Annan-Yao (CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 2005; $30)

Helping the Poor? The IMF and Low-Income Countries, eds. Jan Joost Teunissen and Age Akkerman (FONDAD, The Hague, the Netherlands, 2005; 253 pp, pb €17.50)

Le Financement dans les systemes educatifs d'Afrique subsaharienne, eds. Jean Bernard Rasera, Jean-Pierre Jarousse et al (CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 2005; 200 pp; pb £16.95, $24.95)

Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress, ed. Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; 240 pp; hb £65, $85, pb £18.95, $29.95)

Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa, eds. Harri Englund and Francis B. Nyamnjoh (Zed Books, London, UK, 2004; 304 pp; hb £49.95, $75, pb £15.95, $25)

Poverty, Income Distribution and Labour Markets in Ethiopia, eds. Bigsten Arne, Abebe Shimeles and Bereket Kebede (The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2005; 200 pp; pb SEK220, £16.95, €22)

The Power of Continuity: Ethiopia Through the Eyes of Its Children by Eva Poluha (The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden 2004; 217 pp; pb SEK270, €27, £18.95, $32.50)

Prostitution, la mondialisation incarnée: Points de vue du Sud, ed. Richard Poulin (Alternatives Sud, Paris, France, 2005; 239 pp; pb €13, $17)

***Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region**, eds. Nicolas Florquin and Eric G. Berman (Small Arms Survey, Geneva, Switzerland, 2005; 391 pp)*

The "leakage" of state-owned weapons through theft, seizure and corruption is a primary source of small arms for many armed groups in West Africa, concludes this new study by the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey, an independent research project. It documents more than 30 armed groups that have operated in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since 1988, when the inter-governmental group adopted a moratorium on the production and trade of light weapons in the region. "This book greatly enhances our knowledge and understanding of the regional dynamics of armed conflict in West Africa," comments Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the UN Secretary-General's special representative for West Africa. To read or obtain a copy of the report, visit the website: <www.smallarmssurvey.org>.

A F R I C A

IN BRIEF

Security Council action against using child soldiers

In July, the UN Security Council took its first concrete steps to identify and isolate groups or nations using child soldiers. Resolution 1612 establishes a monitoring and reporting mechanism to allow the UN to obtain information on grave violations of children in armed conflict for subsequent action. The council publicly identified 54 parties utilizing child soldiers across the globe. These included the Janjaweed militia in Sudan, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and government forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. There are an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 children worldwide who are used as combatants, porters, spies and sex slaves, with the problem gravest in Africa and Asia.

UNMIL / Eric Kanalstein

With the adoption of the resolution, "we have now entered the 'era of application'," said then UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Olara Otunnu. He says the resolution brings together "all the key elements we have developed, to ensure accountability and compliance on the ground. This is a turning point of immense consequence."

The resolution orders offenders to prepare time-bound action plans to cease all violations against children in armed conflict. Failure to comply could result in actions such as arms embargoes, travel bans and restrictions on financial resources. ■

Africa can move faster on MDGs, says ECA

Despite widespread pessimism, some African countries are on course to meet key targets set by the international community, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reports the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Fourteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa — out of 30 worldwide — have so far managed to reduce the number of people living in hunger by at least 25 per cent, notes the report, *The Millennium Development Goals in Africa — Progress and Challenges*.

At least 14 African countries have already reached or have the potential to achieve universal primary education, another of the goals. The proportion of children attending school in Africa increased from 50 per cent in 1990 to 61.2 percent in 2000.

Mr. K.Y. Amoako, ECA's then executive secretary, says that "Africa does need to make much faster progress and we're showing a way forward; but the impression is sometimes given that there is no progress to report. That is wrong."

Yet many countries lag far behind, and some have regressed. Average adult life expectancy, for example, has declined from 50 to 46 years. It is clear, the report notes, that sub-Saharan Africa as a whole will not achieve the MDGs by the target date. But the ECA argues that governments can be successful at reducing extreme poverty if they use the MDGs as a tool in shaping their development policies. ■

UNCTAD cautions Africa on foreign investment

A too-narrow focus on attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) may be detrimental to development and long-term economic growth, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warned African countries in a report released in September. Entitled *Economic Development in Africa: Rethinking the Role of Foreign Direct Investment*, the report calls for a more balanced approach to FDI.

Attracting FDI has assumed a prominent place in economic strategies in Africa in recent years, in part because it provides external financing without adding to countries' debt burdens. "FDI can play a constructive role . . . by transferring capital, skills and know-how," says Mr. Samuel Gayi, one of the report's authors. However, he adds, whether it contributes to development depends on broader macroeconomic and structural conditions.

Africa has traditionally drawn FDI into enclaves of export-oriented primary production, such as oil and mining, with limited links to other economic sectors. Competition to attract investment into these extractive sectors has led to what some observers describe as "a race to the bottom," the agency notes. In the process, governments have given up "policy options necessary to organize a more dynamic long-term growth path," such as developing infrastructure.

Policy reforms have instead focused on liberalization, privatization and deregulation. Though intended to improve the investment climate, they have neither increased FDI flows to productive sectors nor stimulated more rapid growth and poverty reduction, UNTCAD reports.

Average FDI flows to Africa rose from $2.2 bn a year during the 1980s to a record $18 bn in 2004. The jump, however, reflected an increase in demand for natural resources such as fossil fuels, platinum, chromium and diamonds, reports UNCTAD. Nine of the top 10 African countries receiving FDI in 2003 had major mineral and oil reserves. Despite policies designed to attract FDI, the continent received only an annual average of about 2 per cent of global flows between 2000 and 2004, compared to 4.4 per cent during the 1970s.

Economic adjustment policies imposed on Africa over the past 20 years did not improve the quantity or quality of FDI, says Mr. Richard Kozul-Wright, an UNCTAD economist. Where FDI did come, it did not encourage local investment or increase government revenues. He warns that trying to attract more FDI through further liberalization and downsizing of the state "will not do the job."

AFRICA WATCH

HIGHER EDUCATION

New funding for African universities

Six of the richest US foundations, in alliance with universities in seven African countries, announced in September that they will spend more than $200 mn over the next five years to strengthen higher education in Africa. The funding will aim to significantly increase Internet access for the universities, provide scholarships for hundreds of young women and train agricultural scientists and public health managers.

"Education, particularly higher education, will take Africa into the mainstream of globalization," said Ghanaian President John Kufuor, following the announcement in New York. The countries taking part in the programme are Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Members of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, as the group is known, say the commitment is a recognition of a "quiet revolution" in Africa, in which universities will play an increasing role in innovation and training.

"We need to train teachers and build up research capacity," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "We need to strengthen open universities and distance-learning programmes and we need to ensure that African institutions have access to the latest technologies." Women and poor people still face too many obstacles to accessing higher education, he noted.

The new funding comes on top of a $150 mn programme first launched in 2000 by the Carnegie, Ford, MacArthur and Rockefeller foundations in the seven countries. This time, the partnership has been joined by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. ■

HIV/AIDS

AIDS and agriculture network launched

A network to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS on farming communities has been convened by the Africa Rice Centre (WARDA), an autonomous intergovernmental research association of African states. Supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the initiative will explore ways to enhance the quality of life in farming regions affected by the epidemic, improve nutrition and carry out policy advocacy and awareness campaigns.

The African Network on HIV/AIDS and Agriculture (ANEHA) will "serve as an interface not only between HIV/AIDS and agriculture, but will also include inter-related food security, nutrition and health policy aspects," says WARDA Director-General Kanayo Nwanze.

Researchers report that HIV/AIDS has ravaged farming communities so badly that the amount of cultivated land in some countries has declined by nearly 70 per cent. Although about 75 per cent of all Africans work primarily in agriculture, the infection of more than 25 million people leaves fewer and fewer hands to till the land. As a result less land is cultivated, many farmers switch to crops that require less labour, traditional farming knowledge and skills are lost, seasonal crop deadlines are missed, overall production is reduced and farmers' incomes fall. ■

APPOINTMENTS

UNDP

Mr. Abdoulie Janneh *of the Gambia has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as the new executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), replacing Mr. K.Y. Amoako. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Janneh was the regional director for Africa of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Prior to that, he held a number of senior positions in UNDP and its affiliated funds, including as deputy executive secretary of the UN Capital Development Fund.*

UN / P. Figueiras

Mr. Firmino G. Mucavele *of Mozambique (right) has been named chief executive of the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union's development plan, effective August 2005. He succeeds Mr. Wiseman Nkuhlu, who remains a member of the NEPAD Steering Committee. Previously, Mr. Mucavele was a special adviser to Mozambique's president, served as a dean at Eduardo Mondlane University and contributed to the formulation of the Millennium Africa Recovery Programme, one of NEPAD's precursors. He has also served as a consultant on issues of food security, agricultural market liberalization and rural development.*

Mr. Alan Doss *of the UK has been named by the UN Secretary-General as his special representative for Liberia. As part of a long career at the UN, he has served as deputy special representative in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, as a UNDP resident representative and as director of the UN Development Group, among other positions.*

UN / Ky Chung

The UN General Assembly has elected **Mr. Jan Eliasson** *of Sweden (left) as the president of its 60th session, which opened in September. He has held a variety of senior positions in his country's diplomatic service (at different times as ambassador to the US and the UN), as well as in the United Nations. He served as the UN Secretary-General's personal representative on Iran and Iraq in 1988-92, and in the latter year became the UN's first under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs.*

ADB

Mr. Donald Kaberuka, *Rwanda's minister of finance and economic planning (right), was sworn in on September 1, 2005, as president of the African Development Bank (ADB), for a five-year term. He succeeds Mr. Omar Kabbaj. Mr. Kaberuka was chosen by the Board of Governors of the 77 member countries of the Bank Group, headquartered in Tunisia. An economist, he was the principal architect of his country's post-war reconstruction programme and served as its governor to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.*

The UN General Assembly has confirmed the appointment of **Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi** *of Thailand as secretary-general of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for a four-year term beginning on 1 September 2005. Following a long career in various academic, economic and political positions in Thailand, he became director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002.*