

Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

Last Year's 10 Most Underreported Humanitarian Stories

from Doctors without Borders

1. End of War Reveals Nutritional Emergency in Angola

An April ceasefire ended Angola's brutal 27-year civil war, but not the extreme suffering of the Angolan people. The ceasefire revealed one of the worst African nutritional emergencies in ten years. Civilians emerged from formerly inaccessible regions, desperately seeking food and relief, only to find a government largely indifferent to their plight and a slow response from the international aid community.

Barely surviving decades of violence deliberately perpetrated against civilians by *Unita* rebels and the Angolan government, Angolans now perish from starvation and disease in the

aftermath of war. In government-controlled Chipindo, traditional leaders reported that nearly 4,000 people from a population of roughly 18,000 died in six months. A May survey in a Malange feeding center revealed that six out of 10 women had lost a child to hunger in the previous four months.

By the end of 2002, the nutritional situation had improved, but with an estimated four million people displaced, a destroyed infrastructure, a landscape littered with millions of land mines, inadequate mine-clearing activities, and continuing government intransigence, the desperate struggle for Angolans is far from over.

2. Civilians Caught in Colombian Violence

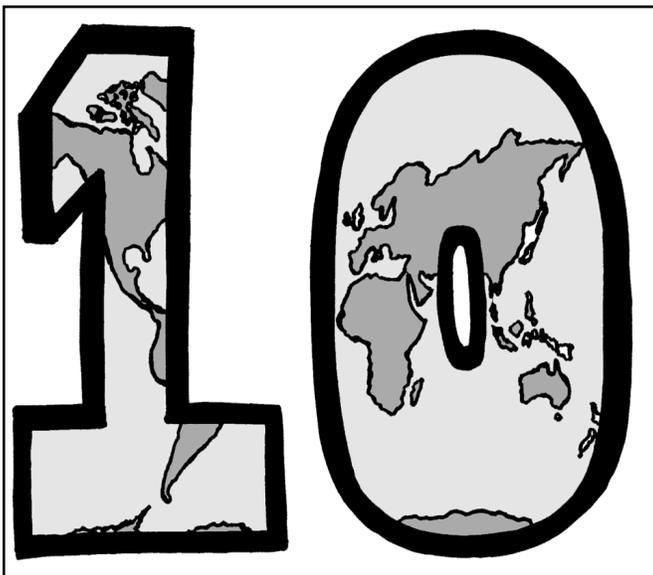
A dramatic escalation of conflicts in Colombia followed the collapse of peace negotiations between the government and FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) rebels in 2002. Against a background of widespread poverty and weakened public services, the war is affecting both urban and rural civilians. Some 25,000 people are murdered and another 3,000 kidnapped in Colombia every year.

An estimated 2 million Colombians have been displaced since 1985—with nearly half within the

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art by Sharon Rollins

past two years flooding urban centers to escape escalating violence. Isolation has intensified the problems of those left in the countryside. Rural health posts have been abandoned, hospital services have become sporadic, and many rural residents forego seeking medical treatment because they are afraid to travel. As a result, preventable diseases such as measles and malaria have made a comeback. As right-wing paramilitaries, left-wing rebels, and government forces become further entrenched, the situation for civilians continues to spiral downward.

3. Democratic Republic of Congo: War and Disease

Despite a peace deal and the withdrawal of foreign armies, war continues to wreak havoc on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Along the ceasefire line and in the east, one in four children dies before reaching the age of five.

For survivors, the conflict exacts a steep price. An estimated 2.5 million people have been displaced from their homes, while civilians throughout the country have been subjected to indiscriminate violence. Meningitis, measles, malaria, and tuberculosis needlessly kill hundreds of thousands of people every year; alarming levels of malnutrition have been recorded in North Kivu province; and a cholera outbreak in Katanga province, where 25,000 cases have been counted since September 2001, has added more to the death toll.

The country's ravaged infrastructure cannot begin to address these health needs. In many parts of DRC, hospitals have ceased to function, while some districts have only one or two doctors serving hundreds of thousands of people.

4. Food Aid, Refugee Protection Denied to Most Vulnerable in North Korea

Although North Korea is one of the largest food aid recipients in the world, its people continue to suffer from lack of access to adequate food supplies. As a result, many North Koreans continue to risk imprisonment attempting to cross the border into China in search of food. Even population groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly, who are

specifically targeted for assistance by the UN World Food Program, are reportedly being denied food aid.

In February 2002, a team from Doctors without Borders (MSF) met with 12 North Korean children between the ages of 6 and 15 who had recently arrived in China. None of them had ever received food at primary school and were often too weak and hungry to attend. Delivery of food aid to the most vulnerable populations is not independently monitored. Those North Koreans desperate enough to seek refuge in China face enormous obstacles. Considered illegal immigrants, they live in hiding and risk fines, arrest, and forceful repatriation—against international law—as well as severe repercussions upon their return to North Korea.

Despite its mandate to protect refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has done little to stop forced repatriations of North Korean refugees or provide adequate humanitarian assistance to them.

5. Liberia's Civil War Displaces Hundreds of Thousands

Throughout 2002, civil war raged between Charles Taylor's government troops and rebels from the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia's northern Lofa region. In the last few years, fighting has forced as many as 250,000 civilians to seek refuge in neighboring Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast—almost 90,000 last year.

In addition, there are at least 80,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps in Liberia and an unknown number of civilians still trapped in Lofa County. Many Liberians have been uprooted multiple times in the past decade and have suffered at the hands of the LURD and government forces, both of which have violated international humanitarian and refugee laws with little repercussion from the global community.

Refugees and IDPs throughout the region have described enduring extortion, forced conscription, repatriation to war zones, violence, and imprisonment as they have sought assistance. Many people struggle to survive in rural areas, particularly in Lofa region, where insecurity hinders access to humanitarian assistance.

In Liberia's capital city of Monrovia, most buildings destroyed in the early 1990s still lie in ruins. Public hospitals and health services continue feebly with the international assistance, and there is a severe lack of potable water, a situation not likely to improve as long as national budget priorities remain with military activities.

6. Somalia: War, Disease, Hunger, and Lack of Health Care

Twelve years of continuous warfare have brutalized the civilian population of Somalia, exposing them to injury, disease, displacement, and hunger. War-related injuries and deaths, many caused by millions of landmines, have remained consistently high throughout the past decade.

According to the UN, regular outbreaks of epidemic diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, malaria, and *kala azar*, plus a chronic food shortage, contribute to the death of nearly a quarter of all Somali children before their fifth year and cause an average life expectancy of only 46 years. Despite enormous needs, the public health care system is in shambles.

Constant insecurity has displaced approximately 2 million Somalis and forced 440,000 to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Warring parties, refusing to recognize the principle of access for humanitarian groups, have actually attacked humanitarian workers and facilities. This, compounded by a decline in interest from the international donor community and a politicization of aid, have left the most vulnerable Somali populations without assistance.

7. Sudan: Violence, Health, and Access to Aid

Although peace talks between the government of Sudan and rebel forces controlling much of the southern part of the country have promoted "a sustainable peace based on justice, equality, democracy, and freedom," leading to "meaningful development and progress," the people of southern Sudan have experienced the polar opposite. They have seen perpetual violence and the deterioration of all life-sustaining systems and infrastructures.

In the past few years, a number of factors have forced the displacement of

civilian populations. The escalation of violence between the government of Sudan and coalitions of ethnically-based militias have forced residents to flee their homes.

To make matters worse, the government of Sudan has repeatedly used military aircraft to bomb and strafe refugees living in the path of a road being constructed for foreign oil companies, forcing thousands to relocate or be killed. Throughout the most recent stage of conflict in southern Sudan, malnutrition and disease have taken over where violence has left off. Forced displacement has led to a vicious cycle of food insecurity and lack of health care, as well as an increase in deadly epidemic diseases such as *kala azar*, malaria, and sleeping sickness.

8. Chechnya: Civilians Escaping War

Ongoing violence and insecurity in Chechnya last year continued to threaten the safety of Chechen civilians caught in the conflict and impede the delivery of humanitarian aid. On numerous occasions since the spring, authorities in the region pressured displaced Chechens—particularly in neighboring Ingushetia—to return to Chechnya, where fighting and inadequate basic services make living conditions intolerable.

Last July an organized campaign of harassment caused the closure of a camp housing some 2,200 displaced persons in Znamenskoye, in northern Chechnya. International organizations active in the region condemned the involuntary return of refugees and IDPs to Chechnya. Nevertheless, in December, a camp near Aki Yurt in southern Russia was sealed off, and some 1,700 residents were evicted. Authorities intend to close all camps for displaced Chechens in the Caucasus by the end of last year. An estimated 110,000 persons are currently seeking refuge in camps, private homes, and collective centers in the region.

Moreover, assistance provided to those returning to Chechnya is largely insufficient, and their safety is not guaranteed. Administrative pressure, kidnappings, and violence have continued to cut off aid. Last summer, two aid workers—Nina Davydovich, the head of Druzhba, a Rus-

sian non-governmental organization, and Arjan Erkel, MSF's projects leader in Dagestan—were kidnaped and remain in custody.

9. World's Poor Still Die for Lack of Access to Medicines

Despite hope surrounding announcements by the pharmaceutical industry that AIDS drugs prices will be reduced, scientific advances such as the mapping of the malaria parasite genome, and the establishment of an unprecedented international funding effort to fight infectious diseases, the vast majority of people suffering from HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis (TB), and other infectious diseases continue to die with no access to lifesaving medicines.

The gap between governments, multilateral agencies, and pharmaceutical companies, and the millions of people suffering from treatable diseases has never been so serious. Ninety-five percent of the 42 million people with HIV/AIDS live in poor countries and at least 6 million of them require immediate treatment with life-extending anti-retroviral therapy.

Although a growing number of programs prove such therapy is possible in resource-poor settings, the high cost of medicines—and a lack of political will to take action—continue to keep millions of people with AIDS from treatment.

As a result, six people die from AIDS each minute. Wealthy countries have contributed a small fraction of the estimated \$7-10 billion needed annually to fight AIDS. The U.S.—which recently pledged ten million dollars toward fighting these diseases—has reportedly been working with the European Union in trade negotiations to roll back important gains made on access to medicines during the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar, in 2001.

Meanwhile, research and development for the treatment of infectious diseases such as malaria, TB, *kala azar*, and sleeping sickness remains inadequate. More people die today from malaria than 40 years ago. The World Health Organization estimates that, if left unchecked, TB cases will kill 35 million people over the next decade.

10. Disregard for Humanitarian Law Erodes Protection for War Victims

Legal protections shielding civilians from violence during war, as set down in International Humanitarian Law (IHL), were dangerously undermined last year. Terrorist groups like *al-Qaeda* showed little regard for IHL as they unleashed direct attacks on civilians in various countries. In response, the U.S.-led coalition has given worrisome signs that the “war on terror” may require deviating from these fundamental legal guarantees.

During the Afghanistan campaign, Pakistan, a close U.S. ally, as well as Iran, faced little protest when they shut their borders to people fleeing the conflict, effectively trapping people in violent areas. Although there is evidence that prisoners of war were suffocated after they had surrendered to the U.S.-supported Northern Alliance, calls for inquiries into these activities have been ignored.

Devastating aerial bombardments, like the one unleashed on Tora Bora a year ago, killed an unknown number of civilians, but the absence of independent observers made it difficult to assess whether all appropriate precautions were taken to limit civilian casualties.

These actions have had profound global repercussions, legitimizing the idea that there may be exceptions to the application of IHL. Military forces in Colombia, Chechnya, Israel, Pakistan, China, and Liberia have used the rhetoric of a global “anti-terror” campaign to cover up abuses. Restraints on the conduct of war remain a hard-earned, often threatened, advance in human relations.

Western countries, including the U.S., played a key role in bringing them about, particularly in the consolidation of IHL in the Geneva Conventions following World War II. For the millions affected by war around the globe, it is critical that all countries respect and defend these fundamental rights.

—*from Doctors without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), working internationally since 1973, Nobel laureates from 1999. For more information, go to website: www.doctorswithoutborders.org.*

hunger in the united states



Nation's Jobless Rate Up to Six Percent

NEW YORK CITY, NY—Unemployment rates reached a startling six percent last November, an eight-year high that had economists pushing for a new stimulus package for this year.

“The increase was a hard blow,” said Bill Cheney, chief economist at John Hancock Fi-

ancial Services. “There was something psychologically comforting about unemployment staying below six percent.” Accompanying figures are equally disheartening. Companies dropped 40,000 jobs in October and the number of people out of work for 27 weeks or more rose by 78,000 to 1.7 million in November.

With business expenses rising due to medical care and pension costs, companies are forced to keep a low head count. However, this slashing of jobs has a negative impact on an economy that depends largely on consumer spending. People who are worried about job security are expected to be frugal, and these economic uncertainties, along with worries about a war with Iraq, have caused a decrease in not only spending, but borrowing as well.

Economists say that the creation of new jobs is the answer, but at the moment the economy is not moving fast enough to accomplish this. Employment in factories, retail, and the communication industry continue to decline, while hiring increased in services, specifically in the health care industry. Other industries showed little change. Paul Kasriel, chief domestic economist at the Northern Trust Company does not see much on the horizon that will move things along.

In an attempt at recovery, the Federal Reserve cut one of their key interest rates by half a percentage point. It was the first interest cut last year and a reduction that brought rates to a 41-year low.—*from the Waco Tribune-Herald*

Report Deduces that Increases in Minimum Wage Reduce Crime

NEW YORK CITY, NY—A paper released last year by the National Bureau of Economic Research investigates the impact of economic conditions (such as declining unemployment and the increase of minimum wage), and sanctions (such as arrests and other actions of the police force) on various serious crimes in New York City. The study employed monthly time-series data spanning 1974-1999. The unem-

ployment rate declined 39 percent in the city between 1992 and 1999.

The study shows that a single percentage point decline in the jobless rate decreased burglary by 2.2 percent and motor vehicle theft by 1.8 percent. Increases in the real minimum wage also significantly reduced robberies and murders: 3.4 to 3.7 percent fewer robberies with a 10 percent increase in the minimum wage and 6.3 to 6.9 percent fewer murders.

—*from the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Food Research and Action Center. For more information, go to www.nber.org/digest/jan03/w9061.html.*

Survey Finds Gap Between Rich and Poor Grew During Late 1990s

WASHINGTON, DC—A survey conducted by the Federal Reserve—released early this year—found that, while wealth and income grew for every income level in the late 1990s, inequality between the highest earners and the lowest earners increased greatly. The median net worth of families in the top ten percent of incomes grew 69 percent from 1998 to 2001, to \$833,600, while families in the bottom fifth of earners rose 24 percent, to \$7,900.

The median wealth of families at the top was about 12 times that of lower-middle income families (the second quintile from the bottom) through much of the 1990s, but then shot up to 22 times as great in 2001. As to income, those in the top ten percent of households increased 19.3 percent from 1998 to 2001 and income for the bottom fifth of households increased 14.4 percent. Economic observers also note that data from 2002 provides evidence that lower-income households are under growing economic stress, such as record levels of personal bankruptcies and mortgage foreclosures.—*from the New York Times and the Food Research and Action Center*

46 American States Facing Financial Woes

NEW YORK CITY, NY—Iris Lav of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which tracks state finances, says the American states are facing the worst financial situation since World War II. With unemployment rising, the states are facing a sharp drop-off in peoples' capital gains, causing a significant amount of damage to states' income taxes. Moreover, unlike the federal government, states are required to balance their budgets; this year the majority of states (possibly 46) may face (in total) budget deficits between \$60 and \$85 billion.

In attempts to solve these issues, governors are proposing cuts in many areas, including highway construction, welfare payments, and health care for the poor. Some states are also hiking tuition prices at colleges and universities.

Governor Gray Davis of California predicts that the state's budget will fall \$34 billion over the next year and a half—an amount more than the whole budget of most states. Therefore, Gray is forced to call for program cuts, even in health care.

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special section: *Is Material Aid Good or Bad?*

Photo by Scott Taylor/courtesy of World Hunger Relief, Inc.



taking action in countries where hunger and poverty are prevalent. One of these places is the Bongaba Lixao in Mage, Rio De Janiero. A project called Recycle Life is making efforts to end the hunger among this community. The material aid

Miguel Hidalgo of the southernmost state of Chiapas wrote...asking for material goods to help alleviate a food crisis in Chiapas. Hidalgo did not ask for money; he asked for corn and other goods....

Material Aid: Taking Action Against Human Suffering *compiled by Crystal Carter*

It is painful to think that thousands of men, women and children spend their days collecting recyclables from the trash to sell. It is even more difficult to imagine that the garbage dump where they find items is their home. Unfortunately this is the reality for the people of Mage, Rio DeJaniero who live on Bongaba Lixao (really big garbage dump). Not only do they recycle, they search for anything edible and make it into stew. The same is true for the people of the payatas in the Philippine capital of Manila.

Also, imagine only living to the age of 34. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS), a child born in the U.S. may live a full life of 76.4 years, but a child born in Sierra Leone may not make it to 35. Is it fair that the place of your birth decide your fate?

Many people and agencies around the world think there is a way to help others in need. For these groups, material aid is the answer to an array of poverty issues. Martha C. Nussbaum, in a report of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, poignantly points out,

We believe that there are certain things that are so bad, so deforming to humanity, that we must go great lengths to prevent them...[yet] we do not feel that we are torturing or raping people when we deny them the things that they need to live.

She continues to argue that the humans are shaped by their material surroundings and people who can should provide aid to those in need.

Thankfully, there are many agencies

provided is a monthly "box of basics." It consists of powdered milk, flour, oil, beans, rice, sugar and canned vegetables—the "basic" nonperishable food items.

Other groups supporting the families in Rio organize drives for the more specific needs of the people. This may include clothing, blankets, medical equipment, school supplies, and televisions. The project is growing and now Recycle Life is able to use a warehouse instead of fighting the weather. According to Activated Ministries, the people of Rio are continuing to learn to support themselves with the start of a simple "box of basics."

Another group, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, works to alleviate shortages and increase hope among the Cuban people that help will be delivered from around the world. The economy in Cuba is in shambles and every small portion of help counts. Therefore, over 100 nations are working together on the "Container for Cuba" Appeal. The project raises public awareness about the U.S. blockade of Cuba and the economic problems caused by the sanctions. They have recently begun asking for the British to donate to the cause.

continued

Every year this group sends several 40-foot containers of material aid for the benefit of the health and education of Cuban people. Through this aid, their leaders say, comes hope for solidarity and future links for trade with other countries. This year, the project is con-

Simply building a stove helps prevent illness, respiratory disease and sight problems. In fact...a masonry cookstove can lengthen a woman's life by about 15 years.

centrating on Cuban children by collecting educational materials, computers, and toys.

Other appeals for aid come from disaster-stricken lands. An earthquake in Northern Pakistan reduced the land to rubble. Some families in the city of Gujarat were left with nothing. They had lost family members and all their possessions. Relief poured in to help these people. Trucks of water, food, clothing and blankets delivered aid to a temporary warehouse. Workers say that was this aid that helped the people of Gujarat to gain control of life again. Monetary donations would have meant nothing to most of these people. In fact, one man rejected an attempt at cash relief and said, "I don't need money. My children need water. I need wood and food." The benefits of actual material aid were what the people of this country needed.

Organizers in Mexico have received material aid and appreciated its worth. Miguel Hidalgo of the southernmost state of Chiapas wrote to National and International Solidarity asking for their help. He asked for material goods to help alleviate a food crisis in Chiapas caused by military conflict between local Zapatistas and the Federales.

Hidalgo did not ask for money; he asked for corn and other goods for the hungry people of his region.

The request from Chiapas was a relatively small one. Other projects have been significantly larger. The Guatemala Stove Project has continually increased its donations since it began in 1999. The goal is to provide cookstoves for homes in the mountains of Guatemala. Currently most people there use stone fires.

Simply building a stove helps prevent illness, respiratory disease and sight problems. In fact, the Guatemala Adoptive Families Network estimates that a masonry cookstove can lengthen a woman's life by about 15 years. Along with the stoves, the project encourages donations of blankets and beds, as well as supporting Potters for Peace who make ceramic water filters. The material aid provided for the Guatemalan people is literally life-changing.

A larger and more well-known source of material aid is provided through Heifer Project International. The program began over 50 years ago when Dan West, a farmer and youth worker, gave out milk to hungry children. He quickly realized that the children did not only need a cup of milk, but they needed "a cow." This process not only helped one family by giving them a milk cow, but the family who received a heifer was able to pass on the support to others. The actual program began in 1944 and has provided aid to more than 125 countries, as well as 38 U.S. states.

The idea of giving long-term relief through a "food source" also gives those people a way to help others. This form of material aid has sent children in the Philippines to school, bought medical equipment in Poland, provided chickens to Afghanistan, and educated many nations about agriculture. There is no question that this aid has been productive.

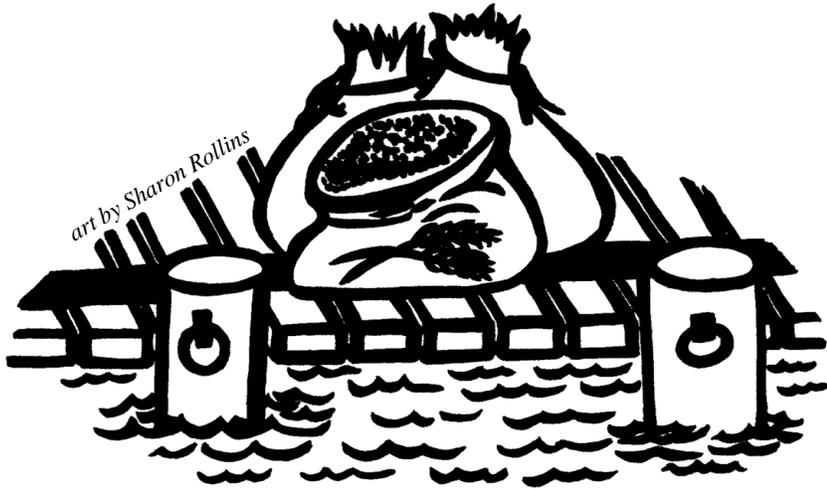
The internet provides many sites for agencies who specialize in material aid. These sites include guidelines and addresses for material aid that people may send. Some of them are international and others are more regional or local. They range from the Alameda Community Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity International, Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), Pastors for Peace, and afghans for Afghans, to the Caroline Chisolm Society.

The Canadian Food Grains Bank has, for many years, provided an organized way to donate grain to countries in need. Donors and donor groups can give either food grains or cash, which go into the larger pool of resources and is distributed as needs arise. Now a similar bank, the Foods Resource Bank in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is beginning operations.

Appeals for material aid come in large numbers from all over the globe. Agencies and projects throughout the world continue to provide material goods every day. The need for material aid is endless and its benefits are countless. ■

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Material Aid: Who Really Benefits?

compiled by Crystal Carter

Who is gaining the benefits of material aid? Some think it isn't the recipients at all. A growing number of relief and development analysts and experts are becoming concerned that material aid can do more harm than good. Fiona Terry, director of research at Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), says an ethical analysis of aid operations needs to be implemented. Several other organizations—including InterAction, Common Dreams, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs—also pose questions concerning the proper use of food, clothing, and other goods as humanitarian aid.

In her book, *Condemned to Repeat*, Terry asserts that food aid is not intrinsically good. To support this claim, she first points out the abuse of aid by the people of Somalia in 1991-1992. Terry says that aid agencies faced problems with Somalis stealing food and registering fake villages for food deliveries. This led to an increase in spending to protect the food and a decrease in the availability of resources. Terry says these

problems will continue to grow if ethics are not applied.

Food organizations strive to “do no harm;” Terry believes this is a Utopian ideal. She says that there is always a winner and a loser. For example, aid organizations may have to work with rebel leaders to provide food to those who need it, and the food may not always reach the desired destination. The worst case of material aid abuse, Terry says, is in North Korea. Starvation is an escalating problem in that country, and the government will not allow aid organizations to monitor their deliveries. In fact, refugees who have escaped from North Korea, looking for food, said that the aid is only given to those who pledge loyalty to Kim Jong-il. It is because of this that Terry believes there should be a halt on the aid to this area. (See part 4 of the story, “Last Year’s 10 Most,” beginning on page 1.)

This paradox continues in other places too. If there are no regulations or ethics applied to the process, these complications will only get worse. Robert James Parsons of Common Dreams adds another negative

comment to the material aid controversy in “Bitter Taste of Charity.” In the article, published by Common Dreams, Parsons discusses the many problems having to do with airdrops of humanitarian aid. Jean-Herve Bradol, president of MSF, brought out three points of concern surrounding attempts of the U.S. government to liberate Afghan people with airdropped aid.

First, Bradol argues, this form of material aid, which is enough to feed an adult for a day, was a waste of the \$25 million dollars the U.S. spent. There has been no proof that the aid has been collected by the people of Afghanistan. Second, under the philosophy of aid to “do no harm,” there is a significant amount of danger that arrives with these airdrops. Afghanistan land is heavily mined, and the random drops could lead people directly into these deadly areas.

Lastly, Bradol says that the planes dropping material aid are almost certainly confused with military planes drop-

A growing number of relief and development analysts and experts are becoming concerned that material aid can do more harm than good.

ping bombs. This may lead to danger for all international aid. In efforts to separate the military from humanitarian aid during the war in Kosovo, Cornelio Sommargua, said, “You have to do something... They are taking our space, and we cannot create confusion and give the impression that the same people who are bringing the bombs are bringing the bread.”

To avoid material aid issues completely, InterAction asserts that cash is the best form of aid. In their *Guide to Appropriate Giving*, the agency defines material aid as “things” and cash as a

separate method of aid. InterAction encourages cash for several reasons. In comparison to material aid, for instance, cash weighs less and requires less transportation and staff costs.

The article continues to point out that monetary aid does not call for the use

with material aid has to do with genetically modified organisms (GMOs). One example of this (among many) involves the donation of genetically modified corn to Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government challenged the donation, saying they feared that indigenous crops would not survive. A material donation of this kind could be toxic or pollute the vegetation of the land.

Ranging from abuse to waste to toxicity, there are many issues spurring the growing controversy against material aid. Unless proper restrictions are placed on the agencies and donors, material aid could continue to

cause harm—creating a difficult paradox for humanity to face.

Decades ago, anthropology textbooks told the story of a humanitarian who visited a village somewhere in the Indian subcontinent, and decided to replace their wooden cart wheels with rubber tires. For various complicated reasons, because he didn't understand the local economy, he basically destroyed it. As field workers and analysts have repeatedly told us, *you have to know what you're doing*.

What is to be done about this? InterAction spokespeople say they will continue with efforts to educate U.S. Americans on appropriate means of providing resources. Peter Vander Meulen, Coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action for the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), said that denominations and other groups, even individuals, often learn, over time, what is appropriate and what is not. He says the CRC was once heavily

involved in sending material aid—mostly used goods like clothing and old tools, which they gathered in a huge warehouse to be sent around the world. But in the middle 1980s they closed the warehouse. “We moved away from that kind of aid, partly because it’s tremendously expensive, and partly for philosophical—even theological—reasons. We began to realize that we shouldn’t send things like old golf shoes to someone in a developing country. Aside from the fact that it isn’t practical, what makes us think our junk is good enough for these images of God around the world?” ■

“Aside from the fact that it isn’t practical, what makes us think our junk is good enough for these images of God around the world?”

***—Peter Vander Meulen,
Christian Reformed Church***

of warehouses. Since some countries have difficulties in delivering items to aid warehouses, monetary aid would have bypassed these problems. For example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs faced significant administrative problems when delivering food to 345,000 people in Namibia. If cash had been the only aid given, those troubles might have been avoided.

Cash also can be more beneficial because the agency can purchase exactly what is needed for the desired location,—which, while helping the people in need, may also support the economy of the region. Reports have come back from places like Afghanistan, Russia, and southern African countries that material aid, especially grain shipments, can worsen local markets. For example, Russia’s grain market will be destabilized by the simultaneous arrival and selling of the aid and its imports. Church World Service representatives came back from Afghanistan last year with concern about what some foreign food aid was doing to the already decimated local economies.

Another lively controversy involved

—Crystal Carter, a native of Waco, Texas, is a professional writing student at Baylor University.

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Books from the Fourth World Movement

Talk With Us, Not At Us

The result of a three-year project, this book explores the concept of partnership between disadvantaged families and members of the legal, health, social, and community work professions who seek to help them. \$6.00.

Out of the Shadows

This poetry anthology was produced from a creative writing project that involved bringing professional writers and performers together with more than one hundred individuals experiencing poverty in the United Kingdom, ranging in age from six to seventy-five. \$7.00.

For Children: Tapori Mini-Books

True illustrated stories about children of courage from around the world. Suitable for 8 years and older. \$1.00 each or \$9.00 for the series of 10.

The Poor Are the Church

Father Joseph Wresinki, founder of the Fourth World Movement, writes about what the movement has learned from the poor, and reflects on what it means to give priority to the poorest among us. \$16.95.

Participation Works: Involving People in Poverty in Policy-Making

This book demonstrates the value of involving people in poverty in the formulation of public policy. \$9.00.

—*The Fourth World Movement is a voluntary organization that works in partnership with people living in poverty, supporting their efforts to overcome social exclusion and take an active role in the development of society. For more information in the U.S., contact: 7600 Willow Hill Drive, Landover, MD 20785; 301/336-9498; fourthworld@erols.com; www.atd-fourthworld.org.*

Non-profit agency in Central Texas seeking to fill full-time staff position. World Hunger Relief, Inc., a Christian agricultural training & education ministry working to alleviate hunger, is looking for an Executive Director.

WHRI is eager to hire a director with experience and skills in administration and teaching, preferably with experience and skills in organic farming, sustainable agriculture, and appropriate technologies. The position requires a commitment to global hunger/agricultural issues.

Our agency has been in continuous operation for 25 years, and is located on a 42-acre farm just outside of Waco. It hosts a year-long internship program that teaches sustainable agriculture to individuals from other countries or those who are planning to go overseas.

Salary is negotiable, and room/board can be included in the benefit package. Work/living experience in other countries is preferred.

Please send resume to:

World Hunger Relief, Inc.
P.O. Box 639
Elm Mott, TX 76640-0639



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art by Sharon Rollins

Nestle Gets in Hot Water—Again

ADIS ABEBBA, ETHIOPIA—Early this year the Nestle company once again gained notoriety by suing the government of Ethiopia for \$6 million. After a global cry of outrage, Nestle, one of the world's wealthiest corporations, reached an agreement with Ethiopia, one of the world's poorest nations, in late January.

Oxfam America, who has worked in Ethiopia since the infamous 1984 famine, began a campaign against Nestle in early January. 40,000 people contacted Nestle's officials, urging them to drop their claim against Ethiopia, now facing a humanitarian crisis that Oxfam describes as drastic.

Jon Cox, a writer for Reuters, said that the claim began 27 years ago when the Ethiopian government nationalized all foreign-owned firms. The claim was reduced to \$1.5 million, and, with the urging of its own consumers, Nestle agreed to reinvest the money in Ethiopian famine relief. The agreement reads, "The first proceeds of the settlement will be received within 30 days, and donations will be made to humanitarian organizations working with the Ethiopian government in providing emergency food aid."

According to Oxfam reports, Nestle initially rejected the offer of 1.5 million for shares in a Nestle subsidiary, Elidco, that was nationalized during a 1975 regime change in Ethiopia. Oxfam found no credible evidence that would support a legal battle. In fact, research indicated that Nestle had profited \$5.5 billion in the last fiscal

year. By contrast, the 1999 World Development Report showed that the average Ethiopian earns less than \$100 a year, and the nation faces increasing food insecurity with 11-14 million people at risk.

Oxfam workers reported that they were glad to see that the consumer concerns caused Nestle to accept the terms and to rethink their decision. Abera Tola, Oxfam America's representative in Ethiopia, said, "Nestle's actions demonstrate that the concerns of business do not have to be at odds with the needs of starving people."

If this all sounds like *déjà vu*, it could be because Nestle was the target of an international boycott in the middle 1980s, stemming from their aggressive marketing of infant formula in poverty-stricken countries. Aid and development workers reported that use of the formula was causing disease and death in large numbers, so anti-hunger advocates launched a widespread campaign that ended in Nestle's agreement to stop marketing the formula in those countries.

—from Oxfam America ("Nestle Resolves Compensation Claim Against Ethiopia") and a Reuters story by Jon Cox ("Nestle Reaches Ethiopia Deal After PR Fiasco")

Millions in China Fall to AIDS Pandemic

FUYANG, CHINA—As the world's most populous nation takes tentative steps to confront a pandemic that its government says has already infected at least 1 million Chinese and could reach 10 million by the end of the decade, only the richest can afford the life-prolonging drugs produced by multi-national pharmaceutical giants.

Some in the government argue that the situation is so dire that China must set aside respect for patents and other such protections and immediately produce cheaper, generic copies of the medicines. But China's leadership is deeply torn between the competing imperatives of confronting a disease that could kill millions and respecting the norms of the global trading system on which it has staked its economic future.

Many other countries in the developing world have confronted this same choice. None has violated drug patents. India produces generic copies of Western AIDS drugs on a massive scale, but it has no patent law. Thailand, South Africa and Brazil—which has cut its rate of AIDS-related deaths in half since 1996—have all wielded the threat of violating patents to force sharp reductions in price from drug companies. Drugs are far more widely available in those countries than in China.

China's government is also complicit in a primary cause of its AIDS epidemic: the illegal blood-collection centers that bought plasma from mostly rural Chinese in the 1990s and sold it to factories that make biomedical products. Local government officials—many of them in on the profits—touted the blood-selling stations as sources of cash for poor farmers. To persuade farmers to donate frequently, the collection stations pooled the blood they collected, removed the plasma, then re-injected the rest back into donors, usually without screening.

This was the origin of the "AIDS villages" that now abound in China's coun-

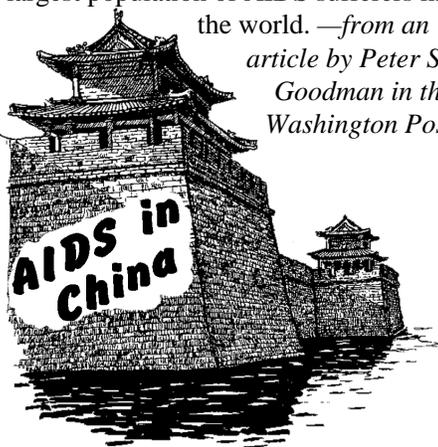
tryside—entire communities consumed by the epidemic, some with infection rates as high as 80 percent. The existence of such villages has been documented in the central province of Henan. Recent interviews with government officials, Western diplomats, and a network of Beijing-based activists report that the pandemic touches most of China's vast interior, including the provinces of Anhui, Jiangsu, Hebei, Shanxi, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, Shandong and Hunan.

The AIDS problem in China is nowhere near as large as in the worst-hit countries of the world. In some parts of sub-Saharan Africa—center of 70 percent of the world's cases—1 in 3 adults carries HIV. But Africa's experience offers caution for every country in the developing world, and particularly for China. In Africa, the epidemic can be seen in part as an outgrowth of globalization. Its spread has neatly followed the corridors of development. Truck drivers traveling great distances have been infected through liaisons with roadside prostitutes, carrying the virus home to spouses in villages.

China has, until recently, been largely insulated from the epidemic by its relative isolation. But as the country engages the outside, it opens up places where the virus can filter in along with everything else.

In a recent report, the United Nations described AIDS in China as "a titanic peril." Experts say China, along with India, is likely to eventually be home to the largest population of AIDS sufferers in the world. —from an

article by Peter S. Goodman in the *Washington Post*.



hunger in the United States, continued from page 4

Dr. Robert Hockberger, who runs the emergency department at Harbor UCLA Medical Center, says that these cuts will kill people. Over two million uninsured people are treated at this hospital, which Hockberger says is "already maxed out."

Governor Ted Kulongoski of Oregon said, "We are all asked to make sacrifices in this budget." Connecticut Governor John Roland agrees. Months ago he eliminated 2800 jobs to help offset the state's \$2 billion deficit for next year.

Roland doesn't believe that Connecticut has made bad decisions. With 45 other states facing a deficit, the nation is experiencing a national downturn, which he believes is part of a cycle. Rowland, a Republican, and Davis, a Democrat, are looking at similar solutions. Both are considering an extra tax on cigarettes, an increase in income tax, and a tax on millionaires.

Although the two agree on some issues, they disagree on appealing to President Bush for help. Davis wants reimbursement from the President, and Rowland refuses to lobby the federal government for money.

—from *CBS News Sunday Morning*

Executive Order Clears Way for Faith-Based Initiatives

WASHINGTON, DC—This past December, President Bush, with an executive order, put into effect portions of his signature issue—faith-based initiatives. The order demanded that federal agencies let religious charities compete for federal money and contracts. It set up offices for faith-based groups in the Agriculture Department (USDA) and the Agency for International Development (USAID), while also asking the Federal Emergency Management Agency to allow religious nonprofit organizations to qualify for aid after disasters. In addition, federal agencies were ordered by the President to give charities receiving federal aid a right to hire and fire based on religious considerations.

The order was met with approval from conservative religious organizations. However, Democrats and civil liberties groups were highly critical, saying it was a violation of the separation of church and state, as well as an infringement of employment discrimination laws. The issue of discrimination was the topic of prolonged deliberation in Congress. Republicans asserted that federal law does not require religious groups to give up their right to hire on the basis of religious belief just because they are using government funds to support their programs. Democrats said the initiative violated a legal principle in which agencies receiving federal financing were required to comply with the government's non-discrimination standards.

President Bush said he wants to end discrimination against religious groups just because they are religious, saying that religious organizations "should be able to hire people that support their vision and mission." Critics argue that, in doing this, the administration is giving the organizations free reign to discriminate against potential employees based on anything that does not fit within their specific system of beliefs. According to James Towey, director of the White House's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, this fits within the borders of federal law stating that religious groups are permitted to hire on the basis of religion.

Though the President said he would like to see further legislation passed on this issue, some of his critics said his initial action went further than anyone in Congress would have been willing to go legislatively—even within his own party.

—from the *Waco Tribune-Herald*

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

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quotes, poems, & pithy sayings

Giving Away Our Lives

Giving our lives away may mean: turning the other cheek; standing with the people who are losing; doing good that will receive no applause; sitting in a home where someone has died; treating discarded people as children of God; shopping for someone else's groceries; baking cookies that we won't eat; reading stories to someone else's children; taking flowers to someone who's not our type; visiting someone else's mother in the nursing home; walking someone else's dog; watering someone else's plants; washing dishes we didn't dirty; discussing current events that don't interest us; sending cards when we don't know what to write; talking about faith when we would rather be silent; doing good for people who will do no good to us in return; weeping when others weep; praying not for an easier life, but for strength to give our lives away; discovering that if there's nothing for which we would die, then we don't have enough for which to live.

—Brett Younger, a pastor in Fort Worth, Texas



“If I don't stop just talking about helping the poor and start doing something to help the poor I'm going to be embarrassed to meet God.”

—James Forbes, pastor of Riverside Church in New York City

“God, help us to know when we have eaten enough and to stop.”

—a prayer for a meal spoken by Carol Younger, a writer in Fort Worth, Texas

... God, give us compassion that lasts.

May we give whatever is within our power
to overturn the tables of injustice
and to pour out bags of rice
for all those the world forgets to feed.

Trusting in your power,
we join with your people everywhere
who long for the day when we will never have to calendar
a “World Hunger Sunday” again,
when all the grain is distributed,
when every parent's hungry child is fed,
when justice and joy prevail.

—Rev. Sharlande Sledge, “Hunger,” from *Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Season* (Smyth & Helwys Publishers, 1999)

Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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