

Farmer suicides in India *The despair of thousands*

Giant's walk *Building Innu pride one step at a time*

Canada's magazine on  
global rights and justice

# The Upstream Journal

**Shell,**  
oppression and murder in  
Nigeria,  
and an obscure 1787 US law



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# **SHELL OIL SPILL AT GOI, NIGERIA**



**THE FARMERS AND FISHERMEN OF THE VILLAGE OF GOI  
HAVE MOSTLY LEFT AFTER A SERIES OF SPILLS OF SHELL OIL**



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Cover: Local children with water containers at the Shell gas flares at Umuebulu community in the Obigbo oilfield near Port Harcourt, Niger Delta, at night. Photo by Peter Roderick

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Dear readers,

In a hard situation, with limited options for expressing opinion and having an honest dialogue, what does one do? As so often in the *Upstream Journal*, the stories we have for you in this issue are about the difficulties of having a voice when the options are few. Nigerian activists seeking justice in a US court for crimes committed there. Farmers in India taking their own lives in despair. Innu people trying their own way of reconnecting with their tradition.

As I prepared this issue, I was reminded how much our efforts to support efforts to build inclusive, rights-based ways of fighting poverty and oppression relies on the strengthening of voice.

Civil society groups need a voice in policy choices at all levels of decision making, and in all aspects of economic and social development. Here in Canada, this voice has been weakened considerably. Dialogue between Canada's NGO community and our federal government is limited or doesn't take place at all.

Much of my own communication was with the Department of Finance, since it is responsible for Canada's policy at the World Bank and IMF. For example, there used to be a semi-annual tradition of the Minister of Finance meeting NGOs to discuss things like cancelling Third World debt. That was stopped. I used to be able to phone up senior bureaucrats to discuss policy options. Now they say they have to refuse my calls.

The office of the Canadian executive director at the World Bank used to be a welcoming place where we many helpful and robust discussions, always with mutual regard. Now most of our messages about World Bank policy get no response at all.

I took part in a World Bank consultation in Ottawa about social safeguard policy, but later found that things I had to say were removed from the record of the discussion. They took out my reference to Canadian law requiring compliance with human rights law in our aid - including the \$1 billion Canada sends each year to the World Bank, which has no human rights policy and has a habit of funding repressive regimes. They said it was removed at the request of one of the participants; I assume it was the Department of Finance. I twice requested that the record better reflect my input, without success.

And all of that reminds me of some of the reasons we print the *Upstream Journal* - the need to have ways people can have a voice, a say in how societies function and develop. For us and for the communities we write about, it comes down to voice. This magazine is about that - finding ways to strengthen the voice of people, from the delta of Nigeria to Canada's north.

Along those lines, we're taking a look at how we can provide a new kind of article that will be about you, and your voice in global issues. For example, there are many times when writing a letter to a politician can make a difference. We asked several experienced politicians and a human rights campaigner about letter writing, and look at ways to make your letter writing even more effective.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Derek MacCuish". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning.

Derek MacCuish    1-514-933-9517    [editor@upstreamjournal.org](mailto:editor@upstreamjournal.org)

# Shell oil challenged by law from 1789

## US Supreme Court to decide if corporations can be pursued in American courts for their role in human rights abuse abroad

**A**n obscure US law from 1789 may have the potential to hold corporations, governments and individuals accountable for international human rights violations.

The Alien Tort Statute grants US courts jurisdiction in cases of certain violations of international law, and cases can be brought by foreign citizens. The law reads:

“The district courts shall have original jurisdiction of any civil action by an alien for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States.”

Only one sentence long, it was created to prevent pirates and other international criminals from having a safe haven in America.

For more than two hundred years this law was mostly dormant, until the court decision in *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala* in 1980. When the family members of a man tortured and killed by a Paraguayan official were successful in their suit, the ATS became the principal vehicle for litigating international human rights claims in U.S. courts.

In that case, the court decided the ATS can apply to cases in which non-American “aliens” have suffered torture in foreign countries and want to legally pursue justice against their torturer in the American courts.

*Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Shell* will decide if it also applies to actions that did not occur within the United States. If Shell loses, the ATS could have an impact on corporate accountability for its activities in countries known for rights abuse.

### THE Ogoni NINE

Esther Kiobel is the widow of Barinem Kiobel, one of the “Ogoni Nine” activists hanged by the Nigerian dictatorship in 1995. Last year, the US Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Shell*. She is the lead plaintiff.

Kiobel, in a joint action with eleven others, has been in court since 2002, alleging that Royal Dutch Shell aided the government’s use of torture and murder, especially against protesters like Barinem Kiobel,

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BY ANDREA PARE

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Shell gas flare at Rumuekpe in the Niger Delta, the main oil-producing region. Nigeria is the fifth largest exporter of oil to the United States, but most local people are still poor. 70 percent of them try to survive on less than a dollar a day. Photo: Elaine Gilligan/Friends of the Earth

writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and the seven others who formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. Shell is accused of providing soldiers with transportation, food, compensation and staging areas for attacks.

Shell maintains that it did not participate in any human rights abuse.

“Shell denies any allegation that it engaged in any form of human rights violations in Nigeria,” said a company spokesperson. “We strongly condemn such human rights abuses which clearly violate both our company values and our high respect for the dignity of all people.”

#### PIRATES AND CORPORATION

However, Shell’s guilt or innocence is not the central issue for the court. It has to decide whether the Alien Tort Statute, which has been used to take action against non-US citizens, also applies to the actions of a corporation outside the US. Shell argues that the ATS should not be used against aliens in U.S courts at all, except against pirates, as the law originally intended.

For Kiobel and her counterparts, the Supreme Court decision will determine whether they can continue to pursue their case in the US, and there are broader implications for others who have no official legal system in their own countries.

Peter Rees, Legal Director for Royal Dutch Shell, summed up the company’s position in a talk he gave, the only reference to the case on the company’s website: “Few cases could be more remote from the circumstances that prompted the First Congress to enact the Alien Tort Stat-

ute: namely, the prospect that international-law violations committed on U.S. soil might prompt international conflict and even war if left without a remedy in the nascent federal courts.”

Katie Redford, a lawyer and a founder of Earth Rights International, a non-profit legal aid organization that offered legal advice to the plaintiffs, said that Shell’s arguments did not impress the judges. The previous ruling on extraterritoriality sets a precedent for future cases, and thus must be respected, she says.

“Shell took an extreme position- not only from a human rights perspective and from a corporate immunity perspective, but also from the perspective of asking a court to overturn a precedent that they had already decided on just eight years ago.”

Redford says the court also rejected the argument that the ATS be only used against piracy. “The court specifically stated in its opinion that the torturer was the modern day pirate and is the enemy of all mankind.”

#### PERSONS AND CORPORATIONS

Shell also argues that the ATS can only be used to hold nations and individuals violations of international law,

which provides that nations and individuals - but not corporations - can be held liable for violation of the law like those alleged, even though corporations are legally considered “persons” under U.S law. (They were legally deemed persons following the Supreme Court ruling in the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Campaign*, which ruled on corporate fundraising to support political parties.)

Redford says that this type of power without accountability is a dangerous mix, especially given



#### *Quotes from arguments at the Supreme Court (October 2012)*

**Shell lawyer** Kathleen Sullivan, a former Harvard and Stanford constitutional expert, on international law: “The United States objected to the universal civil jurisdiction aspect of the convention against torture. We have never acceded to that. And the reason is that we fear exactly the consequences Justice Kennedy began the argument with. We fear that if we say that a United States court can be open to try any accused law of nations violator for anywhere in the world regardless of the place of the conduct, the other nations of the world might seek to do the same to us.”

On US law: “The precise argument we are making here is that the presumption against application of U.S. law to conduct within foreign sovereigns.”

On corporations and law: “And if you don’t agree with us on the lack of extraterritorial application, we still maintain that the ATS does not apply to corporations.”

the ubiquitous nature of corporations.

"You've got to think of today's world. You can't be everywhere in terms of where you're doing business, and nowhere in terms of where you can be regulated and held accountable."

The issue of corporate personhood, however, was not assessed in the Supreme Court hearings. It was not a part of the Court's argument, and therefore could not be addressed, Redford said, arguing that it is up to the media to create a discourse on this topic.

"There has been a big media focus, and there has been kind of a framing of this Kiobel case in the context of the Citizens United case," she said. "How can corporations ask for free speech rights but then claim they have immunity and no responsibility for human rights abuses like torture, murder and war crimes?"

#### THE OUTCOME

The Supreme Court ruling must be issued by the end of June, when the court session closes. Redford says the ruling could have many different outcomes, and that ultimately the decision will determine whether ATS cases against corporations are allowed to proceed in the US.

The ATS was created to uphold international law standards in the US, Redford says. "It was an expression of this young nation's desire to become part of the international community and make a commitment, not only for respecting international law but enforcing it."

"If you think of it in today's context,

we wouldn't provide safety for torturers or people who commit genocide or war criminals. And if they are in our jurisdiction, these bad guys, then it is within our rights to haul them in to our courts. This case is just one example, but it's an extreme example. The abuses at issue are people being tortured and executed, killed and raped and it doesn't get much more extreme than that."

*Andrea Pare completed studies in journalism at Concordia University and now lives in Toronto. She wrote the article "Graffiti as social protest" in the Feb. 2009 Upstream Journal.*



Shell oil spill at Rukpoku in 2004, showing no clean up or remediation after three months.  
Photo: Elaine Gilligan/Friends of the Earth

*More quotes from arguments at the Supreme Court (October 2012)*

**US Solicitor General** Donald Verrilli on US responsibility: "The Alien Tort Statute should not afford a cause of action to address the extraterritorial conduct of a foreign corporation when the allegation is that the defendant aided and abetted a foreign sovereign. In this category of cases, there just isn't any meaningful connection to the United States."

On US interests: "In cases under the Alien Tort Statute, the United States has multiple interests. We certainly have foreign relations interests in avoiding friction with foreign governments. We have interests in avoiding subjecting United States companies to liability abroad. We also have interests in ensuring that our Nation's foreign relations commitments to the rule of law and human rights are not eroded."

**Kiobel lawyer** Paul Hoffman, on why the case should go forward, even though the events took place outside the US involving a foreign nation, non-American citizens and a foreign-owned corporation: "The plaintiffs in this case received asylum in the United States because of the human rights violations alleged in the complaint. They sued the defendants for their role in these human rights violations in U.S. courts because the defendants are here and subject to the general personal jurisdiction of our courts."

# Farmer suicides



**241,679 farmers in India committed suicide between 1995 and 2009\***



**Dr. Raju Das**, an associate professor at York University, has done extensive research on economic development policy, agrarian change, and poverty in India. Here is some of what he had to say:

In 1991, the Indian government scaled back support of small-scale farmers and increased investment in infrastructure serving large agribusiness. Farmers saw decreased input subsidies, privatization of government industries, and an increase in foreign investment encouraged by tax incentives. Opening up markets to inexpensive foreign goods eroded the competitiveness of India's crops. Forced to sell at lower prices and denied subsidies by the government, the wages of India's farmers began to plummet.

Open markets have also given international corporations the platform to push genetically modified (GM) seeds with higher crop yield potentials, but the seeds are sold to farmers at a cost two to ten times higher than traditional seeds.

Irrigation is required for these higher yields, but the government has failed to provide irrigation facilities in any adequate way. Seventy percent of farmland still depends on monsoon rainfall, so when drought comes farmers suffer.

In a dry year, the investment required to produce a crop can be lost. Seed and other input prices continue to rise, rendering it increasingly difficult for farmers with little capital to recover without relying on loans. Unable to get bank loans, farmers rely on small scale rural lenders, often at a cost that many farmers can't afford, bringing chronic indebtedness and land loss.

Indebted farmers often face harassment by money lenders and may also be shunned by their communities. In rural India, land has emotional value, and without non-farm employment opportunities, land is everything. The loss of land autonomy can lead to despair, and without many options farmers are turning to suicide.

Suicide in rural India is a form of violence, a form of violence that is committed by the political economic system which cares more for profit than for human need and human life.

\* Source: National Crime Records Bureau of India.

*Contributors to this article: Riham Reza has a degree in economics and business from McGill University. She plans to continue her studies, specializing in microeconomics and game theory. Jen Bieber has a degree in international development and anthropology from McGill. Her experiences include working with Habitat for Humanity in Bolivia, hosting a radio program in Montreal and running a household maintenance and landscaping business.*



# Vandana Shiva vs Monsanto

**Monsanto** responded to the issue of farmer suicide in India when the film *Bitter Seeds* was released in 2011. The IMDb plot summary says:

*India has more farmers than any country in the world, and they are in a crisis that is unprecedented in human history. Every 30 minutes a farmer in India kills himself in despair. In a village at the center of the suicide epidemic, a farmer and his family struggle to keep his land and a teenage girl makes her first steps to become a journalist and tell the world about the crisis. Bitter Seeds raises questions about the human cost of genetically-modified agriculture and the future of how we grow things.*

**Dr. Vandana Shiva** is a feminist ecologist living in New Delhi. She is founder of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (1982) and Navdanya (1991). Navdanya is a national movement with a membership of hundreds of thousands of Indian farmers, providing training in sustainable agriculture, protecting indigenous seed varieties, promoting the rights to food and fighting biopiracy and genetic engineering. The author of more than 20 books and recipient of many awards such as the Right Livelihood Award (1993), she is also advising the government of Bhutan in its effort to become a 100% organic country.

*The Upstream Journal's Riham Reza spoke with her about the role of Monsanto in the lives of Indian farmers.*

## THE ACTIVIST

**D**r Shiva: **Monsanto is hugely implicated in the farmer suicides.** The suicides really start in 1997-98, when Monsanto entered the market and started buying up Indian seed companies. They started pushing seed companies

## THE COMPANY

**F**armer suicides are a tragic phenomenon that take place for a variety of complex social and economic reasons, which long pre-date the 2002 introduction of insect-protection Bt cotton technologies in India in hybrid cotton seeds.



Several reputable organizations including International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) have conducted comprehensive socio-economic investigations into the farmer suicide issue

## THE ACTIVIST

to buy hybrids first, and genetically modified seeds, but I took them to court and they were delayed to 2004.

They pushed the seed cost up 8000 percent, but why would farmers buy it when they have their own seed? So they destroyed the farmers' own seeds, they destroyed the public system, they destroyed the lower cost option of local seed suppliers by locking them in with licensing agreements and preventing them from using or selling other seeds.

They are the same kind of contracts they sign with the US and Canadian farmers. There, they sign them directly with farmers; here they sign them with companies.

In Gujarat, the largest producer of cotton, Monsanto's Bt cotton is not there, and they don't have farmer suicides. But in every area where Monsanto is present, farmers are indebted and that debt is pushing farmers to suicide.

In 1987, I realized what the corporate patent of genetically modified seed would do. You don't patent a seed to give it for free to farmers, you patent it to collect royalties. Every year, Monsanto collects 10 billion rupees [CDN\$190 million] in royalties from poor Indian people.

That is why we have started to protect seeds, and distribute them to farmers. And we help them go organic, and are now trying to build a market for the product.

*Why hasn't the government taken any action against Monsanto the prices of seed has gone up exorbitantly?*

Monsanto appropriates the government. And when the US pushes the government of India, the government of India gets pushed. The present prime minister thinks an agriculture deal with the

US - which hands over seeds to Monsanto - and a nuclear deal are the best future for India. So governments have become part of the push for Monsanto's monopoly.

*Could you tell me more about the impact of GMOs on health and the crop itself?*

I think the biggest health issue is the debt leading to farmer suicide. A quarter million suicides from drinking pesticides, is a big health issue.

The second biggest issue is in biodiversity, soil and environment. We have done surveys on the soil to show that in four years of planting, the soil had lost 25 percent of its beneficial soil organisms.

Then there are other things, like animals dying in Andra Pradesh when they were fed Bt cotton seeds. And workers, engineers etc., reporting health problems.

*Since you started, do you think there has been any improvement, and response from the government, or civil society?*

Well, for the first five years, the government spent all of its time saying that there were no suicides. I think it's a success that we forced them to admit and monitor this now.

What the federal government should be doing is intervening at the policy level. It's not, its failing. So the states are intervening and have joined the Andra Pradesh government in its anti-trust case against Monsanto.

It's the federal government that is corrupted. We stopped Monsanto from introducing a Bt eggplant last year, when thirteen states joined us, because at the sub-national level there are huge, huge protests. But at the national level, it's everywhere. Canada, the US, even Brazil became a Monsanto government.

*"If you search the Internet for Monsanto, you will likely come across claims that failure of our Bollgard® cotton seed products has caused many farmers in India to take their own lives. Not everything you see or read on the Internet is fact and this is a good example.*

The reality is that that the tragic phenomena of farmer suicides in India began long before the introduction of Bollgard in 2002. Farmer suicide has numerous causes with most experts agreeing that indebtedness is one of the main factors. Farmers unable to repay loans and facing spiraling interest often see suicide as the only solution."

*- Monsanto' web site*

*"Cotton farmers are in a deep crisis since shifting to Bt cotton. The spate of farmer suicides in 2011-12 has been particularly severe among Bt cotton farmers.*

*In fact cost of cotton cultivation has jumped from Rs 7 million per hectare to Rs 12 million due to rising costs of pesticides. Total Bt cotton production in the last five years has reduced."*

*- Jan. 2012 Agriculture Ministry advisory*



## THE COMPANY

and most agreed that indebtedness is one of the main factors. Other causes include repeated crop failures due to climatic conditions like heavy rain or drought, social and family obligations, breakdown of formal credit structures, lack of irrigation, lack of alternative source of income from occupations allied to agriculture, and little value addition to agriculture produce.

A recent study titled 'Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of Bt Cotton in India' by the Council for Social Development (CSD) analyzed the key reasons leading to farmer suicides as lack of irrigation facilities, lack of timely credit availability, and fluctuating cotton prices over the years. The CSD also found that 86 per cent of the farmers surveyed said yields and returns from hybrid Bt cotton seeds were higher than non-Bt cotton; 45 per cent of farmers reported the quantity and expenditure on pesticide usage on hybrid Bt cotton seeds had reduced over the years; and 99 per cent of farmers claimed Bt cotton had significantly reduced the attack of bollworms. Because of better profits, on average 85 per cent of farmers and landless labourers invested in better quality education for their children, 80 per cent reported intake of high value and nutritious food, 82 per cent on health of their family members, and 81 per cent on health of livestock.

Farmers' choices to plant hybrid cotton seeds



Women, on average, comprise 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries and account for an estimated two-thirds of the world's 600 million poor livestock keepers. Photo: BBC World Service

with insect-protection Bt cotton technologies on over 90 per cent of cotton acres, and increased cotton yields are testament to the value created by better seeds, technologies and farming practices, when compared with the alternative of conventional seed and insecticide spraying

## ON MONSANTO'S ALLEGED MONOPOLY

Monsanto develops and markets its own hybrid seeds with biotech traits as well as broadly licenses seed company competitors to use our biotech traits (for example, in-the-seed insect protection Bt cotton technology) in their competing cotton seed germplasm. Broad licensing accomplishes two things. First, it makes the market more competitive because all seed suppliers are able to offer biotech traits to their customers. Second, farmers get to choose from a wider variety of seed germplasm suited to their local agronomic conditions, but still have the option of not using the Bt insect protection trait.

Farmers learn from their experiences, and choose seeds that provide them with optimal yield, income and convenience in cultivation. As a result, many choose seeds with the Bt insect protection trait - whether produced by Monsanto or one of our competitors. Monsanto's broad licensing model ensures Indian farmers have the choice of our cotton trait technologies in the hybrid cotton seeds of their choice.

As a company, we want farmers to be successful, and have the widest choice. We welcome competition as it drives innovation and wider choice, to the long-term benefit of farmers, the industry and the economy. Farmers are our customers. When farmers succeed, we succeed.

For perspective, Indian cotton farmers have the widest choice in the world - over 850+ hybrid seed varieties. According to the International Cotton Advisory Council (ICAC), Washington "The technology fee charged in India is the lowest in the world, and benefits are the highest."

Development and commercialization of better quality seeds, new biotechnologies and seed treatments requires huge investments. It takes eight-to-ten years to discover a single beneficial gene and investments of approx. Rs. 500 crores to bring a single beneficial agri-biotechnology product to market, the benefits of which are experienced by farmers, through the supply chain and across the global commodity market.



# Giant's walk

**T**he deceased grandfather of Nikashant Antane, a young Innu man, came to him in a dream and said, “Get up and help your people.” So Antane, also called

Michel Andrew but known in his community as “Giant,” stopped drinking and started walking to raise awareness about diabetes in Innu settlements and to reconnect Innu youth with Nutshimi, the country.

He started the Innu Cultural Health Walk in February 2009. Since then, the walk has covered more than 4000 kilometres across northeastern Quebec and Labrador, and has been growing in popularity. Giant has been to every Innu community on the Nitassinan during his walk for diabetes, covering more than 4000 kms since that first 500 km walk from Sheshatshiu to Natuashish. In October 2012 he walked to Pessamit, Quebec, the only Innu community he had not yet walked to in Quebec and Labrador.

His uncle, Alex Andrew, is the main organizer for the walk. He told me that the walk is an experience of self-healing, for both the individuals who take part and for the community as a whole. It empowers people who walk in memory of family members and others who suffer diabetes or addiction, as they return to the land where they have a deep knowledge and history.

The taiga, tundra and numerous waterways stretching between Innu communities in Labrador and north-eastern Quebec is called Nitassinan by the Innu. This rocky territory has been their home for more than 8,000 years. They were permanent migratory people until the 1950-60’s when they were forced into settlements by the Canadian government. These fixed settlements brought abrupt changes to their lifestyle and diet, and much of the Nitassinan became open to mining concessions and development. They brought unemployment, diabetes, alcoholism and abuse. The Innu became disconnected from Nitassinan, as their lifestyle became sedentary and away from the land.

Giant wants to help heal the inter-generational divide by leading young people back to the land. The

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BY LIBBY JAY CHISHOLM

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walk also gives the opportunity for elders to re-assume positions as teachers by passing on hunting and survival skills on the land, and teaching their culture and history.

"The walk is part of the process of cultural revitalization," says Jules Pretty, a researcher on traditional lifestyles in Innu settlements at the University of Essex. "It provokes a pride about their place - their way of living and their history."

Pretty says the walk is taking a leap forward; creating new hopes for people that have become seriously disconnected from their traditional lifestyles. He also says that the push away from the land did not happen very long ago; people were mobile until the mid-1960s, and this is a period that the older generation still remembers vividly.

I also spoke with Pretty's colleague at the University of Essex, Colin Samson. They both are concerned about how the influx of processed and sugared foods into the settlements of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish drastically changed their diet from the diverse sources of lifestyle-appropriate food that Innu obtain from the land. For example, Innu obtain necessary fats and nutrients from caribou, ducks and geese in the spring, different types of fish like salmon, arctic char, lake trout, and porcupine in the winter; and a wide range of berries in fall and September.

These food sources supplied the calories and good fats necessary for operating snowmobiles and canoes after the ice breakup, and for hunting and migrating across the Nitassinan. However, many of the foods available in settlements are high in sugars and saturated fats; a direct result of globalization. As a result, Samson says, people's health suffers. "Diabetes rates are directly related to abrupt changes in diet; from a wild food diet to a junk food diet."

Giant's walk is also important for younger generations because they are able to see evidence of past Innu migration across the Nitassinan, in the old camp-

Joanna Eede, an editorial consultant at Survival International, an NGO in the UK, was helpful in preparing this article. She joined Giant for part of a walk, and talked about that experience and how spiritual concepts of food and land explain why the Nitassinan is "the essence of who the Innu are."

Her writing and photos from that walk are available at *Nitassinan: Walking in the footsteps of Innu ancestors* on the organization's web site, [www.survivalinternational.org](http://www.survivalinternational.org). Here are some excerpts:

"Several years ago when an Innu man went to social services and was asked his occupation, he replied 'hunter,'" said Innu man Jean-Pierre Ashini. "Now, he says 'unemployed'."

"The land is your life," said Innu Elder George Rich. "Without it, you are nothing; everything that is connected to the land is a symbol of who you are as a human being."

Joel – at 15 the youngest member of Giant's walk – regularly sniffs gas with his friends in the community of Natuashish. In nutshimit, however, he felt strong. "The country feels good. I like being sober," he said.



The Innu walkers follow tracks across the frozen Nitassinan, setting up camps along the walk. Above, Michel Andrew (left) sets up camp with fellow Innu walkers. All photos by Dominick Tyler

**Native Americans in the US are 770% more likely to die from alcoholism, 650% more likely to die from tuberculosis and 420% more likely to die from diabetes than the general population,** according to a recent report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights (2004). If figures could be obtained for the Innu they are likely to approximate to the US rates for alcoholism and diabetes, though not for tuberculosis.

– Colin Samson and Jules Pretty,  
2006 research paper

The book *Giant's Dream: A healing journey through Nitassinan* by Nikashant Antane is available from:  
[www.creativebookpublishing.ca](http://www.creativebookpublishing.ca).

sites, canoes and arrowheads that give them a communal discovery of their history, which is largely ignored in the Canadian education system.

There is a strong spiritual connection that is awakened on the land, Samson said. "People will tell stories and talk about non-human presences on the land, and will tell you they've seen them more and talk about past times when they were seen. People who don't have position and are unemployed in villages transform on the land."

Alex Andrew talked about the elders with tears in their eyes as they watched Giant return with Innu youth from their journey. "The elders were saying they look like caribou crossing the river with their white coats, like old times."

*Libby Jay Chisholm is a recent graduate from the University of Guelph, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Anthropology. She has researched and written articles regarding development and mining issues in Central America for organizations including Rights Action, and is interested in land sovereignty and First Nations issues in Canada.*

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# Be a more effective global citizen - maximize the impact when you write your Member of Parliament

**Expressing your concerns through a letter to your political representative is perhaps the most effective thing you can do** when your time is limited. A carefully written letter is respected because it shows that you care enough to take the time to write it. Here are some ways to strengthen your letter's impact:

Keep it **short and to the point** – no more than two pages – and keep the tone polite and respectful.

**Research** your issue before you write about it. Include key research in the letter or, if you need to, attach research separately.

Be clear about why you are writing. Is it to express your opinion? Are you looking for a specific action? Don't just write to complain – try to **include a solution or alternative** you think is better.

Aim for clarity: **one main point** or argument, not more.

Request a response. **Ask questions** to better ensure you get one. Also, a substantial letter invites a substantive reply.

If your MP has done something you agree with, **express your appreciation**.

Consider writing to a **cabinet minister or the prime minister**, and send a copy to your MP.

What about **meeting** with your MP in person? (Ideally, go with one or two other people).

Write afterwards as a follow-up

Mention if you are from their constituency.

If you send it via email, be precise about the topic in the subject line.

Letters to MPs do not require a postage stamp.

## Forms of address:

For a letter to the prime minister: The Right Honourable [name], P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada.

The salutation should be Dear Prime Minister.

For a cabinet minister, it is The Honourable [name], P.C., M.P., Minister of \_\_\_\_\_. Dear Minister.

(The title of "The Right Honourable" or "The Honourable" is that person's for life.)

For members of the House of Commons it is Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss [name], MP.

Sign it "Yours sincerely,"

# Letters to politicians

## Do they make much difference?

**If you have hopes for change that go far beyond the borders of your riding, you may question the usefulness – or the point at all – of writing to your local MP.**

With issues that tend to be global in focus, such as international human rights, World Bank reform, and corporate social responsibility, it is important to know how citizens can engage. I asked five experienced Canadians with varied perspectives for advice on how much change you can affect with a letter:

Francis Scarpaleggia, Liberal MP

Mark Eyking, Liberal MP, Party Critic for CIDA

Hélène Laverdière, NDP MP, Opposition Critic for International Cooperation, the Americas and Consular Affairs,

Warren Allmand, former Liberal MP,

Alain Roy, Director of Campaigns and Activism for Amnesty International Canada

### **INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND SAY WHY YOU CARE**

Scepticism about the significance of your letter is understandable. But MPs do heed letters from their constituents, at least as much as they do campaign letters or petitions with many signatures. Don't hesitate to make your letter personal and introduce yourself. Write as an individual.

"I wouldn't discount the impact of an individual letter," Alain Roy from Amnesty International said. "If people make it personal, and speak directly from their own experience, if they say that they are a teacher or a nurse or a student and they speak as that and care about an issue, that is acknowledged, and that can make a difference."

A strong personal narrative can make a letter more memorable, and can also help your MP understand your perspective on the issue you're writing about. Your MP needs to know why your issue is important to you, and why it should also be important to him or her.

"Say why I should care about the issue – right from the beginning, in the first paragraph," Helene Laverdière said.

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BY SUZANNA KHOSHABI

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### **ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP**

More than one letter may be needed to really engage with an MP.

"We encourage Amnesty International members to cultivate some sort of relationship with the MP, so that a letter is not just a one-off but part of an on-going conversation" Roy said. "Often it's not one letter that changes something, but engagement over time."

Think about your MP as an individual with personal interests as well. Knowing what those interests are can help you make your letter more effective, because you know how to frame it to get his or her attention.

"We suggest that people find out about their MPs' relevance and interests," Roy said. "The more you know about your MP the better you can pitch your story, and the more likely they are to take action." For example, if you want to write about a global or foreign policy concern, check if your MP has a personal interest in a foreign country, or worked or travelled internationally.

### **WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR LETTER?**

It is up to the MP what he or she chooses to do with your letter, once they receive it, but you can expect it to be read and replied to.

"In my offices, we answer everything that is from a constituent," Francis Scarpaleggia said. "If it's a timely issue, we might even use the information in the letter to inform a speech we want to give on the topic."

An informative letter with research in it or attached with it is more likely to be influential. MPs sometimes discuss letters they receive from constituents with their colleagues.

It can take time for discussion to turn into concrete policy decisions, so it's a good idea to be patient. "You may not see a change in policy in the following weeks," Roy said. "But it might be

enough for an MP to raise a question in the weekly caucus meetings.”

Caucus meetings are a main forum in which MPs discuss their constituents’ concerns. The meetings are a private place in which issues – including issues with party policy – are raised. “We have caucus meetings every week and they’re very private,” Mark Eyking said. “You’d be surprised, but an MP will say ‘OK, I’ve been getting these concerns so we have a problem with this bill.’”

Laverdière said that not only does writing to your MP have an impact, it is essential for them to know what their constituents’ concerns are. “I often have colleagues who come to me and say ‘I’ve got somebody from my riding who wrote to me about this subject, what is it? What do you think? Are we working on this?’”

#### **WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO WRITE?**

Warren Allmand warned me that the current government is more talk and less action, so I asked if there was a point to writing to your MP in the current circumstances. All agreed there was.

“There’s no doubt that there’s a big change going on in the way we are behaving on the international stage,” Eyking said. “We’re backing off from the UN, and there are big changes in the way we are behaving in the Middle East where we didn’t used to take sides.”

In spite of this, citizens should still try and put pressure on MPs to influence policy, he says. “An individual can make an impact on a decision at the top. Sometimes you don’t know how it’s happening but it does happen.”

It’s especially important to write to MPs when they are in opposition, because you’re providing them with much needed feedback and information. “The government has thousands of public servants working for them and some are experts, with a lot of experience and knowledge of an issue,” Scarpaleggia said. “Opposition MPs don’t have those resources; we have very small staff, so we rely on NGOs and citizen groups to provide us with points of view and information.”

For Laverdière, letters are a part of sending a message to the government. “It’s important to speak and to speak out loudly, especially right

now given the fact that we have a government that doesn’t seem to want to listen to that many people. Letters are part of the dialogue, part of the movement, and part of a more general message that citizens can send to MPs in general - that people care, and that people are engaged.”

However, while MPs may be keen to hear from their constituents, there is still the question of whether individual MPs themselves have much impact. They may be bound to follow party policy.

“There is debate about the actual role or impact that individual MPs can have in systems like ours where there is a party discipline,” Roy said. “But MPs still have a number of things that they can do that can help, and that’s why many Amnesty International campaigns include a part about out-reaching to MPs to help us uphold human rights or deal with specific issues.”

#### **IN THE END, DOES LETTER WRITING WORK?**

There are a few things to keep in mind when judging the success of a letter to an MP. If you expect your letter to bring about instant global change, you may be disappointed. But as representatives of their constituents, an integral part of the MPs’ job is to engage with the letters and feedback they receive.

“We had the case of Bill C300 a couple of years ago on corporate accountability where letter writing and outreach to MPs almost got us a positive vote,” Roy said. “It came very close on an issue where many people thought there was no chance.”

If you want to engage with the government, writing to your MP is one of the most direct ways you can do it.

Even so, Laverdière says, it may not be enough. “We need people to be involved. Being an MP is being in a dialogue with citizens. There are, unfortunately, too few means for citizens to keep talking to their MPs and elected officials. Writing is one of them, and I don’t think people should give up on that opportunity.”

“I’ll tell you one thing that I know in this business,” Eyking said of his experience as an MP. “If you have some correspondence from an individual in your riding, MPs do take note and it does have an influence on their decision making process.”

*Suzanna Khoshabi has a political science and English literature degree from McGill University. She will soon start graduate studies in law in the UK. She plays classical piano, and is pursuing a performance diploma from Trinity College, London.*





# African countries take a hit in federal budget says Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

*Excerpts from the CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget 2013:*

“Despite sometimes marginal increases in wealth, income is concentrated among a more wealthy minority and many people live precariously on the margins of poverty. Globalization and free trade may have brought with it growth in some parts of the world, but it certainly has not been equitable neither between countries and regions, nor within them.

Against this backdrop, Budget 2012 delivered a punishing message to the world's poor. Between FY2011–12 and FY2014–15, Canadian aid is set to decrease by 7.6%, from \$5 billion in 2011 to \$4.66 billion in 2014–15.

Between 2011–12 and 2012–13 alone, it is estimated that Canada's ODA will drop by almost \$320 million, assuming no additional supplementary estimates in 2012–13. This is equivalent to the Canadian International

Development Agency (CIDA) pulling all of its funding for the Global Fund to fight HIV-AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (\$180 million), for water and sanitation (\$70 million), and for the World Food Programme (\$70 million).

## **WHERE WILL THE IMPACT BE FELT?**

CIDA will be completely cutting its geographic funding to eight countries (Cambodia, China, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) and will reduce program funding by \$69 million to five of its 20 countries of focus (Bolivia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Pakistan, and Tanzania).

African countries, where poverty is still endemic, are taking a big hit, with eight countries in this continent losing funding. Ten of the 13 countries affected lie in the bottom quarter of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index.

Contrary to the ODA Accountability Act which requires that poverty reduction and human rights standards be the determining factors, Canada is following in the footsteps of other bilateral donors, who are using aid to promote their country's national economic interests.”

## **Respond:**

Comments on Canadian aid policy can be sent to the Minister for International Cooperation, Julian Fantino.

Mail: House of Commons,  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
(no postage stamp  
necessary)

Email: [fantij@parl.gc.ca](mailto:fantij@parl.gc.ca)

# Canadian aid policy not based on fighting poverty, aid groups say

*The Canadian Council for International Co-operation, the coalition of about 100 development groups, says countries in need are being left out of Canadian aid.\* Here is a summary of countries that are being cut from Canadian aid, according to the CCIC:*

## Countries where aid is cut or reduced are at the bottom of the Human Development Index

Countries of Focus that were cut, but not completely, and their Human Development Index (of 187 countries, 2011)

Bolivia	108
Pakistan	145
Ethiopia	174
Mozambique	184
Tanzania	152

Non-Countries of Focus that were completely cut, and their Human Development Index

Cambodia	139
China	101
Malawi	171
Nepal	157
Niger	186
Rwanda	166
Zambia	164
Zimbabwe	173

Meanwhile: Colombia, Peru, Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh, important trading partners for Canada in recent years, did not see their programs cut.

\* The Social Justice Committee of Montreal, the Upstream publisher, is not a member. The SJC argues for aid based on a broader consideration of human needs, respect for human rights, and the empowerment of local communities and culture.

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## CIDA comes to an end

OPINION

The folding of CIDA into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade probably means the end of any hope that the agency would ever become truly professional and effective as an agency that fights poverty.

The manipulation of aid money for political and commercial purpose is, of course, not new. CIDA aid to Indonesia increased ten-fold in the 1970s, for strategic and investment reasons, despite the actions of the corrupt, authoritarian Suharto regime and its genocidal occupation of East Timor. More recently, it is apparent that a lot of the CIDA money that went to Haiti was for political objectives.

But this latest move has even a cynic like me appalled. Done with no consultation or discussion with the development community, no analysis or input on what the implications are for Canadian aid, the decision to close CIDA was made by the same ideologue who gutted and then closed Canada's human rights agency, Rights and Democracy, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird.

Is an agency like CIDA even needed anymore? It cut off funding to Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda and Zambia despite the desperate needs of people there, and boosted spending in wealthier countries of higher strategic and commercial importance, like Colombia. So why should we Canadians continue to let it spend our money? Well, in those places where it has been allowed to function properly, it has done a decent job of delivering the basics of development - health and education. For the most part, CIDA people do their best to improve other people's lives.

I hope that CIDA doesn't disappear completely, and that someday the government will allow development professionals to do their job independent of political meddling. The world desperately needs development agencies that are professional and take an approach to poverty that empowers and gives voice to the impoverished.

- Derek MacCuish, Editor

**CIDA comes to an end**

# NOT WITH A BANG...

## What people say about the end of Canada's international development agency

"As the linkages between our foreign policy, development, and trade objectives continue to grow, the opportunity to leverage each of these grows at equal pace,"- *2013 budget document*.

"It will be important to watch closely how this will be addressed... Our hope is that CIDA's mandate will not be watered down any further." - *Julia Sanchez, President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Cooperation*.

« L'Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI) dénonce le virage idéologique qui subordonne désormais la solidarité internationale aux intérêts de la politique étrangère et commerciale canadienne. »

"Our foreign policy priorities have always influenced our development assistance programs... This restructuring offers a real opportunity to improve the quality of our programming and to push scarce dollars to the poor as the costs in Ottawa go down." - *Janice Gross Stein, director of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto*.

"No matter where CIDA is administratively housed, we still must ask what role Canada will play in the international arena to contribute to addressing global challenges and how CIDA will continue to fulfill its specific mandate." - *Michael Casey, Executive Director of Development and Peace*.

"By hijacking funds meant for long-term development to satisfy short-term political purposes, and by consistently sidelining CIDA's development expertise, the Canadian government has sabotaged the agency. In a self-serving argument, it has then blamed CIDA for its lack of effectiveness, using that to justify its abolition." - *Stephen Brown, Associate Professor, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa*.

"The record shows that the Trade and Foreign Affairs Ministries have had virtually no commitment to pro-development policies of their own, and no clue on how to define and pursue our national interest in developing countries in more than the crudest, most adolescent terms." - *Bernard Wood, former head of the Development Cooperation Directorate at the OECD, founding head of Canada's North-South Institute*.

"CIDA ignored, deliberately, the fact that security is a key element of the context for the making and implementation of foreign policy, for development and for trade. As a human security advisor and practitioner in SE Asia, I struggled for six years to convince CIDA people that 'security' was not a dirty word. Now, maybe, Canada's wishes and work overseas will be informed by appropriate analysis of all the important drivers." - *David Harries - Former military engineer officer, now a specialist in international relations in terms of governance and security*.

"Canadian development assistance is now set for more cuts and a plunge into further ineffectiveness, less transparency and more diversion to short-term commercial and political interests. The move will tarnish Canada's international reputation, and it will draw us farther away from solutions to poverty, problems that have and will continue to have a direct and negative effect on Canada." - *Ian Smillie, author of Freedom from Want, member of the McLeod Group*.

"I have to question how much a poverty of leadership from CIDA contributed to Thursday's decision. Over the last few years, I watched with hopelessness CIDA's pursuit of un-strategic policies or rolling along with no strategies whatsoever." - *Nipa Banerjee, professor at the School of International Development at the University of Ottawa after 30+ years with CIDA*.

« La disparition de l'ACDI, près d'un demi-siècle après sa création, pourrait entraîner une perte importante pour les Québécois et les Canadiens. L'ACDI a constitué un levier essentiel au déploiement de l'effort de solidarité des Québécois au cours des dernières décennies. » - *Jean-François Lisée, le ministre des Relations internationales, de la Francophonie et du Commerce extérieur*.



# Talking about climate change

## - but not about it's biggest cause and who is responsible

In the World Bank report **“Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4C Warmer World Must be Avoided”** (Nov. 2012), World Bank President Jim Yong Kim gave these comments on climate change:

“The lack of action on climate change not only risks putting prosperity out of reach of millions of people in the developing world, it threatens to roll back decades of sustainable development.

This report spells out what the world would be like if it warmed by 4 degrees Celsius, which is what scientists are nearly unanimously predicting by the end of the century, without serious policy changes.

The 4°C scenarios are devastating: the inundation of coastal cities; increasing risks for food production potentially leading to higher malnutrition rates; many dry regions becoming dryer, wet regions wetter; unprecedented heat waves in many regions, especially in the tropics; substantially exacerbated water scarcity in many regions; increased frequency of high-intensity tropical cyclones; and irreversible loss of biodiversity, including coral reef systems.”

**Coal-fired power plants are the largest contributor to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change**, yet coal was not mentioned at all in that World Bank report. And it wasn't mentioned in a Washington Post editorial by Kim in January on the World Bank's role in climate change.

1,199 new coal-fired plants are being proposed worldwide, according to the World Resources Institute.\* **China and India together account for 76 percent of the proposed new coal power capacities.** Among the largest developers of new coal-fired plants are the “Big Five” Chinese power companies, the world's biggest coal-fired power producers. China consumes more coal than the next ten largest consumer nations combined.

**Japan, the World Bank and the US** provide more than half of the world's public international finance of coal-fired power plants.

Japan	27 projects, \$10.1 billion
<b>World Bank</b>	<b>29 projects, \$5.3 billion</b>
United States	23 projects, \$4.2 billion
Asian Development Bank	21 projects, \$3.9 billion
Germany	12 projects, \$3 billion
China	7 projects, \$3.1 billion
European Investment Bank	9 projects, \$2.5 billion
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	9 projects, \$869 million

Others public funders: Italy, Korea, United Kingdom, the African Development Bank, Italy, France, Norway, Spain, Canada, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, Switzerland and Netherlands. **Total: \$37 billion for 156 projects.**

\* Ailun, Yang, and Yiyun Cui. 2012. “Global Coal Risk Assessment: Data Analysis and Market Research”. WRI Working Paper. World Resources Institute, Washington DC. Available online at [wri.org](http://wri.org).



# World Bank told to Get real, be more sensitive

Evaluation of World Bank finds that it continues to fall short of its goals, mainly because it needs to be more realistic and sensitive to the local “political economy”

The World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group examines the effectiveness of its activities. Here are excerpts from its recent annual report, along with our take on what it means:

“Although country programs have met their objectives more often than not, the record falls short of the 70 percent performance standard set in the World Bank’s Corporate Scorecard. There is little disagreement on the need to strengthen realism and results frameworks for country programs, a finding supported by recent IEG country program evaluations and an evaluation of the Bank’s matrix system. Realistic country programs typically show an understanding of the country’s political economy and are characterized by selectivity and focus on areas in which the Bank can best add value.”

*Upstream’s translation: The World Bank continues to neglect the needs of the people it is supposed to serve, operates in an imagined environment, and leaves out stuff it doesn’t like - like human rights abuse and oppression.*

“In infrastructure, agriculture, and beyond, evaluations regularly stress the relevance of high-quality project design and effective progress monitoring to project outcomes. They repeatedly refer to overambitious project design, inadequate consultation with stakeholders, insufficient candor during supervision, and failure to follow up on problems identified during supervision missions as reasons for less-than-satisfactory achievements.”

*Upstream’s translation: When you don’t include the people affected, things don’t work.*

“Human development was the only area in which the share of projects rated moderately satisfactory or better in development outcome ratings improved between FY06–08 and FY09–11. Although the change is not statistically significant, it is a positive development for the sectors that can be examined further.”

“Since the mid-2000s, ratings for human development operations have been poorer than those in other areas.”

*Upstream’s translation: The economy, not the people, is still the point of World Bank programs.*

“Dialogue with a range of stakeholders is important in driving the demand for change. An in-depth understanding of political economy and associated risks is key to assessing ownership of and opposition to a particular intervention, as well as the likelihood that it will succeed and its eventual impact. More effective management of governance and anticorruption risks calls for greater consistency in the Bank’s approach to setting risk tolerances across client countries as well as a harmonized control framework across Bank financing instruments.”

*Upstream’s translation: Another way of saying that the people affected don’t have a say, their realities aren’t taken seriously, and the World Bank’s Washington-based technocrats need to get real.*

What wasn’t in the report? No mention of these words or phrases: human rights, rights-based development, consent, empowerment.

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## You are encouraged to let the World Bank know what you think.

The World Bank president is Jim Yong Kim, you can send him an email at [jkim@worldbank.org](mailto:jkim@worldbank.org).

Canada’s representative is Marie-Lucie Morin, you can write her at [mmorin@worldbank.org](mailto:mmorin@worldbank.org).

# A new global advocate for universal access to renewable energy



Installing solar panels. 1.5 billion people in developing countries have no access to electricity, more than 80 per cent of them living in sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia. 9 out of 10 people in rural sub-Saharan Africa are without electrical power. Solar can provide low-carbon pro-poor power. The cost of electricity for local communities decreases significantly with the use of solar technologies. A solar home system pays for itself in one to three years through savings in kerosene and batteries, and saves an average household about 30% on its energy expenses, according to the Rural Energy Foundation, a non-profit organization based in the Netherlands. In this photo, new solar panels are installed at the Idodi Health Center in Tanzania. Photo: Public Radio International

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BY JUDITH QUINN

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**W**hen the first session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, last year, I was already in the area and attended on behalf of the Social Justice Committee. IRENA is to be an independent, international agency run by countries who want to move into a future that doesn't rely on nonrenewable energy sources like fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

Much of the inspiration for IRENA came from the work of Hermann Scheer, a German politician, activist, writer and an outspoken advocate for renewable energy. Opposed to the fossil fuel and nuclear industries until his death in 2010, he tried to counter their message that a future powered by renewable energy is naïve and not possible, a path that will cause severe economic hardship and leave people freezing in the dark.

Founded in January 2009, IRENA now has more than 100 member countries, and 58 others have signed in support and/or applied for membership. Canada is not a member, and has not indicated support. We have not even reached the stage of thinking about developing our own national “energy road map,” a stage reached by many European countries thirty years ago.

However, it is exciting and comforting to realize that this conversation is taking place in so many other countries around the world. Plans are being drawn up for a transition to a renewable energy economy, in which

the production of energy is more decentralized and people have more control over its consumption and sale.

Adnan Amin, from Kenya, is IRENA's first director-general. Renewable energy is the only way to provide energy security and a "more stable, safer, cleaner and sustainable" world, he says. "In five years' time, IRENA should be the hallmark in terms of renewable energy information, technology cooperation and facilitation, setting the standards that will facilitate the uptake of renewable energy globally."

IRENA was deliberately not formed as a UN agency, wanting to be lean, efficient and transparent and to avoid excessive bureaucracy and the inaction. The hope is that IRENA will be a forum of action, positive thinking and collaboration. It will facilitate access to technical and economic data, share experiences on best practices and lessons learned, and assist with capacity-building and access to finance.

Many developing countries view renewable energy as perhaps the only way of providing energy access to their citizens, especially in remote areas.

Jose Rene Almendras, Secretary of Energy for the Philippines, said that his motivation to reduce reliance on fossil fuel comes from the fact that "every time the price of fuel goes up, they burn my picture in the streets."

Small countries, like Samoa, Grenada, Kiribati and Fiji, encourage affordable renewable energy because addressing climate change is a matter of survival for small island states. So IRENA is helping Tonga, for example, develop a ten-year plan for renewable energy.

As Hermann Scheer once argued, renewables are the only sensible way forward. "It is obvious that conventional energies will become more and more expensive over time, whereas the costs for renewables steadily decrease."

For more information on IRENA, visit [www.irena.org](http://www.irena.org). To find out more on the life and publications of Hermann Scheer visit [www.hermannscheer.de](http://www.hermannscheer.de)

*Judith Quinn is a former member of the Social Justice Committee board of directors. She lives part of the year in Dubai.*

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*Bits of good news...*

## Hershey chocolates to be certified child-labour free

In October Hershey announced it would only use 100% certified cocoa by 2020 for its global chocolate product lines, and accelerate its programs to help eliminate child labour in the cocoa regions of West Africa.

In its press release, Hershey said independent auditors will assure that the cocoa is grown "in line with the highest internationally recognized standards for labor, environmental and better farming practices." The company says that less than five percent of the world's cocoa supply is certified now.

## Cooperatives may succeed where NGOs have not in Ethiopia

As Ethiopia imposes increasing restrictions on foreign-backed NGOs, cooperatives - which have boosted the country's coffee industry - are being championed as a preferred model for economic development.

NGOs have been active in Ethiopia for roughly 40 years, yet the country still ranks in the world's seventh percentile in terms of health, education and living standards, according to the UN Development Programme's human development index. This has led to questions about the effectiveness of NGOs - especially those that are foreign-backed - in creating tangible, long-term progress.

By contrast, say development observers and government advisers, the cooperative model gives ownership of development issues to those affected by them, creating incentives for lasting change."

Ethiopia's coffee industry has recently seen significant growth, thanks in part to indigenous coffee cooperatives - demonstrating, advocates say, cooperatives' superiority to NGO assistance. (Source: IRIN)



## Presente!

**T**he SJC has worked in solidarity with Central American communities affected by Canadian gold mining companies ever since a group of us visited the site of the Marlin Mine in Guatemala about ten years ago. Community leaders from the town of Sipicapa, just on the edge of the mine, made it clear to us that local people did not want the mine and, since the company was Canadian, that they expected our support of their resistance to the mine.

That support continues, and in November I went on my latest trip to Central America. Goldcorp is starting to shut down the Marlin Mine, and people are concerned about how well the company will restore the land and water.

It didn't take long to learn that, although this mine was approaching the end of its life, Goldcorp has plans to open up several other mines nearby. Marlin II, III, etc. So I met with people from other communities who were beginning to organize their resistance to these new mines. Their reasons are familiar: lack of free, informed, and prior consent; damage to the surrounding environment; conflict within the communities; a scarcity of clean water...

A few days later I met with Dr. Yuri Melini. (Some of you will remember Yuri from his visit to Canada that the SJC sponsored a couple of years ago.) He took me to visit two other mines I hadn't been to before.

The first was the Escobal (San Rafael) silver and gold mine just outside of Santa Rosa de Flores, owned by Tahoe Resources, a Canadian company. Here, people told me they are worried about the scarcity and contamination of their water supply. They said that the company had not yet received an exploitation license but was already working anyway. Local communities were trying to convince the government not to grant the licence.

[Update: As I was writing this column I got the news that the government did grant the license. Yuri immediately responded, saying that his organization, CALAS, would take the government to court. Shortly afterwards shots were fired at CALAS, while Yuri was in the building. The next day, Rafael Maldonado, CALAS' lawyer, said that his house had been broken into.]

My next visit was to the Tambor mine, formerly Canadian-owned but now American, where people from the local community had blockaded the mine for almost nine months. A few days previously, the people had been attacked by miners and thugs; they were expecting another attack soon. Yolanda, one of their leaders, had been shot and seriously injured but she was back at the blockade site.

People in these communities made several things clear to me: there are more mines, and most are Canadian owned. There is strong, organized resistance that counts upon and appreciates international support.

It has not always been easy and progress is slow. But what about the people who have seen their land taken away or damaged, their children and cattle sick and dead? I have had the good fortune to meet many of them and see how much they appreciate our support. Now is not the time for us to weaken; it is the time for greater engagement. And the SJC will be *Presente!*

Ernie Schibli is a founding member of the SJC and president of its board of directors. Contact: [ernie@s-j-c.net](mailto:ernie@s-j-c.net)

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# 5 ways you can be part of the global struggle against poverty and for human rights

1. **Learn** about the people under oppression, and understand their issues, through SJC educational resources and the *Upstream Journal* magazine.
2. **Subscribe to our email bulletin** to know about SJC events or announcements and appeals for action. [www.sjc-cjs.org](http://www.sjc-cjs.org)
3. **Join us on Facebook** to see more about our campaigns and the work of others - [www.facebook.com/cjssjc.montreal](http://www.facebook.com/cjssjc.montreal).
4. **Use your voice.** Write to decision-makers about the human rights issues we engage in.
5. **Be a member of the SJC**, and support your organization with regular donations.

Information gives people a subversive power against tyranny. The greater the knowledge and education the more difficult it is to oppress.

Most articles are produced in the SJC office by volunteers and interns who are in training in journalism, with guidance and content input from the editor. Views expressed in the *Upstream Journal* are the writers' own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Social Justice Committee.

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**The Upstream Journal is seeking volunteers and interns in writing, design or magazine development.**

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If you are interested in volunteering or interning with us, contact the editor.



The Social Justice Committee  
Le Comité pour la justice sociale

**The Social Justice Committee of Montreal** is an independent Canadian organization working in international solidarity. Conscious that many of the world's impoverished peoples are victims of social injustice, and inspired by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its mission is to engage Canadians in working for a more socially just world.

The SJC has been working to raise awareness of the root causes of hunger, poverty and repression in the world through our education programs since 1975. As an independent human rights organization, the SJC provides education and advocacy about global poverty and inequality to help individuals and organizations become actively engaged in efforts to create a more just global society.

The SJC depends on financial support from its members and the general public. It is a registered charitable organization; donations are tax deductible.

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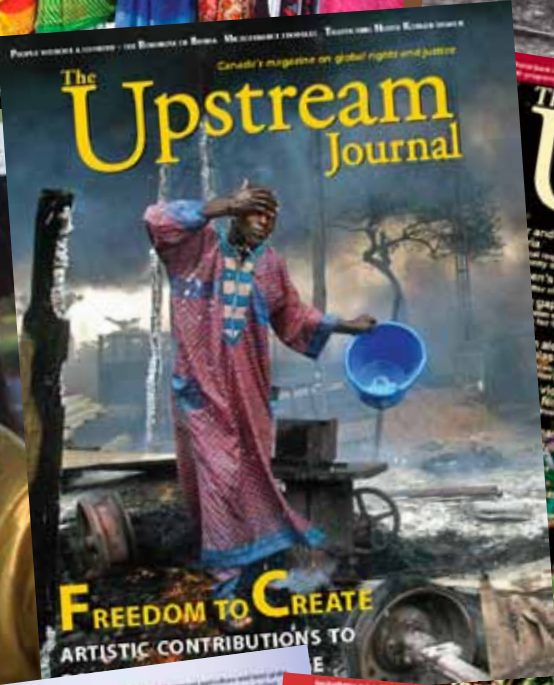
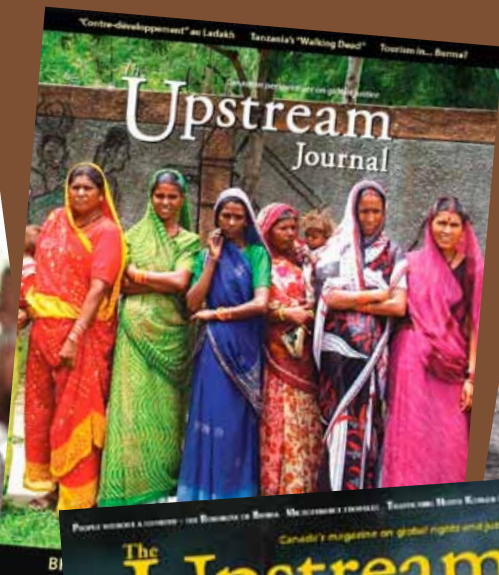
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