

AJWS REPORTS

Spring 2009

DISPLACED BY ENDLESS WAR

INSIDE:

AJWS Interviews Journalist Nicholas Kristof
Mumbai's Endangered Slums
The Migrant's Dilemma

AMERICAN
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AJWS Reports

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Dear Friends:

Every day in the news we hear about the downturn on Wall Street and the tightening of belts on Main Street. But relatively little is said about the impact of the recession on the unpaved roads in rural El Salvador or the narrow alleys of the world's largest slum in Mumbai. We are all hurting in 2009, but developing countries and their citizens feel every dip in our global economy in a way that few of us in North America can imagine. For the billion people already living in severe poverty in the world today, a recession doesn't just mean spending cuts: it can mean starvation, violence and the total upheaval of daily life.

Upheaval is the subject of this issue of *AJWS Reports*, which focuses on displacement, a problem that is worsening as the economic outlook dims. The poor and oppressed are increasingly homeless, migrating across borders, within borders, from rural to urban landscapes and from their homes to refugee and IDP camps. People are forced to move to escape genocide and despotic military regimes, to rebuild after natural disasters, and to resettle when ancestral lands are exploited for mining or urban development. This movement uproots lives and communities and impacts livelihoods around the globe. Because of the severity of this problem, the UN has selected migration as the topic of its upcoming 2009 Human Development Report to call attention to this major crisis of our time.

The displaced in places like eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur and Haiti can't wait for the economy to rebound—they need our help desperately now. During difficult times we should do more to bolster the grassroots and community-based groups that help the poor and the displaced—not less. A recession is a time for our compassion, contribution and action, because no matter how grim the news is on Wall Street, Main Street and in Washington, people in the developing world are far worse off than we are. This makes AJWS's role—and your help—more critical than ever. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to promoting peace, justice and change with AJWS.

Ruth W. Messinger
President

AJWS Reports is published biannually by American Jewish World Service, an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.



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COVER Life is overturned for a woman displaced by Democratic Republic of Congo’s war, now in its 15th year. She takes refuge in a shelter at Kibati, north of Goma. Finbarr O’Reilly / REUTERS.

FACING PAGE Displaced Congolese civilians queue at a food distribution center in eastern Congo. Sarah Elliott / REUTERS.

ABOVE TOP Refugees pour across the Ngueli Bridge into Cameroon, fleeing fighting in Chad. Les Neuhaus / REUTERS.

ABOVE RIGHT Bulengo refugee camp, near Goma, is home to a 16-year-old girl in eastern Congo. Finbarr O’Reilly / REUTERS.

AJWS Reports was printed on paper that was produced locally and contains 30% post-consumer recycled content material. This issue saved 2 tons of wood, 11 million BTUs of energy, required 5,000 fewer gallons of water, eliminated 2,400 lbs. of CO₂ from greenhouse gas production and prevented 700 lbs. of solid waste from entering landfills. These estimates were made using the Environmental Defense Paper Calculator. For more information, please visit www.papercalculator.org.

DISPLACED BY ENDLESS WAR

PROTECTION

A refugee camp in eastern Congo is now home to this teenage girl and others displaced in fall 2008.

House, home and family are under siege in Congo

By Leah Kaplan Robins

The conflict that has been called the world's deadliest since WWII is being waged right in the midst of communal life in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, or Congo). At the vortex of DRC's seemingly endless war, civilians endure violence that is punctuated as much by psychological wounds as by gunfire. The vast tide of displaced Congolese, for whom home has become a battlefield, live in a reality in which women have come to expect rape rather than love and children learn to kill before they can read. Living in camps and in impoverished communities in the path of the conflict, they are the everyday casualties of the war in Congo.

Far from Home

Since a resurgence of rebel clashes in October 2008, an estimated 250,000 people have fled to Goma, a border town in North Kivu Province. Having left homes and farms elsewhere in the country, they are known as internally displaced persons,

or IDPs. The newest displaced join 750,000 others who arrived at various points during the last 15 years of fighting—a mix of Congolese IDPs and refugees from the Rwandan genocide. Civilians seem to be carried by the gale forces of destruction in this war, moving from one place to another as militias bloody their communities again and again.

AJWS's partner, Kivu Refugee Network,* reported in November: "No human being can stand the sight of the scenes that are unfolding. MONUC [the UN's peacekeeping mission] announced that more than 150 people were killed in the latest attack in North Kivu. Our center was looted and all our staff and my family have run away. You will know as soon as we have a proof of life or learn their whereabouts."

Many of the people displaced this fall suffered through the winter rains in crude tents near the MONUC headquarters, or huddled in churches or community centers. Those surviving in makeshift settlements are among eastern Congo's

most desperate. According to one of our partners nearby, they "have no assistance. The situation is disastrous." Other refugees seek shelter with local families, taxing their hosts' already meager resources. "The food crisis is hitting hard," says a grantee* who declined to be named. "I am currently hosting 17 people in my house and we are getting by on one meal a day."

Those who reached the established refugee camps that gird the city are faring better—but not much. AJWS's grantees there report that aid from The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN and a patchwork of other agencies has been insufficient to feed the displaced, leading to water-borne disease and malnutrition. The camps also provide little refuge against the brutality that the displaced have tried to leave behind. In November, rebels raided and destroyed several IDP camps in Kiwanja, north of Goma, forcing thousands to flee again. Militias wage night killing and

* Non-governmental organizations in Congo are vulnerable to attack. Where indicated, their names have been changed or omitted to ensure their security.

raping sprees, and violence is committed both among the displaced in the scramble for resources and by frustrated police and security forces.

The War Against Women

Women and girls are violated with alarming frequency and largely without consequences. They are kidnapped by soldiers and brutalized or attacked by men in the camps.

“I was raped by a ruthless military man who kept me nine months with six other girls,” says 20-year-old Sifa. “We were beaten and raped every day.” Fifteen-year-old Sylvie “was kidnapped by a sergeant of the Regular Army, 11th Brigade. He handcuffed me, tortured and raped me continuously for 10 days,” she says. Both girls found AJWS grantee SOFEDI Action, which cared for them and provided HIV testing and vocational training. Like many in their situation, they bore babies fathered by their rapists.

In one particularly brutal case, soldiers murdered and dismembered 32-year-old Yvonne’s husband right in front of her. “Afterwards, 12 of them raped me,” she says. “They found my daughters, 15 and 12, who were hiding in the

room, and raped them too.” SOFEDI is helping Yvonne and her children—also impregnated by their attackers—pick up the pieces of their lives.

Rape was criminalized in Congo in 2006, but the legislation has had little impact on the eastern region. SOFEDI’s director, Viviane Sebahire, says that the greatest challenge is “combating impunity for those who violate the rape law, because more often than not, perpetrators are not prosecuted and punished.” Most women don’t report sexual attacks out of fear and shame, and the government lacks the capacity to mobilize effective law enforcement and judicial operations in a conflict zone. Yet in some cases, justice is possible. Sylvie’s attacker tried to abduct her again after she escaped, and SOFEDI lobbied for his arrest. The organization works to help survivors speak out. “It is critical that they break the silence.”

Guns in the Hands of Children

Displaced children are under a different kind of attack. Without school, recreation or visible prospects for a future in the camps, they are highly vulnerable to abduction by militias. Armed groups lure them with the promise of a better life and

train them to be ruthless killers. Most die on the battlefield, used by rebel groups as disposable “human shields.”

WITNESS’s Bukeni Tete Waruzi, formerly director of an AJWS partner, the Child Soldier Project, describes what happens to children taken in by militias: “They are trained to kill; their minds are altered. They learn how to manipulate weapons, how to use knives, how to forcibly kill someone.” Girl soldiers, he says, “are sexually abused—not only by the commanders, but by the entire group.”

The militias have a tremendous psychological hold on these children raised in upheaval, providing them with structure, a sense of community and an outlet for anger and frustration that they often don’t find in their war-torn communities. AJWS grantee Get Ahead* rescued 80 child combatants in late January and is working to rehabilitate them. “Not enough is being done by the [aid] agencies,” says its director, “to keep children occupied and entertained, to reduce the incentives for them to re-enlist.” Get Ahead will work closely with these fragile kids for as long as it takes, pending availability of funds, to provide them with activity and prospects for a future without violence.

An End to the Fighting

A long series of ceasefires and diplomacy efforts have so far failed to bring peace to eastern Congo. Waruzi comments on his country’s uncertain future: “I think DRC is still really far away from long-term, or even mid-term, stability. We hope that the involvement of the international community and the regional stakeholders can help us build a strong nation.”

In the meantime, he thinks that salvation can come on an individual level: “As an African, as a Congolese, I don’t have money to give them, I don’t have power, but if I can save the lives of one or two children, that is my contribution to my community. Five million people have died as a result of the conflict in Congo. It’s time to think about doing as much as we can for ourselves.” ■



HUNGRY AND WAITING
A woman displaced by fighting sits with her two children at a feeding center near Goma.

PHOTO STRINGER / REUTERS

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof has been to "Hell on Earth." He visited eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in 2007, a time when the conflict between Tutsi rebels and Hutu militias was starting to dramatically escalate again, on the heels of 15 years of vicious conflict. The continuing violence has led to new waves of displaced civilians and nearly constant bloodshed.

A few days after rebel leader Laurent Nkunda was arrested in January, AJWS's Josh Berkman had the opportunity to ask Mr. Kristof a few questions about the warring militias, the effects of starvation and the prevalence of gruesome rape, which threaten the very fabric of civil society.



Hell on Earth

An interview with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nicholas Kristof

Why has catastrophic violence persisted in eastern Congo while the rest of the country has achieved greater stability?

Eastern Congo is a mess for two reasons. First, the Hutu-Tutsi conflict is still playing out, 15 years after the Rwandan genocide. Second, rebel groups can easily get support from neighboring countries and can export precious metals and resources such as coltan or diamonds through neighboring countries like Rwanda and Uganda. If running a militia wasn't profitable, there wouldn't be warlords.

Natural resources are a huge liability to Congo. Why is that?

One of the worst things a country can have is a vast bounty of natural resources, and Congo is a victim of that bounty rather than a beneficiary of it. Experts call this the "natural resources curse," and there's a well-known inverse relationship between a country's dependence on resources and its long-term rate of economic growth. One reason is that resource-dependent countries tend to have over-valued exchange rates, which harms other sectors of the economy such as manufacturing. Another reason is that rebel groups have a financial reason to fight and can monetize the territory that they control. Research into insurgencies suggests that the crucial factor in the rise of a rebel movement isn't

grievance but rather the ability to exploit resources to pay for weapons and to make rebels rich.

DRC has been called "Hell on Earth." In addition to the killing, what is going on in Congo that, in your opinion, is most deserving of this epithet?

Rape is a problem in conflicts all over the world, but I have never, ever seen a conflict where the rapes are as widespread and as brutal as in Congo. Women are often raped with sticks that tear apart their insides; soldiers fire guns into the vaginas of women and girls. As best I can make out, the rapes have become a bonding mechanism for militia members. They engage in barbaric rapes as a kind of gang rite, and they show their toughness by demonstrating their cruelty.

People sometimes say that women are the worst victims of war, but I think that's

mistaken one-upmanship; after all, the male mortality rate is significantly higher than that of women. But the culture of rape in eastern Congo is a pathology that is unfathomably horrible and will have reverberations long after the conflict is over.

With five million people dead, does this qualify as genocide?

The slaughter in Congo is awful, but I don't believe it's genocide. You have groups killing people in ways that often have an ethnic element, but it's not a case of a government or quasi-government deliberately choosing people on the basis of ethnicity and killing them or driving them out. It's more like the brutal chaos of Somalia than like the organized Sudanese genocide in Darfur. I think we should set a fairly high bar before using the word genocide to avoid devaluing it, and while Congo is horrendous in terms of numbers I don't believe it qualitatively rises to that standard.

What will it take to bring stability to eastern Congo?

There are some specific steps that are needed: a bigger, more robust, more mobile UN force with a stronger mandate; pressure on Rwanda to stop supporting Tutsi rebels; pressure on Rwanda and Uganda to halt the export of minerals from Congo; more training of Congolese forces; repatriation of more Rwandan Hutu to Rwanda and a crackdown on the remaining extremist Hutu elements; and also a harsher crackdown on the Lord's Resistance Army to the north. But what is needed above all is political will to deal with the problem; if the world's leaders have the will, the resources and policies will follow.

Why is engagement of high-level diplomats so important in ending humanitarian crises such as this one?

At the end of the day, diplomacy is still about carrots and sticks—reward

and punishment—and only high-level figures can credibly promise benefits for cooperation or whacks for obduracy. The tendency with humanitarian crises is for Western governments to dispatch low-level, second-string negotiators, and that doesn't work. In contrast, the 2005 north-south agreement in Sudan followed an intensive high-level American diplomatic initiative. And the 2008 Kenya agreement likewise followed heroic efforts by Kofi Annan backed up by other world leaders, including Condoleezza Rice.

Are people right to question the UN's ability to protect civilians and humanitarian workers? What can be done to bolster their effectiveness where they operate?

UN peacekeepers are lousy, but far better than the alternative, which is not having UN peacekeepers. When I'm in Congo or elsewhere, I always conclude that the criticisms of peacekeepers are all valid—but, boy, I sure feel better in a tough neighborhood when I see the blue helmets. And some studies show that UN peacekeepers are highly cost effective, because the alternative is paying for long-term refugee and relief efforts that cost incomparably more.

Most people don't realize that our cellphones and laptops might contain coltan, one of the exploited metals at the root of so much violence in eastern Congo. Aside from not using these products, which is unrealistic, what can people with a conscience do?

I agree that a boycott of coltan isn't feasible, but we can demand an end to exports of Congolese coltan through Rwanda or neighboring countries. We should also put more pressure on regional governments. Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, has done a superb job running his country and he cares about international opinion—so we should hold his feet to the fire for his behavior in Congo. It was probably because he did feel pressure that his troops recently arrested General Nkunda, the warlord he had previously supported, in a move that may mark a step toward security. We can also demand that Kagame do more to encourage the repatriation of Hutus in Congo to defuse the warfare there, and ensure that Rwanda doesn't see eastern Congo simply as its buffer zone. Kagame depends on the U.S. and we should use that leverage to help the people of Congo escape from their "Hell on Earth."



ABOVE Kristof with POWs, including a child soldier, at General Nkunda's camp.

FACING PAGE A woman in the village Kalenge, near the front line of fighting in February.

PHOTO WILL OKUN



NOWHERE TO GO
A man walks through a refugee site for internally displaced people fleeing fighting and ethnic attacks in eastern Chad.

~~FREEDOM OF~~ MOVEMENT

PHOTO FINBARR O'REILLY / REUTERS

By Sarah Meyer

We are in the midst of a crisis of movement, even as rapid transit, international commerce and the Internet have made borders more permeable in our ever more interconnected world. Millions of people each year are moved forcefully and unjustly against their will: the Burmese adrift at sea trying to seek asylum in Thailand; the thousands of Congolese living in camps because of the ongoing attacks by rebel groups; the villages that are submerged when a new dam is built downstream. Their lives and communities are destroyed and the world is irrevocably changed.

The United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon wrote that displacement in the developing world remains “arguably

the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face.”

The words “refugee,” “asylum-seeker,” “IDP,” “illegal alien” and “migrant” are often used interchangeably—but behind them are highly individual stories of suffering and numbers often too large to fathom. Clarifying the terminology helps us to understand the nuanced causes and consequences of this crisis of global movement.

Refugee: A person who seeks safety in another country out of fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or identity.

There are approximately 15 million refugees today¹ who have left everything behind to escape genocide, conflict, civil war, ethnic cleansing and forced

1-8 Footnotes: www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

recruitment by militias. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to protect them and provide food and water, shelter and healthcare. Yet, many refugees become dependent on the aid that they receive in camps, because they are frequently denied freedom of movement and access to work and education that they would need to get on their feet. Nearly six million people today are in protracted exile, of at least five years, with little hope of ever returning home.

Asylum Seeker: A person who has left his or her country of origin, has applied for recognition as a refugee in another country, and is awaiting a decision.

Unfortunately, many asylum seekers end up in limbo for years pending approval of their applications—at worst,

in detention centers where they have no legal rights.

Internally Displaced Person or IDP: Similar to a refugee, but within one's own country.

Because IDPs remain under the political jurisdiction of their home countries—which are often complicit in the violence that caused them to flee—it is much more difficult for humanitarian agencies to intervene on their behalf. In fact, under current international law, IDPs have far fewer protections than refugees. This disparity is clear in the camps in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, which house IDPs from nearby towns as well as Rwandan refugees from the 1994 genocide. The two groups receive different kinds of aid from different sources.

Until very recently, there had been no official policy on aid for IDPs and no agency charged with their assistance. The UN has tried to change that: its Commission on Human Rights published the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in 1998 and in 2005 it mandated that agencies like UNHCR and UNICEF provide services for the internally displaced, especially in conflict situations.

But even so, the principles aren't binding, and the mandate has not always translated to adequate action on the ground. According to Francis Deng, former UN Secretary General on Internal Displacement and currently Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide, the protection and assistance of IDPs in many parts of the world is still "a neglected concern, or an unfulfilled aspiration, at best."²

IDPs thus face tremendous risk of malnutrition, disease and violence. In northern Uganda, for example, the HIV/AIDS rate among the internally displaced is six times higher than that of the general population.³

Migrant Workers: There are approximately 30 million poor migrant workers today⁴ whose labor has a major impact on the Gross Domestic Product of developing countries.

Economic migration is often seen as purely voluntary, but for most poor migrant workers it is hardly a matter of choice at all. The poor leave home because they cannot feed their families, afford healthcare or educate their children. They leave villages for cities and poor countries for richer, industrialized ones, often sending their earnings home to support dependent families.

Urban centers balloon under the pressure of new immigrants, and are often unprepared for the greater demand for healthcare, sanitation, housing and social services. Migrants generally work in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs where they are subject to forced labor, exploitation, abuse and denial of their rights.

Development-Induced Displacement: Over 10 million people every year are displaced by development.⁵

While a new dam or road may benefit the broader economy of a town, the poor, indigenous or ethnic minority groups who live on the land are rarely consulted or adequately compensated when they're forced to move. Some governments have guidelines for appropriate resettlement and compensation schemes; however, these are rarely implemented. Most of the time, populations are simply dispossessed and left impoverished.

Climate-Induced Displacement: In any given year, as many as 50 million people are displaced due to tsunamis, earthquakes, landslides, flooding and other natural disasters.⁶

When disasters like these strike, they affect the poor disproportionately. The 2004 tsunami displaced two million people in Southeast Asia, Cyclone Nargis in 2008 displaced 800,000 Burmese. In fact, 90 percent of natural disaster victims live in developing countries. This is because poor regions often lack the infrastructure and planning for disaster management, and the poor often live in flimsy structures in vulnerable areas like coastlines and unstable hillsides. When disasters strike, people are

killed inside their crumbling homes and precarious edifices wash away. We saw this phenomenon in action in the United States when Hurricane Katrina decimated New Orleans' poor Lower Ninth Ward.

Many believe that climate change is making catastrophic events more frequent, and that communities should brace themselves for future peril.

Human Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation and transfer of individuals by force or coercion for the purpose of exploitation.

"Slavery" often conjures images of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which ended in the early 19th century. Yet the trade is alive and well today in the form of human trafficking, in which perpetrators recruit, transport and exploit women, men and children across the globe for prostitution, forced labor and debt-bondage.

Because trafficking is covert and illegal, it is hard to pin down the number of victims. UNHCR estimates that anywhere between 700,000 and four million people are trafficked internationally each year. According to UNICEF, 1.2 million children fall prey to traffickers annually.⁷ The number of modern slaves spikes when we take into account the many millions of people engaged in local forced labor. The International Labour Organization cites 12.3 million people enslaved today, of which 2.4 million are victims of human trafficking.⁸

These phenomena are real and increasing. The challenge for the international community—humanitarian agencies, development NGOs and governments—is to respond with compassion and concerted action, to help the displaced return home, and to make sure that home is a secure, safe and economically viable place to stay. ■■

» Grassroots Impact

AJWS supports dozens of organizations working with refugee and IDP populations. To learn more about their work, visit:

www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

“We won’t let them turn our town into a desert.”

By Julia Kaminsky
AJWS World Partners Fellow

“Que bello”—how beautiful, whispered my 17-year-old neighbor Chepe as we stepped back to admire our work, paintbrushes still in hand. What had started out that morning as a faint sketch on an otherwise unremarkable wall was now colorfully taking form as a mural of a crane encroaching upon a lush landscape. A steady stream of people had been arriving since the morning—on foot, on bicycles, in the back of a rusting red pickup—all eager to take up brushes and declare their opposition to gold mining in their town.

It was May 2008, and just two months prior, I had arrived in San Isidro, a rural municipality of 10,000 people in Cabañas, one of El Salvador’s poorest regions. I was there through AJWS’s World Partners Fellowship to volunteer for Asociación Amigos de San Isidro Cabañas (ASIC), a

grassroots community-development NGO. When I first set foot in the dusty, wilted town, I had no idea that I was walking straight into the epicenter of a national and international battle.

The gold-rich subsoil of northern El Salvador has attracted various foreign mining companies, among them Pacific Rim, which operates the most advanced gold exploration project in the country. It operates in San Isidro, near tributaries to the Lempa River—the lifeline of much of Cabañas and San Salvador. Exploratory drilling—the process by which the company finds gold deposits—has deepened groundwater levels, causing water sources in several of San Isidro’s rural communities to dry up.

A local activist, Graciela Funes, points to an empty cement tank that once was a well: “People used to come here to wash their clothes, bathe and bring water to their houses. I am afraid that we will be left without water. We don’t have the money to buy it.”

If Pacific Rim receives the exploitation permit that it seeks from the government of El Salvador, the results would be disastrous. In a single day, the mine would use 900,000 liters of water—a quantity that could sustain the average Salvadoran household for 20 years. It would also use two tons of cyanide, which, with other toxic substances, would end up in the rivers, groundwater, air and rain.

Due to heavy deforestation, a long dry season and inadequate facilities for treating wastewater, Salvadorans’ access to potable water is already low, particularly in rural areas. And given the importance of water for agriculture—the principle livelihood in the region—residents are angry that their land is being raped for foreign economic gain.

Anti-mining activist Santos Rodriguez lost several fingers when he was brutally attacked by a mine promoter. “They would rather get rich than protect the well-being of the country,” he says. In nearby Palo Bonito, Lidia Uribe’s pigs died when the water source dried up, leaving her without an income. She is worried about the future: “I am resentful and angry because they are taking away my way of life. If they end up mining, we would have to move, look for other places to live. After so many years here that wouldn’t be easy.”

Nevertheless, Pacific Rim maintains that under the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), its investment of \$77 million in El Salvador entitles it to proceed. Community members have become increasingly determined to halt its activities. Up against a wealthy, powerful corporation, they continue with the unshaken resolve to protect their lands, livelihoods and lives.

In collaboration with local youth and other NGOs, ASIC has painted three murals in San Isidro that celebrate the



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASIC

environment and denounce the exploitation that threatens to destroy it. They are part of an awareness campaign designed to get community members involved.

There was a palpable excitement among residents as we painted our mural. We blasted the radio, listening to the anti-mining announcements that local teenagers like Chepe had recorded for a nearby community station. Small children, too young to participate in the painting, offered anti-mining flyers to passersby. Now, the once-crumbling bricks of San Isidro's tired walls—walls which have weathered rain, war and the constant beating sun—stand transformed, a vivid reminder of human resilience.

In August, the community held a celebration inaugurating the murals. Hundreds of people from San Isidro and surrounding municipalities attended the event, which included a performance by Wilfredo Lainez, a 22 year old rapper nearly blind in both eyes from a childhood disease. Lainez has become a local hero for his socially conscious music. That day, he gazed out intently at the

audience as he rapped: "We won't let them turn our town into a desert."

Armed with paint, words and homemade beats, the people of San Isidro—from lawyers, to illiterate farmers, to young kids dreaming of a better life—are uniting, a veritable David up against a bulldozer-clawed Goliath. They have been joining forces with similarly affected communities throughout El Salvador and

Central America, forming strong networks of solidarity. It is my hope that their work will pay off, and that access to clean water will become an inalienable right for all rather than a privilege for some.

I asked Ramiro Rivera, a community leader from a nearby town, why this cause is so important. He replied: "We are asking for respect, because even as a small community, we have dignity." ■■■



RESISTANCE
Youth demonstrate against Pacific Rim's activities in San Isidro.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ASIC

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PHOTO RUTH MESSINGER

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SENDING MONEY HOME

Supporting families thousands of miles away, migrant workers struggle with poverty, identity and separation.

By Rabbi Brent Spodek,
AJWS Rabbi-in-Residence

For many American Jews, “immigration” conjures up images of huddled masses arriving at Ellis Island to build a better life in America. We imagine the “Old Country” either nostalgically, as a place where fiddlers danced on roofs, or tragically, as the scene of pogroms and the Holocaust. For most of our ancestors, immigration was a one-way street. The archetypal Jewish immigration story, of Abraham leaving for the Land of Israel, follows this narrative. Abraham leaves his father’s house, never to return.

However, there is a different immigrant narrative represented by the life of Jacob, who fled a famine in the Land of Israel and spent the last 17 years of his life in Egypt. As he prepares for his death, Jacob tells his son Joseph that he wants to be buried in his native land. In many ways, Jacob was the first “transnational” migrant, living abroad in pursuit of greater prosperity, yet psychologically bound to the land from which he came.⁹

With one foot in his native country and the other in his adopted land, Jacob represents a story common among contemporary immigrants to America, many of whom maintain tight connections and a deep longing for their countries of origin.

For example, the Dominican Republic, a country of only nine million people, has more than two million citizens living and working overseas. The overwhelming majority of them speak to their families at least once a week and visit as often as possible.¹⁰

This enormous diaspora has a tremendous financial impact. Approximately 70% of Dominican migrants send money home on a regular basis, generally in denominations of only about \$150 at a time. Together, these small sums add up to more than \$3 billion annually, which is more than 1,000 times greater than the foreign aid sent by the United States government to the Dominican Republic.¹¹ According to the Inter-American Development Bank, Latin American and Caribbean migrants around the world sent \$66.5 billion back to their homelands in 2007, dwarfing all international foreign aid to the region. The burden of repairing the economic inequity in these countries falls unjustly on the migrant community.

Remittances are both a blessing and a curse. For more than one million Dominicans who make less than \$3,500 a year, the money they receive from family abroad provides food and medicine they otherwise couldn’t afford. Stories of low-wage migrants saving their money and changing the lives of the global poor on a family-by-family basis, are incredible testaments to the ability of individuals and small groups to become the agents of positive change.

Yet for many migrants, this money is earned through tremendous suffering.

They often have access only to menial or dangerous jobs with little chance of advancement. And the money sent home reflects financial support to individuals, but little structural progress in terms of the development of communal resources such as roads, hospitals and schools. Furthermore, migrants are often caught in a cycle of earning and sending home that guarantees that they will continue to live thousands of miles away from their loved ones indefinitely.

Jacob feared that he would die of grief trying to maintain his family in Egypt and Israel at the same time,¹² and many of today’s Latino and Caribbean migrants find themselves in exactly the same fragmented position. The costs can be devastating, both to individuals and to entire countries.

Jacob went to Egypt in search of economic security, and he found it. Yet his journey also resulted in more than 400 years of slavery for his descendants. The benefits seemed clear when he left Israel, but some of the costs took generations to be rectified. Many of today’s immigrants face a similar reality. While many of them achieve some degree of success, the ultimate costs of this migration—dislocated families, depleted human capital and dependent local economies—might also take years to address. ■

TRANSFORM YOUR SEDER

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- *All Who are Hungry, Come and Eat: A Seder Reading*

Available on our website:
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9-12 Footnotes: www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

David Salgado Aranda was an eight-year-old indigenous boy working alongside his family as a day laborer for the Paredes Agricultural Company in Sinaloa, Mexico. On January 6, 2007, he was run over by a tractor while picking tomatoes. To date, David's tragic death remains unpunished; his case was never prosecuted and his family has received no compensation for their loss. **By Sara Hahn**

The Migrant's Dilemma

The mountainous southern state of Guerrero is home to some of Mexico's poorest people—mostly indigenous farmers who once made a living from small-scale agriculture. Powerful agribusiness corporations, supported by unfair farming and trade policies, have devastated the economy of these local growers, and the Mexican government has turned a blind eye.

With no way to make a living off their own land or even protect it from confiscation, many people have no choice but to look for work elsewhere. And because many cannot afford the costs of crossing the border, they travel to northern Mexico to work as laborers on American and Canadian agribusiness plantations like Paredes.

The living conditions they encounter there can be atrocious. Alex Halkin, producer of "Paying the Price," a collaborative film on the conditions of Guerreran migrant workers, says: "There are so many human rights abuses: a lack of health care, lack of public schools, lack of dignified housing, lack of potable water. Workers aren't protected against toxic pesticides, they aren't given uniforms, they work barefoot. They're basically all sick, in one way or another. Children have to work because their parents aren't making a living wage."

All of this caught the attention of Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, a resource center, legal clinic and an education and advocacy organization rolled into one. Its dedicated staff offer legal counsel, advocate for indigenous rights, document abuses and provide resources for smaller local organizations to strengthen and grow.



Tlachinollan has galvanized action around the death of David Salgado Aranda. Paredes has refused to accept accountability despite the fact that it employed this underaged child illegally, and despite national laws that require special oversight for young adult employees. Instead, it has attempted to cover up its role, claiming that the accident did not happen on the company's fields, and tried to manipulate David's family into signing documents they could not read. Tlachinollan has responded by publicizing the issue widely, litigating the case and using film and documentation to make the death of one indigenous child an international cause.

"David's is not an isolated case. Thousands of young children work in the fields in the north of Mexico, and yet the government does not intervene," Tlachinollan recently argued. Indeed, David was one of four migrant children who were killed on agribusiness farms in 2007 and 2008. This February a child from Guerrero was killed by a truck on

the agribusiness plantation where his parents, themselves teenagers, worked. "It is urgent that the authorities address the matter of child labor and, more specifically, that of migrant agricultural workers, who work, grow up and live in conditions of semi-slavery, unable to exercise their most fundamental human rights," says Tlachinollan.

In the meantime, David's family has returned to working in the fields of Sinaloa. The sad reality for many internal migrants in Mexico is that agribusiness plantations are often their sole source of income. The Aranda family's situation is not unusual: thousands of families are forced to make these hard choices. And with the exception of dedicated organizations like Tlachinollan, no one is looking out for them. ■

» Paying the Price

Alex Halkin's film on Guerreran migrant workers puts David Salgado Aranda's tragic death in context of an unjust labor system.

View it at www.ajws.org/ajwsreports

Bringing Books to Ethiopia

For Ethiopian children, books are rare. Some graduate from college without ever having owned, or even held, one. Until 2003, there were no original picture books written in Ethiopian languages, and no public library from which to borrow books for free. Thanks to AJWS grantee Ethiopia Reads, that is changing.

By Leah Kaplan Robins



PHOTO J. CARRIER / J-CARRIER.COM

Ethiopian-born librarian Yohannes Gebregeorgis learned to read when Peace Corps volunteers visited his village school. His early encounters with their books nurtured a love of stories that has lasted a lifetime. When he came to the United States as a young political refugee he decided to make reading his livelihood.

In 1998, while working at the San Francisco Public library, Gebregeorgis founded Ethiopia Reads to address the dearth of children's books in Ethiopian languages and a deep chasm in the educational system in his home country.

He and his family moved back to Ethiopia, taking with them a hand-packed freight container full of books. With this cache of children's literature, he and American author Jane Kurtz built a small library in a house in the capital city, Addis Ababa. In the first year alone, 60,000 children registered for library cards, and more than a quarter million have visited in the years since.

"Kids started coming in thousands to read books, most of whom had never had or held one in their lives," Gebregeorgis says. "We saw several children holding books upside down. These are kids who go to school in the

capital—not the wilderness!—yet they have never had the opportunity to touch books. Some kids have come to the library almost every day since we opened. They say their grades are better because their comprehension is better."

Ethiopia Reads is changing the Ethiopian school system one volume at a time. It has established 10 libraries in major cities and schools, and sends small "portable" libraries of 200 books to schools that don't have room to house a full collection.

"Education without books is like eating food without spices," Gebregeorgis says. "We're adding that spice by establishing school libraries. Now the kids have some flavor that they can add to their education—history books, books about society, legends and myths." The organization aims to build a public library in every major Ethiopian city.

The "donkey mobile library," a book-mobile that traverses the southern countryside by donkey power, is, to date, Ethiopia's only lending library; wherever it goes, kids of all ages—more than 1,000 a month—gather to check out new books and read. Ethiopia Reads designed this

unusual traveling library to reach kids in remote villages and towns. Its bearer, a costumed donkey named "Queen Helena," has become a potent educational tool. The organization has woven a story around her that teaches children about humane treatment of animals—and by extension, human rights.

According to Gebregeorgis, "The kids have taken Queen Helena's message and it has become part of their literacy. They read books and learn new ideas and new ways of thinking: Why should we respect animals? Why do we respect people? What are their rights? In countries like Ethiopia the problems that we see happening frequently are because people don't understand their own rights, and therefore, don't respect the rights of others. Children can relate to all this if they are taught, especially in a way that they can read about it and embrace as a story."

Soon after the Addis Ababa library opened it became apparent that Ethiopian children desperately needed more than just books. Now every Saturday, kids flock to the library to shower, have their hair cut and braided and participate in language arts programs. They also

look forward to “bread and book day,” what Gebregeorgis calls “a symbolic feeding of the mind and body.” So far, over 100,000 children have received a loaf of bread and one of Ethiopia Reads’s original illustrated books.

The organization has been able to reach even the poorest children in Ethiopia. Gebregeorgis likes to tell of the day that

he went to buy bread and saw two kids begging: “They said they know me from the library. Can you imagine, beggar children coming and reading books?”

Experiences like these keep him going. “These children are the future of Ethiopia. Reading gives them hope and strength and the ability to cope with their present condition and help them do better in life.”

» Ethiopia Reads on CNN

Watch CNN’s tribute to the librarian who transformed literacy in Ethiopia. Gebregeorgis was honored on Thanksgiving as one of CNN’s *Top Ten Heroes for 2008*.

View it at www.ajws.org/ajwsreports



PHOTO | J. CARRIER / J-CARRIER.COM

DONOR PROFILE

AJWS board member Sally Gottesman believes in equality, change and the imperative to give.



Sally Gottesman’s philanthropy grows organically out of her deep belief in equal opportunity. Gottesman is an influential activist in the egalitarian Jewish prayer movement, and through the organizations that she founded—Moving Traditions and Kolot—she encourages Jewish expression in women, men and youth.

As a philanthropist, Gottesman seeks

funding opportunities that are both Jewish and global. “I want to give to non-Jews in need, but I want to do it through the Jewish community, using Jewish values,” she says. “AJWS is the best conduit that I have found for doing both at the same time. I’m helping to eradicate poverty, but I’m doing it as a Jew. In that sense AJWS is the best bang for my buck.”

Gottesman is committed to AJWS’s grassroots strategy because “it funds in the margins—giving capacity to small, local organizations that can respond quickly and adapt to need.” She prefers to fund young, upstart projects that “push the limits and urge people to think beyond their own experiences. This is where change comes from.”

While many people are afraid to give in today’s tense economic climate,

Gottesman argues that there is no better time for generosity. “I believe it’s not the amount of money you have that makes you philanthropic or not. I think that it’s a real mistake to wait until you have a certain amount to give it away. Giving is hard to do whether you’re rich or poor, but anyone who is reading this has so much compared to the poor communities that AJWS serves.”

Gottesman has words of wisdom for aspiring philanthropists: “Find whatever it is that you’re passionate about and stay with it,” she says. “Help it to thrive and grow and achieve whatever its goals are. Become knowledgeable about it, give it time, energy and intelligence, bring other people to it. Money alone doesn’t create change. Philanthropy is about long-term investment.”

A Landscape Reborn

Indonesian Communities Seek Regrowth and Renewal Four Years After the Tsunami



**By Melissa Extein,
AJWS Grants Staff**

60,000 Indonesians were among the more than a quarter million people who died in the massive tsunami that swept Indian Ocean coastal regions on December 27, 2004. In addition to physical destruction and the unfathomable loss of life, the wave left in its wake profound changes to society. In Indonesia, it altered the course of a devastating, multi-decade internal armed conflict between the armed separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government and military. In ways that aren't yet entirely understood, the disaster contributed to ending the struggle, likely through a combination of international attention and crippling loss on both sides. Though the tsunami caused catastrophic loss of life and resources, it set the stage for peacebuilding in Indonesia. Today, the Acehnese are building and mobilizing a stronger civil society, constructing lives in what they hope will be a peaceful future.

I landed in this lush region just a few weeks shy of the fourth anniversary of the tsunami to meet with 15 of AJWS's grantees and monitor their progress. They are among the beneficiaries of over \$11 million that AJWS donors contributed in 2004 in an outpouring of support for tsunami relief.

In every corner in Aceh, I saw and heard echoes of the angry sea and the things that it swept away. Wati, my translator and guide, told me that some who saw the barreling wave described it as another mountain appearing in the distance across the water. A fisherman pointed to a

willow palm tree standing about 30 feet high: "The wave that came ashore was as high as the top of the tree," he said.

Amidst the memories of loss, I also saw ample evidence of growth. Rows of new houses now stand several hundred feet back from decimated shorelines. New programs and services have been created to help people rebuild their lives.

Wati and I crisscrossed the region, visiting grassroots organizations in homes, fields and offices. In meeting after meeting, I was told that though much of the rebuilding has been completed, new problems have arisen. Some new homes

are uninhabitable due to poor or inappropriate construction; there is residual discord between communities that have and have not received aid from large international non-governmental organizations; misunderstandings occur when people do receive money as to whether it is a grant or a loan. One of our partners told us that their work has had to shift from reconstruction itself to addressing the conflicts and dependencies resulting from the massive influx of funding and humanitarian efforts.

Yet these problems have not crippled people's desire to heal. AJWS's partners

have built new organizations and have refocused the work of pre-existing ones to meet the complex needs that their new lives require. They oversee a diverse group of projects, from community centers and sustainable farming cooperatives to advocacy networks and women’s rights groups.

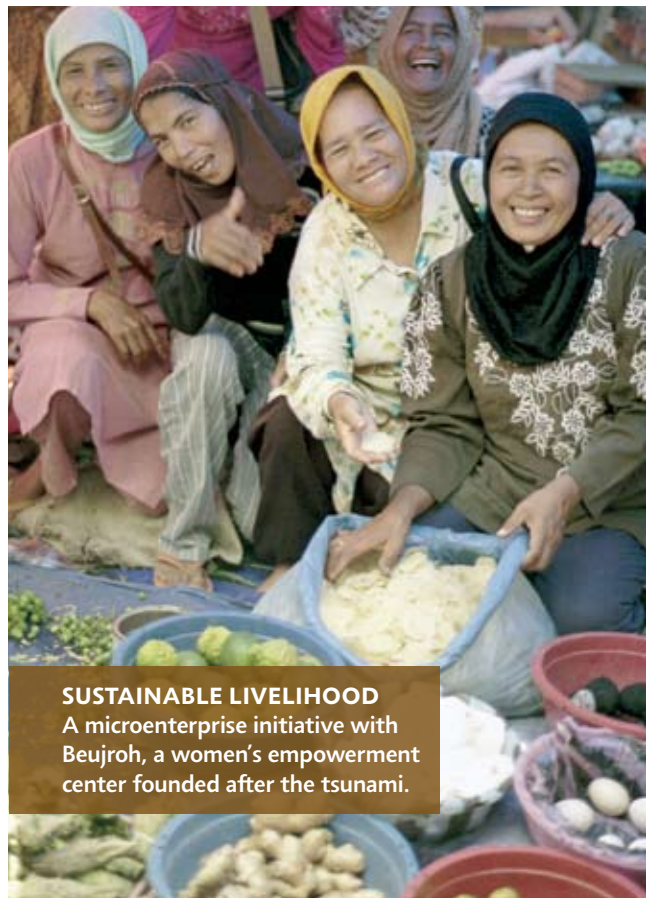
Women have a long history as community leaders in Aceh. During the years of conflict, many held their families and communities together even as they became targets of rape and torture and were increasingly relegated to more traditional roles in the home. Several of AJWS’s partners are working to bring women back to the forefront of public life with projects like a women-run radio station, Aceh’s first women’s newspaper and a campaign to strengthen women’s political participation.

I visited one town with Environment of Asia, an NGO that aids financial recovery by providing women’s groups with micro loans, seed money and management skills training. There, Nurasiah, a beneficiary of the program, told us: “My life has changed. I am now able to play a very important role in sustaining my family and I am even able to send my child to university. Before I became part of this project, I earned only [\$10] each month

from very occasional work. But now, with this group business, I am earning between [\$100-200] a month.”

“The women in my village are becoming stronger,” Nurasiah observed. “We often come and sit together to talk about the issues that are happening in the village and discuss how we are going to get involved in giving our input.”

Grassroots organizations are also working to prepare for future disasters. In Aceh’s Lhong District, I saw a new community map, recently created by village members with the help of a local disaster-risk-reduction facilitator trained by AJWS partner Samdhana Institute. The map illustrates the village’s exposure to potential harm and outlines tsunami evacuation routes and other response plans. Communities are working to spread awareness of the natural signs of a tsunami—animals running for higher



SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD
A microenterprise initiative with Beujroh, a women’s empowerment center founded after the tsunami.

ground, a salty smell in the air and the earth moving up and down.

Neni, Samdhana’s program coordinator, told me that the village we were in had a population of 1500 before the tsunami. Today, there are only 200 people left. Those who remain are committed to planning a safe future.

I left Indonesia concerned about the hard work still ahead, but buoyed by what I saw. Four years post-tsunami, Aceh’s resilient people show no signs of slowing down. They are rebuilding their lives, aiming to have even more opportunities than they did before and to heal the wounds of the past.

Real change takes time. Netty Herawati, a beneficiary of Sri Ratu, an organization that is training women in conflict resolution and peacekeeping techniques, told me: “I’m very sure that with this small group we can build many things, even though our progress is slow. Slowly, everything will be possible.”



FROM THE GROUND UP
Indonesians build new housing to replace homes that were destroyed.

PHOTO ELIZABETH TODER

Mumbai's Endangered Slums

PORTRAITS OF A COMMUNITY IN PERIL

In 2003, prompted by the growing liberalization of the Indian economy, government authorities in Mumbai embarked on a massive slum demolition program. City planners and industrialists dreamed of making Mumbai into the next Shanghai—a sparkling city of modernity and progress. In this new city of the future, Mumbai's shanties and their residents, a diverse multitude of men, women and children, would not have a place.

90,000 dwellings were razed in the first round of demolitions, displacing 350,000 slum and pavement residents to the margins of the city, where they have lived without access to municipal services or sources of employment since 2005. Even those who lived in the streets before the demolitions now lack even the ability to call a corner with running water nearby, "home." As the drive to realize a modernized India intensifies and plans for giant office complexes, shopping malls, high-rises and multimedia entertainment plazas continue, more of the poor and marginalized who have lived there for generations will slowly be squeezed out. It will be necessary to find innovative solutions to ensure that the rights to livelihood and services remain in the hands that built the city—the residents of Mumbai's slums.

Stiff opposition from slum communities and NGOs working in the area has slowed the rate of demolitions recently, though a constant threat hangs in the air. Plans to start demolitions in Dharavi, the largest slum in Mumbai and in all of Asia, have been discussed by developers and government officials. If this happens, the already fragile infrastructure of Mumbai will have to find a place for over half a million of the city's recyclers, tailors, leather tanners, laundrymen, potters and shopkeepers.

—Sandhya Gupta





DIVERSITY ON FILM These photographs, taken by participants in AJWS's fall Study Tour to India, capture daily life in Mumbai's slums.

FACING PAGE TOP RUTH MESSINGER **FACING PAGE BOTTOM** RUTH MESSINGER
THIS PAGE TOP JOLIE SCHWAB **LEFT** ALISON KATZ **ABOVE** BONNIE POTTER



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AJWS has received an "A" rating from the American Institute of Philanthropy since 2004 and a four-star rating from Charity Navigator for seven years in a row.