South cooperation.

In particular, the so-called

donor-countries" are chal-

lenged to reassess their aid

policies and priorities, which

have yet to produce the de-

sired positive effects on the

way the majority of people in

resources from the so-called

"receiver countries" in the

Third World to the "donor

countries" in the North aver-

aged \$12.5 billion annually in

the period 1983-1990,

according to the latest UN

The need is for the aid and

Human Development Report.

investment from the devel-

oped countries to be redi-

rected towards causes that

In fact, the net transfer of

the "receiver-countries" live.

# NGO's Call for Change in Attitude on Aid

by Vincent Magombe

Since its establishment in the early 1940's Oxfam

has been contributing to efforts to build a more

equitable world. It has been helping the needy

and the victims of conflict through its projects in

70 countries. As Oxfam celebrates its 50th birth-

If late, several non gover-· nmental , organisations (NGOs) have intensified their calls for new approaches to the issues of development as well as crisis-resolution in developing countries.

At the forefront are charities such as Oxfam and Save the Children, credited for their long experience of working with the poor and suffering in the Third World.

Oxfam, for one, has on its record fifty years of contribution to the global efforts directed at the building of a more equitable world.

Since its establishment in war-time Europe in the early 1940's, the charity has traversed the most difficult and dangerous of barriers, to reach the needy as well as the victims of human conflict.

Today, Oxfam has an annual income of £69 million and supports 2,300 projects in more than 70 countries.

The call for change by the NGOs comes at a time when economies of most developing countries are in turmoil. strangled by the debt-burden.

For sub-Saharan Africa alone this debt was estimated at \$175.8 billion. Meanwhile the day, reports Gemini News Service, awareness is growing that the problems faced by the developing countries can not be solved unless political questions are adequately addressed.

> opment model to which equity and social justice are alien. At the same time, governments in the developing countries are being asked to offer their people more chances for democratic and peaceful co-

existence. There is little doubt that the responsibility for the economic, social and political upheavals plaguing developing countries lies on the shoulders of local politicians. Corruption, ethnic conflicts and undemocratic regimes are common in many Third World countries.

But it is often forgotten that economic problems arising out of external debt, IMF-dictated structural adjustment programmes and an unfair inter-

sion-making processes. " This, in spite of the fact that these decisions are meant to determine the overall nature and direction of national development.

looming tragedies are to be

averted, much more needs to

be done by those who are able

to do something. But, this can

only be achieved within the

framework and context of po-

Bryer, puts it: "Without real

political commitment to

change in rich and poor coun-

tries poverty will continue to

whatever change one talks

about, it should be in form of

an empowerment of the peo

ple themselves to make their

the importance of involving lo-

cal communities in aid pro-

jects. Besides, the charity

plans to stress through its

wide-ranging programme and

influence with policy makers

the key role played by women

in the community and the im-

portance of ensuring aid pro-

the majority of people in de-

veloping countries live in rural

areas, and in effect are the ma-

jor contributors to economic

development, they, in most

cases, are left out of the deci-

It is unbelievable that while

jects meet their needs.

Hence Oxfam's emphasis on

It is no less important that

As Oxfam Director, David

litical change.

own choices.

As one development analyst Dickson L Eyoh, put it: "The models of agrarian change, in particular, have been such that peasants are constituted as objects, rather than subjects of their own development."

Indeed, the crisis of development in most Third World countries has sparked a serious debate about the models of development which have been applied in these countries for decades.

ganisations presently involved in the decision-making processes have already joined the debate. One thing is clear, though.

Whether the people and or

The common people, whose voices have yet to be listened to, have been in this debate for centuries.

If the international NGO's want to be effective they must raise awareness in the North about the real causes of poverty in the South and lobby for change of policies by the Western governments. - Gemint News

About the Author: VIN-CENT MAGOMBE is a Ugandan writer and journalist based in London. He is coordinating the establishment of two literary organisations: "The African Literature Forum' and a pen International Centre for African writes abroad. He holds a Ph D in Mass Communication from the University of St. Petersburg.

## Singapore Bans Chewing Gum and Deep Frying

Some items in the local

newspapers have an Orwellian

ring. One case reported some

time ago involved the authori-

ties' efforts to catch a man who

secretly and repeatedly uri-

nated in the lift of his block of

not work, so a device was in-

stalled in the lift floor that

would detect ammonia. This

was electronically wired to the

Ordinary surveillance did

EADERS of Singapore confidently predict that in the next century this island state of four million people will be one of the wealthiest societies in the

In the pecking order of southeast Asian nations its economic achievements have been exceeded only by South Korea, Hong Kong and Tatwan.

The island's earnings. mostly derived from petroleum processing, outstrip those of its giant neighbour, Indonesia (population 187 million), with exports two billion dollars a year higher.

Although still behind middle income societics like Britain, Singapore has already overtaken the least well-off rich nation, New Zealand. eventually its planners aim to overtake that other clean, well ordered state with a small population and high living standard, Switzerland.

For all its economic success, Singapore remains, by the standards of the rest of the world, over-regulated and prissily governed. Notices everywhere tell you what to do and what not to do. You can, for instance, be fined \$\$140 for not flushing a public toilct.

The latest in a series of extraordinary proposals about to become law is an on the importation, public sale and consumption of chewing gum. Bizarre as it may seem, this new entry into the statute books has excited little opposi-

Singaporeans have the ability to accept blandly legislation that would elsewhere provoke incredulous guffaws or disbelieving outrage.

The authorities are also planning to make illegal the frying of deep fat in public places. It will soon be an offence for a food hawker, of which there are many on the island, to take his wok - a high-sided Chinese frying pan - to his stall and deep-fry anything.

Many items of traditional Chinese cooking are sizzled in fat. But modern medical evidence about cholesterol is putting deep fat on the banned substances list.

The authorities are not going so far as to outlaw fat frying at home. Singaporeans, long subjected to draconian drug laws, can still consume illegal substances like chewing gum and fat in the comfort and safety of their own homes.

Theories abound as to why the Singaporean government thinks, it must make chewing gum illegal. One citizen suggested that a stray gobbet of gum in the wrong place at the wrong time could cause havoe in the delicate machinery of the island's swish, efficient underground railway system, costing millions to repair.

about urine detectors in lifts as if they were entirely normal feels like stumbling into some

weird, real-life Southeast Asian version of Aldous Huxley's brave New World. For the one thing lacking from all the country's glittering plans is the political devel-

nomic success. No effective democratic opposition party has been al

opment to match the eco-

If you are found in Singapore eating chewing gum you may soon be fined. It is the latest ban in one of the world's most disciplined societies. Scrupulous cleanliness and tough laws on plants and trees and traffic control have always been enforced.

by Stephen Carr



#### GOH CHOK TONG Prime Minister of Singapore

lift's hauling mechanism in the innards of the building. One sight the phantom urinater. indulging in his anti-social behaviour as usual, was suddenly trapped between floors. Waiting police took him away.

A fairly sensible solution to the problem, some might argue. To the outsider, reading

most objectionable is when the

aid is given with the attached

strings of political control,

which limit the independence

and possibilities for self-

sustained development of poor

lennium is finishing badly be-

cause the poor countries are

being forced to carry out poli-

cies of economic adjustment

To crown it all, this mil-

lowed in the former British colony. The lone opposition MP who bravely fought for years to challenge the island's ruling establishment, has been stlenced. He was prosecuted on charges of "malpractices" which were, many observers thought, flimsily concocted by

ture in the poor countries

should still have the aim of

bringing 'bread and soap' to all,

that is, encouraging proper

nutrition and preventing

communicable diseases. What

we are getting instead from

the rich countries is sophisti-

cated computerised diagnostic

techniques. I am convinced

that, if the new technology of

primary health care were to be

properly used, there would,

with the present level of in-

ternational aid, be no reason

for such a high prevalence of

the malnutrition-infection syn-

drome or for the high infant

and pre-school mortality in

democracy to the world,

among countries and groups as

well as among people? For it is

only then that it will be possi-

ble to share available knowl-

edge and technology and thus,

to some extent, through basic

services, to ensure that the

benefits generated by our

Planet Earth are also shared.

Why should people in the de-

veloped countries see the logic

Is it not time to bring true

vast regions of the world.

government lawyers.

The Singapore economic boom was overseen from independence in 1965 by Cambridge-educated Lee Kwan Yew, who stepped down as prime minister in 1990, but remains very much a power behind the throne. The current Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, has a more liberal style than his predecessor and one of his first acts last year was to relax Singapore's prudish

film censorship laws. They were on a par with those in the West 30 years ago when it was quite all right to show someone's guts spilling on the floor, while the sight of

a female breast was taboo. Following Goh's action, almost every cinema on the island republic was flooded with soft porn products from Hong

Films such as Erotic Ghost Story, starring the enigmatic Amy Yip, were being advertised on lurid billboards hastily erected on the streets of sedate, bougainvillia-clad neighbourhoods.

Kong studios.

Today Singapore has reinstated its censorship laws, allowing cinematic nudity only on grounds of "artistic merit" in selected cinemas away from residential areas.

Although the city is clean and will run, some people charge the authorities with

environmental vandalism. Old / colonial hands returning to the island would miss the sights and sounds of Chinatown, now but a shell of its former self.

This vibrant bazaar with Straits Chinese houses as old as the century, was on land too valuable to be left intact. Architectural treasure troves, such as remnants of an ancient Malay village, were hastily concealed so building could con-

Yet the Eighties boom crented too many hotels for the number of visitors. Rooms had to be offered at unprofitableat

Recently the authorities demolished the last of the island's traditional kampongs of Malay-style villages. The population has now mostly been herded into Stalinist style blocks in satellite towns scattered around the island.

These dreary conurbations, reminscent of Ceausescu's Romania, are a far cry from the sparkling emporia of Singapore's main shopping street, Orchard Road.

Most tourists do not get to see them, nor read the painted slegans that relieve the por-

ringer walls. They urge citizens to self-discipline, harder work and other orthodoxies. to have the stomach and in-

### Coconut Farms to Lure Migrant Fathers Back

socio-political infrastructure serve not merely the interests

The torment lived by the what colonialism and later

#### by A Special Correspondent

**MANY** fathers in the Musi river delta here are lea-**↓ V ⊥** ving their wives and children to work the land

Feeding the needy in Bangladesh

has been cracking as a result of

people of countries like

Somalia is a clear testimony of

the seriousness of the situa-

dustrialised countries are be-

ing urged to change their

policies, with a view of creat-

ing a less exploitative, and

more equitable atmosphere in

the various spheres of North-

In the circumstances, in-

persistent conflict.

In the Musi river delta, between south Sumatra's capital Palembang and the Strait of Bangka, an estimated 15 per cent of families are headed by women. The men are forced to seek livelihood elsewhere.

Residents of the delta are mostly former landless farmers from Java, Indonesia's most populous island, who have taken advantage of the government's trans-migration programme. The settlers now have their own land - 2.25 hectares per family.

The land is fertile and the settlers have been industrious in their efforts to forge a better life. But the vast majority remain below the poverty line.

The reason is that the tidal swamps they cultivate are inadequately drained, resulting in low crop yields. Less than half of the 13,300 households are able to grow enough food to meet their needs. Income from cash crops is insufficient to make up the balance.

In an effort to assist these families take full advantage of the area's potential, the Romebased International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has designed the US\$28 million South Sumatra Smallholder Tree Crop Development Project. A US \$19.9 million loan agreement was signed to get the project rolling. It is the seventh IFADsupported initiative in the country which brings the total committed amount to US \$150.9 million.

In order to enable these farming families to become more productive and self-reliant, the development of small-scale coconut plantations will greatly increase cash incomes, while food crops will' not be neglected. And the key

for both lies in rehabilitating and improving drainage sys-

and aspirations of the people

of the West. This in effect, is

neo-colonialism were all about.

Development: "Official aid all

too often strengthens govern-

ments whose policies and

practices oppress the poor. It

may support projects which

provide the wrong service or

which serve the wrong people,

and may strengthen a devel-

As John Clark writes in his

Democratising

For this purpose, farmers' groups will be organised and trained to plan and carry out the necessary construction of field drains and raised earth mounds on which the trees would be planted. A complementary project, supported by the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan, will undertake the major drainage

While this work is being carried out, nurseries for improved hybrid coconuts will be established. The self-help groups will work together to plant the trees. Grants and credit in cash and kind will be provided for rehabilitation works, as well as for such things as seed nuts, improved food crop seeds and fertiliser.

Women, who share with men in all but the heaviest farming tasks, will have a full voice in village planning com-

They will be included in all training programmes and will receive at least 30 per cent of the credit.

Apart from increasing coconut and food crop production, the project is expected to provide a further benefit, that of bringing back many of the men who have been compelled to leave their land in search of other employment.

The delta soil is rich, the desire of the men and women to make a success of their recently acquired farms is high. So the prospects for a better life for some 65,000 poor people on the Musi river delta are

And the project would provide a model that would benefit many others who have settled in areas with similar problems.

- Depthnews Asia

S we approach the end of the second millenn-1 ium of the modern era, we still have not developed any clear sense of our collective identity or formed any real idea of the magnitude of the problems we face. More significantly, perhaps, we are also unaware of the great potential we possess to resolve these problems.

national trading system make

has not escaped criticism from

the charities. In August the

British charity, Save the

Children, bitterly attacked the

UN over Somalia. A charity of-

ficial accused the UN of being

"ill equipped, ill informed, and

uncoordinated" in the way they

have been handling the Somali

that, if the on-going and

What the NGOs are saying is

Even the United Nations

regimes powerless.

crisis.

Perhaps the world's greatest problem is poverty, accompanied by malnutrition, disease and ignorance - blights which are probably as old as humankind itself and which now afflict at least 2000 million people with extreme suffering. What is new, however, dating only from this century, is the condition of social wealth in many areas of the planet, where a majority of people have ample resources to live in security and even in superabundance. These 'affluent' individuals now number some 1000 million.

rather than to the former group, or to an intermediate category whose members have few resources but are simply able to work and to eat, is largely a matter of birth and not, as some people persistently argue, a right that is acquired by perseverance and saving. If only we could grasp this fully, if only we could all understand that we might just as easily be living in the Sahel or Bangladesh and suffering from the natural disasters visited upon the populations there, it would do much to help us to find the solutions we so badly need.

To belong to the latter

This duality of our world today gives rise to the greatest happiness and the most dire misfortune. Happiness. because riches have brought tremendous technological development and built up immense wealth which ought to resolve the basic problems of the entire human race, and misfortune, because the extremes of egotism and exploitation such as we are now witnessing often produce the opposite result and propel the human race towards a seemingly inexorable fate.

Widening the Gap The world food situation is

# The Need for a Fairer World Food System

countries.

by Adolfo Chavez

the most glaring example of inequality - an inequality that is conflictual and damaging for all. Affluent populations are served by supermarkets packed with every imaginable type of food, many of which are conducive to the chronic diseases that are characteristic of these populations; while in the poor areas, paradoxically where the most food is produced, there is too little food to be had simply because people lack purchasing power.

The big food-processing companies purchase raw foodstuffs at low prices, but the prices of their finished products are inflated by processing, packaging and advertising and are therefore beyond the reach of any but the richest sectors of society. Hardly anybody stops to think where this global food policy is taking us, when in fact it is widening the gap between rich and poor.

The rich countries of the world have formally committed themselves to giving seven thousandths of their gross national products to external aid, but only the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands are actually doing so. The total amount set aside for development assistance - US\$47,600 million - is heavily publicised but corresponds only to US\$60 per developed-country inhabitant per year.

Such an amount makes no significant difference in the face of the real and continuous flow of money from the poor to the rich countries. Faulty administration also means that this aid has no significant impact towards finding lasting

dictated by the large banks and creditor governments, which solutions; the main problem is The current world food situation is the most glaring example of inequality — while affluent populations are served by supermarkets packed with every imaginable type of food, in the pour areas, where the most food is produced, there is

too little food to be had simply because people

not so much the small amount of aid as the fact that it often consists of dual investments that produce greater benefits for the 'donor' than for the recipient.

lack purchasing power.

Where food is concerned, the motive behind the aid is often to dispose of a donor country's surpluses. Sometimes this means aggressive intervention in the markets of the recipient country; what is only accentuate the divide between regions and social countries are not doing so.

classes. It is difficult to understand why it is only we, in the poor countries, who have to 'adjust' our economies, matehing income to expenditure and demand to supply, abolishing subsidies to agriculture and imposing controls on workers' wages, when the rich The real health infrastruc-



With every day that passes we have more and more data to show that there is a diet that is ideal for us all, that is, a diet which keeps our bodies functioning healthily and protects us against chronic discases and premature aging. It is also clear that we are not mercly descended from the primates but that we continue

testines of hunter-gatherers and, no doubt, also similar cells and tissues. What we need is a reason-

able daily diet, with plenty of vegetables and fruit and small amounts of animal products and high-energy foodstuffs. We now know that to live better, longer and more healthily, there is no need to kill so many animals, or to grow so much grain for fodder, or to destroy woodlands in order to introduce grazing.

Now that news travels faster than the wind, we should proclaim the idea that a good diet, the diet that is right for people, is a simple one, containing plenty of fresh vegetable foods. Many already know this and many are already changing their eating habits and lifestyles, but unfortunately not yet in sufficient numbers to safeguard the world's scarce. resources.

It needs to be understood that just one family of consumers in the rich parts of the world uses more energy and creates more pollution than 30 rural families in the poor parts of the world.

The human race is approaching certain critical situations in which swift and intelligent action is needed. Many diseases are also blowing like a wind for the poor to the affluent, and the crises in poor societies may presage greater worldwide crises.

The affluent countries and sectors, besides rationalising their own consumption, will have to think in terms of global 'sharing', starting with at least three to four times the volume of external aid which must,

above all, be properly administered. Only in this way will we be able to start the next millennium by taking a definite step towards relieving the extreme suffering of the great masses of the world's deprived.

- Third World Network Features/World Health

Dr Adolfo Chavez is Director of Community Nutrition, Nattonal Institute of Nutrition. Deleg. Italpan, Calle Vasco de Quiroga 15, Mexico DF 14000. Mexico.

