Panambízinho, Brazil—The sun was still rising and Delma Gonçalves, 41, had already spent two hours trekking to the place where she and the rest of her settlement collected firewood. The return trip was even worse: under the hot sun, she carried a bundle of wood weighing 20 kilogrammes on her shoulder. Gonçalves is a member of the Kaiowá Guarani indigenous people, the nation’s second largest indigenous group, who live on the Panambízinho land located 250 kilometres from the capital city of Mato Grosso do Sul state in west-central Brazil.

Three times a week, for many years, this has been Gonçalves’s morning routine. “I had a really sore back. I would get home so tired that I couldn’t find the energy to cook,” says Gonçalves. Every day she would make the fire for lunch on the floor, using a few cans to protect it from the wind and a refrigerator cooling coil as an improvised grill.

In addition to worsening her back pain, the floor fire filled the house with smoke, hurting the health of Gonçalves’ children, who suffered from respiratory problems like asthma, pneumonia and bronchitis. But all this has started to change with the arrival of high-efficiency wood stoves that have helped to transform the lives of dozens of indigenous families in Panambízinho.

The technology to construct these so-called “eco-stoves” was developed by a group of Brazilian non-governmental organizations through a UNDP project promoting low-cost and green energy access in Brazil’s semi-arid northeast. It is currently being adapted to serve the needs of the Kaiowá Guarani people in the Brazilian tropical savannah. In contrast with traditional wood stoves constructed with materials like cement and iron, this new stove uses low-cost materials that are found in the region like mud, sand and clay.

The UNDP initiative is part of a joint programme developed with other UN agencies, with the goal of promoting food and nutrition security within indigenous communities, especially for women and children. In all, the project potentially benefits about 53,000 indigenous people across the country, both directly and indirectly. The stove has been considered a model for sustainable technology and will hopefully be adapted to serve the needs of the Kaiowá Guarani people in the Brazilian tropical savannah.
The stove’s materials and design heat better. As a result, the plates are now going to her backyard to pick small branches that have fallen from trees. I use my extra time to take care of my kids and the house. I weed the yard, do the laundry and sweep the porch. I also take care of the garden, she says as she drinks her tea, a traditional yerba mate drink from the region.

Fire has spiritual significance for the Kaiówá people: it is a synonym for purification. Generally, fire is controlled by women, whose role is to unify and feed the family. Around the fire—now sustainable and healthy—Gonçalves and other indigenous women in Panamabzinóh nourish not only their families’ daily needs but also a long respected tradition.

The Development Advocate

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RESULTS

• 53,000 indigenous people in Brazil will have the opportunity to lead healthier lives due to the introduction of the new eco-stoves

DONORS: MDG Achievement Fund

bark as fuel, all products that are easy to find around the yard, where families generally plant gardens and trees. One of the aims of the project is to encourage families to stop using heavy firewood. Lighter and smaller wood is readily available around the house, and diminishes the environmental impact on nearby forests.

Gonçalves’ long journeys to fetch wood have ended. She now goes to her backyard to pick up small branches that have fallen from trees.

“I use my extra time to take care of my kids and the house. I weed the yard, do the laundry and sweep the porch. I also take care of the garden,” she says as she drinks her tea, a traditional yerba mate drink from the region.

Fire has spiritual significance for the Kaiówá people: it is a synonym for purification. Generally, fire is controlled by women, whose role is to unify and feed the family. Around the fire—now sustainable and healthy—Gonçalves and other indigenous women in Panamabzinóh nourish not only their families’ daily needs but also a long respected tradition.

The stove’s high energy efficiency makes it possible to use thin firewood.

Thanks to the new stove, the health of everyone in Gonçalves’ family has improved, especially that of her children who, in addition to eating better, now have fewer respiratory problems. The new stove uses a chimney to keep the house well-ventilated and removes smoke and other by-products. The environment also benefits from such stoves, since they produce significantly less greenhouse gases due to a more efficient use of firewood.

The stove’s high energy efficiency makes it possible to use thin firewood.
Bangladesh

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO FIGHT POVERTY

BY MAHTAB HAIDER AND NADEER RAHMAN

Dhaka, Bangladesh—In the past decade alone, Bangladesh has slashed its poverty rate by half, rapidly decreased family size by two-thirds, ensured that roughly 90 per cent of its girls children are enrolled in schools and reduced child mortality by 60 per cent—a development feat recognized by a United Nations award two years ago.

The story of Shyamola Begum, 43, is one personal example of this larger success in Bangladesh's development landscape.

Shyamola says she understands why her husband left her. Under the pressures of crippling poverty, with too many mouths to feed, he left their one-room shanty in the capital one morning and never came back, she explains.

"We came to this city looking for a better life but my husband Jamal struggled to find work and ended up pulling a cycle-rickshaw. When I got pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, he wasn't happy, " she says. "I was 23, unmarried, had left me, " she says. "They told me the people from the slum knew he hadn't left his sick son in hospitals and morgues but ended up pulling a cycle-rickshaw."

When I got pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, he wasn't happy," she explains. "For several weeks in my pregnancy, I frantically searched for a job, but couldn't find anything. I was too poor to get an abortion, so I kept the baby."

"Until I became destitute, I had never imagined I could run a business, that I could do accounts, that I could be successful," she says.

This particular success story is not the exception either. Over 53,000 families like Shyamola’s have received such grants over the past five years, with encouraging results. In many places, these men and women have started making monthly contributions to their own local savings groups, so that there is a source of a larger loan in cases of emergency.

INVESTING IN WOMEN

The Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction does more than hand out seed money. It also provides apprenticeships and educational stipends that equip young men and women to acquire vocational skills they can use to earn a living. According to a report by the UK development agency, as a result of better opportunities for youth, school dropout rates in participating slums have declined. Meanwhile, the project’s work in helping 29 of these communities build infrastructure in their slums has seen 150,000 households gain improved access to sanitation and water.

The initiative has directly resulted in better healthcare, allowing the poor to dedicate more time to finding jobs or keeping the ones they already have.

"The Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction has played a strong role in bringing urban poverty into the Government’s policy focus, while changing the lives of roughly three million urban poor for the better," says Stefan Priesner, Country Director at UNDP Bangladesh.

Much of this success has been possible through investments in women’s education and the expansion of women’s opportunities in the economic sphere, as seen in the joint UNDP and UK programme, says experts.

"Investing in women yields dividends for the entire family, specifically for children’s education and nutrition. UNDP’s work in combating rural and urban poverty is proof of this."

When a different UNDP programme started providing cash-for-work schemes for destitute and abandoned women in rural Bangladesh, school enrolment rates for participants’ children nearly doubled to more than 90 per cent. As the country, once defined by rural poverty, wakes up to the fact that it now needs a strategy to address pockets of extreme poverty in its growing urban areas, UNDP’s pioneering satellite mapping is adding a targeted approach by the Government.

"In Bangladesh’s current development trajectory, Shyamola’s story could very well cease to be an exception," Priesner says. "With a national ethos that believes in the economic sphere, much of this success could be replicated in other countries as well."

Donor: United Kingdom

RESULTS

• Three million people, especially women and children, have better living conditions and job opportunities
• 230,000 households have improved access to footpaths, thanks to cash-for-work improvements
• 150,000 households have improved access to sanitation and water
• 5,500 urban poor families received cash transfers to start micro-businesses
• 29 cities and towns have been seen improved living conditions and support to livelihoods

Investing in women yields dividends for the entire family, specifically for children’s education and nutrition. UNDP’s work in combating rural and urban poverty is proof of this. Stefan Priesner Country Director UNDP Bangladesh

Donor: United Kingdom

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Mahtab Haider is a Communications Associate in UNDP Bangladesh.
I thought I couldn’t afford to stop using pesticides and that they were the only way to safeguard my income, but it turns out they were actually limiting it.

Dang Jiuru, Farmer

BY ADAM PITT

Shaanxi Province, China—Seventy-year-old Dang Jiuru dreamed of sending his grandson to university but until recently his lifelong ambition seemed destined to remain unfulfilled. His apple orchard in Luochuan County, Shaanxi Province, simply did not make enough money. But just two years since he took the bold step of abandoning toxic DDT-based pesticides, his grandson’s university fund is now growing almost as fast as his apples.

Average altitudes of 1,100 metres and deep mineral-rich soil make conditions along this part of China’s Loess Plateau perfect for growing nutritious fruit. Like most farmers he knew, however, Dang felt he had to rely on chemicals to protect his fruit from the leaf mites and quick solution to the problem.

What Dang didn’t know was that those same pesticides he thought were protecting his family’s income were the very reason his apples had never sold for more than 2 yuan (US$0.30) per kilogramme. International treaties like the Stockholm Convention that aim to control the use of DDT, and strict regulations provided by local and international experts, Dang is one of 100,000 farmers in three provinces being trained each year to adapt their farming techniques to international conventions and trading standards. This joint four-year project was initiated by UNDP and China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection. With $6 million funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project is also helping farmers to remove their dependence on so-called persistent organic pollutants altogether. These pollutants include DDT and have been linked to serious health complications in people who come into contact with them.

Many of the new pest management techniques are simple, such as cultivating grass around the base of trees to provide a habitat for natural mite predators. Others involve more complex scientific technologies, with UNDP project experts providing scientific and biological guidance on the safe introduction of new predatory mite species into local ecosystems. And despite the larger investment in time and management that is required, interest has spread quickly and many farmers have already graduated and become trainers themselves in Luochuan County, where Dang has his farm.

Similar success in Hubei and Shandong provinces has seen thousands—equivalent to an average of 3.5 tons for each of the 200,000 people living in the county. Better quality apples now sell for 6 yuan (US$0.90) per kilogramme. As for Dang, now a trainer himself, he is busy making preparations to join the growing number of farmers who are selling their apples to markets in Europe. And with a good harvest, offering his family the chance to earn 12 percent more per hectare than they did last year and invest in his grandson’s education, who could blame him?

One thing he is sure about though is that he won’t be going back to chemicals anytime soon.

ADAM PITT is a Communications Assistant at UNDP China.

RESULTS

• 100,000 farmers in three provinces are being trained each year to adapt their farming techniques to international conventions and trading standards

• Production has reached 700,000 tonnes of apples per year in Luochuan

• DDT emissions cut by 180 metric tonnes and DDT waste release cut by 350 metric tonnes by production plants in three provinces

Donors: China, GEF

MONITORING PROGRESS

Over time, farmers have learnt to record the effectiveness of their new cultivation methods in personal logbooks, allowing communities to monitor the quality of their produce and take measures to avoid potential problems before they emerge. These efforts have been further enhanced by pest monitoring and forecasting centres, and a pesticide residue testing station set up under the project has provided regular guidance in compliance with international agricultural production standards.

In line with China’s compliance with the Stockholm Convention, the project has helped minimize the amount of DDT released at a factory in Jiangsu Province and shut down production lines at two other factories in Hubei and Shandong. As a result, the project has realized annual reductions of 180 metric tonnes in DDT emissions and 350 metric tonnes of DDT-contaminated waste released during production.

Thanks to the reduced use of DDT on most of Luochuan’s 300 square kilometres of apple orchards, as well as the farmers’ newly-minted skills, annual apple production has reached 700,000 tonnes—equivalent to an average of 3.5 tonnes for each of the 200,000 people living in the county.

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ADAM PITT is a Communications Assistant at UNDP China.

China

FARMERS PLANT A SEED FOR
A CHEMICAL-FREE FUTURE

Dang Jiuru smiles as he collects an apple from his orchard in Luochuan County, Shaanxi Province. With training and support from UNDP, he has increased his income by 12 percent. Each apple he sells is a step towards his grandson’s education. (Luo Yi/UNDP China)

I thought I couldn’t afford to stop using pesticides and that they were the only way to safeguard my income, but it turns out they were actually limiting it.

Dang Jiuru, Farmer

China
Mama Hassen, a 55-year-old farmer in Kalu, South Wollo Zone, in northern Ethiopia, is dreaming of a better future. The region has been hit by conflict, droughts, and the effects of climate change. The Production Advocate 5

**COMMUNITY CENTRES HELP PEOPLE LEARN TO LIVE AGAIN**

By JIN-HEE DIEU and FLORENCE MARCIAL

Mangina, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo — Conflict has raged among armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since the late 1990s. The humanitarian and security situation there is very alarming, with ongoing attacks against civilians, acts of sexual violence, and the recruitment and use of child soldiers. To support and meet the needs of individuals left vulnerable by these protracted conflicts, UNDP has established 12 multifunctional community centres in North and South Kivu provinces, two of the areas hardest hit by conflict.

"The beneficiaries are all victims of sexual violence and asked not to be identified by their real names."

Maman Miram,* a 34-year-old widow, has benefited from her centre. In 2004, she was raped by three armed men who slashed her genitals with a knife, leaving her with physical and emotional scars. She felt completely abandoned and unable to care for her three children. When she entered her local community centre for the first time in 2010, the staff there provided psychosocial support to help her heal. Additionally, Maman Miriam was equipped with skills to earn a living and make way in life, from learning to manage small amounts of money and read basic information to finding the ability to express her voice and leadership skills.

Today, two years later, Maman Miriam has left the displaced persons’ camp where she has lived since the attack and has moved to a neighbouring town. By combining her dressmaking skills along with selling local traditional beverages, she is able to pay her rent.

**SEEING CHANGE**

"I see small changes all around me," she says with pride. "The children are healthy and clean, and they are going to school. I am saving up to buy my own piece of land."

She has gained new colleagues and friends as well, a real community that has given her new strength.

UNDP proposed this unusual response to violence in 2010, drawing on existing local initiatives already underway in Beni, a city in North Kivu, as a way of ensuring the economic and social reintegration of vulnerable individuals. The centres are community-managed and provide a range of services, including mediation, literacy classes and information on women’s leadership and work opportunities. The centres also offer instruction in dozens of trades, including cutting and sewing, basket weaving, raising livestock, baking and market gardening. Last, but not least, the centres are meeting places where citizens and local authorities and community leaders can discuss health and development plans, such as HIV prevention and peacebuilding campaigns.

The 12 UNDP-supported community centres that opened in the two Kivu provinces in the last two years have enabled more than 4,300 people to once again become part of local economic life. After attending education and information sessions, more than 2,000 of them also joined a community credit union, where they learn about saving and can take advantage of microloans, which offer a collective approach to achieving financial independence.

"I didn’t know that poor women like us could save," says Sylvie Lubaki,* a participant at the Uvira community centre in South Kivu.

"Before, I just thought about the present but now I know that you can plan for the future with what you earn today."

The project can also take credit for the massive voter turnout in the 2011 presidential and legislative elections among women in the town of Bunia in North Kivu. Many of the new voters included women who had just learned to read and write through community centres.

"I felt worthless," says Maman Miriam, "I would cry, watching my children dying of hunger. I had no money and my health was destroyed."

"Today, I am alive again. I am proud of myself and I know that I can be independent, make decisions and take action," she says with pride.

**ETHIOPIA**

**COPING WITH DROUGHT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

By WBUSA MEKONNEN

Kalu, Ethiopia — Throughout most of its 55 years, Mohammed Hassen and his family have faced much suffering during on-again, off-again droughts that have ravaged his district of Kalu, South Wollo Zone, in northeastern Ethiopia.

However, the father of nine, along with other farmers in his region, is now dreaming of a better future, the result of practical drought-adaptation measures that are preparing them for future droughts and the effects of climate change.

In Hassen’s case, it has meant providing him and his neighbours with high-yielding seeds that are drought resistant. Hassen’s income has improved and his large family is now able to enjoy three meals a day; he even has extra cash to buy school supplies for the children and to start saving for the future.

Hassen and his family are benefitting from a three-year UNDP and GEF pilot project covering four African countries—Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique and Zimbabwe—where the most recent drought has had disastrous consequences. UNDP is working with Ethiopia’s Ministry of Agriculture, with financing of US$9,595,000 from GEF.

A key component of the initiative includes ensuring that participating countries and communities can share their drought and climate change experiences with one another, with the ultimate hope of achieving some kind of sustainable and transformational change in the face of the ongoing and worsening effects of climate change.

**DROUGHT REFUGEES**

Ethiopia absorbed about 275,000 drought refugees from the Horn of Africa in 2012 alone. The country’s rural communities, however, are already fragile themselves, with livelihoods dependent on increasingly erratic rainfall patterns, magnifying Ethiopia’s vulnerability to climate-related shocks and food shortages.

Saad Ibrahim, 41, knows all too well about food insecurity. His 400 square metre plot used to produce per year, forcing his family to be dependent for nine months of the year on government food relief.

While this arrangement helped keep his family from starving, Ibrahim felt frustrated and powerless.

“My family considered me a useless head of the household because of my inability to feed them,” he says.

The UNDP and GEF drought adaptation project helped Ibrahim join 200 fellow Ethiopian farmers on a learning tour in 2010 to the southern part of Ethiopia to gain insight into water harvesting techniques, vegetable production and beekeeping. He applied what he learned and is now able to earn about $1,567 per year in addition to now owning $10,000 worth of livestock. Ibrahim says he feels he is on his way to dealing with poverty, thanks to the advice and expertise he accessed through the project.

Today, the family’s vegetable plot is not only a source of income but help provide a much-needed nutritional balance to his family’s diet.

“My daughter will not be forced into an early marriage due to a shortage of food, clothing and school materials,” adds Aregash, Ibrahim’s wife.

The project is also empowering communities to take charge of their crop-cycle planning with the introduction of easy-to-use early warning systems that can predict the rainy season.

Now in its third year, the drought-adaptation project in Ethiopia initially planned on reaching 41,000 inhabitants of the selected pilot areas in the Kalu District of northwestern Ethiopia. However, the number of people benefiting has risen to 100,000 as neighbouring communities became involved, eager to learn from these new practices that will allow farmers to plan ahead in an increasingly unpredictable environment.

**DONORS:** Ethiopia, UNDP, GEF

**NEW PROJECTS**

4,500 people reintegrated into economic life
2,000 people have joined the community credit union

DONOR: UNDP

Schools and community centres offered in their local centres.

The special community centre approach is offering women and young people from isolated rural areas who have suffered decades of violence an opportunity to improve their ability to express themselves within their families and communities and to take charge of their own futures.

Congolese authorities have since become interested in the UNDP-supported community centres and have incorporated them into the country’s national gender and development strategy. The centres will soon receive a kind of legal status that respects community management while allowing support from the Government.

The centres’ current budget totals approximately US$1.6 million, with funding primarily provided by UNDP.

"I felt worthless," says Maman Miriam. "I would cry, watching my children dying of hunger. I had no money and my health was destroyed."

"Today, I am alive again. I am proud of myself and I know that I can be independent, make decisions and take action," she says with pride.

**FLORENCE MARCIAL** is a Communications Specialist at UNDP DRC.

JIN-HEE DIEU is a UNDP Communications Officer in UNDP DRC based in Goma, North Kivu.

**RESULTS**

**DONORS:** Ethiopia, UNDP, GEF

• 100,000 Ethiopians are benefiting from the drought-adaptation project

**AFRICA**

The Development Advocate 5
Siwa, Egypt—Fatma Ibrahim, a poor mother of six, has been illiterate all her life. As a child her hard-working parents made simple handicrafts and sold them to help ends meet. Like many girls growing up in Siwa, the largest oasis in Egypt’s western desert, Ibrahim was deprived of an education due to her family’s poverty and a community tradition biased against girls’ education. These factors, in addition to the oasis’ harsh living conditions, resulted in illiteracy rates reaching 40 percent among women there, who make up half of the Siwa’s population of 23,000.

In 2008, UNDP’s ICT Trust Fund provided a computer to Fatma Ibrahim, a business owner in the western desert town of Rafah, Gaza Strip, to work with the UNDP’s Programme of Assistance for the Palestinian People in training non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the kinds of skills and materials needed to effectively take control of their lives and surroundings. For example, the programme put a special emphasis on computer skills, so in addition to providing training in business development and problem solving, it equipped the participants with their own personal computers.

As a result, women who enrolled in the programme learned to read and write, improved their agricultural and handicraft production abilities and acquired online marketing skills. Siwa women now promote their products through a custom-made online store (http://kenanaonline.com/siwa).

Aware of prevailing social norms in the oasis, programme instructors brought the classes into women’s homes. They transformed the traditional tablety—a low, round, dining table around which rural Egyptians sit cross-legged and eat—into a so-called tablety. A tablety is a customized, ergonomic computer embedded in the tablety, the computer hosts a single central processing unit that can run up to four independent computers. The newly crafted tablety is foldable, making it easy to carry around from home to home.

In 2012 alone, the initiative trained 120 women on the device, in addition to 10 more who were taught how to be literacy instructors, ensuring the ongoing life of the project. Fatma Ibrahim was among the first group of women to complete their literacy programme on a tablety.

As a result, for the first time in her life, she has fulfilled her dream of being able to read the Holy Koran on her own; she is also able to help her children with their studies. Ibrahim did not stop at reading and writing. She joined the programme’s business development training course and eventually opened her own successful tailoring business. The business not only helps her make money but has also created employment opportunities for her neighbors who now work as tailors for her.

"When I first joined the literacy classes I was told that learning to work on computers can make our lives easier and help reduce inequality between men and women," Ibrahim says. "I found in computers life itself. Now I can read and write, I can earn my living and give my children a better life. And as a mother, I am a better role model for them to follow!"

The project team is currently training non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the Siwa governorate in using the tablety to teach reading and writing. UNDP is also working on putting together a business model for these NGOs that will enable them to offer literacy classes for free. Going forward, UNDP and its partners are preparing to bring the entire initiative—including literacy classes, business training and tablety usage—to five more oases in Egypt.

Ibrahim now devotes her life to helping other women in her village overcome illiteracy.

"Who knows, maybe one day I might go beyond," she says.

ARAB STATES

EGYPT

ADAPTING TECHNOLOGY TO LOCAL NEEDS

The Development Advocate

6

Siwa Women taking literacy lessons on the tablety, a customized computer setup. (UNDP Egypt)

RESULTS

• 8,800 women have learned to read and write
• 5 more oasis communities will benefit from the programme

DONORS: Italian-Egyptian Debt for Development Swap Programme, Vodafone Foundation
—established with the Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology—joined forces with the World Health Organization, Vodafone Foundation and the Siwa Community Development and Environment Conservation Association to launch a US$300,000 initiative aimed at both eradicating female illiteracy and helping women to find new or better employment.

A 3,000 cubic metres water tank is now serving more than 50,000 residents of Rafah in the occupied Palestinian territory. (UNDP PA/PJ)

RESULTS

• More than 50,000 residents of Rafah have clean water

DONOR: Japan

We turn on the tap at any time and we get water. It may be too mundane to you but for us it is a great feat!

Salem Mdalal, Rafah Resident

Providing safe water in Gaza

A 3,000 cubic metres water tank is now serving more than 50,000 residents of Rafah in the occupied Palestinian territory. (UNDP PA/PJ)

RESULTS

• More than 50,000 residents of Rafah have clean water

DONOR: Japan

The building’s residents consume 5,000 litres of water every day, until recently, the city could only provide water via pipes for three to four hours, twice a week, and the flow of water was very weak. Mdalal frequently had to buy drinkable water from vendors roaming the streets in their water tank trucks. Each 1,000 litres cost NIS 20 (US$ 5.25).

"We had a water crisis" Mdalal says. "I had to take extreme measures at home. We only flushed the toilet twice a day to conserve water. Imagine a family of 12 flushing the toilet twice a day only!"

"I also set a schedule for showers and urged my children to get out of the shower if they were in for too long. This caused tensions in the family but what could we do?"

The family’s situation eased after UNDP built a 3,000 cubic metres water tank serving Rafah and provided booster pumps to supply water to Rafah’s residents through a $1 million project funded by the Government of Japan.

Along with the people living in Mdalal’s building, 50 percent of the city’s population of 102,000 people experienced a huge improvement in the water supply reaching their homes, after eight years of constant water shortages.

Power supply is also scarce in the Gaza Strip, only available eight to 10 hours a day. Because of uncoordinated supply of water and electricity, Mdalal and his brothers had to schedule shifts every night to check water supply and to turn on booster pumps as soon as electricity and water were available at the same time. Things are different now.

"We celebrated the day when the Rafah water tank became operational" Mdalal exiles. "Yesterday, water reached our roof tanks without the lift pump. That was a record for us."

"The Rafah water tank changed our lives" he continues. "No longer did we need to compromise hygiene, live in a tense house, trade water shifts with my brothers, and worry about the exorbitantly high cost of water."

UNDP has completed over 200 water supply and sanitation projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Projects ranged from strengthening water and sanitation authorities to the construction of water supply and distribution networks, storage reservoirs and house connections.

The water tank in Rafah is part of an emergency water supply and rehabilitation programme that UNDP is implementing in the Northern Governorates of the Gaza Strip, at a total cost of $14.5 million, provided by the Government of Japan.

"I wish this project was done eight years ago," when severe water shortages began in Gaza, Mdalal says. "It would have spared a lot of suffering. Now, we all save money and have access to the water we need to lead normal lives."

"We turn on the tap at any time and we get water. It may be too mundane to you but for us it is a great feat!"
Women in El Fasher, North Darfur, march for “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence,” an annual campaign beginning on 25 November, the International Day to End Violence Against Women. (Albert Gonzalez Farran/Un Photo)
The Development Advocate

BY MIDORI Paxton

Akbastau, Mongolia—Naranbek Ristan slings his binoculars and notebook around his neck and mounts his horse with graceful ease. He is setting off on a monthly patrol of 6,000 hectares of community land to check on wildlife.

The country he will cover inspires many adjectives: harsh, magnificent, daunting. But for Ristan it brings to mind the most important word of all: home.

Ristan comes from the Kazakh ethnic group and he lives in the community of Akbastau (literally “White Spring”) in the Altai Mountains of Mongolia’s extreme west. People here are herdsmen and horsemen living in gers (yurts) that are decorated with colourful floor and wall carpets.

The Altai Mountains, which straddle China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia, are a critical area for global conservation. They harbour a number of endangered species, such as the snow leopard and Argali sheep.

Life here is tough. The winters are long and brutal. Fierce gales combined with drought create a catastrophic phenomenon called the dzud. The 2009 dzud killed one in five domestic animals in the country. Wildlife numbers are declining as a result of overhunting and overfishing, and livestock pastures are deteriorating.

Overgrazing is one of the main causes of environmental degradation in the range, worsened further by the harsh effects of climate change on precious water and land resources. Many herdsmen have stopped traditional rotational grazing methods, which require moving seasonally in search of good pasture, leaving time for other pasture lands to recover.

Problems, though, invite solutions. Over the past six years, the Altai Sayan Project has worked with communities to manage natural resources such as pastures, wild animals and plants, while also improving and expanding livelihood opportunities for herdsmen. The project was supported by UNDP, the GEF, the Government of The dzud, and reduces pressure on pasture land.

The initiative instituted 20 environment units within the local government office to support community groups. Altai and Sayan conservation plans were developed through expert support from the project, which provided essential biodiversity information for land use and local development planning. The project also helped create “eco-clubs” to foster environmental education in 20 local primary schools, each equipped with a meeting room and library materials.

Training Herders in New Trades

Through project support, more than 7,000 herdsmen received training in new trades, including weaving and felt-making, dairy product processing and marketing, tourism and wildlife management. The project provided small loans and grants to community groups in the region to help develop tourism, grow vegetables for the first time, repair winter shelters and improve the quality of their milk and wool products. Diversification of livelihoods makes the herders more resilient to external shocks such as drought and reduces pressure on pasture land.

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Naranbek Ristan, Herder

The Kazakhs use golden eagles to hunt animals.

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Nino Narmania, Student Tailor

Georgian system of professional education has been questioned by advocates who argue that it needs to do much more to equip people for the labour market. In 2006, with funds from the European Union, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, and the Governments of Norway and Romania, UNDP began collaborating with the Ministry of Education to reform Georgia’s system of professional education. As a result, participating colleges are now better aligned to the demands of the local labour market, there are uniform standards for qualifications, teachers have received critical retraining and vocational training sites have been refurbished.

After the outbreak of military conflict in 2008, UNDP began aiming these efforts at conflict-affected areas, where a professional education would help people return to self-reliance, especially those experiencing disruptions in education and careers due to displacement. One of the first initiatives took place at Gori University in Shida Kartli, the region most affected by war. Now recognized as one of the best-equipped professional education sites in the country, it offers a full range of vocational courses. On-the-job training includes mini-workshops for the production of agricultural products, such as traditional Georgian cheeses and canned fruit and vegetables, some of which sell in the largest supermarkets of Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital. The workshops allow students to begin work while learning the practical application of new skills.

By the end of 2011, as part of its support to Samegrelo, a region in western Georgia that hosts around 80,000 displaced people, UNDP helped professional colleges in Poti and Zugdidi establish their own new curricula. About 1,500 students—half of them IDPs—can enrol in the courses each year. The colleges have opened furniture-making and tailoring workshops based on the model in Gori.

By 2012, upgraded training in 25 professions—mainly in higher-demand sectors like agriculture, food-processing and construction—was available in nine professional education centres across the country. Each of the educational courses was equipped with new training programmes, guidebooks for instructors and students, and special qualification courses for teachers.

Of the 3,000 people who have graduated so far, 70 percent have quickly found employment.

Levan Lakia, 22, lives in a small village with his parents and two younger brothers. Today, he is the only person in his family with a job, having started work on a school rehabilitation project after completing vocational training at the college in Poti.

“Vocational training changed my life for the better,” he says. “I feel more confident and know what to do. It’s not only about income. It’s about experience that improves my chances to become professional and competitive.”

People like Nino Narmania and Levan Lakia are making full use of their chances for a better future. An underlying belief that it is never too late to learn is helping thousands of people in Georgia to cultivate hope and skills to reshape their lives.

Donors: Norway, Romania, European Union, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation

They are also visible as small enterprises, offering a double return by contributing to the income of the university.

Up-to-date curricula, modern equipment and qualified trainers make Phasis College one of the most reputable educational institutions in the region. The tailoring programme accepts 50 students at a time and classes fill up eight months in advance.

Almost half of the college students are, like Narmania, from families displaced by conflict, known as internally displaced persons or IDPs. For them, professional training is one of the most direct ways to find employment and rebuild their lives disrupted by violence.

“Two years ago, I would not imagine that it was possible to get an education like that in our city. Now I feel confident that I can become a good professional and find a nice job. This college is my future,” Narmania says.

Vocational training equips youth for careers

Georgia

The Development Advocate

Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Results

- 3,000 trainees graduated with 70% now employed
- Nine professional education centres providing training in 25 high-demand careers
As a schoolboy, I began using crutches and had to do my homework lying on my back. As the years passed, I realized that life would only become more difficult. It is not easy being disabled, it is not easy being Ali Amanbayev.

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Since its inception, UNDP’s programme has been successful at raising public awareness and fostering a culture of inclusion for those with disabilities. In addition to a short film, photo exhibitions and national and international conferences, over 5,000 copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been distributed to major public institutions, libraries and universities.

Donors: Kazakhstan

500,000 disabled now benefiting from the social protection system
5,000 copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities distributed

RESULTS

Kazakhstan

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Ali Amanbayev
Advocate for the Disabled

Thanks in part to UNDP’s advocacy, Kazakhstan signed the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2008. More recently, UNDP has been working with the Government to promote national disability policies and the establishment of basic support services, such as opportunities to receive college degrees through distance learning, in addition to jobs training and rehabilitation services.

IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICES

With UNDP’s advice, Kazakhstan has amended key laws to improve social services for vulnerable groups, with special attention given to those with disabilities. As a result, US$200 million of government funding has been allocated, allowing over 2,000 people with disabilities to receive special services. Amanbayev now has his own personal assistant who helps him in his wheelchair around the city and within his own home.

These days, more than 7,000 disabled people in Kazakhstan receive these critical services.

“It’s made such a difference,” Amanbayev says of his assistant. “He’s the extra oomph to help me face the challenges of each day.”

These days, Amanbayev and other NGO leaders are busy lobbying the Ministry for Transport and Communication to revise standards for providing the disabled access to public spaces and public transport. As a result, Amanbayev was invited to take part in several hearings and meetings at the Ministry, where he convincingly pointed out the urgent need for change in a country where such standards lag far behind the international norm. The Ministry has reacted, promising to make all railway platforms and trains accessible for wheelchair users within the next two years.

“You can’t imagine how vital this is,” Amanbayev says.

Improving transport infrastructure is just one part of a wider national campaign to provide inclusive access to public spaces. This is bringing fundamental change to Kazakhstan, where more than 70 percent of public infrastructure is inaccessible to the disabled. With UNDP’s help, the Government is surveying the accessibility of public buildings and services and making cost estimates for necessary upgrades.

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ASSIS T TILDE is a Communications Associate in UNDP Kazakhstan.
BY AMPARO DÍAZ

La Argentina, Colombia—The 21st century was just beginning when Salomón Manuel Petro—a troubadour and farmer—and his family were forced to leave their home in northwestern Colombia. They took only what they could carry with them, along with their memories, shattered dreams and popular songs stuck in Petro’s throat. That was when he and his family became internally displaced persons, or IDPs. Petro, better known as “Don Manuel,” was a peasant farmer, or campesino, from the region of Bajo Cauca Antioqueño. Like Colombia’s other millions of IDPs, he left his lands to escape almost certain death due to ongoing armed conflict. He and his family fled to Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, where they met with countless other displaced people selling trinkets or begging at the traffic light in order to survive in the harsh cement jungle.

Don Manuel saw his life change dramatically. He left his home while his body was still recovering from the six machete blows he received from paramilitary groups in Caceros, a little village in the Bajo Cauca region, and he was being threatened with death if he did not leave within 15 days.

“I had to leave, I was lucky that I received only blows, others were killed,” Don Manuel says. “And my family was unharmed. Others did not live to tell the story.”

Don Manuel’s case is not unique. Internal displacement as a result of ongoing armed conflict continues to occur in Colombia. Almost 3.9 million IDPs have been recorded since 1997. The search to resolve the situation of this huge population has become a priority for the Government and there are many needs for the displaced, including humanitarian aid, protection and opportunities for working towards more permanent and sustainable livelihoods.

Realistically speaking, many of Colombia’s IDPs cannot hope to return to their homes in the near future. In 2012, UNDP partnered with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Government of Colombia to improve the quality of life for the country’s IDPs, specifically focusing on moving beyond immediate humanitarian assistance to helping them to build a long-term future for themselves and their families. The programme receives financial support from Sweden, the United States and Colombia’s Ministry of Labour, in addition to support from local governments.

QUALITY OF LIFE

For example, the initiative is working to improve the overall quality of life for both the IDPs and the communities they are being located into. Funds are used to provide land, housing, basic services and local economic development programmes that help enrich the host communities along with their new neighbours. The programme also works to strengthen and support the government institutions tasked with protecting the rights of victims of armed conflict.

With the programme’s support, Don Manuel and his family finally ended up in the city of La Argentina, where he and other IDPs arrived with the promise of receiving a plot of land to support their relocation.

“Paradise” is how Don Manuel describes his life today in La Argentina, located in southwestern Colombia. “This region is very poor in natural resources but it is peaceful and calm with regard to public order. I feel more at peace. Here there is no war, like there was back home, where people could be killed for no reason and thrown in the river!”

The initiative is already showing substantial results, currently beneﬁtting 22,000 people in ﬁve communities. For example, two community centres have been built, nearly 100 boys and girls are beneﬁting from better schools—attended by students who are both IDPs and those who are not—and IDP settlements once deemed illegal by the Government have seen measurably improved primary health care systems.

Community organization is instrumental in the resettlement process. Don Manuel is a living example of this: today, he is a well-known leader in his municipality. He helped create the Asociación de Desplazados en Proceso de Restablación (Association for Displaced People in the Process of Relocation) and is president of the Community Action Board.

SMILES AND TEARS

But his smile is laced with tears that he tries to control: “Yes, I am thinking of staying, but I really miss my land, I can’t deny it. But here we are, alive and with a future.”

Indeed, more important than new buildings, community consultations and humanitarian handouts, is the resilience of the people themselves. That’s why in 2013 the programme will reach seven additional communities, bringing much-needed opportunity to some 50,000 Colombians displaced by violence.

“The most important thing is to be persistent, to be willing to act, to recover what was lost during the time of violence, that is why we resisted so much hardship,” Don Manuel explains, smiling with eyes that still reflect the scars of what he has seen and experienced.

AMPARO DÍAZ is a Communications Specialist in UNDP Colombia. The programme in the Oriente region contributed to this story.

Top Soccer Players Shine in UNDP’s 10th Annual Match Against Poverty

Porto Alegre, Brazil, 20 December 2012—Twelve-year-old soccer fan Clara hug’s her idol, Brazilian superstar Neymar, and refuses to let go. As the players for the Match Against Poverty assemble before the start of the game, it takes a lot of gentle persuasion before Clara, overcome with excitement and emotion from being in direct contact with one of Brazil’s most adored players, agrees to let go. Only then can officials blow the opening whistle of UNDP’s 10th annual Match Against Poverty.

More than 50,000 soccer fans descended upon the new Arena Gremio stadium in Porto Alegre to watch UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane’s teams play against each other in a friendly and exciting match. The game, sponsored by UNDP, ended with Ronaldo’s star-studded team winning 3-2, with Zidane scoring one of the consolation goals.

“To be able to host this match and have my dear friend, Zidane, and all my other fellows graciously accept this invitation, in my home country Brazil, is marvellous,” said Ronaldo. “This cause is really important to both of us. We are very glad with the progress made in Brazil and that we were able to sell all the tickets in just two weeks.”

The annual UNDP Match Against Poverty began in 2003 at the initiative of star footballers Ronaldo and Zidane to raise awareness about the challenges and solutions around combating poverty, in what UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called global solidarity at its best.

“With the universal language of sport and the goodwill that football brings, together with the support of Ronaldo and Zidane, I hope we will be able to maintain the awareness and the vigilance to fight against poverty,” said Rebecca Grynspan, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate Administrator, who represented the organization at the match.

“There are still 1.2 billion out there who are waiting for an opportunity to become full members of society and live with dignity.”

Proceeds from the game will be evenly split between two projects—one in Brazil and one in Cape Verde, western Africa, both aimed at re-integrating marginalized youth.

Funds raised from previous matches have so far contributed to anti-poverty projects in more than 27 developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Proceeds from last year’s match in Hamburg were used to respond to a devastating drought in the Horn of Africa. The 2010 Match raised US$540,000 for ongoing earth quake and flood relief efforts in Haiti and Pakistan, respectively.

The annual match is televised globally. The Brazilian game was selected by 18 broadcasters around the world, plus major news outlets such as CNN, ABC Sports, ITN and TVE aired news stories reaching an estimated audience of tens of millions of global viewers. Every year, the match is supported by soccer’s governing bodies, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). All the players and match officials donate their time.

For Clara and many others, the December 2012 Match will be a day to remember. Apart from seeing some of their greatest idols on the pitch, what they perhaps will also take home is the collective message from players, UNDP and all participants, that fighting against poverty is an everyday struggle and that every action helps.

“I hope that one day, with time, we will not need anymore,” Zidane said. —By Abdel-Rahman Gundoun/UNDP NY
NIGERIA: The UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme has provided training in agricultural techniques to 32,500 women, allowing them to feed their families and sell produce in local markets.

CAMEROON: Two local women—trained in India to install solar panels—subsequently trained other women upon their return, who went on to set up 98 household solar systems in their villages. Children can now study at night and there is less risk of fire and asphyxiation from gasoline generators.

SOUTH SUDAN: With funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNDP has focused on strengthening the country’s health care system. Last year alone, over 4,000 people received anti-retroviral medications and 85 percent successfully completed tuberculosis treatment.

CAMBODIA: Two local women—trained in India to install solar panels—subsequently trained other women upon their return, who went on to set up 98 household solar systems in their villages. Children can now study at night and there is less risk of fire and asphyxiation from gasoline generators.

PAKISTAN: Juan started a local women’s community organization, one of more than 1,000 such organizations aided by UNDP’s Refugees Affected and Host communities programme. The initiative has helped rebuild an earthquake-destroyed road to Juan’s village, benefiting more than 12,000 residents.

HONDURAS: Conflict Mediation and Conciliation Units, promoted by UNDP, have dealt with a total of 5,546 disputes, of which 3,057 were mediated or successfully reconciled.

Myanmar: UNDP’s Human Development Initiative has provided vocational training—snack-making, food preservation, knitting, bag and basket weaving—to 9,000 internally displaced people.

Kosovo: Bujar Kadriu—a 43-year-old married father of five who is partially sighted—has headed Kosovo’s Association of the Blind for eight years. One of his proudest accomplishments was the June 2011 passage of a new law protecting the rights of the blind, who number around 3,000.

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Feedback? Write to: publications.queries@undp.org