



ENDPOVERTYNOW NEWSLETTER

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End Poverty Now (EPN) is a non-partisan, non-political, non-religious, non-profit Canadian charitable organization based in Montreal and dedicated to the long-term alleviation of abject poverty. EPN represents a group of dedicated individuals, mainly students, and is operated on a tri-pillar base that emphasizes Grassroots Projects, InReach and Education.

If you have questions or comments about the Newsletter, or if you are interested in joining the Newsletter Team, please email newsletter@endpovertynow.ca

Poverty in the News Last Month

by Carina Bluer

CANADA:

Canada's welfare system stuck in the Victorian Era – Financial Post

Newfoundland poverty levels down significantly – CBC

INDIA:

Poverty in India – Deccan Herald

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:

Ten years after the Water Wars in Bolivia – Narco News

CLIMATE CHANGE:

Danish police torture protestors at the UN Climate Summit – The New Internationalist

Global Poverty is a Big Issue... But We're Bigger

We have made significant strides towards social justice before, and we can do it again

by Nick Bond

Being socially active can be a struggle. Unlike the all-bark-no-bite short-term political cycle, real change on a social issue can take generations. Even after a hundred years of patient and dedicated campaigning, substantive change on social issues such as poverty or equality can sometimes remain hard to decipher.

Practically all of the truly progressive steps taken by our societies over the generations have been the direct result of well-organized and sustained social activism. Historically, it has been an upwards push by the masses that has made our societies more equitable and just, not a top-down policy from government or business leaders. To name just a few examples, the fall of political colonialism, the abolishment of slavery and the establishment of women's rights all have their roots in widespread grassroots social movements aimed at overturning pervasive injustice.

Humans are unique on Earth for many reasons, but one of the most valuable is our ability to recognize and institutionalize fairness. Nonetheless, the road leading towards social justice is long and one on which we have barely taken our first steps on many issues. This realization, however, should not take away from the successes we have achieved to date.

Along with being critical to our societal development, social movements are interesting in that they are led by everyday citizens who care enough to make themselves heard. Perhaps this isn't surprising, since those who hold political, financial or social power are often reluctant to see any change in the status quo - even when societal disparities and the resultant tensions cause deep dissension in their communities. Illustrating this point, with only two exceptions, every president in the first forty-five years of the existence of the United States was a slaveholder. Being a slaveholder in nascent North America was an enormous source of income for many in the agricultural industry before Abolition took hold in the mid-1800s. With money often comes a lot of political and social power - not something people have historically been very eager to give up.

The incentives to abolish slavery were clearly not going to come from the power-holders. Accordingly, the onus to form a grassroots movement was placed on everyday citizens and those directly oppressed. Eventually the struggle was rewarded, as slavery ultimately became prohibited by international law. That a practice once characterized as "a necessary evil" and a method of "self-preservation" - according to Thomas Jefferson - could become punishable by law in nearly every country in the world signified a monumental shift in social values. It was a social movement success unlike any seen before, and gave concrete legitimacy and renewed motivation to the notion of social activism.

Notwithstanding the end result, however, imagine the mindset of an abolitionist working for the rights of slaves in the mid-1700s. Real progress on the issue wouldn't be seen for nearly another hundred years.

Global Poverty is a Big Issue... But We're Bigger CONTINUED

A somewhat similar struggle exists today in the fight against global poverty, as nations and individuals are becoming economically better off on the backs of today's world poor, through access to a multitude of under-priced goods and services. Millions of people in the world remain subject to a form of economic slavery, and poverty in developing countries is too easily overlooked by the Western world.

The difficulty inherent in the struggle against world poverty is that the people benefiting from the plight of others are not just high-class bourgeois sector of society, but each and every one of us enjoying the economic opportunities that our Western societies afford us. I say this not to provoke guilt, but to shed light on the enormity of the problem. It is, on scale, a monumental problem to address. Nevertheless, if 18th and 19th century slavery was able to be abolished in many countries across the world, why can't we see progress happening for the world's poor? Evidently, it's a very tall order, but we should avoid deterministic denunciations of the impossibility of the task.

In order to reduce global poverty, a few criteria have to be in place first. The key ones include:

- **A common goal:** The alleviation of a social rift which inhibits a group of people from realizing their potential due to unfair external restrictions on their basic rights.
- **Organization:** The provision of resources, strategic guidance, moral support and a unified communications outlet.
- **A solid cross-section of support:** The inclusion of support from key players within a broad spectrum of society's political, social or economic circles, fostering strong cooperation with the oppressed group or groups.

Today's worldwide movements to end world poverty exhibit varying levels of these elements. Looking at the trajectory over time, it seems that it is a movement that is gaining momentum. More people and organizations today than ever before are discussing the alleviation of poverty as a key issue that must be addressed. It's becoming increasingly trendy to purchase a goat for a poor African family on behalf of a friend, in lieu of buying that friend yet another HMV-gift card for his birthday (visit the Institute for Cultural Affairs International's www.workinggifts.org for more information). The anti-poverty movement has many parts, but is becoming better organized due to the increasing ease of communication and experience from past successes and failures.

Support from key social players is likewise on the rise. Obviously, the deeply rooted and widespread nature of world poverty means it's going to take a lot more than a handful of well-intentioned politicians to get the job done, but we have a much broader support base than that. There are millions of motivated people from every country and from all walks of life, all working to take those first few steps on the road to economic fairness and equality. However slow the progress may be, the conditions are becoming increasingly suitable for progress in global poverty reduction.

Global Poverty is a Big Issue... But We're Bigger CONTINUED

Before any major improvements can be realized, there is much to be done. Nevertheless, a good reason for remaining optimistic stems from the feeling that the seeds of real progress are being sewn by many committed, caring people. As we look at the immense challenge before us, it helps to remember that humanity has seen this type of challenge before, and has risen up to meet it. Though this may be bigger in scale and different in many regards, the same steps to success that have worked in the past can work again. Every time you see a new water-well being put in a once parched community, or a group of African women successfully starting a home-grown business, or a South American farmer getting fairly compensated for the work he's doing, regard these accomplishments as small dents in the armour of world poverty. Eventually, with enough small successes, thoughtful organization and unified action, that armour, like any, can be destroyed.

Grassroots Updates from the Field — Wrapping up 2009

by Alysha Kassam

Rwanda

For over a year, EPN has collaborated with a widows association in Rwanda on a bee-keeping project. The site is visited regularly in order to monitor the project and provide assistance, such as a recent recommendation to improve hygiene management since four hives were contaminated with harmful substances. Overall, however, this project has been successful at both producing honey and generating income.

Philippines

EPN has also collaborated with IAT (International Association for Transformation) on a backyard gardening project in the Philippines, aiming to:

- improve nutritional habits and health, by harvesting seeds and plants
- protect crop from roaming animals
- promote income generation
- encourage families to manage their own vegetable gardens
- train participants in managing financial affairs

The project focused on helping 25 families in 5 villages. The results have been positive: the once barren land is now productively yielding nutritious crops, and inhabitants have been able to both sell their excess produce and put their profits in a savings account. Also, the villagers have implemented an efficient labour rotation system, which allowed them to build pens to stop the animals from invading the gardens.

Earlier in the fall, the Philippines were struck by Typhoons Ketsana and Parma, which destroyed the rice crop in the northern part of the country. Luckily, no one was injured or killed.

Grassroots Updates from the Field – Wrapping up 2009 CONTINUED

Looking Forwards

Over the last few months, the Grassroots Committee has reviewed project proposals from a number of different organisations, however a new project has yet to be undertaken and we are still accepting proposals. If you know of an interested organisation or are hoping to begin a project, please send along proposals! We are excited for the New Year and all the possibilities that lie ahead.

The Call of the Moderate: The Need for Regulation, Law, and Logic

by David Rozon

The controversy surrounding corporate land grabbing in underdeveloped countries is beginning to boil over, with detractors to foreign land leasing claiming that big business is profiting off of the current food crisis and even exacerbating famine and poverty. And despite the diplomatic appeals to diminish protectionism and tariff raising amidst the exhausted global market, a protocol that is being respected in terms of manufactured goods, food, on the other hand, couldn't be further from free market ideals of openness and liberal competition. In fact, it is the border-crossing control of foods that has induced massive land grabs in Africa and South America. In order to circumvent the cost of buying foreign produce, a cheaper route is simply to rent the land yourself and grow your own produce.

What is most disturbing about foreign land leasing is that there is no management overseeing this new sly way of importing with half the cost. In fact, "it is the very lack of leadership on this issue by the US and EU which creates the kind of global trading environment where water-poor, resource-rich nations such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait feel more secure leasing overseas farmland directly, rather than purchasing the produce of that land on the open market" (Cornock, 2009). As well, if land grabbing engenders the need for more aide to combat hunger, countries spending millions of dollars might want to think about how illogical it is throw that money away (not to mention that a disproportionate pendulum between aide and hunger only causes an ambivalence towards aide). In fact, the absence of law, regulation and management in the case of land grabbing shows a great dearth in intergovernmental cooperation and censorship. Perhaps, the food crisis demonstrates more clearly than any other phenomenon that the globe is a corporate world; that is to say, the globe is absent of anything antithetical to corporate interests – law, regulation, and, most importantly, logic.

Nevertheless, filling the void in a corporate world is paradoxically increasing the

The Call of the Moderate CONTINUED

importance of local mobilisation and protest. As the spread of absentee logic and law heightens, so the voice of ethics increases. For example, this year's World Food Summit on Food Security in Rome led to a strong declaration that awaits ratification. The declaration expressed concerns about the

“proposed World Bank Global Agriculture and Food Security programme whose governance mechanism appears undemocratic, un-transparent, and destined to lead to a replication of past mistakes. [So] long as institutions such as the WTO continue to privilege commercial interests over the globally marginalised and malnourished, hunger will continue to stalk the world” (People’s Food Sovereignty Now, 2009).

More importantly, there is a demand for a greater regulatory force across the globe by governments:

“Governments must protect and properly regulate domestic food markets. Our practices [the declaration is written and signed in part by small farmers across the world. Their “practices” comprise of small scale farming that focuses on the provision of crops and land fertility as well as environmental sustainability] require supply management policies in order to secure availability of food and to guarantee decent wages and fair prices. We are ready to discuss new legal frameworks to support our practices” (People’s Food Sovereignty Now, 2009).

The fact that this declaration, a document proving the peaceful and efficient cooperation of farmers from underdeveloped countries at a local and international level, exists at all is quite astounding when considering how the media tends to focus on how unmanageable the third-world is. More significantly, the collection of local farmers and NGO's who participated in writing the document recognizes not only their crucial influence but also the need to work alongside governments, another quality missed in the plethora of photos and news reels documenting violent protests and mass arrests, most recently exemplified in Copenhagen. Legislation, regulation, management – it is funny that it is the people who are at a disadvantage in the world who are calling for these three tenets to be implemented more forcefully and effectively. I find it ironic that within the social movements of today there is a maintained and moderate cry for order and governmental intervention rather than a call for radicalism and disorder. The only hope is that these forms of declarations and appeals from NGO's and local farmers are responded to (and I suspect that accountability will be the strongest motivating factor) adequately by democratic governments, especially if the democratic world wants to sustain faith in its political project.

Cornock, Oliver. “Food Security Keeps its Place at the Table.” The National. <http://farmlandgrab.org/9919>

People's Food Sovereignty Now, Civil Society Organizations Forum Parallel to World Summit On Food Security Rome, Italy November 13-17, 2009. “Declaration from Social Movements Parallel Forum to the World Food Summit.” <http://peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/sites/peoplesforum2009.foodsovereignty.org/file>

What's New with End Poverty Now!

by Jennifer Sault

"Be the change you wish to see" – Mahatma Ghandi

This month is End Poverty Now's month for Social Movements! With this, the entire EPN team encourages you to act for human rights and global equality. Make 2010 a year to start contributing to an initiative that you feel connected with. Volunteer, donate, and speak out to see the change you wish to see on behalf of the many individuals that cannot.

EPN is dedicating this year to further our efforts in poverty elimination. In addition to our continued work with our existing grassroots projects, we are looking to initiate another grassroots project in 2010. If you have any suggestions, please contact Alysha at projects@endpovertynow.ca. Our efforts with the International Association for Transformation in the implementation of a Backyard Gardening Project, the Rwanda Village Concept Project for the sponsorship of a Bee-Keeping Initiative, and the Projet Autochtone du Quebec's Warm Fireside Project continue successfully. All three of our current projects are coming to a close with EPN, but the success of these initiatives will continue to impact the lives of the people they serve.

We are also expanding our educational efforts. In addition to our existing materials (newsletters, podcasts, journals, news-feeds, curricula, and others), we are including photo and written blogs on your efforts to alleviate poverty. Check our website's InReach section for more information.

For our future podcasts, we are hosting a podcast competition, requiring your creative ideas! We require a 10 to 30 second musical introduction that will be used for each one of our future podcasts. Send your entry to Jason at AlternativeMedia@endpovertynow.ca by February 15th for a chance to win EPN t-shirts, water bottles, a spot on our February podcast and the honour of knowing that thousands will hear your contribution to EPN every month.

Our first annual academic journal, **Means to an End** has made its debut. It encompasses a wide range of scholarly articles on numerous issues behind poverty ranging from child poverty in Canada to international refugee rights and many more. Our journal is being mailed to universities and libraries across Canada and can be found on our website. For a donation of \$10.00 or more, we can mail the printed version to you.

We are also seeking articles for our next journal to be released in September 2010. The theme is Global Health and the submission deadline is March 15th. Contact Neesha at journal@endpovertynow.ca for more information.

What's New with End Poverty Now! CONTINUED

Donate to End Poverty Now:

All of End Poverty Now's activities are the result of a tireless group of volunteers across Canada that believe in our mission of ending abject poverty. If you would like to support our activities financially, a donation is very much appreciated. Donations allow us to continue supporting grassroots projects in Canada and around the world as well as to pursue greater implementation of our curriculum in various cities. Donations can be made through our website, Facebook or by addressing cheques to:

3450 Durocher #38
Montreal, QC
H2X 2E1 CANADA

All donations of 20\$ or more are eligible for a Canadian tax receipt. We thank you for your support.

Opportunities to Join Our Team:

EPN is hiring! We are looking for a *Poverty in the News Officer*. This person will be responsible for updating our poverty-news feed on our website through posting links, stories, and initiatives related to poverty and its alleviation. This officer is also active in our different campaigns, such as writing articles for our educational materials and others. It is a non-remunerated position. If you are interested, please send your C.V. and letter of intent to apply@endpovertynow.ca by January 15th.

The *End Poverty Now Chapter group at University of British Columbia* is currently looking for leadership. If you are interested in getting involved with this chapter group, please contact Japneet at internal@endpovertynow.ca for more information!

Start or join a Chapter group! Contact Japneet at internal@endpovertynow.ca
Newsletter writers/editors wanted! Contact Hilary at newsletter@endpovertynow.ca
Do you have ideas for EPN's next *grassroots project*?
Contact Alysha at Alysha@endpovertynow.ca

For more information in general, please contact us at info@endpovertynow.ca

Many thanks to this editon's dedicated team of writers and editors!

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