

APRIL 2018

OFID

THE OPEC FUND
FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Quarterly



**WOMAN-POWER
AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT**

OFID Quarterly is published four times a year by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).

OFID is the development finance agency established in January 1976 by the Member States of OPEC (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to promote South-South cooperation by extending development assistance to non-OPEC developing countries.

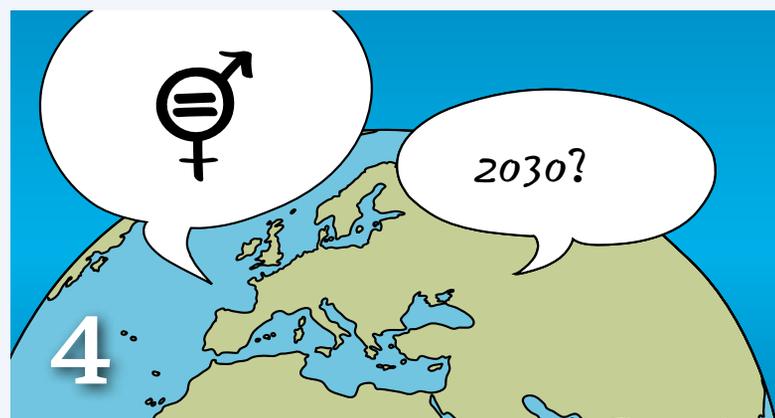
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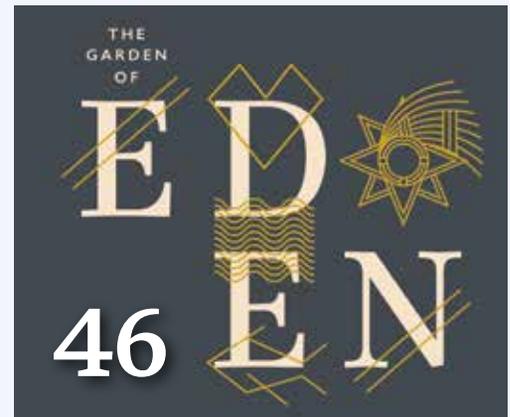
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PRODUCTION Susanne Dillinger

DESIGN etage.cc

PRINTED IN AUSTRIA Druckerei Odysseus

This publication is printed on paper produced from responsibly managed forests.

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The SDGs are not gender-neutral

March 8 was International Women's Day. As with many of these 'days', the very act of marking them suggests that something's not quite right, or that we're not quite *there* yet. There is also an International Day of Women and Girls in Science, a World Day against Trafficking in Persons and an International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

International Women's Day recognizes women for their achievements without regard to divisions – whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. The day has now assumed a global scale and is relevant for women in developed and developing countries alike. The international women's movement continues to grow, and builds support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas; rights and participation that are fundamental ingredients to a well-functioning, progressive, socio-economic order.

This issue of the *OFID Quarterly* considers global progress toward Sustainable Devel-

opment Goal (SDG) 5 and gender equality. But it also widens out its scope of investigation, given that, as the World Bank's Senior Director for Gender Caren Grown says in our lead feature on page 5: "Achieving SDG 5 requires progress in many very different contexts, simultaneously."

UN Women Research Specialist and Report Manager Silke Staab agrees, pointing out that progress (or otherwise) on each of the other 16 SDGs is not gender-neutral. "We know, for example, that in most countries women report higher levels of food insecurity than men (SDG 2), that they do the lion's share of water collection in households with no water on the premises (SDG 6), that they are differently affected by climate change (SDG 13) and deforestation (SDG 15)." Again, see our lead feature for more on this.

On page 16, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All Rachel Kyte talks about many women-related issues, not least the global challenge of SDG 7: ensuring access to affordable, modern, clean energy. Currently,

one billion people still lack access to electricity, and over three billion lack access to clean cooking fuels. Substantially more than half of these people are women.

Helping to alleviate energy poverty is a focus area for OFID. This organization allocated more than US\$464 million to this end during 2017 alone. OFID is only too aware of the challenges Kyte talks of in her interview: that cooking – an activity dominated by women – is a major cause of childhood respiratory disease and a significant source of indoor air pollution. According to the World Health Organization, it kills 4.3 million people a year globally. Universal access to clean cooking energy is a vital step in improving women and children's health and in slowing rates of deforestation and land degradation.

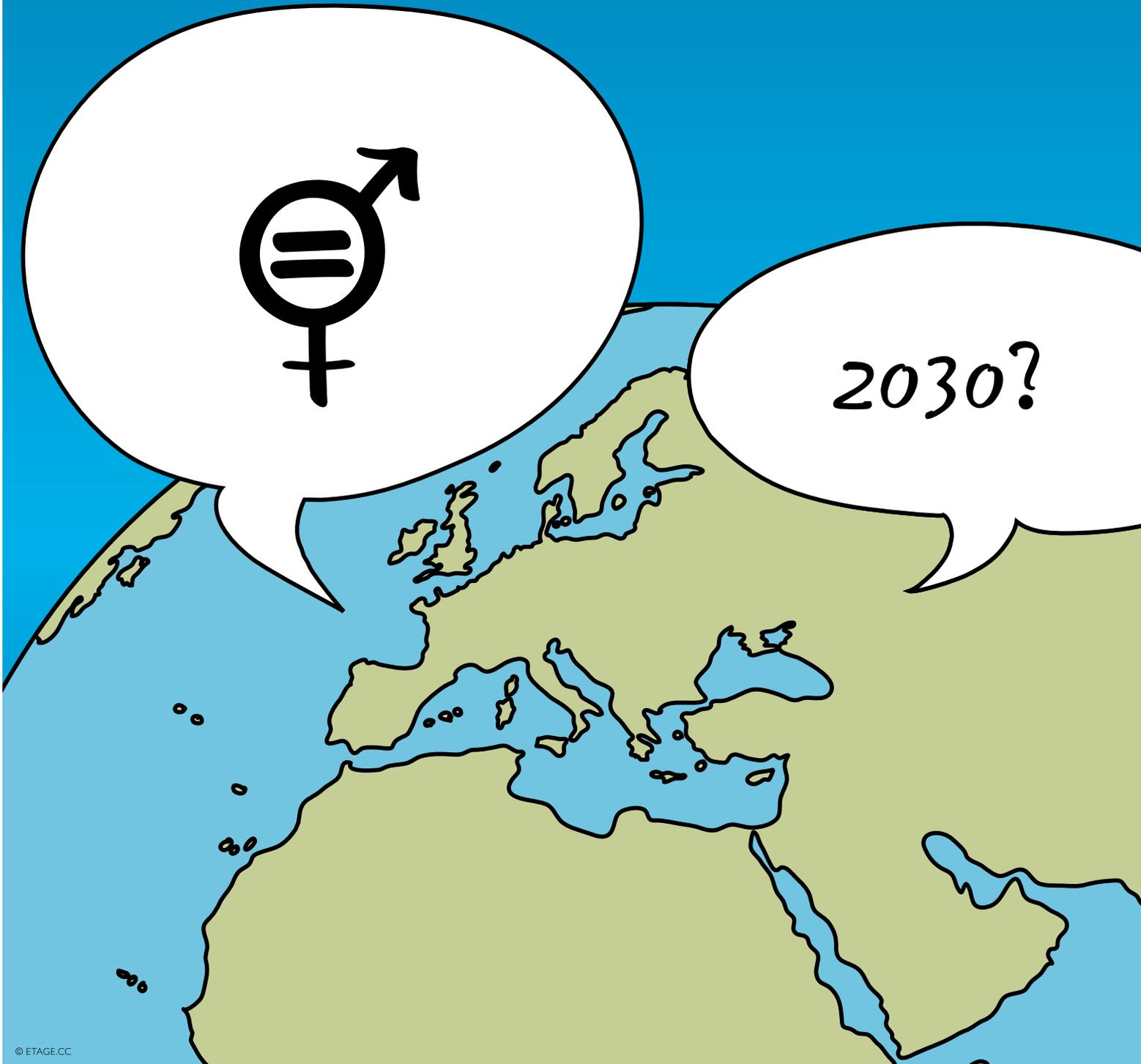
There are many ways that OFID supports gender equality – not least by committing fully to all 17 SDGs. As a new report by UN Women states: “Development will only be sustainable if its benefits accrue equally to both women and men; and women's rights will only become a reality if they are part of broader

efforts to protect the planet and ensure that all people can live with dignity and respect.”

Three of the many projects OFID supports that have an outcome specifically related to gender equality can be found on pages 20 to 25. They are: the small towns water project in Nepal; the Banco Ficohsa specialized market program for women in Honduras; and a project that promotes clean cooking solutions and solar systems in Burkina Faso, the Philippines and Togo.

In addition, this ‘women-power’ issue also includes features on an OFID-supported scheme that enables Syrian women to continue their education at some of the best institutions in the world (page 52), a project to empower indigenous war-affected women in Colombia (page 54), an interview with Violet Onyemenam, OFID's female Senior Director and General Counsel (page 18), and a glimpse into the world of the late Algerian female artist Baya Mahieddine (page 56), whose work adorns the cover of this magazine. ■

SPECIAL FEATURE



Gender equality: Bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality

Thanks to the relentless efforts of advocates across the world, the commitment to gender equality appears strong. But how far have we come and how far do we still have to go on the journey to SDG 5? *Steve Hughes* considers these questions in the context of an important new report from UN Women.

Why does gender equality matter? In a recent report on income inequality, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) argues that equality, like fairness, is an important value in most societies, irrespective of ideology, culture or religion. But it's more than that, too. Inequality, the IMF suggests, can signal a lack of income mobility and opportunity and reflect persistent disadvantages for particular segments of society. Gender equality is far more than a 'nice to have'. It's a fundamental ingredient to a well-functioning, progressive, socioeconomic order.

"Equality between men and women is important for economic and social progress," says the World

Bank Group Senior Director for Gender Caren Grown. "Closing gender gaps enables women and men to fully participate in the economy as workers, employers, suppliers and community partners. Research by the World Bank, IMF, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the private sector shows that billions can be added to the global economy by creating an enabling environment that fosters increases in women's labor force participation and business ownership, and improvements in the productivity of their work."

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dedicates Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 to gender equality. Building on previous commitments, the ►

◀ global political consensus appears to be clear: sustainable development depends upon many factors and one of them is equality between men and women. In turn, women’s rights will only be fully respected if they are a part of the big picture effort to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Despite the consensus, daunting problems remain. The World Economic Forum’s 2017 *Global Gender Gap Report*, for example, benchmarks countries on their progress toward gender parity across different thematic dimensions. On current trends, the report finds that the overall global gender gap between men and women will take exactly 100 years to close across the 106 countries covered since the inception of the report (2006), compared to 83 years last year. The most challenging gender gaps remain, it finds, in the economic and health spheres. Given the continued widening of the economic gender gap, it will now not be closed for another 217 years. However, the education-specific gender gap could be reduced to parity within the next 13 years. That’s OK then. Or not.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

Silke Staab,
UN Women
Research Specialist.

Turning promises into action

Though SDG 5 suggests there is a global political will to close the gender gap, what does this mean in reality? UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, is working hard to find out. With its recently-launched report *Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, UN Women tries to discern how far we’ve come “in turning this new development consensus into results for women and girls on the ground, and what is needed to bridge the remaining gaps between rhetoric and reality.”

100
years
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countries.

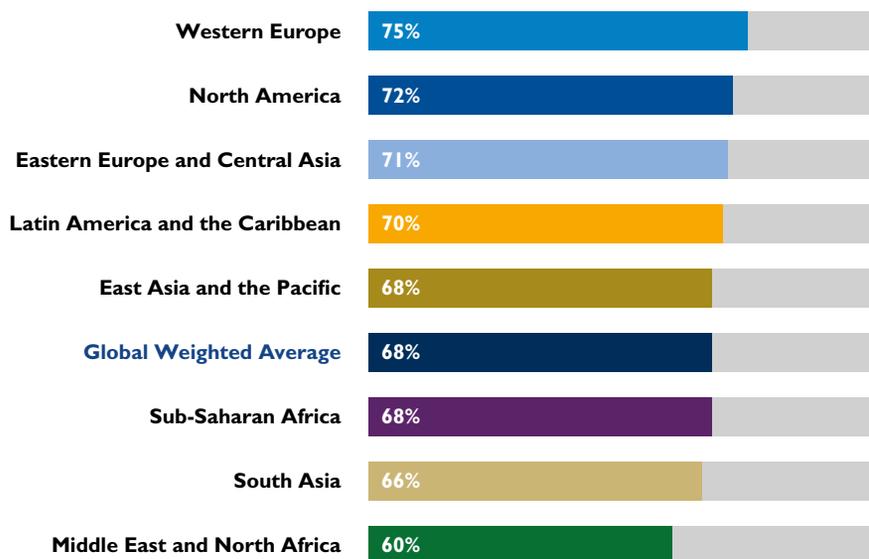
The overarching findings are deeply disappointing, though not surprising. The report shines a spotlight on gender-based discrimination across all 17 SDGs. The goal-by-goal review (see pages 8 to 9) shows that gender inequalities are pervasive in each and every dimension of sustainable development. Across countries, women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are often left behind and excluded from progress. These groups of women and girls not only lack access to education and health, but also other key measures of wellbeing including access to clean water, fuel and housing (see case studies summary opposite).

Change never comes easily

At a macro level, the UN Women report argues that orthodox economic policies continue to deepen inequality, and that exclusionary and fear-based politics are diverting people’s attention from the SDGs. But then how to explain the massive momentum that has built up around movements like #metoo? “Let’s be clear: the challenges that women’s rights are up against are daunting,” says Silke Staab, UN Women Research Specialist and Report Manager. “At the same time, we see global movements exposing gender inequalities and discrimination against women like never before: from the #NiUnaMenos movement against femicide in Latin America to the #metoo campaign on sexual harassment.”

Change never comes easily, Staab continues: “We know for a fact that without the mobilization of women’s movements issues such as domestic violence would have remained ‘private’ and laws that address the issue would have never seen the light of day. Today, three-quarters of countries have laws that address this issue. The problem is that in many countries they remain weakly implemented.

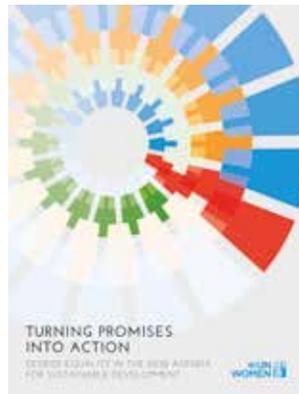
Distance from gender parity 2017, by region



Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2017.
Note: Covers all 144 countries featured in the 2017 index.

Laws are not enough. We also need services for survivors – such as shelters, health care and legal assistance – to ensure that women are safe and able to rebuild their lives. Most importantly, we need to prevent violence before it happens by challenging the unequal gender power relations that lie at its root.”

The recent social media movements are a rallying call, Staab says, that have drawn mainstream attention to issues that women’s movements have fought to make visible and address for decades. “If we want to move beyond awareness to what is needed to actually address this pandemic we need to provide women with spaces to influence and shape policy responses. It is a pivotal moment; but we need to monitor very carefully how powerful actors, including governments, respond to it. Are governments listening to ▶



Turning promises into action: Case studies from the UN Women report

- In the United States, the share of black and Native American/Alaska Native women over the age of 50 who live in low-income households is more than **10 percentage points** above the average for all women.
- In Nigeria, a low-income, rural woman of Hausa ethnicity is **eight times** as likely to be married before the age of 18 as a high-income, urban woman of Yoruba ethnicity.
- In Pakistan, the poorest rural Punjabi women and girls are almost **200 times** as likely as the richest urban Urdu women and girls to lack access to clean fuels.
- In Colombia, the poorest rural indigenous women are more than **300 times** as likely as women who do not identify with any ethnicity and live in the richest urban households to lack skilled delivery care.

Proportion of women aged 18–49 in the United States who lack health insurance, by location, income, race and ethnicity, 2015



Source: UN Women calculations based on microdata from U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. "American Community Survey (ACS)." Accessed 19 January 2018. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

Note: In the left-hand graph, all groups are shown and ranked from most to least deprived except those with insufficient sample size (n<100). The bar charts to the right present results for a selection of these.

At a glance: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda

1 NO POVERTY



Globally, there are 122 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Women represent 28.8% of researchers worldwide. Only about 1 in 5 countries have achieved gender parity in this area.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



The 2030 Agenda promises to put an end to barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential. But significant challenges lie ahead:

2 ZERO HUNGER



Women are up to 11 percentage points more likely than men to report food insecurity.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Globally, 303,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. The rate of death is declining much too slowly to achieve Target 3.1.

5.1 In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Up to 30% of income inequality is due to inequality within households, including between women and men. Women are also more likely than men to live below 50% of the median income.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



5.2 19% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



The contamination of freshwater and marine ecosystems negatively impacts women's and men's livelihoods, their health and the health of their children.

15 LIFE ON LAND



Between 2010 and 2015, the world lost 3.3 million hectares of forest areas. Poor rural women depend on common pool resources and are especially affected by their depletion.

Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises.

5.3 Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.

5.4 Women do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do.

5.5 Women hold just 23.7% of parliamentary seats, an increase of 10 percentage points compared to 2000 – but still way below parity.

5.6 Only 52% of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

5.a Globally, women are just 13% of agricultural land holders.

5.b Women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and their internet usage is 5.9 percentage points lower than that of men.

5.c More than 100 countries have taken action to track budget allocations for gender equality.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Indoor air pollution from using combustible fuels for household energy caused 4.3 million deaths in 2012, with women and girls accounting for 6 out of every 10 of these.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



15 million girls of primary-school age will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school compared to 10 million boys.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women and children, who are 14 times as likely as men to die during a disaster.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



In times of conflict, rates of homicide and other forms of violent crime increase significantly. While men are more likely to be killed on the battlefield, women are subjected during conflict to sexual violence and abducted, tortured and forced to leave their homes.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



In 2012, finances flowing out of developing countries were 2.5 times the amount of aid flowing in, and gender allocations paled in comparison.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Women living in urban slums endure many hardships, with basic needs such as access to clean water and improved sanitation facilities often going unmet.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Investment in public transportation yields large benefits for women, who tend to rely on public transport more than men do.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



The global gender pay gap is 23%. Women's labour force participation rate is 63% while that of men is 94%.

◀ women's organizations, including those that represent women who experience multiple forms of discrimination (ethnic minorities, migrant workers, LBT...)? Are they committing funds to strengthen response and prevention measures? Are they practicing zero tolerance for discrimination, violence and sexual abuse among their own rank and file?"

Taking a bird's eye view, the World Bank's Caren Grown is pragmatic about progress to date. "Particularly when it comes to 'first generation' problems in health and education, there has been steady progress: girls' access to education has improved, maternal deaths have reduced, and there have been reductions in child marriage and female genital mutilation," she says. "Similarly, there has been a gradual increase in women's participation in national parliaments (although women remain underrepresented), along with a reduction in the number of laws that discriminate against women."

Staab recognizes some progress too, but notes it has been patchy. "It is often uneven: many so-called 'developed' countries, for example, have comparatively low rates of child marriage, safe water and sanitation is widely available and gender gaps in educational attainment are small. But they still struggle with enormous gender pay gaps and occupational segregation: in some developed countries, for example, the share of women researchers is way below the global average."

"Progress is also not irreversible," Staab continues. "In the US, for example, we have seen a worrying rise in maternal mortality over the past decades. And all countries struggle with the promise to leave no one behind. In Colombia, for example, access to skilled birth attendants is widely available compared to many other developing countries. And yet, while the urban elite enjoys

universal access, one-third of poor indigenous women in rural areas lacks access to skilled birth attendants. Conversely, there are good examples in different areas that we can learn from across regions. Governments in Chile and Ecuador, for example, have made huge strides in terms of making childcare services much more widely available."

Great expectations, challenging realities

How do we know all this? How does anyone go about measuring something as complex as gender equality? And how can we be sure that the results are accurate? "People have huge expectations of a global monitoring report. They want to know where we stand, how far we've come and how much further we need to go," says Staab. "For this report, we mined every data source available, but the truth is that there are huge challenges for monitoring progress for women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda."

"The truth is there are huge challenges for monitoring progress for women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda."

She continues: "Apart from the goal that is dedicated to gender equality (SDG 5), progress or stagnation on each of the other 16 SDGs is not gender-neutral. We know, for example, that in most countries women report higher levels of food insecurity than men (SDG 2), that they do the lion's share of water collection in households with no water on the premises (SDG 6), that they are differently affected by climate change (SDG 13) and deforestation (SDG 15). Currently, however, six out of the 17 SDGs have no official indicator that explicitly tracks progress for women and girls. For the 54 gender-specific indicators that we do have in the framework, only 24 percent of the available data is recent (from 2010 or later) and only 17 percent is available for two or more points in time."

The World Bank's Caren Grown agrees: "Achieving SDG 5 requires progress in many very different contexts, simultaneously. Gender inequality is multidimensional and exists in almost every domain. Gaps



SOURCE: POWERING POTENTIAL, BNY MELLON AND UN FOUNDATION

can be closed in one domain, but this will not always mean progress will occur in other domains. For example, improving girls' education is important, but not enough by itself to ensure that they will participate in the labor market or be able to access high quality jobs. Education is necessary but insufficient; other reforms are needed to ensure that when a girl graduates from high school, she can continue studying in any field, start a business, enter politics, or pursue any other opportunities that are open to her male counterparts."

Similarly, Grown explains, policies that enhance economic growth are not sufficient by themselves to make sure that benefits and opportunities are shared by everyone. She quotes the World Bank's *World Development Report 2012*: "...income growth by itself does not deliver greater gender equality on all fronts. Indeed, where gender gaps have closed quickly, it is because of how markets and institutions – formal and informal – have functioned and evolved, how growth has played out, and how all these factors have interacted through household decisions."

With these daunting challenges in mind, the new report from UN Women calls for a revolution in measuring and accountability. Systematic monitoring of gender equality outcomes, policies and processes at the national, regional and global levels can contribute to catalyzing action, the report argues, translating global commitments into results and strengthening accountability for actions or omissions by different stakeholders. The report highlights three key strategies for keeping gender equality front and center: improving gender data, statistics and analysis to effectively monitor progress for women and girls across all goals and targets; prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies and programs to align with ►



UN Women's flagship program Making Every Woman and Girl Count: Better gender statistics for the SDGs

Statistics that adequately reflect the lived realities of women, men, girls and boys are indispensable tools for developing evidence-based policies and solutions to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Such statistics shed light on areas where progress is made, provide evidence of what works, and reveal gaps where further efforts are needed.

But 80 percent of the indicators for gender equality across the SDGs are lacking data. For example, only 41 percent of countries regularly produce violence against women data; 15 percent of countries have legislation that mandates specialized gender-based surveys; and only 13 percent of countries have a dedicated gender statistics budget.

UN Women's flagship program Making Every Woman and Girl Count aims to bring about a radical shift in how gender statistics are used, created and promoted. The program addresses the urgent need to increase the availability of accurate information on gender equality and women's rights in order to inform policy and decision-making.

Funded by the governments of Australia, Ireland and the United States, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Making Every Woman and Girl Count will provide technical and financial support to countries to improve the production and use of gender statistics in order to monitor the implementation of gender equality commitments in the 2030 Agenda.

◀ the 2030 Agenda; and strengthening accountability through gender-responsive processes and institutions to ensure an integrated approach to implementation, follow-up and review with gender equality at its core.

No SDG delivery without data

“If we are serious about tracking progress on gender equality, we need to ensure that gender data is collected and updated on a regular basis,” says Staab. “This must be part of broader strategies to strengthen national statistical systems. I am quite optimistic that the coming years will see important progress on this front. Countries have an interest in investing in gender statistics: good data enables good decision-making. It can inform policies by shedding light on what works and where further efforts are needed.



UN Women Executive Director
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

“ Without quality data, there is simply no credible path to achieving the SDGs. ”

As part of its program Making Every Woman and Girl Count (see page 11), UN Women is actively working with governments, including national statistical offices, regional commissions, civil society organizations and academic institutions to strengthen the production and use of gender statistics.”

All this is in line with what Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has been saying for some time: “The 2030 Agenda is an unmistakable commitment to justice and prosperity, with gender equality at its heart. But this is a promise and a commitment that can only be a reality when we have adequate data that we can monitor. We must ensure that when we have policies, these policies can be informed by reliable data. Without quality data, there is simply no credible path to achieving the SDGs.” ■

World Bank Group Senior Director for Gender Caren Grown on the terminology of gender equality

“The terminology of gender has not always served us well. It is often used to refer to women when in fact it is about the social norms and relations that underpin the roles, responsibilities, rights, and entitlements to public resources of both men and women. Moreover, ensuring equality between males and females requires an increase in opportunities – economic, political and social – for everyone.

Historically and still today, gender inequality disadvantages women relative to men, and closing gaps between them is important not only for individual men and women but also for households, firms, communities and countries. Disparities between men and women hurt everyone by choking economic and social progress. Violence against women not only has devastating impacts for its victims, but reduces productivity for both men and women. It has a vast

economic and social toll that affects all of society. Just as norms about female roles can be restrictive, norms about male roles can be harmful to men, contributing to problems like alcoholism. In areas like education, there are emerging disparities where boys are disadvantaged.

There is a growing body of research that shows clearly that firms perform better with diverse boards and workforces, and economies do better when women are able to participate fully in education and the paid labor market. Many studies show that putting resources in the hands of women can be a game-changer for household welfare and children’s outcomes.

When governments have a strong understanding of why it is important to invest in closing gaps between men and women, they are receptive to the agenda. When the World Bank talks to countries about in-



Caren Grown

creasing female labor force participation, for example, we can point to the example of Bangladesh, which made a remarkable increase in female labor force participation between 1999 and 2013, contributing to its robust growth.

Our language about equality needs to be both more inclusive and more accurate, identifying inequality wherever it occurs.”

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CRISTINA MUELLER



Cristina Müller is Chief of the Communications and Information Management Section at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Sudan. Here, via a candid short essay and by answering some specific questions posed by the *OFID Quarterly*, she shares her experiences of working with women (and men) in Sudan and some informed and thought-provoking perspectives on gender.

Gender neutrality in Sudan (and beyond)

“**T**he first thing that comes to mind when I think about gender equality is that it doesn’t exist.

It doesn’t exist because the equality itself is defined through a male prism. For example, a young woman in my team, who has three small children, recently revealed to me that by asking her to travel to the field, I was not understanding or respecting her priorities. She asked whether I could find a way she could shine at her job, which would not involve being away from her children.

Equality and opportunity are defined differently in every social construct. To most western women, for example, it would be uncommon for a woman to decline a work assignment. Contrary to my Sudanese colleague, as a young professional woman from a European-origin family in Brazil, it was a point of honor to fight for a place in the sun alongside my male counterparts.

It was expected of me to have a brilliant career. To have and look after a husband. To have children. A bit like superwoman. It was exhausting.

Today, as far as we are from the ideal, younger women have many more options. Whether in Sudan, Brazil, Austria or the United Kingdom, more women than ever are making life and professional choices that reflect their concern for themselves, their families, their environment and society at large. And this is not occurring, as many believe, only among the educated classes.

Earlier this year, I was in the most remote part of West Darfur visiting some communities. What I heard from women there was akin to a revolution of sorts. With no exception, whether they were mothers of six or unmarried women, all of the women I interviewed expressed their keen desire to be financially independent.

“It was expected of me to have a brilliant career. To have and look after a husband. To have children. A bit like superwoman. It was exhausting.”

‘If I can manage the money, I can do much more for the children,’ said one woman, during a community conflict resolution workshop sponsored by the Sudan Humanitarian Fund, managed by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

I spoke to women with fingernails bitten to the quick, who had been first displaced, and then become refugees. Raising daughters, sons, grandchildren in the midst of war and turmoil, and economic hardship, one of them compared her life to that of a snail, carrying her home and possessions on her back from state to state, to other countries.

Although her description had a connotation of slowness, in fact she was referring to her ability to cope. Having heard of my visit, she came from her farm to speak with me; to tell me that she had already sent one child to study IT in Khartoum, and a second daughter was on her way to nursing school. ▶

◀ Like this woman, many of the women I meet across the world – about 65 percent of the refugee women in Sudan – are *de facto* heads of households even when the statistics do not say so. Many women watch their men come home from war, without skills, and exhausted. Their hands are tied by cultural norms they are unwilling – or unable – to overcome. It is left to the women to raise the bar of poverty.

Without exception, the women work morning and night to improve their families' lives. In countries where the average income is less than a dollar a day, women find a way to pay exorbitant school fees for their children. 'She,' said one mother of five, pointing to her daughter in one returning refugee community in Darfur, 'will have a chance to help us all.'

Since losing her husband to conflict in 2008, this woman raises sheep, goats and camels. 'My children and grandchildren drink milk every morning,' she told me, with a sparkle in her eye. 'If you could do anything for the women here, it would be to teach them how to read and write.'

In Sudan today, where 4.3 million people are in need of assistance, at

About
65%
of the
refugee
women in
Sudan are
de facto
heads of
household.

least half are women. Most are unable to read and write, but possess rudimentary math skills, a requirement for doing business. This is not the case in the country's capital, Khartoum, where more and more highly qualified women join the job market each year. 'My wife,' said an acquaintance, 'is a medical doctor and the CEO of a new pharmaceutical company. She is amazing.'

OQ: Why is gender equality important in terms of social and economic progress?

CM: Society is equally made up of men and women. By sheer force of numbers, including women as both active consumers and producers will result in more economic activity. In addition, gender equality pre-supposes equal access to services and privileges, meaning the procurement of services, which generates income and livelihoods.

A woman also votes differently from a man, because in general women are much more likely to think about the needs of their children, family and society at large. Societies are more prosperous where women are allowed full participation in the political, social and economic model.

Gender equality is also a health issue. Early marriage, for example, is not only a form of child abuse, but it is also unhealthy for society. This is because girls are not physically or emotionally prepared for the sexual act, and many times are physically unable to – without great suffering and long term health consequences – bear children. An immature mother might not have the emotional wherewithal to cope with the pressures of parenthood. This can generate emotional neglect and abuse, with long-term consequences over entire generations.

OQ: How are we doing in terms of empowering women?



CM: I am on assignment in Sudan. Here there has been slow but steady progress. For example, Sudan has codified the legal age of marriage at 18. Although this is sometimes contested on religious grounds, Islamic scholars in the country do warn against early marriage, mostly because they believe it constitutes a violation of the rights of the child.

Another issue that is commonly discussed in the context of Sudan is gender-based violence (GBV). Used as a weapon in the war in Darfur, sexual violence continues to be an issue of concern in rural and urban areas alike. Female genital cutting (FGC) is also an issue – albeit diminished – in the rural areas of the country, where



PHOTOS: CRISTINA MUELLER/UNOCHA



up to 78 percent of girls between ages 6 and 12 are exposed to some form of the practice. In urban areas FGC has dropped to below 20 percent. Both aspects of GBV are being addressed in Sudan by national and international non-governmental organizations, and the government of Sudan, through legislation.

OQ: Is the terminology we use to talk about equality suitable or does something need to change?

CM: The terminology is too focused on equality, and not enough on speaking about creating common platforms where men and women will express their vision of society without pre-conceived notions of gender.

OQ: Have you experienced gender bias or found progression more difficult because you are a woman? If so, how have you dealt with it?

CM: Yes, I have personally experienced gender bias. If I were to recount, it would take up all of this piece. Now, after reaching the age of 50, I am not afraid any longer to call sexism by its name. But this is not an easy stance. I am sad to report that women avoid confronting this reality by being in collusion with – and practicing – discriminatory behaviour against other women.

OQ: What would a more gender equal world look and feel like?

CM: A more gender neutral world would be one where girls and boys

from the outset are treated gender-free as children, and not as sexualised beings.

OQ: Do you have any advice for a young woman about to embark on a career?

CM: My advice to young women is to keep the bar of your achievements high. Be confident and avoid circumstances where you will be manipulated. Get to know your rights, and do not be afraid to exercise them. And preferably, don't giggle, throw your hair around and act like a little girl in work meetings. It gives all women a bad name.

OQ: Advice for young men?

CM: None. Wouldn't know where to begin. ■

18

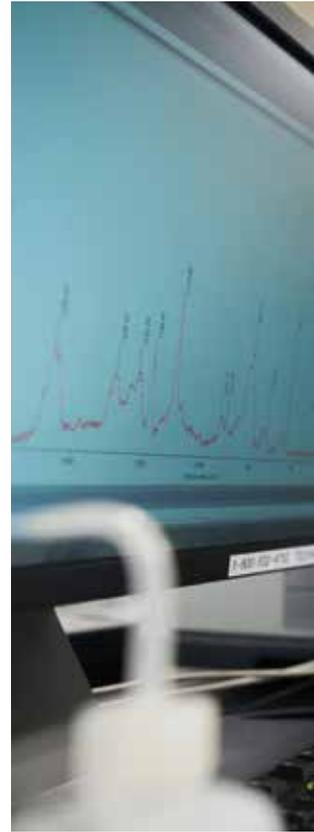
legal age
of marriage
in Sudan.

Access to energy = powerful women



PHOTO: SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL

Rachel Kyte is the CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All – the global platform working for universal access to sustainable energy. Kyte explains to OFID’s *Fatma Elzahra Elshhati* how affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is key to empowering women, as well as helping to combat poverty and climate change.



OQ: What effect does access to energy have on women across the world?

RK: Over one billion people globally still lack access to electricity, and over three billion lack access to clean cooking fuels. Substantially more than half of these are women; a proportion due in part to systemic social barriers in many countries that restrict women’s access to resources, bank accounts and land ownership.

Energy access is crucial to allow all women and girls to achieve their full potential. From powering health clinics, supporting new mothers and lighting houses, to illuminating streets to make them safer, providing job opportunities and making it possible to cook cleanly, energy access empowers women. It reduces hours of drudgery (time spent collecting firewood, for example) and instead enables

women to put their time to more productive use.

To achieve sustainable energy for all, women and the most marginalized must have a voice in the design of energy systems and services.

OQ: How can the international community help to empower women, particularly in the developing world?

RK: First, we need to improve the quality of data we use to measure progress toward sustainable energy for all. While we know that around one billion people do not have access to electricity and around three billion do not have access to clean fuels for cooking, it has taken a large collaborative effort to determine the multi-tiered approach necessary. The solutions for those who have no foot on the energy access ladder may be different from those for people who have some

access but need super-efficient appliances to meet their needs affordably. Gender disaggregating the data on energy access is a priority. We need to know who these one billion people are and understand their needs.

Second, we need women in decision making. We cannot build the energy systems of the future without taking into account the views, patterns of use and needs of half of the population. Furthermore, women make most household purchasing decisions and so for residential energy access, women are key. And as energy companies navigate the energy transition, the risks and opportunities are complex. Building diverse teams that will make better risk management decisions is critical for business success and is another reason to ensure a good representation of women in management and on boards.



PHOTO: HERO IMAGES INC./ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

OQ: Can different sources of energy be more or less gender-friendly than others?

RK: Cooking – an activity dominated by women – is a major cause of childhood respiratory disease and a significant source of indoor air pollution. According to the World Health Organization, it kills 4.3 million people a year globally. Universal access to clean cooking energy is a vital step in improving women and children’s health and in slowing rates of deforestation and land degradation. It is at the heart of poverty eradication efforts for some of the poorest and most isolated in society.

If we are truly serious about not leaving poor and isolated women behind, the public and private sectors need to join together with civil society to build big markets for clean fuels and make them available and affordable everywhere, now.

OQ: In what ways can we encourage women to participate in achieving the Global Goals, particularly as they relate to energy?

RK: Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) calls for universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy by 2030. The energy services of the future will not resemble the energy system of the past, and those who design, deliver and plan them should be as diverse as those who use them. This is why women must be at the table and participating to help create the energy system of the future.

Gender balance in the energy sector is worse than in other parts of the global economy in terms of everything from the participation rates of girls and young women in science, technology and mathematics, to women in the energy-sector workforce, all the way up through management and to the

“It is estimated that women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities.”

boards of energy companies. There’s no time like the present for governments, corporations and civil society to walk the talk on their commitment to empowering women and girls.

OQ: How is your organization, Sustainable Energy for All, supporting women’s empowerment in the energy sector?

RK: At Sustainable Energy for All, we recognized that one of the biggest challenges to achieving SDG 7 was that business-as-usual ideas and approaches did not represent diverse perspectives, nor did they include the voices of women. In response, we developed the People-Centered Accelerator, a voluntary partnership working to advance social inclusion, gender equality and women’s empowerment in sustainable energy.

The Accelerator now counts over 40 organizations as partners from across government, civil society, private sector and non-government organizations – all aiming to provide clean energy access to those who will not be reached by status quo approaches. The Accelerator is focused on unlocking finance, strengthening collaboration and connections between stakeholders concerned with energy, gender and social justice, and increasing women’s participation in sustainable energy solutions.

As more women are connected to modern energy services, entire communities benefit. It is estimated that women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities. They are also more likely than men to invest a large proportion of their household income in the education of their children, including girls. Investing in energy access solutions that benefit women is one important way we’re making sure that we’re moving forward – together – to achieving sustainable energy for all. ■



Gender and the bottom line

Violet Onyemenam, Senior Director and General Counsel at OFID, discusses glass ceilings, overcoming gender bias and what a world with more women in power might look like. As told to *Steve Hughes*.

“I grew up in Nigeria and my parents were quite supportive of my decision to study law. As a teenager, I loved reading and would use my pocket money to buy books. I also had a strong sense of fairness and would always speak out if I saw something I felt was not right. I guess this is what led me to the legal profession, where I qualified as a solicitor and a barrister – that was my dream. It was not difficult for me to aspire to become a lawyer; there were already several female senior advocates of Nigeria, which is equivalent to a Queen’s Counsel in the UK.

Gender equality is important because it’s about fairness: giving everyone the same opportunities to reach their full potential without

the limits of a ‘glass ceiling’. Every society and organization should encourage fairness. However, it’s not just a moral issue but it also makes economic sense. Several studies have drawn a straight line between gender equality and sustainable economic growth. There is also data showing that diversity on boards of listed companies increases the return on capital and share price. A recent World Bank study estimated that labor productivity could rise by up to 25 percent in some developing countries if barriers to women working in certain sectors are removed. According to Christine Lagarde, the first female Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund: “empowering women and fostering more inclusive growth is

the right thing to do, both morally and economically.”

To me, an ‘empowered’ woman is one who is professionally competent (regardless of what her profession is), one who is able to express her views and opinions and is respected for her ideas. She strives to fulfil not just her own potential but also creates opportunities for other women. She can step up and own her space without feeling intimidated – and without being intimidating.

Fortunately, over my 30 year career as a lawyer, I have always felt empowered. In the last 15 years before joining OFID I worked in the Nigerian financial sector, first at Habib Nigeria Bank Limited and then at Vetiva Capital Management Limited. I can only remember experiencing some form of gender bias on one occasion. As head of the legal department, I recall my male colleagues interrupting my arguments in a management meeting, noting that I was a legal specialist, and did not understand business. I was convinced the barrier was mostly gender-based. So I took a year off work, went back to university and studied for a Master’s in Business Administration in the UK, where I was awarded a distinction. I came back, sat at the same table and they couldn’t tell me I did not understand business anymore. For me it was a challenge and I enjoyed it. A Master’s in Law and in Business made me more versatile as a professional. Sometimes, you just need to broaden your perspective.

The progress made on gender equality is sometimes hindered by the way the narrative on the subject is framed. When we talk about gender equality, the perception is that we want a woman to be appointed or promoted because she is female and not because she is competent. Empowerment is understood as helping women to progress beyond what they deserve. We could change that narrative by highlighting the



Violet Onyemenam

benefits of empowering and having all genders on board. Better performance, innovation and creativity coming from the diverse perspectives of each gender are just a few of the potential benefits.

I believe more women in positions of power would be a game changer for the world and would lead to increased growth and improved inclusivity. Women would be involved at all levels of society including politics, business, academia – and not just involved, but really at the helm. I mentioned Ms Lagarde earlier; she’s one of very few women at the top of an international financial institution. It would be great if we had more. Women are not just competent and hardworking; they are also intuitive and have

“More women in positions of power would be a game changer for the world.”

emotional intelligence. Their participation could improve the quality of decision-making at the leadership level. Globally, achieving SDG 5 relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls would become more of a reality than a mere goal. Meaningful progress would be made in many important aspects, such as reducing the number of harmful actions against women, sex trafficking, wartime sexual violence and other oppressive practices. Yes, there has been progress, but more women in power would definitely up the ante.

Speaking of OFID, after eight years I can say that my opinion has always been respected and I have had a positive experience leading the legal team. Recently, I attended the World Bank Group’s 2017 Law, Justice and Development Week. Gender was the main theme of the conference. We examined whether international financial institutions were walking the talk. I used the same scorecard to see how OFID measures up. In terms of recruitment and entry-level positions, we have a good policy for engaging male and female candidates. But there is room for improvement. I am the only female at the executive level. We need to support the progression of women into more senior positions and management roles. There is willingness within OFID for this, but we need to make progress by introducing specific policies to support this. I believe very strongly that this would ultimately be in OFID’s best interest.

On a final note, one of the main challenges girls or young women face is being told they can’t do something. I have three daughters – one is an engineer, one is an economist and the third is still in high school. Every day I tell them they can be whatever they want to be. Nothing should be seen as out of bounds or beyond reach. ■

OFID in the field

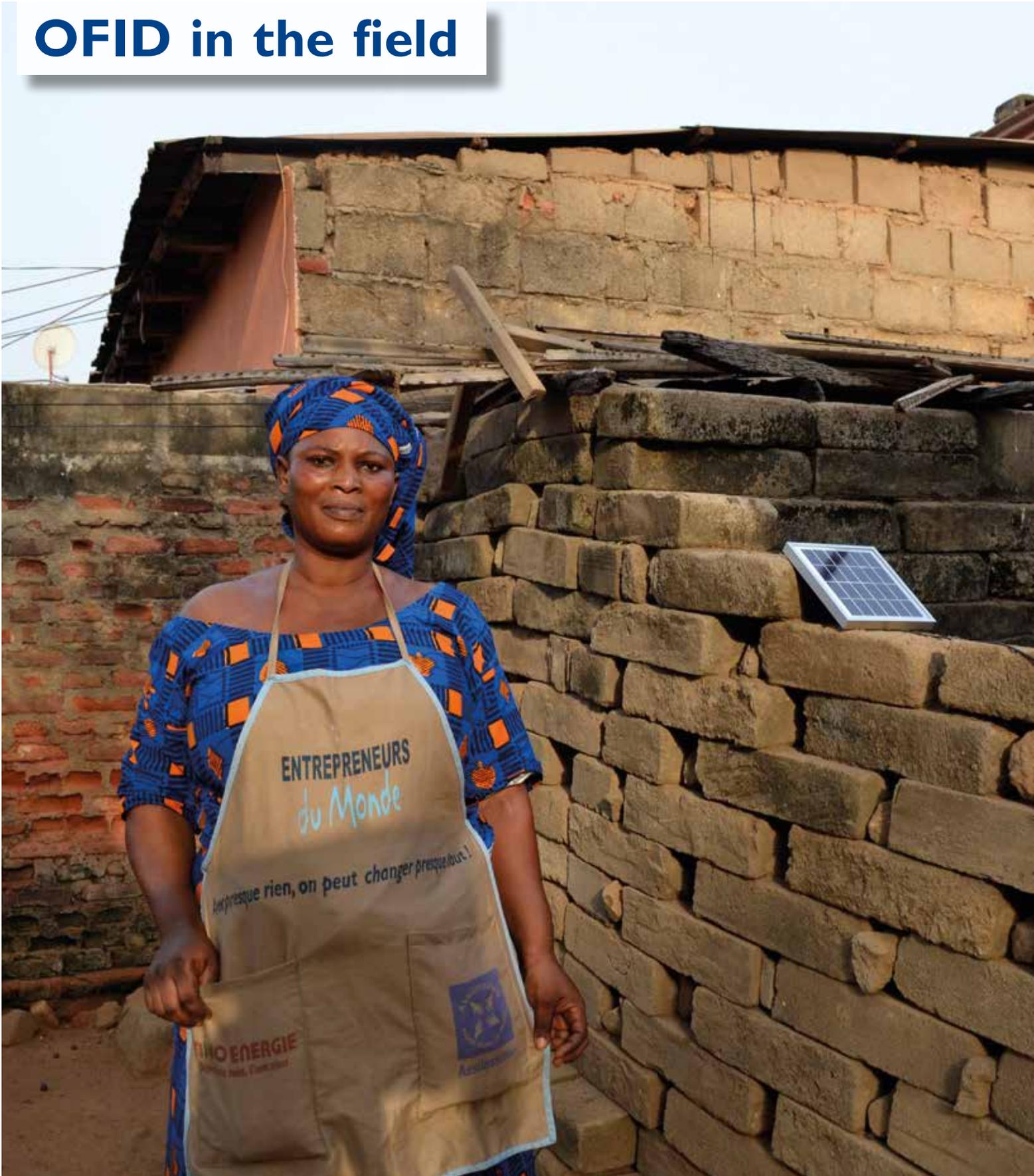


PHOTO: ENTREPRENEURS DU MONDE



Light and healthy

Energy boost for vulnerable communities in Burkina Faso, Togo and the Philippines.

BY ANNA ILARIA-MAYRHOFER

Across the developing world some three billion people cook and heat their homes with open fires and inefficient cookstoves fueled by biomass such as wood, animal and crop waste, and coal. This creates indoor air pollution that results in an estimated four million premature deaths each year from pulmonary and respiratory-related diseases. Women are particularly affected, since they spend the most time indoors preparing meals, but nearly two million of these deaths are accounted for by children under the age of five. Indoor fires and kerosene stoves also cause millions of debilitating burn injuries and fatalities annually.

Open fires and inefficient cooking methods can put a strain on time and finances too. Some families spend up to one-quarter of their monthly income purchasing wood and other fuels and it is most often women and children who shoulder the time-consuming, tedious burden of collecting fuel each day.

Fortunately, innovative schemes devised by French NGO *Entrepre-*

LPG reduces indoor air pollution exposures by more than 90 percent in comparison to open fires or traditional stoves.

neurs du Monde (EdM) are helping to slowly change this scenario. Established in 1998, EdM works with some of the most disadvantaged communities in the world and enables them to enjoy better health and living standards while simultaneously protecting against deforestation. One such scheme is 'Access to Energy'. Launched by EdM in 2010, the scheme focuses on providing clean, inexpensive and sustainable sources of energy to even the most remote 'forgotten' communities unconnected to an electrical grid. The scheme distributes energy sources such as solar lighting, LPG gas stoves and improved cookstoves to as many people as possible.

Under Access to Energy, individuals receive training and access to financial services to set up their own micro-franchises for marketing and selling the products; a practice that supplements household incomes and benefits the community at the same time.

EdM also works with various partners to help them become autonomous social and financial enterprises by providing a range ▶

◀ of tailor-made technical and financial support services. Teams on the ground assist throughout the entire process – from the gradual transfer of knowledge to helping the partners become legal organizations. To date, EdM has formed 11 such partnerships in Africa and Asia.

Access to Energy has enjoyed impressive results: the program has resulted in the distribution of more than 88,000 products, helped avoid more than 245,000 tons of CO₂ emissions and enabled families to save an estimated 14 million Euros in fuel costs.

EdM social enterprises

Nafa Naana in Burkina Faso, established in 2012 after the completion of a successful two-year pilot scheme, has been bringing light and cooking solutions to even the most remote communities. In 2016, French newspaper *Le Monde* and the Finansol Association awarded Nafa Naana with the *Finance Solidaire Grand Prix* award. In addition, two large associations of shea butter producers joined the Nafa Naana network to enable their members to buy cooking and solar lighting equipment on preferential terms.

Nafa Naana distributor Zoenabo, Burkina Faso. “I found out about Nafa Naana’s products during a presentation in my village. I was won over by these lamps and stoves and the coal and electricity savings that they bring, so I bought some. They make our life much easier. As a result, I became a Nafa Naana distributor. I attended training courses on sales and stock management, which were very interesting. We are selling well because of word of mouth recommendations and Nafa Naana demonstrations around my shop. I love this business, which involves building relationships. I am proud of providing several vulnerable families with access to gas, enabling them to improve their daily lives a little.”



PHOTO: ENTREPRENEURS DU MONDE

An improved wood or charcoal cookstove can cut wood consumption by 40 percent. This equates to around 800kg of wood saved on average per year for a five-people household.

MIVO Energie in Togo supports local cookstove manufacturers by securing their place in a distribution network and developing financial solutions, as well as organizing awareness-raising campaigns.

MIVO reseller Paulin, Togo. “I discovered MIVO products at a trade fair and I was impressed. Buying a solar lamp made me think of people in my village who have no access to electricity. So I decided to become a reseller to help improve their living conditions and to increase my income. I very much appreciate MIVO’s services: buying on credit allows me to develop my business and the training sessions have given me good commercial techniques. The products are displayed outside my home, where the MIVO posters draw in passers-by. Sometimes I travel to showcase the products. The customers are happy and talk about them to their neighbors. The solar lamp will also charge their telephone, which saves them time and money: they used to have to travel long distances to find somewhere to recharge. I feel useful and I’m very proud of that!”

In 2016, EdM partnered with Total to launch **ATE Co in the Philippines** where an innovative PAYGO (pay-as-you-go) scheme is helping slum dwellers. Families rent LED kits run on lithium batteries that provide light for 24 hours. The batteries are then recharged and delivered to residents for a nominal fee. An EdM team takes care of installing and maintaining the kits, providing training and setting up a concessional repayment plan. The highly-successful scheme is being replicated in other high-need areas.

ATE Co customer Virginia, a local from the Isla Puting slum in Manila. “Before, we had to use kerosene lamps. Not only were they expensive and dangerous, but they were also very weak and turned off when there was wind. With this set, we can finally see clearly. My children use it for their homework and we can now leave the light on at night to scare thieves away.”

OFID has to date extended two grants totaling US\$1.3 million to EdM to support its work in Burkina Faso, Togo, the Philippines and Haiti. ■



For more information: entrepreneursdumonde.org/en/

Banco Ficohsa banks on women

BY JUSTINE WÜRTZ

In a drive to support social change, improve gender equality and promote financial inclusion, Banco Ficohsa of Honduras has created a specialized market program for women, with OFID's help.

"We are developing a proposition that includes savings plans, pensions and insurance for wellbeing and family health as well as financing facilities, among other things, that will allow us to meet the needs of women," explains Banco Ficohsa's Sandra Giannini, Vice-President of Corporate, Business and SME Banking.

More than half (58 percent) of the bank's employees are female, 46 percent of whom work at senior management levels.

Giannini says that the objectives of the program include providing personalized financial and non-financial products and opportunities for women including those relating to professional development. The bank, she explains, also aims to embed a culture that helps women feel welcomed and respected.

Banco Ficohsa, one of the largest banks in Central America and a long-standing private sector partner of OFID, is serious about supporting gender equality. More than half (58 percent) of the bank's

employees are female, 46 percent of whom work at senior management levels. The bank has implemented a number of programs to actively support female employees – including health fairs, lactation rooms and personal finance advisory services – and is also a member of the Global Banking Alliance (GBA) for Women, which promotes sustainable banking practices specifically aimed at supporting women (see box, next page).

Banco Ficohsa President and Founder Camilo Atala recognized ►



PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

◀ the potential for a women's market as early as 2007. Speaking on a visit to OFID last year, Atala said: "Women are the head of the family; they are responsible for giving education and health to their children, which is an important part of the SME sector, so we are concentrating on them and [OFID's] funds will help us concentrate on this market."

Banco Ficohsa Vice-President Sandra Giannini, speaking about the bank's earlier efforts to engage with female customers, said: "Our biggest lesson...was that we needed to get closer [to women] and understand their needs and behaviours."

In an interview with the GBA for Women, Giannini pointed out: "Statistics show that women are entrepreneurial, they repay loans because they don't like to be in debt, they are more responsible, and they

always invest with their children and families in mind."

Women now represent 51 percent of the banking market. The GBA for Women website (www.gbaforwomen.org) shows that consumer spending by women is set to hit US\$18 trillion this year. Women also make up to 80 percent of buying decisions worldwide and by 2020, women could control over US\$72 trillion globally.

In 2011, Honduras ranked 105th out of 146 countries on the United Nations Development Program's Gender Inequality Index. Many of the inequalities stem from the longstanding traditions of a patriarchal society. But these outdated views are being challenged as more and more women take up careers and establish businesses of their own. ■



PHOTO: PHILIPPE LISSAC/GODONG/PANOS PICTURES

Global Banking Alliance for Women

The Global Banking Alliance (GBA) for Women is a consortium of financial institutions in more than 135 countries that have proven the business case for serving women. The GBA provides a wide range of services to help organizations design, implement and refine effective women's market programs. It also advocates for greater awareness of women's vital economic role as consumers, investors and job-creating entrepreneurs.



gbaforwomen.org

PHOTO: SAMIR JUNG THAPA FOR ADB



A US\$20 million project in Nepal will help provide drinking water and safe sanitation services across 19 small rural towns, as OFID joins forces with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the government of Nepal.

The towns under this project are represented through water user associations, which elect water user and sanitation committees (WUSCs), responsible for the management and maintenance of drinking water. Each WUSC has a minimum of three women members, making up at least 33 percent of the committee. In addition, a woman must occupy at least one of the key posts – Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary or Treasurer.

The approach provides opportunities to the communities' women members, helping to raise their public profile, self-esteem and confidence within the community. Women



Women and water in Nepal

Key posts for women and opportunities for self-development

BY SILVIA MATEYKA

members are also empowered through various training and capacity building initiatives. WUSCs have strengthened the projects and helped create many strong and dedicated women leaders.

“This loan will fund the third phase of a wide-ranging water program undertaken by the government of Nepal and the ADB,” explains Dr Jaafar Al-Mahdi, OFID country officer for Nepal. The main objective is to provide around 78,000 households across 19 small towns

with piped-in water, and over 20,000 sanitation facilities.

Sustainability and social inclusion is central to all three phases of the ‘Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Projects’. Nepal’s government places a strong emphasis on community ownership and participation in maintaining all new infrastructure.

Water is one of Nepal’s greatest natural assets. However, a large proportion of the population does not have access to safe and adequate

drinking water. They rely on conventional or more traditional sources of water such as lakes, rivers and wells.

Many women spend a large part of their day fetching water, a chore that is also expected of young girls, thus preventing them from attending school. Water-related diseases also hamper the productivity of small farmers and other wage earners, hindering the country’s socio-economic development. ■

NEWSROUND



OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish and Professor Kala Vairavamoorthy, IWA Executive Director (*third and fourth from left*) with (*from left*): OFID's Dr Walid Mehalaine, Head, Grants and Technical Assistance; Faris Hasan, Director, Strategic Planning and Economic Services; and Shirin Hashemzadeh Sooreh, Technical Assistance Officer.

Wastewater: The great global opportunity

Experts gather in OFID for the launch of a new, hard-hitting report that aims to drive a revolution in the way the world manages water.

BY STEVE HUGHES

“The attendance was excellent and the messages we wanted to put out there came through loud and clear,” says the International Water Association’s (IWA) Executive Director Professor Kala Vairavamoorthy. “There were some really important people here. For me, it was a 10 out of 10 event.”

Professor Vairavamoorthy is speaking of the recent launch of an innovative report on wastewater. The OFID headquarters in Vienna was awash with leading water industry professionals and academics from around the world as the organization helped to publicize *Wastewater: The reuse opportunity*. Published by the IWA with OFID’s support, the report argues that decisive, urgent and large-scale action is needed to dramatically increase wastewater treatment, reuse and

recycling. The report states that cities, as drivers of the global economy, must lead this resource revolution to enable a transition to a circular economy.

“We wanted to show best practices and what is happening out there,” explains Professor Vairavamoorthy, speaking of the report which details how wastewater is managed by eight pioneering cities. “These aren’t the typical cities you might focus on. These are cities reacting to their context – they know what works for them – and we’re hoping they will inspire other cities across the world.

“Almost every city in the world has an interesting story to tell in terms of water management – you just have to cut through some of the negativity to find that story,” Professor Vairavamoorthy says. “We’ve found some gems and we’re presenting them in this report. There is innovation and creativity taking place and I think that will surprise some people.”

OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish, speaking at the launch event, said: “This report illustrates both the global wastewater challenges, and the reuse opportunity in eight cities. These are all cities in low- or middle-income countries where future challenges will be more acute and the need for change is urgent. The report presents city roadmaps and identifies priorities – as well as the benefits – of meeting the Sustainable Development Goal target of halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse by 2030.” The cities ‘seizing the reuse opportunity’ documented in the report are: Aqaba, Jordan – a mid-size city turning its “zero discharge” challenge into a good opportunity; Bangkok, Thailand – using wastewater as a resource and a valuable economic good; Beijing, China – building infrastructure to keep up with an ever-expanding

mega city; Chennai, India – addressing water scarcity through accelerated wastewater reuse; Durban, South Africa – treating wastewater as an economic good; Kampala, Uganda – protecting its water sources with an integrated plan to control, treat and reuse wastewater; Lima, Peru – learning by doing under the urgency of shrinking glaciers; and Manila, Philippines – a mega city regenerating resources through wastewater treatment and reuse.

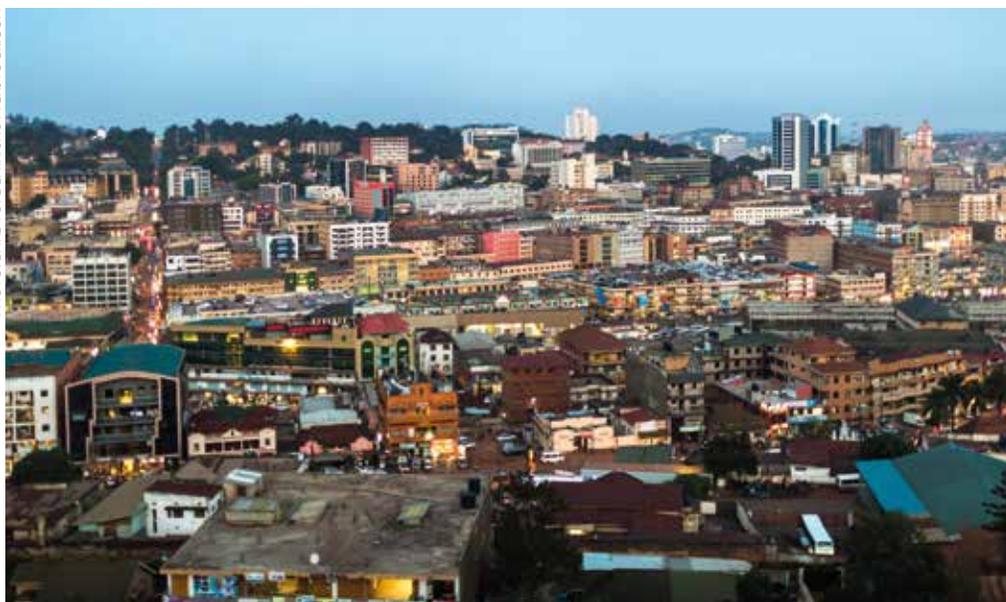
Historically in developing countries, wastewater has been forgotten about, says Professor Vairavamoorthy, and only about 15 percent is treated. The benefits of piped water are immediate, he explains, but


Only
15% of
wastewater
in developing
countries is
treated.

those associated with wastewater, not so. “Wastewater leaves people’s houses or businesses and is out of mind and often ignored,” he adds. “But it can be enormously damaging to the environment and to people’s health.”

Wastewater poses challenges, but if managed well it offers huge sustainable development opportunities, argues Professor Vairavamoorthy, and we’re about to see a significant change in the way it’s managed. “Used water is one of the most under-exploited resources we have. Our dependence on water *supply* will diminish and we’ll see the golden years of water recycling and reuse in the coming two decades. Wastewater is the one to watch.” ▶

PHOTO: EMRE TOPDEMIR/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



View of the city of Kampala, Uganda.

About wastewater

Wastewater is a global problem. Today, around 80 percent of all wastewater is discharged untreated into rivers, lakes and oceans. It creates health and environmental hazards, and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are three times larger than those produced by conventional wastewater treatment activities. Recovering water, energy, nutrients and other precious materials embedded in wastewater is an opportunity for cities to transition to the circular economy and contribute to improved water security.

80% of
wastewater is
discharged
untreated.

◀ Speaking of the IWA's relationship with OFID, Professor Vairavamoorthy says: "OFID's focus on supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and supporting developing countries is consistent with the values of IWA. The funding we receive from OFID allows us to think outside of the box and take on more creative projects. We work very much in partnership to craft some important projects. It's a very strong relationship."

On the sidelines of the event, Al-Herbish and Professor Vairavamoorthy signed a US\$400,000 grant agreement for implementing a 'Climate Resilient Water Safety Planning' project, which aims to improve the capacity of water utilities in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal to ensure the safety of water supplies and safeguard public health. ■



SOME OF THE EVENT'S ATTENDEES

Dieudonne Kere, Ambassador, Burkina Faso
Subhash P Gupta, First Secretary, Embassy / Permanent Mission of India
Hussam Abdullah Hasan Ghodayeh al Hussein, Ambassador, Embassy of Jordan
Professor Kala Vairavamoorthy, Executive Director, International Water Association (IWA)
Robert Ottitsch, Secretary General, HOPE87, Austria
Stefan Fritz, Managing Director, Hilfswerk International, Austria
Andrea Vigevani, Secretary General, ICU, Italy
Helmut Kross, Professor Emeritus, Vienna University of Technology, Austria
Walter Kling, President, International Association of Water Supply Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD)
Katerina Schilling, Knowledge Management and Capacity Building Coordinator, IAWD
Philip Weller, Danube Water Program Coordinator, IAWD
Patricia Lopez, Danube Water Program Coordinator, World Bank
Armen Grigoryan, DRR Team Leader and Advisor, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
William Carter, Senior Officer WASH, International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC)

Bolivian President attends loan signing, OFID Director-General honored

BY STEVE HUGHES

Bolivian President Evo Morales recently attended the signing of a US\$30 million loan agreement to help fund an important transport project in his country that will provide around 1.75 million Bolivians with shorter, faster and safer road connections.

The loan agreement, provided by OFID to help finance the Santa Cruz – Las Cruces – Buena Vista Road project connecting the eastern and southern regions of the country, was signed by Bolivia's Minister of Planning for Development Mariana Prado Noya and OFID Director-

General Suleiman J Al-Herbish. The project is co-financed by the Bolivian government and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF).

The loan signing took place during an OFID mission to Argentina and Bolivia which also saw Al-Herbish receive an honorary doctorate from *Universidad Amazónica de Pando* in recognition of development financing supplied by OFID. In his acceptance speech, Al-Herbish thanked the Executive Committee of the university and said: "This honor will remain close to my heart since it recognizes the central role educa-



loan will boost Bolivia's transport infrastructure.

tion plays in alleviating poverty and improving opportunities for the world's most vulnerable people."

Al-Herbish explained that despite more children receiving an education than ever before, inequalities still persist, particularly among the world's poor. This is why, he said, OFID will remain a staunch supporter of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 that aims to guarantee the global community "does everything possible to ensure inclusive and quality education for all...and promote lifelong learning."



Bolivian President Evo Morales (*center*), OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish (*right*) and Miguel Linares, OFID Director, Latin America, Caribbean and Europe Region.

Al-Herbish noted that more than US\$1 billion of OFID's total commitments have been allocated to education-related initiatives. He explained how OFID's US\$10 million loan for Bolivia's National Universities Rehabilitation and Modernization Project helped upgrade and equip a total of five national universities, benefiting "thousands of students and lecturers – and the neighboring community at large."

In Argentina, Al-Herbish signed another loan agreement, this time for US\$50 million, that will be used to co-finance – with the government and OFID's sister institution, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development – the Gran Tulum Water Supply project. On completion, the project will help meet the needs of around 520,000 people in the Province of San Juan. During

the signature ceremony, Al-Herbish spoke of OFID's energy-water-food nexus approach to development. OFID has long argued that policies across these sectors must be aligned to achieve sustainable development and energy access for all.

OFID's cooperation with Argentina began in 2010 with private sector funding and has now reached total approvals of US\$120 million, including two public sector loans to help improve potable water supply. OFID is also a long-time supporter of Bolivia's socioeconomic development, having extended 21 public sector loans toward the Latin American nation's food security, access to sustainable energy services and safe drinking water operations, as well as for improved transport and social infrastructure.



Al-Herbish (*left*) and University of Pando President Ludwing Arcienega Baptista.



OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish (center) with representatives of OFID, LGB Bank, FMO and OeEB.

Three-way development deal supports lifeblood of Lebanese economy

BY STEVE HUGHES

OFID recently partnered with two development banks – the Dutch development bank FMO and the Austria-based Oesterreichische Entwicklungsbank AG (OeEB) – to sign a US\$67.5 million loan to Lebanon and Gulf Bank (LGB Bank). The transaction was established by the efforts of OFID and Alpen Capital, the latter of which acted as the sole financial advisor. FMO acted as the mandated lead arranger and facility agent.

The loan, which has a tenor of five years, is LGB Bank's first from development finance institutions. The facility increases the availability of funding for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Lebanon. SMEs serve as the key eco-

conomic driver of many developing countries – generating employment and improving living standards. But the sector is often undervalued and under-supported. By stimulating investment in the SME sector, the lenders aim to contribute to job creation and boost economic and private sector development.

Commenting on the transaction, OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish said: “OFID works hard to develop and maintain partnerships to optimize the impact of its contribution to international development. We are proud to have played such an instrumental role in an important transaction that will stimulate Lebanon's private sector and help support SMEs.”

The OFID Quarterly spoke with representatives of LGB Bank, FMO and OeEB for their perspectives on the transaction.

Samer Itani, Vice Chairman and CEO, LGB Bank

“We are proud of the collaboration between all the partners. We have come together, ultimately, to support SMEs in Lebanon – they constitute more than 90 percent of my country's economy, so we see them as the backbone. There are all kinds of businesses, from small shops to craftspeople and engineers. They represent the whole spectrum of Lebanese society. It's very rewarding to be able to support this sector. We are happy to see small compa-



Samer Itani, Vice Chairman and CEO, LGB Bank.



Huib-Jan de Ruitjer; Director Financial Institutions, FMO.

nies expanding – we feel part of their success.

The transaction gives credibility to LGB Bank; something that is essential for future international transactions. LGB Bank is doing well and growing. In 2017, we achieved 15 percent growth in assets and profit. We intend to keep this up and grow our branch network to service our clients even better and increase our portfolio. Longer term, we would like to expand regionally, but keep our culture – what differentiates us is how close we are to our clients.”

Huib-Jan de Ruitjer, Director Financial Institutions, FMO

“We’ve done many transactions over recent years with OFID in different regions. This transaction was special because OFID initiated it and we’re very grateful for that. Also, FMO has not been active in Lebanon for a number of years, so we benefited from OFID’s local knowledge.

We’re good partners as we share values and ambitions. FMO has linked its strategy to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We want to be particularly active around job creation, climate action and reducing inequalities. And we work with a strong focus on three sectors: financial (including gender equality) agribusiness and energy.

It’s a very exciting environment right now because the SDGs have created a shared agenda and a common

language that helps bring different stakeholders together. Collaboration, as we demonstrated with this transaction, is essential to achieving the SDGs. No one can do it on their own.”

Sabine Gaber, OeEB Executive Board member

“This transaction will create new perspectives for entrepreneurs in Lebanon. It is another good example of the excellent cooperation between OFID and OeEB – the Development Bank of Austria – which is based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2014. Both our organizations have similar targets and goals: to support private sector development and SMEs in developing countries. We manage this well by working together to mobilize finance for challenging

environments. It’s important to select the best projects, especially in countries or regions that sometimes lack robust regulatory frameworks. If there are obstacles, we help provide technical assistance to enable our partners to develop a better regulatory framework. We additionally provide technical assistance to our partners to enhance the developmental effectiveness of projects.

Like OFID, OeEB supports the SDGs, and SDG 7 – ensuring access to modern clean energy – in particular. We are a major player in climate change-related projects in Austria and we promote hydro-power plants, wind farms, energy efficiency and photovoltaic projects, among others, in emerging countries. We are particularly adept at providing long-term financing.” ■

“ This transaction will create new perspectives for entrepreneurs in Lebanon. ”



Sabine Gaber, Member of the Executive Board, OeEB.

Côte d'Ivoire and Djibouti plan to bring down poverty

BY ANNA ILARIA-MAYRHOFER

OFID has signed public sector loan agreements with Côte d'Ivoire and Djibouti to co-finance projects aimed at helping reduce poverty. The two loans, totaling US\$25 million, were signed by OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish and Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to Austria Roger A Kacou, and Fahmi Ahmed El Hag, Advisor to the President of Djibouti in charge of Investment Promotion.

A US\$11 million loan to Côte d'Ivoire will co-finance the Rehabilitation of Cocody Bay project. OFID's sister organization BADEA (Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa) is also funding the project, which will carry out various environmental works at Cocody Bay and the Ebrie Lagoon. Around 1.9 million inhabitants in and around the capital Abidjan will benefit from an anticipated reduction in vector-borne diseases, particularly malaria, as well as lower infant mortality rates and improved environmental conditions.



Fahmi Elhag, Advisor to the President of Djibouti with OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish (right).

Roger A Kacou, Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to Austria, with OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish (right).

At the signature ceremony, Al-Herbish spoke of the longstanding partnership between OFID and Côte d'Ivoire, which spans more than 35 years and comprises over US\$124 million in public sector lending. Other support was extended under OFID's Private Sector and Trade Finance windows and Grants program.

Ambassador Kacou thanked the Director-General and said: "OFID has constantly supported the development of Cote d'Ivoire with a number of projects...The development of Cocody Bay is very important for our country. The overall development plan includes the construction of a viaduct, an urban park and a marina, as well as recreational areas, sanitation facilities and commercial facilities."

A US\$14 million loan to Djibouti will co-finance – along with government support – the Tadjoura Port Access Road project, which will connect the port to the Tadjoura – Balho road that links the country's northern region to the Ethiopian

border. Once completed, the anticipated increase in trade and overall economic activity will boost development and create job opportunities for some 200,000 people.

During the loan signing, Al-Herbish referred to cooperation between OFID and Djibouti that began just two years after the institution's inception in 1976. He outlined OFID's support that includes public sector loans benefiting the country's energy, transportation, education and health sectors, funding approved under OFID's private sector facility, as well as a number of regional and national grants that have helped fund a wide range of initiatives.



Côte d'Ivoire is the world's top exporter of cocoa and raw cashew nuts. From 2016 into the early stages of 2017, Côte d'Ivoire's economic growth ranked among the most robust on the African continent, according to the World Bank. But there are indications the economy is slowing.

Djibouti is a small country in which more than 23 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty, according to World Bank figures. Its economy is dependent on foreign financing and investments, and on port services. GDP growth was estimated at 6.5 percent in 2016.



During OFID's high-level mission to Bangladesh in January, the country's Finance Minister Abul Maal A Muhith announced that in 2015, Bangladesh had graduated from being defined as one of the world's least developed countries to the ranks of the lower middle-income countries, as per the World Bank Atlas method of calculating GNP. "We hope," he said, "to become a middle-income country by 2024, with the assistance of key donors such as OFID."

Visiting the South Asian country for the first time on behalf of OFID, Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and signed two US\$30 million loan agreements for the Paira Bridge and SASEC Road Connectivity projects. The agreements were co-signed with the aforementioned Muhith and Bangladesh's Secretary of Economic Relations Division, Shofiquel Azam.

Speaking at the ceremony, Al-Herbish said: "The two new loans will help strengthen transportation – a sector that connects people and improves opportunities and ulti-

Bangladesh sets sights on middle-income status



PHOTO: OFID/ALESANDRA SOLANO

mately living standards. Transportation plays a vital enabling role, supporting our energy-water-food nexus approach to development, which recognizes the complex interlinkages between these sectors."

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (right) with OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish.

OFID has been supporting Bangladesh's development goals since 1976. The country has achieved great things, halving the number of those living in extreme poverty, creating opportunities for its people and attaining stable economic growth. Most recently, Bangladesh has also provided refuge for hundreds of thousands of displaced Rohingya people in their time of need.

"We are delighted to be working so closely with Bangladesh," said Al-Herbish. "We remain committed to supporting the country's development."

During the mission, Al-Herbish also delivered an address to the Bangladesh Development Forum (see box below) and met with government ministers and other high-level officials to discuss ongoing and future projects.

Bangladesh Development Forum, IRENA Assembly and Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

During the high-level mission to Bangladesh, OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish also delivered an address to the Bangladesh Development Forum. Held in Dhaka, it brought together some 700 delegates from government and international development institutions to discuss the country's development goals.

Immediately prior to the Bangladesh mission, Al-Herbish also headed an OFID delegation to the 8th Session of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The assembly brought

together heads of state, ministers, government officials and representatives from the private sector, civil society and other international organizations to reaffirm the global renewable energy agenda and to accelerate the global energy transition.

In addition, Al-Herbish attended Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week on January 15-16 and was present at the opening ceremony, held at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. He also attended a high-level reception at the Louvre Abu Dhabi during which he met with several ministers.



PHOTO: OFID/ALESANDRA SOLANO

OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish with IRENA Director-General Adnan Z Amin.

Armenia powers ahead with renewable energy

In April 2015, OFID signed a US\$10 million loan agreement with Armenia's Ardshinbank for on-lending to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in the construction and operation of small-scale hydropower plants. The loan aimed to help Armenia develop its alternative energy sources and ease its reliance on foreign imports of oil and natural gas. **Ardshinbank CEO Mher Grigoryan** was present at the loan signing back in 2015 and recently visited the OFID headquarters again. He found the time to update the *OFID Quarterly* on his country's progress.

INTERVIEW BY STEVE HUGHES

OQ: Are there any success stories directly attributable to OFID support?

MG: Ardshinbank has successfully closed a US\$2.5 million 10-year financing of a 3.9 MW hydroelectric power project located in Syunik region (the southernmost province of Armenia). The much-needed funds for the implementation of this greenfield project have been sourced from the OFID agreement. The construction of the power plant started in 2015 and it became fully operational at the end of 2016. The annual generating capacity is estimated at over 13 million kWh. The supply of green electricity will expand the use of renewable energy in Armenia and contribute to the real economy and its sustainable development. The hydropower plant project is one of the several landmark renewable energy projects successfully implemented by the bank thanks to the funds made available

by OFID. These success stories underline the importance of successful cooperation between the bank and OFID in channeling the required capital to the implementation of economically viable and environmentally sustainable projects.



Mher Grigoryan began his professional career in 1996 at the legal department of the Central Bank of the Republic of Armenia. He was appointed the Head of the Legal Department in 1997 and held the position until 1999. He went on to hold executive positions in various commercial banks including Armimpexbank (now Ameriabank), Inecobank, HSBC Bank Armenia and VTB Bank Armenia. In 2011, he joined Ardshinbank as a CEO. Overall, he has 21 years of experience in the financial sector. He was born February 15, 1972 and holds a law degree.

OQ: How will these projects improve lives?

MG: People always welcome investment initiatives in the real sector of the economy, especially when it comes to the regions where economic activity is considerably lagging. From the regional development perspective, the construction of small hydropower facilities create additional employment and the plants themselves bring electricity, industry and trade to the communities, developing the economy and improving the quality of living.

OQ: How important is this sector in terms of Armenia's overall power supply and national development as a whole?

MG: The development of the renewable energy sector is expected to produce double dividends for Armenia. Renewable energy, above all, has a critical role for enhancing energy security. By using green

sources of energy, Armenia can help reduce the high dependence on imported fossil fuels and contribute to greater energy stability. The country has an adequate and growing capacity for renewable energy, especially from small scale hydropower plants and solar energy.

The increase of renewable energy generation will also result in net exports of electricity, delivering economic dividends for the country and creating spillover effects for related industries.

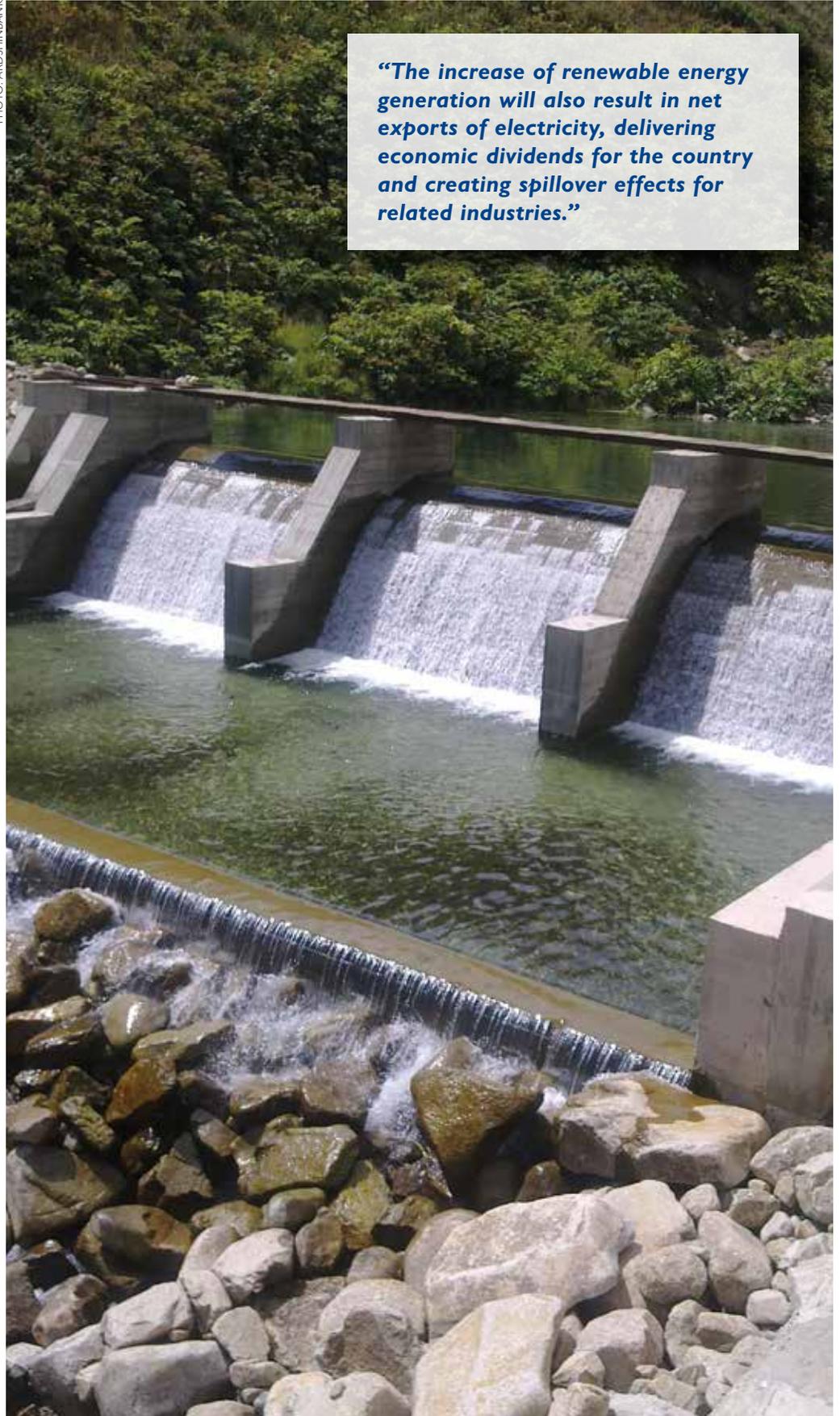
As part of its long-term development strategy, the government is calling for the use of domestic energy resources to be maximized. To encourage the use of renewable energy sources, a feed-in tariff scheme has been introduced.

OQ: How important are relationships with development finance institutions (DFIs) such as OFID? What does it enable you to do that you would not otherwise manage?

MG: Over the past 10 years, Ardshinbank has been cooperating intensively with DFIs, increasing the number of its partners. We are always facing the challenge of financing the long-term investment projects of our clients. This is where DFIs are instrumental: providing competitive long-term funding for the implementation of projects by local SMEs that play a key role in driving economic growth.

Ardshinbank has been successfully collaborating with OFID for more than seven years. We are happy with our experience. It is a productive and pleasant experience, which is, above all, thanks to OFID's skilled and professional staff. Our joint efforts toward developing private sector enterprises in Armenia are very positive and provide a solid basis for building future cooperation.

PHOTO: ARDUSHINBANK



“The increase of renewable energy generation will also result in net exports of electricity, delivering economic dividends for the country and creating spillover effects for related industries.”



Solar project fuels Cuban energy policy

BY ANNA ILARIA-MAYRHOFER

OFID is supporting the Cuban government's goals of diversifying its energy mix and increasing the part renewable energy plays with a US\$45 million public sector loan that will fund the Solar Energy Development project.

These aims are the cornerstone of Cuba's energy policy adopted in 2014: to reduce the consumption and import of fossil fuels, lower electricity generation costs and help mitigate the effects of climate change. The government plans to invest more than US\$3.5 billion in the renewable energy sector to bring its share in the energy mix of around 4.7 percent to approximately 25 percent by 2030.

Owing to the successes of earlier OFID co-financed projects, the Cuban

government approached the organization for support. For more than 15 years, OFID has worked closely with Cuba, having funded all three phases of a project that rehabilitated electricity networks in Havana. Other projects have modernized water and sanitation systems and upgraded irrigation schemes.

OFID's Romulo Martinez, Senior Public Sector Operations Officer for Latin America, Caribbean and Europe region, talks about the partnership: "OFID places the energy-water-food nexus at the heart of its operations, an approach Cuba also embraces in its development strategies. We've enjoyed a cordial relationship with the country and the government has expressed its pleasure in OFID's responsiveness and uncomplicated approach toward

the implementation of its projects."

The majority of the OFID loan will cover the renovation and purchase of new equipment for two facilities that manufacture photovoltaic (PV) panels and solar water heater systems. Located in the Ciego de Avila and Pinar del Rio provinces, the factories are in urgent need of modernization.

This project component, says Martinez, will enable Cuba to become self-sufficient in producing what it needs to broaden solar coverage: "There will be no need to rely on imported finished products, and the facility expansions will lead to more jobs. The solar panels are suitable for both for domestic and commercial systems and for distribution throughout the country. It's a win-win situation."



PHOTO: XIEYUJIANGSHUTTERSTOCK.COM



PHOTO: OFID/ROMULO MARTINEZ

OFID delegation members and project staff at the photovoltaic plant in Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

The output will increase coverage to some 130,000 people. In order to encourage the transition to solar energy, the Cuban government is heavily subsidizing the cost of the PV panels and solar heaters.

Also included in the project works is the construction of two solar photovoltaic power plants in Las Tunas Province in Cuba's eastern region, where flat, unshaded terrain affords an optimal environment for harnessing solar energy.

The anticipated environmental benefits are impressive: a reduction of over 26,000 tons of CO₂ emissions and savings of around 8,900 tons of fossil fuels (once the new infrastructure is connected to the national grid).

Additionally, the infrastructure will generate electricity for an important underground water reservoir in Las Tunas Province, where works are planned to rehabilitate water supplies in a new phase of an earlier project co-funded by OFID with a US\$17 million loan.

"We look forward to furthering our cooperation and contributing to the new phase of this important water supply project," says Martinez.

26,000
tons

anticipated
reduction
of CO₂
emissions.

Loan signing ceremony

The loan agreement was signed at OFID's Vienna headquarters on March 1 by OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish and Marieta García Jordán, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Vienna.

At the ceremony, Al-Herbish said: "Improved access to energy is critical for development, and the alleviation of energy poverty underpins the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our energy-water-food nexus approach to development recognizes the complex interlinkages between and within sectors. This project fits with our strategic priorities and we are proud to help improve living standards for the people of Cuba."

García Jordán thanked the Director-General for OFID's support which began in 2002 and comprises a total of US\$228.5 million in public sector lending, of which US\$77 million has been directed to the energy sector.



OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish and Marieta García Jordán, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Vienna, sign a US\$45 million public sector loan agreement for the Solar Energy Development Project in Cuba.



Art auction raises funds for refugee integration

BY STEVE HUGHES

A recent art auction organized by OFID in partnership with the Austrian Red Cross raised nearly €40,000 to help refugees in Austria integrate more easily via learning support and language courses.

Despite the event's location in OFID's Vienna headquarters, there were no works by famed Austrian artists Gustav Klimt or Egon Schiele on offer. But pieces from well and lesser-known artists still encouraged the audience to dig deep in their pockets. Christian Eisenberger, Richard Kaplenig, Lenny Kravitz, Hermann Nitsch and Kerstin von Gabain, in addition to galleries and collectors, were among those who donated works.

Andrea Jungmann, Managing Director of Sotheby's Austria, Hungary and Poland, led the auction, which was attended by approximately 200 guests. The highest



Red Cross Secretary-General
Werner Kerschbaum.

single bid was attracted by a 100cm by 120cm work entitled *Dog Walk* by Dr Jorge Goncalves, OFID's very own Director of Information Technology.

Writing in the auction's catalogue, OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish drew attention to the organization's focus on refugees, far and wide, and high-



Managing Director of Sotheby's
Andrea Jungmann

lighted some of the work that still needs to be done: "While we support refugees and sustainable development across the globe, we are also committed to causes in our host city of Vienna...Breaking down language barriers and promoting social integration remains a major opportunity."



OFID DIARY

JANUARY – MARCH 2018

JANUARY 19

Public sector loan agreements signed

Bangladesh. US\$30 million. Paira Bridge Project. To build a 1.5km bridge over the Paira River to connect the districts of Barisal and Pataukhali in the south-central region and construct access roads to the national highway. In addition to providing the population with more efficient and safer travel, access to income-generating opportunities, marketplaces and social services will be improved.

Bangladesh. US\$30 million. SASEC Road Connectivity Project. To promote socio-economic development by facilitating trade in Bangladesh by upgrading part of the Dhaka-Northwest Corridor, the Joydebpur-Chandra-Tangail-Elenga road, to a four-lane highway. Improvements will also be carried out at two land ports at Benapole and Burimari.

JANUARY 25

Private sector agreement signed

Lebanon and Gulf Bank (LGB Bank). US\$67.5 million. Partnering with the Dutch development bank FMO and the Austria-based Österreichische Entwicklungsbank AG (OeEB), OFID signed a

loan agreement with LGB Bank. The transaction was established by the efforts of OFID and Alpen Capital, the latter of which acted as the sole financial advisor. FMO acted as the mandated lead arranger and facility agent. The facility increases the availability of funding for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Lebanon.

FEBRUARY 2

Public sector loan agreement signed

Argentina. US\$50 million. Gran Tulum Water Supply Project. To promote the socio-economic development and living standards of around 520,000 people in San Juan province by building a new water supply system. In addition to improving health indicators, the project will help boost the agriculture sector.

FEBRUARY 8

Public sector loan agreement signed

Bolivia. US\$30 million. Santa Cruz-Las Cruces-Buena Vista Road Project. To provide a bypass for Bolivia's most heavily populated city – Santa Cruz de la Sierra, with circa 1.75 million inhabitants. The planned 81km road will divert heavy traffic between southern

towns and the western-located main trade corridors. This will in turn reduce travel time, improve connectivity and help promote local and international trade.

FEBRUARY 27

Grant agreement signed

International Water Association (IWA). US\$400,000. To co-fund the Implementing Climate Resilient Water Safety Planning project, which aims at improving the capacity of water utilities in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal to ensure the safety of water supplies and safeguard public health.

MARCH 6

Grant agreement signed

International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). US\$100,000. To support a study on refugee protection and development, which seeks to better understand available policy options and initiatives.

MARCH 8

Public sector loan agreement signed

Zimbabwe. US\$15 million. Irrigation Revitalization Project. To reduce rural poverty and

enhance food security for 25,000 small-scale, low-income farming households in four rural regions. This will be done by rehabilitating infrastructure, providing related equipment and materials, and delivering training and workshops. The project will also support the development of new irrigation sub-projects at a national level.

MARCH 12

Public sector loan agreement signed

Rwanda. US\$20 million. Rwanda Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Program. To improve water and sanitation infrastructure in Kigali and six satellite cities. This will reduce waterborne diseases and related healthcare costs, improving living standards for nearly 1.6 million people.

MARCH 13

Private sector loan agreement signed

Lafise Bancentro SA. US\$25 million. To boost access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises. The proceeds are intended to provide Lafise with access to finance and improve the bank's capital. The loan is part of a larger syndication that is being structured by the World Bank Group's IFC.



162nd Session of the Governing Board.

MARCH 19

162nd Session of the Governing Board

Public sector loans approved

Argentina. US\$50 million. Desvío Arijón Water Supply – Phase II. To provide safe and reliable access to potable water to over 120,000 inhabitants in the central region of Santa Fe Province. This will be done by expanding and increasing coverage of the current water supply system. In addition to helping strengthen local economic activities, including tourism, the project is expected to provide abundant water supplies for crop irrigation and livestock.

Cabo Verde. US\$19.5 million. Mindelo Cruise Terminal. To help boost tourism, a vital economic sector for the country, on the island of Sao Vicente by constructing a cruise terminal at Porto Grande and on-shore facilities. The project is expected

to help reduce poverty for the island's 80,000 inhabitants through the creation of jobs and anticipated growth in the private sector.

China. US\$41.6 million. Hohhot Healthcare. To expand the Hohhot Mongolian Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine through the construction of a 700-bed medical and care center for the elderly. The new facility will increase and improve in-patient capacity, and offer out-patient services for over 510,000 individuals per year.

Côte d'Ivoire. US\$19 million. Agriculture Rural Development Program (PADFA). To stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty through the repair and installation of rice and mango processing/packaging systems, upgrading of rural roads, development of farmland and institutional strengthening, and improving producers' linkages with export and urban markets, among other works. This will in turn improve living conditions and incomes for around 180,000 people.

Dominican Republic. US\$75 million. Electricity Distribution Rehabilitation and Loss Reduction Program – Phase III. To rehabilitate high-priority circuits across the country and install around 1,050 km of distribution networks with the view of reaching 607,500 users. The program also contains a component to strengthen the commercial management of electricity to reduce losses and boost revenues. Phases I and II were also co-financed by OFID with US\$90 million in funding.

Guinea Bissau. US\$6 million. Economic Development Project for the Southern Regions (PADES). To help alleviate poverty and enhance food security by rehabilitating over 22,000 hectares of mangrove rice production fields, strengthening the capacity of producers' and users' associations and modernizing 33km of rural roads to open up agricultural production areas and provide links to markets. Around 31,000 farmers stand to benefit from the project, of which 40 percent comprise women and youth.

Malawi. US\$15 million. Rehabilitation, Upgrading and Expansion of Karonga Water Supply System. To boost capacity of potable water supplies in Karonga town in Malawi's northern region, where demand is outpacing supply. An estimated 184,000 residents will be able to enjoy improved health and livelihoods.

Grants approved

Habitat for Humanity. US\$420,000. To improve living conditions of some 13,000 slum-dwellers of Peace Island in Greater Monrovia, Liberia, by carrying out works that will increase access to clean water, sanitation and waste management, as well as awareness raising through hygiene workshops and training. Also planned is pilot scheme that will offer micro-finance loans for housing and interventions to provide households with construction materials.

Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). US\$1.5 million. This grant, to be channeled through the IsDB and implemented by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, aims to improve living conditions of Palestinians in Hebron by rehabilitating 85 residential units belonging to disadvantaged families residing in historic buildings in the Old City. Restoration works will also be carried out at the Ibrahimi Mosque, a UNESCO heritage site. Around 680 people will benefit from the project.

Jordan River Foundation – Madrasati Initiative. US\$500,000. To enhance education access for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem. Activities will include renovating and refurbishing six schools (attended by around 1,200 pupils), the purchase of equipment and teaching supplies, and a professional development scheme for teachers focusing on ICT (Information and Communication Technology), as well as a student and community engagement activity component.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

US\$1.5 million. To enhance the health and living conditions of around 24,000 residents in Shu'fat camp by upgrading storm-water and sewerage networks, which flood during the rainy season and cause pollution. OFID also co-funded Phase I of this initiative with a US\$1.4 million grant.

World Health Organization (WHO). US\$1 million.

To support a wide-scale initiative aimed at reducing the burden of Neglected Tropic Diseases (NTDs) in endemic African countries through the control, elimination and eradication of the five most prevalent and highest-burden NTDs: Onchocerciasis, Schistosomiasis, Trachoma, Lymphatic Filariasis and Soil-transmitted Helminths. Activities will be carried out in Comoros, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia.

Research grants approved

Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). US\$50,000.

To help cover participants' costs to attend an AUDI Conference: Small Projects and Productive Families as Development Enablers in Agadir, Morocco, April 2018, benefiting researchers and practitioners from Arab developing countries.

Jordanian Arabic Language Academy. US\$50,000.

To support the production of an Arabic-English dictionary of economic terms taking into account the latest developments in economic research and the world economy. The dictionary will comprise eight volumes covering all fields of economics.

Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL). US\$70,000.

To cover participation costs of around 30 delegates from African developing countries in the SEforALL Forum to be held in Lisbon, Portugal May 2 – 3, 2018.



University of Jordan. US\$50,000. To help fund the restoration, digitization and analysis of documents from the Jerusalem Sharia Courts by the Centre for Documents and Manuscripts at the University of Jordan.

Research grant agreement signing: Director-General of the International Center for Migration Policy Development Dr Michael Spindelegger (left) and OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish.



A US\$15 million loan agreement (Smallholder Irrigation Project) was signed by OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish (right) and Patrick Anthony Chinamasa, Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Zimbabwe.

Meetings attended by OFID

JANUARY 13 – 14

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
8th Session of the International Renewable Energy Agency Assembly

JANUARY 15 – 16

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
World Future Energy Summit and Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

JANUARY 17 – 18

BANGLADESH AND INDIA
High-level mission including Bangladesh Development Forum 2018

FEBRUARY 1 – 10

ARGENTINA AND BOLIVIA
High-level mission

FEBRUARY 13 – 15

ROME, ITALY
41st session of the International Fund for Agricultural Development's Governing Council

FEBRUARY 14 – 16

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
AIESEC Partnerships for the Global Goals: Global Consultation and Workshops

FEBRUARY 21 – 23

BANGKOK, THAILAND
United Nations Global SDG 7 Conference

www.ofid.org

162nd Session of the Governing Board



Abdul Wahab Al-Bader
Governing Board Chairman

The 162nd Session of OFID's Governing Board approved more than US\$368 million of new development funding to benefit developing countries across the globe.

The public sector loans, which total US\$226.1 million, will support projects in Argentina, Cabo Verde, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guinea Bissau and Malawi.

Other approvals included five grants totaling US\$4.92 million to the following organizations: Habitat for Humanity, Palestine (to be channeled through the Islamic Development Bank), Jordan River Foundation - Madrasati Initiative, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Under OFID's private sector window, two financing facilities were approved: one to help enhance the energy sector in Cameroon and the other to support a financial institution in Sri Lanka in expanding its lending to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises. Under OFID's trade finance operations, US\$65 million was approved to support international trade activities in El Salvador and Panama. A revolving trade finance facility was also approved for Ghana.

Jesse Alonso Chacón Escamillo

Governor, Venezuela



Jean-Jacques Essono Nguema

Governor, Gabon

Bader Ahmed Al Qayed

Governor, Qatar



Dr Hamad S Al-Bazai

Governor, Saudi Arabia

CONFERENCE WATCH

Event: **Global SDG 7 Conference**
A global preparatory meeting in support of the review of SDG 7 at the 2018 High Level Political Forum

Venue: Bangkok, Thailand

Date: February 21-23, 2018

Do we have the energy for SDG 7?

The Global SDG 7 Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand was intended to help prepare for the review of the world's progress toward the energy-focused Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7. So how did it go and how are we doing on the journey toward affordable and clean energy for all?

BY IMAN ALSHAMMARI AND DR MOHAMMAD MAZRAATI

February's Global SDG 7 Conference encouraged the exchange of insights and experiences gained by states and stakeholders in the globally agreed upon quest for SDG 7 – affordable and clean energy for all. Delegates from around the world considered trends and gaps, interlinkages between SDG 7 and the other 16 SDGs, means of implementation, key opportunities and more.

Complex interlinkages

Interlinkage between SDG 7 and other SDGs were considered, since unequal access to energy and low human development are highly correlated. SDG 7, for example, is a necessary condition for economic development, poverty alleviation (SDG 1) and reducing inequalities

(SDG 10). Access to clean fuels and technologies is in line with SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) and also has the potential to save millions of lives each year from household-related energy pollution.

Around three billion people lack access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking and the health risk of inefficient household energy use is a particular risk for women, children and infants, since the burden of cooking, globally, falls mostly to women. Modern clean energy access contributes to inclusivity and quality education for all (SDG 4) and supports the empowerment of women by freeing up time for girls and women to attend school. Energy access projects create job opportunities, in line with SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). Direct and

indirect employment in the renewable energy sector (excluding large hydropower) rose from 5.7 million in 2012 to 8.3 million in 2016. It could expand to 25 million by 2030 with proper policy support.

Modern, clean energy is also crucial to mitigate the risk of climate change (SDG 13) and limit the use of unsustainable traditional fuels such as firewood and animal waste (which remain the major cooking fuels in informal settlements), thereby helping to reduce deforestation and soil degradation (SDG 15 and the sustainable management of life on land).

Regional variations in progress

The Conference noted that the percentage of people now connected to basic electricity services has increased from 73 percent in 1990 to 85 percent today. But there is a need for sustained political will and increased finance to extend access to affordable and clean energy to the 1.2 billion people still without it. Five regional United Nations commissions also provided an overview of SDG 7 progress across the globe:

The **Asia and the Pacific** region has shown remarkable progress on energy access in the last decade. There has been a slowdown in the rate of electrification, however, and a growing chasm between electrification in urban and rural areas. According to the World Bank, while Asia and the Pacific may reach universal electrification by 2030 (up from 90.3 percent electrification in 2014), there is much work to be done to ensure that such access is reliable and affordable. Nearly half of the region's people do not have access to clean cooking fuels and technology.

In **Western Asia** (the Middle East region), overall access to electricity is close to universal in cities, although it is just 80 percent in rural areas. Renewable energy still plays a marginal role.

Africa is expected to witness a dramatic increase in energy demand



Global SDG 7 Conference: High level closing plenary.

PHOTO: 2018 UNITED NATIONS ESCAP

by 2030 and with the exception of some North African nations; most countries are not expected to achieve SDG 7 given existing policies and commitments. The region is performing poorly on energy access and clean cooking indicators. In addition, there is a severe lack of capacity for energy systems and investment planning.

Based on the recent trends in **Latin America**, all SDG 7 targets (except for electricity access) appear unlikely to be reached by 2030.

The Europe region has already achieved 100 percent access to power networks and 98 percent access to clean cooking fuels, though there are significant quality and affordability challenges.

The (financial) size of the challenge

Financing SDG 7 is a crucial issue and received a great deal of attention at the conference. Some argued that funding was either simply not accessible or affordable for developing countries and that this was especially the case for the least developed countries and small islands.

There was a general consensus on the overall financing needed to meet SDG 7 – across renewable energy, energy efficiency and universal access, it is estimated that between US\$1.06 to US\$1.3 trillion per year until 2030 is required (between 42 to 51 percent of this is for renewable energy). Although progress is being made to scale-up financing, current annual levels are

significantly below this, at approximately US\$514 billion. Moreover, investment is not spread equally, with many developing countries left behind.

The solutions are multifaceted, but private finance must play a bigger role in financing SDG 7 and be blended with public sector resources. Some recent electrification projects have seen digital finance and private sector models (Pay-As-You-Go) employed successfully for off-grid solar solutions and solar mini-grids. Enabling environments that include de-risking financial instruments need to be provided to encourage private sector actors. Direct financial incentives (such as carbon pricing and fossil-subsidy reform) could also be relevant, as could supply-side interventions including financial system reform and the provision of new low-cost asset classes.

High-level panel and sharing experiences

An OFID delegation participated in a high-level panel on the energy-water-food nexus approach to development – an approach that recognizes the complex interlinkages between the three sectors. The panel noted, above all else, that a business as usual approach to development will likely make it impossible to meet the huge increased demand for water, energy and food that is expected in the coming decades.

The panel considered the importance of a holistic approach to tackling challenges across the three

The panel noted, above all else, that a business as usual approach to development will likely make it impossible to meet the huge increased demand for water, energy and food that is expected in the coming decades.

sectors and beyond, as well as supportive policies and institutional frameworks, barriers to mainstreaming the nexus approach, and access to finance and the role of the private sector. Viable and successful business models were discussed, as well as success stories – including start-up and pilot projects supported by OFID.

OFID shared its specific experience of establishing the OFID-REEEP* Revolving Capital Pool. REEEP offers repayable grants at zero interest to nexus-related start-up businesses and so helps unlock their potential for growth. The pool partially funded two energy access projects: solar-powered irrigation pumps in Kenya and two pilot Pay-As-You-Go solar farms in Tanzania. The project was used to demonstrate how the correct financing tool paired with proven technology can help to optimize the management of energy, water and food resources and support sustainable development.

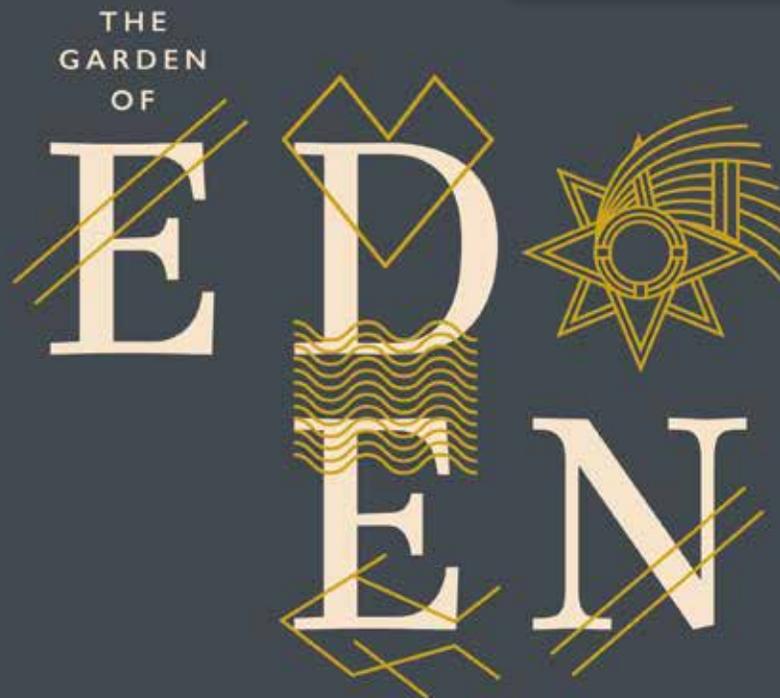


The Millennium Development Goals did not include a specific goal related to energy. However, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7), the first universal goal for energy, with targets focusing on energy access, efficiency, renewables and means of implementation.

* Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP)

THE
GARDEN
OF

EDEN



Society

The Ma'dān or Marsh Arabs

The Marsh Arabs are the primary inhabitants of the Mesopotamian Marshes today and are practitioners of a life-style rooted in the beginnings of human history. Many different tribes exist, including the *Āl Bū Mu'ammad*, *Ferayghāt*, *Shaghanbah* and *Banī Lām*, and the *Ma'dān*. Their unique culture centers on the Marshes' natural resources.

Two occupations dominate: some branches of the *Ma'dān* were nomadic pastoralists, erecting temporary dwellings and moving buffalo around the marshes according to the season. In addition to raising livestock, they hunted birds and fish for their own consumption. The main economic activity for the



Marshlands of Mesopotamia

An OFID exhibition helps highlight one of the most vulnerable and valuable ecosystems of the Middle East.

BY STEVE HUGHES

OFID celebrated its 42nd anniversary with an exhibition entitled 'In the Garden of Eden – the Marshlands of Mesopotamia (Al-Ahwar) in Iraq'. Jointly hosted by OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish and Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Vienna, Ezat Al-Bhadily, the exhibition documented a unique ecosystem and culture that has been under threat since the 1970s.

The exhibition provided the many visitors to OFID's headquarters in Vienna with an extraordinary insight into one of the most precious ecosystems on the planet and a truly inspiring culture that links back to ancient civilizations.

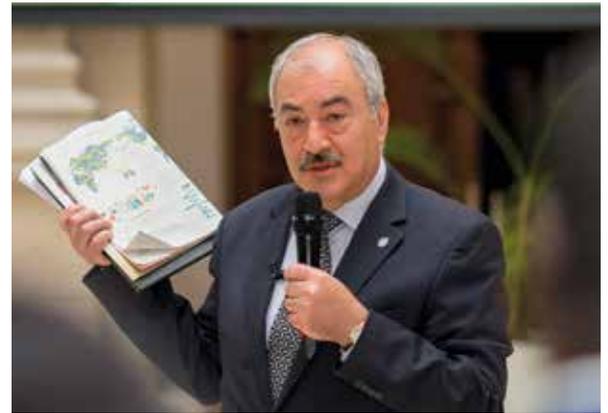
Modern day Mesopotamia is formed by Iraq and parts of eastern Syria, southeast Turkey and southwest Iran. Some religious scholars believe that the marshes were once home to the Garden of Eden and evidence (clay tablets) has been found showing similarities between the Marsh Arabs who inhabit the area and the ancient Sumerians – arguably the first civilization in the world.

The event was the latest in a long line of exhibitions hosted by OFID to showcase the cultures of its Member and Partner Countries and was jointly hosted by Iraq, an OFID Member Country and also a founding member of OFID's sister institution the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). OPEC was created in the

Iraq capital at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

Commenting on the event, Al-Herbish said: "This exhibition sits well with the Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15 in particular, which focus on our responsibility to protect the planet's precious land and water resources.

"We all have a role to play. Furthering our knowledge and understanding of our extraordinary cultures and ecosystems is an important part in the process. I have stressed many times that international development should be human centered and that the richness of diversity and culture should be maintained and promoted for all of humanity."



Faris Hasan

OFID's Director of Strategic Planning and Economic Services Faris Hasan, who was born in Iraq, explains the value of the Marshlands...

"The primary reason we wanted to highlight this region was to help draw attention to its cultural and ecological importance.

In 2016, the Mesopotamian Marshlands were inscribed on the World Heritage List during the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee. The move comes in recognition of its outstanding universal value. The Marshlands played a major role in the development of the earliest urban centers – the Sumerian cities of Ur, Uruk and Eridu – and in the emergence of complex societies. It remains a vital habitat for important bird and animal species.

The main challenges facing the area today are transboundary water-related issues. Water is a focus for OFID and as an organization we are committed to the energy-water-food nexus approach to development, which recognizes the complex interlinkages between these three sectors." ►

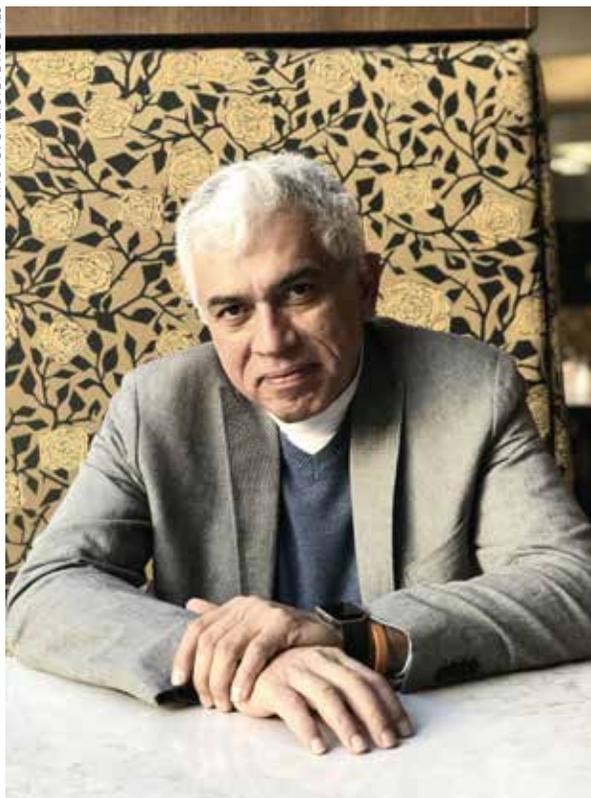


OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al-Herbish.

Nature Iraq founder and CEO **Dr Azzam Alwash** and acclaimed photojournalist **Tor Eigeland**, both of whom helped stage the OFID exhibition, spoke with the *OFID Quarterly* about their love for the vital but vulnerable marshlands, possible solutions to man-made problems, their long careers and more.



PHOTO: OFID/STEVE HUGHES



Dr Azzam Alwash, who knows the marshes well.

Dr Azzam Alwash spent many of his younger years on the fringes of Iraq's southern Mesopotamian marshlands. His father, a district irrigation manager, was one of the first Iraqi engineers trained in flood management and irrigation. The younger Alwash is now founder and CEO of Nature Iraq. He campaigns to improve the marshlands and confront growing water-related challenges.

"I'd lived in four different cities by the time I was 18, all around the marshes. I'd go into the marshes on a boat with my dad – it was the only time he had for just me. Though it was work for him, he loved hunting ducks. I have vivid memories of those wonderful days. The marshes are incredible: a water-world in the middle of a barren desert. When you disturbed the ducks, they'd go up and the sky would turn from blue to black.

I studied in the US, most recently for a PhD in Civil Engineering. I started my career in America, too. But I'm from Iraq. I was waiting for an opportunity to return. While I was away, I started hearing about the marshes being drained. I have pictures that show them slowly shrinking. I saw lakes that had become dry and white. From afar, it looked like salt. It was, in fact, the shells of millions of stranded crustaceans.



The marshes were about 8,000 km² before ‘drying’ began in the 1970s, some of which was to allow for oil exploration. During the following years, conflict – including a deliberate program of building and water diversion by the former regime – drought and international dam building degraded the area further, and the marsh ‘system’ of self-regulated flooding ceased to function properly from about 1995.

The Marsh Arabs left in stages during the 1990s. They lost their way of making a living – marshland-related economic activities, such as collecting reeds, fishing and herding water buffalo – and became dependent on the government. They were moved from the marshes to compounds.

The opportunity for me to return to Iraq came after 2003. I took a self-assigned job: to help restore the marshes. I started going to scientific conferences talking about the marshes – about this remarkable water-world that very few people had heard of, let alone seen. After receiving funding, I hired an engineer and engaged some scientists.

We did some modeling using satellite imagery and produced a report about the marshlands. The conclusion was that the restoration of the marshes was not only *feasible*; it was also *warranted*. The case was overwhelming.

When I first went back to Iraq, I had to create a vehicle to attract funding. Nature Iraq, a not-for-profit organization, was created to help preserve Iraq’s environment and culture (see www.natureiraq.org). Just last year we published a book on Iraq’s most important biodiversity sites.

Many predict that the next layer of difficulty in the Middle East will be a struggle over water. My prediction is that if we don’t do something, agriculture is going to die in the land where it was born. We need to find solutions. Hydropower can play an important role, but I suggest we take more time to consider the downstream effects of dams.

The solutions, of course, are multifaceted, like with every difficult problem. At the core of it, though, is arriving at an agreement for the management of the increas-

“
I took a
self-assigned
job: to help
restore the
marshes.
”

ingly limited water resources of the region, and cooperation between countries – between Iraq, Turkey and Iran, for example. Perhaps Iraq could lease space in Turkish dams to store water. Instead of paying Turkey in money, we could provide subsidized oil and gas, transported to Istanbul, where it is needed. The behavior of the consumer needs to change, too. Some still behave as if water is abundant. Part of the solution will require changing of habits – using government policies to reduce usage and wastage.

About 50 percent of the marshes have now been re-flooded. But they have not been restored. Flooding and restoration are two different things. The biodiversity is changing. Fish that depended on the fresh water are losing their territory to carp, a more robust fish species that can take the brackish water.

But reeds, fortunately, live in salt water. Some people say that the changing biodiversity is bad. Yes, maybe, but then again, the only constant in nature is change. It’s the survival of the fittest, and species ►

◀ modify to adapt to the changing environment. The condition of the marshes at the moment is stable. When I arrived back in 2003 to Chibayish, the city in the center of the marshes, the population was 6,000. In 2009, we did a census. There were more than 67,000 people. They had come back. But the area is very vulnerable. Lack of water is the biggest threat.

I am turning 60 in two months. I'm starting to slow down. I spend 60 percent of my time in Iraq and 40 percent flying to engagements, talking about Iraq. But I am trying to take a breath. I'm in reasonably good health, but 60 is 60, right? I have always had this space in my head where I see myself on a farm overlooking the Mediterranean. A few olive trees, a few goats, a few chickens. I learn how to make cheese. It's a slower style of living. But I've determined that it's just a dream."



Internationally acclaimed photo-journalist **Tor Eigeland** made a number of his images available for OFID's anniversary exhibition, and attended in person, too.

He explains to the *OFID Quarterly* how he first came to set foot in the marshlands. He also reminisces about his remarkable career documenting some of the planet's most fascinating cultures and how the world has changed in his lifetime.

"Some 50 years ago the *Time / Life* book division in New York asked me to illustrate a chapter in one of its books entitled *The Cradle of Civilization*. Just getting to the marshlands of Iraq was a bureaucratic struggle, but once there, having taken the required photos, I was so intrigued I stayed on.

Most memorable of all were the dreamy moments when I felt I had totally left the world I knew. I felt as if I had stepped back in time and into another existence. It gave me goose bumps. One morning, I was up at 4 am to photograph in the early dawn light. I stood at the tip of a small island made of reeds and there was total silence. Other reed homes were visible across the still water, but for a moment, I felt I was the only being in the whole world. Out of nowhere, a woman in a long canoe sailed by with a gentle splash. We didn't communicate; it was as if

we both existed in separate dimensions.

There was no way I could have foreseen the disasters that were to happen to the marshlands. I would have stayed longer if I had known. So much has been destroyed by man. It's time to preserve what remains of a culture and habitat thousands of years old. People here have lived in perfect harmony with nature. Looking at the before and after picture, hopefully, we can learn something. Man and nature need these marshes.

Ever since my youth in Oslo, Norway, I was smitten with the bug to be a traveler rather than a mere tourist. Tourism is good, but being a real traveler goes deeper somehow. You get to know a country, get off the beaten track and mix with the people.

In 1947 I was 16 and my parents reluctantly allowed me to take a



PHOTO: TOR EIGELAND

Arabs, and a variety of well-known people from Chuck Berry to King Hussein of Jordan. I've sweated with the al-Murrah Bedouins in Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter; spent months with the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico's Sierra Madre; explored the River Nile and Australia's outback; and had a huge number of adventures in between. I feel very privileged. I have *National Geographic* to thank for many of the highlights of my career, and also *Aramco World Magazine*.

A good part of my work has been in the Middle East where a few states have made startling progress due to wise management and abundant oil money. Other countries, often due to foreign interference, have made backward leaps. It seriously concerns me that the world has never had so many desperate refugees. One-in-six children live in a conflict zone. The divide between rich and poor is ever widening. Cyber warfare and social media seem out of control. And oceans are rapidly being filled with plastic that is entering the food chain. We need great leaders who think of the good of the planet and mankind, rather than narrow political aims.

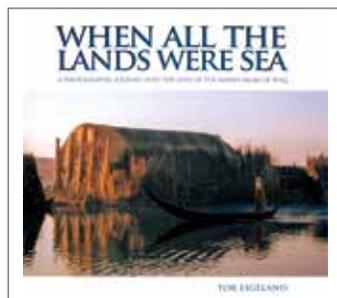
There is increasing worldwide awareness that if we are to keep this planet habitable, urgent action on many fronts is needed. On the positive side, it's fascinating to see how renewable energy is increasingly perceived as the way forward. It's also encouraging to observe how businesses and governments across the world remain committed to the Paris Treaty, despite setbacks. And scientific advances mean that the apparent impossibilities of my childhood are now part of everyday life.

I hope that through my photography and writing, I have contributed toward helping people of different cultures, circumstances and countries understand each other better. Photography, for me, has been one long, fascinating learning process." ■

year off school. I signed up as a deckhand on the Norwegian merchant ship *Tricolor*. We voyaged from Oslo to Shanghai and back via some 22 ports in Europe, Africa, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and China. This trip took nine months and increased my appetite for new places, more adventures, hearing and learning other languages and experiencing different cultures.

After high school in Norway, my life turned nomadic. I took odd jobs in Canada, Mexico, the US, the Caribbean and other places. I picked up a second-hand Rolleiflex camera at an early stage of this existence and started to contribute articles to Norway's main newspaper, *Aftenposten*. Along the way I continued my studies and attended universities in Canada, Mexico and the US.

I signed up for a course in Photojournalism in Miami to study with the then renowned Wilson Hicks.



Tor Eigeland's remarkable photographs of Iraq can be seen in his 2014 book.

Hicks was executive editor of *Life* magazine during its most innovative period. It was indisputably the top magazine in the world for photojournalism. Hicks was helpful and was even going to get me a job at *Life*. But it wasn't what I wanted at the time.

Gradually, through photo agencies and meeting magazine editors, including one at *National Geographic*, I gained entry into just about anything, anywhere. I met indigenous people of all kinds, ranging from the Dayak in Borneo to the Marsh

PERSPECTIVES

Syrian women: Re-building bridges

In 2016, OFID sponsored five young women from Syria to complete their graduate studies at top-ranking universities in the US as part of the Jusoor Scholarship Program's '100 Syrian Women, 10,000 Syrian Lives' initiative. OFID Communication Officer **Fatma Elzahra Elshhati** interviewed three of the OFID-sponsored students...



February 11 marked the third annual International Day of Women and Girls in Science. Despite significant advancements in basic education for girls, the chance of women graduating with a bachelor's, master's or doctorate in any of the social and physical sciences remains less than half that

Maya Alkateb-Chami



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MAYA ALKATEB-CHAMI

of men. This difference widens significantly in conflict situations. Men and women who attended university in Syria in roughly equal numbers before the war faced a different reality in exile. Men are three times more likely than women to resume their studies. "More support for the education of Syrian students is increasingly urgent in response to the crisis," says Maya Alkateb-Chami, Executive Director of Jusoor. "This support contributes to capacity building for the country and its people in the long-run and helps individuals continue their education despite the emergency. "The students on the '100 Syrian Women, 10,000 Syrian Lives' program have thrived despite challenging circumstances and demonstrate exemplary social service through leadership, academic excellence and civic responsibility," Alkateb-Chami adds. "We selected them because they have the potential to be global leaders."

Zelfa Hamadieh wanted to take her career to the next level when she applied to Jusoor's Scholarship Program. "Education for me, as a person from a poor family and a war-torn country, was the only hope for a peaceful future," she says. While living in the Ain Mneen suburb in Syria, Zelfa would travel three hours to Damascus to attend lectures.

Thanks to OFID and Jusoor, in 2016 she was able to accept an offer to study for a Master's in Environmental Engineering at New York University. "Studying abroad, living with people I don't know and speaking a language I'm not used to has taught me that I am able to take risks," she says. "This has allowed me to grow more than I could by staying home. I also learned to stop, take a deep breath and get creative in the face of challenges," she adds.

Zelfa is passionate about being part of the reconstruction process in



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ZELFA HAMADIEH

Zelfa Hamadie

her country and specializes in environmental and water resources. “The war in Syria encouraged women to challenge and break the norms, and empowered us to become increasingly influential in public life and in shaping Syria’s future,” she says. “I believe that women will play a significant role in the reconstruction. We will be present and have an impact in civil society, media and government sectors.” Zelfa is already making an impact. She has been a volunteer with a group of Syrian researchers for five years. On a weekly basis, she translates scientific articles from English to Arabic and publishes them, reaching a community of more than 2.2 million online users. “Peace cannot be achieved by guns,” she says. “It needs clear, educated minds to rebuild and educate young people. Once the mind is full of knowledge, there is no room for extremist ideology.”

Architects, like **Alaa Marrawi**, who will transfer to Columbia University this summer to complete a Master’s of Science in Architecture and Urban Design, will be essential for the reconstruction of Syria. “The current war in Syria has led not only to destroyed lives and buildings, but also to demographic changes and psychological damage,” Alaa says. “These complex challenges

have pushed me toward what I consider a powerful program aimed at empowering women to be leaders in Syria.”

Alaa arrived in the US in 2017 and experienced a ‘culture shock’. “I gave myself a break and allowed for an adjustment period,” she says. “Now, I’m excited to discover a new world every day with different cultures, habits, people and systems. This enriches my life skills and broadens my view – architecturally and more generally,” she says. “Education is important for cohesion in communities,” she says. “As a future urban designer, I aim to take an active part in the reconstruction phase in Syria by working with social vulnerabilities in mind, redeveloping schemes for the locally marginalized, creating liveable places and improving development strategies for contested urban territories.” Alaa believes that the future of Syria hinges on the involvement of women. “Women participated in the reconstruction process of war-torn cities after the Second World War,” she says. “German women, for example, were clearing the ruins of Berlin in 1945. In 2014 in Syria, local women helped rehabilitate two damaged but important religious buildings despite the ongoing war.” Women are vital to regenerating urban spaces, she says.

Alaa Marrawi



PHOTO: COURTESY ALAA MARRAWI

“I believe that women will play a significant role in the reconstruction. We will be present and have an impact in civil society, media and government sectors.”

Zelfa Hamadie

“Education saved my life and gave me possibilities that I couldn’t imagine before.”

Lama Ranjous



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LAMA RANJOUS

Lama Ranjous

Lama Ranjous is at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies completing a Master’s in International Policy and Development. “Education saved my life and gave me possibilities that I couldn’t imagine before,” she says. “It helped other people in my community to understand that an alternative to war did exist.” Lama has held several positions since beginning her studies. She has been a graduate teaching assistant; an intern for the Climate Action Network; a member of the Academic Advisory Committee of the Thematic Paper on Youth, Peace, and Security; and she also joined the United Nation’s Global Focal Point on Migration project. “It’s been a tough but significant experience,” she says, on studying in the US. “Being in a new country without any social capital made me realize the importance of my social network back at home. It also helped me to grow: being all alone, appreciating the opportunity and being able to help other people even when you have nothing.” Lama believes women need to play a central role in the reconstruction of Syria; and at the heart of that role is helping to bring up a new generation of children who think differently about our planet’s future.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ALAS DE COLOMBIA

Patricia Restrepo (first row, left) with butterfly producers.

Giving wings to women in conflict zones

Patricia Restrepo runs a flourishing butterfly business with indigenous Colombian women who were victims of war and violence. **Mery Mogollón** visits her lush green paradise to talk eggs, entrepreneurship and empowerment...

Patricia Restrepo was raised in Colombia's Cali, the capital of the Valle del Cauca province, where infamous battles took place between leftist guerrillas and right wing paramilitary groups over drug trafficking turf. The battles made it the most lawless and violent region of Colombia.

Despite this, Restrepo grew up in a family with an abundance of affection and wealth. But she learned from an early age to give back to those less fortunate than her, and to reject violence and the unequal treatment of women. "My mother taught me that poor women are more vulnerable and that it is necessary to help them advance and recognize their strengths," Restrepo says.

In 2000, Restrepo was well-paid and comfortable as a corporate attorney, but she left to start a new life raising butterflies at a farm in El Arenillo, a forested section of Palmira, a 40-minute drive from Cali. Together with her daughter, Vanessa Wilches Restrepo, now 37, Restrepo senior launched a new business with a social focus called Wings of Colombia. The two women created and consolidated a strategic alliance with a group called the Butterfly Producers Association, known locally as Asopromar. The group now includes 28 peasant families who were victims of war and violence in Valle del Cauca.

Every week, Asopromar sells around 1,500 butterfly pupae to Wings of Colombia. They are then exported to buyers as far away as the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. The principal export market for the insects is the increasing number of zoos and resorts that keep live butterfly exhibits.

Restrepo's butterfly farm is a lush green paradise filled with plants and trees, and criss-crossed with clear streams originating in Colombia's Andes mountains. The

work day begins at around 8am with the collection of butterfly eggs. Later, the insects are fed with different plants specific to their species. It is important to control and monitor conditions, time and species. Finally, each Asopromar producer gives up her pupae, which have been carefully placed on a bed of cotton in round white boxes.

Each box is carefully labelled with the number of pupae per specie, the name of the producer and the date of collection. Once in the chrysalis stage, the insects take between 10 and 20 days to emerge from their cocoons. It's not a simple business: it requires consistency and compliance with Colombian laws and environmental controls. Any mistake or delay in the process can mean a week's work amounts to nothing.

Restrepo talks to the OFID Quarterly:

"In 2001, we began to work on the construction of the farm. Our business model required the participation of independent producers, so we put out the word on public buses that we were looking for people to participate. Many men and women came on the day of the first meeting,

but all the men left before we even finished explaining the project. Women, on the other hand, believed in the project, stayed, and with them we began. Now, the husbands of some of the women of Asopromar have joined the business.

Just as with the butterflies, these women have experienced their own metamorphoses. Victims not only of war but of family violence, abandonment and poverty, they have become entrepreneurs, masters of their own destinies, with their own houses, and now they are capable of earning enough to give their children a better quality of life.

We have two-year contracts with fixed prices, which guarantee wages. Revenues depend on productivity: the more pupae the women collect, the more they earn. 10 percent of the monthly income goes into a savings fund that is distributed at the end of the year. The work allows the women to raise their children while holding down a job.

El Arenillo is an at-risk zone. Some of the women lost close family members at the hands of armed groups. The idea of working in butterfly production attracted them from the first moment, and they have stayed and brought other women into the project, and even their



Diaethria neglecta

“Just as with the butterflies, these women have experienced their own metamorphoses.”

husbands. Mothers have introduced their daughters to a production chain that we hope will keep growing.

There have been many challenges, but the principal one was to help the women believe in themselves. They have now become examples for other women to follow and other communities to emulate. Our business model means having children is not a limiting factor. Women are not employees but fellow workers. They have the opportunity to work from their own homes. They are free to manage their time.

This is my life's work. I believe in this. You have to fight for what you believe in. I feel fulfilled and professionally happy. Wings of Colombia represents my dreams of development and inclusion. Despite the violence, peasant and indigenous women have continued living in the valleys and mountains and have realized a sustainable and ecologically friendly future.”

Patricia Restrepo receives the pupae from the hands of a producer.



Mery Mogollón

A freelance writer and journalist with broad experience in business, economics and energy issues.

Mery is currently the Caracas-based correspondent of *The Los Angeles Times* newspaper. Prior to her current position, she was a news reporter for leading Venezuelan newspapers. Additionally, she is a columnist for several Venezuelan and international publications.



PHOTO: GALERIE MAECHT, PARIS

The wondrous world of Baya

BY NADIA BENAMARA

Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine (1931 - 1998) repeatedly rejected attempts to label her style – naive, primitive, surreal, oriental, outsider – preferring to let her fantastically flamboyant images of female figures, flora and fauna speak for themselves.

Though celebrated in Algeria, France and the Middle East, Baya (as she chose to be known) has yet to gain greater international recognition. Perhaps her background or initial association with mid-century luminaries such as Pablo Picasso, Andre Breton and Jean DuBuffet discouraged broader or more dedicated consideration of her work.

A new exhibition redresses this oversight. *Baya: Woman of Algiers* – on view at New York University's Grey Art Gallery, January through March – is the first solo show of Baya's art in North America. Comprising 22 gouache paintings from her 1947 Paris debut, it was curated by the French American scholar Natasha Boas, who recasts Baya's legacy within critical, contemporary, feminist contexts.

Largely self-taught, Baya is not an artist whose intentions are readily apparent. Her brilliant colors, boldly-patterned shapes and fluid lines reflect her own complex cultural inheritance – Kabyle, Arab, Islamic and French. The idyllic, fertile, feminine scenes she paints are

expressive and imaginative but nonetheless circumscribed. Men are nowhere to be seen; possibly even excluded from Baya's world.

Big, open eyes are a recurring focal point. Earlier critics, such as the late Algerian novelist Assia Djebar, have described this female eye of Baya's as a 'liberated' one. It can be read as a reversal of the male gaze – a prominent theme in Western figurative art – as well as a subversion of traditional Islamic art, which rarely depicts the human figure. Resembling the Arabic letter for 'H', Baya's eye can also be identified as the Egyptian Horus or hamsa eye, worn as a good luck charm throughout the Arab world.

Writing about Baya in the Grey Art Gallery catalogue, Boas is careful to point out that the artist herself never spoke about feminism or colonialism. Boas makes the case that Baya's prolific and repetitive paintings of women nonetheless model a way of building an identity, and that her aesthetic narratives "interrogate, deconstruct, complicate, and transform in order to reach solutions that are entirely Baya's own."

"Baya's unclear delineations, indeterminate locales, closed spaces, and floating objects lacking perspective or volume invite us to think more broadly about borders and boundaries: Where does the natural

female body begin and end before it becomes cultural?" asks Boas.

In looking back on modernist art history from today's vantage point, Boas concludes that the most significant function in Baya's work may be her step into the visible. "Removing the veil of invisibility, Baya upholds the right to see and the knowledge that seeing means being visible," writes Boas. "Being exposed to being seen is what Baya's women do."

Baya's works can still be seen in the collections of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Algiers; the Arab World Institute in Paris; the Picasso Museum in Antibes; the Collection of Art Brut in Lausanne, and the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah. ■



Baya, aged 16, at the time of her Paris debut.

Baya's biographical dates*

1931: Baya is born (Fatma Haddad) to a poor Kabyle-Arab family in Bordj el-Kiffan (then named Fort de l'Eau), a seaside suburb of Algiers.

1936 – 1941: Orphaned at the age of five, Baya is sent to live with her grandmother. She does not attend school. Her aptitude for drawing and sculpting attracts the attention of her grandmother's employer, the French intellectual Marguerite Camina Benhoura.

1942 – 1945: Baya is officially adopted by Benhoura, who provides her with art supplies, instruction, and access to her circle of French and Maghrebi artists, as well as to her personal collection of modernist masterpieces.

1945 – 1947: Baya's work is seen by the French art dealer Aime Maeght. He shares his enthusiasm with Andre Breton, who includes one of Baya's gouaches in his July 1947 exhibition of international Surrealist art at Galerie Maeght in Paris.

November 1947: Galerie Maeght hosts a solo exhibition of Baya's gouaches and ceramics. The 16 year-old's work attracts Paris' avant-garde intellectual elite, as well as a popular audience. Baya is featured in the February 1948 issue of *French Vogue*.

1948 – 1952: Baya (still in Benhoura's care) is invited to become artist-in-residence at the Madoura ceramic studio in the south of France, where she spends her summers working alongside Pablo Picasso. Picasso later cites her as one of the inspirations for his *Women of Algiers* series.

1953 – 1962: Baya returns to Blida, Algeria to become the second wife of El Hadj Mahfound Mahieddine, a traditional Muslim and acclaimed 'arabo-andalusian' musician 30 years her senior. She bears and raises six children. She abandons painting during this period, which roughly coincides with Algeria's eight year war of independence.

1963: Baya starts painting again. She's encouraged by the newly appointed director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Algiers, Jean de Maisonseul, who repatriates some of her work from France and organizes a retrospective of her gouaches.

1964 – 1998: Baya continuously paints and exhibits – in Algeria as well as abroad – nearly every year until her death.

*thanks to research compiled by curator Natasha Boas

Public drive to prevent harassment in Quito

BY NADIA BENAMARA

Ecuador's capital, Quito, is ramping up an ongoing campaign to fight sexual harassment on public transportation. Launched March 2017, #Bajale Al Acoso (Let's put down harassment) has already succeeded in raising wide-spread awareness among the city's more than one million daily transit riders, and to date led to the conviction of 11 perpetrators.

City officials developed the campaign in response to an alarming 2012 scoping study in which eight in ten women respondents said they'd been harassed or violated on board Quito public transportation.

#Bajale Al Acoso's key feature is an SMS-activated alert that enables passengers to draw a near immediate response from specially trained personnel. Bus drivers, once notified, can also sound a public service announcement warning passengers of the potential danger and appealing to their sense of solidarity. Originally tested on 120 city buses, this mechanism has now been installed on more than 2,200 publicly and privately-operated buses, covering almost all metropolitan district routes.

The campaign is part of Quito's larger commitment to making public spaces more secure for women and girls. One of five pioneering cities to partner with UN Women on its global *Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces* initiative, Quito has recently amended local ordinances to strengthen action against sexual harassment in the public sphere.

In its first year of implementation, #Bajale Al Acoso registered more than 1,319 complaints, 44 of which were referred to the public prosecutor's office, resulting in 11 perpetrators being convicted and sentenced to jail terms of between 12 and 38 months.

5 IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO

10 REDUCCIÓN DE LAS DESIGUALDADES

SI TE DICE GROSERIAS, REPORTELO AL ACOSO

98,7% USUARIOS

CONSIDERAN QUE BÁJALE AL ACOSO ES BENEFICIOSA PARA LA COMUNIDAD

PNUD Al servicio de las personas y las naciones

QUITO 40 años PATRIMONIO CULTURAL DE LA HUMANIDAD

QUITO ALCALDIA

A local advertisement for the campaign.

Some 70 percent of complaints concerned unwanted physical contact. Instances of obscene language and gestures were also registered but formal charges can only be brought against the first type of complaint.

Sexual harassment in public spaces is a common occurrence for innumerable women and girls around the world; one that negatively impacts their health and well-being, and limits their access to essential services and their ability to participate in school, work and public life.

“The trauma affects victims in different ways,” said San Jose Municipal Board President Maria Fernanda Pacheco, who is in charge of the #Bajale Al Acoso campaign. Outlining its one-year findings at a March 11 news conference, she explained: “Many have already told us: I don’t want to go outside by myself, or I don’t want to leave the house after dark, or I don’t want to finish my studies.”

Fears of re-victimization may also prevent those who’ve experienced sexual harassment from going to the police or pressing formal charges in the first place. That’s why #Bajale Al Acoso guarantees anonymity, and provides psychological support services as well as legal assistance. Data collection, newly facilitated by the platform’s technology, promises to help the city optimize predictive systems, focus police attention and formulate more effective policies going forward.

#Bajale Al Acoso ultimately aims to put an end to sexual harassment altogether. Pacheco emphasized that some 77 percent of Quito transit riders are now aware of the campaign, that witnesses, as well as victims, use its alert-mechanism, and that social sanction will eventually change people’s behavior by negating the perception that sexual harassment is normal or in any way acceptable. ■



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THE EPMTP* CONTROL CENTER RECEIVES YOUR SMS



YOU RECEIVE A CALL FOR ASSESSMENT AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT



THE CONTROL CENTER WILL NOTIFY THE DRIVER AND THE BRIGADE** OF THE BULLYING



THE DRIVER ACTIVATES AN AUDIO MESSAGE ALERTING PASSENGERS AND CALLING FOR MUTUAL RESPECT



THE BRIGADE WILL BE WAITING TO ASSIST YOU AT THE NEXT STOP



IF YOU DECIDE TO FILE A COMPLAINT, THE NATIONAL POLICE WILL ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE CENTER FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE, OR THE PUBLIC PROSECTORS OFFICE

* Empresa Pública Metropolitana De Transporte De Pasajeros / Quito’s Metropolitan Public Transport Company

** The Bájale Al Acoso Brigade consists of trained professionals, who specialize in preventing and handling cases of sexual harassment, providing psychological and social support to those affected.

A new vision for humanity

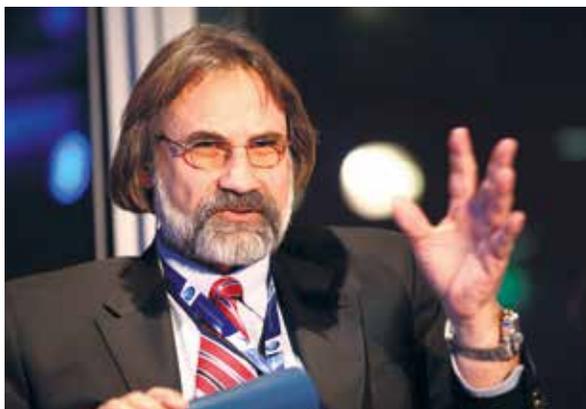
Professor Nebojsa Nakicenovic, Deputy Director General of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), recently visited the OPEC Secretariat as part of the OPEC Lecture Series to talk about new technological solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Below is an abridged and edited version of *Maureen MacNeill's* report for the *OPEC Bulletin*.

IIASA is committed to conducting research into technological solutions for the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Professor Nakicenovic believes that while the SDGs may represent a political compromise, they nevertheless offer a vital “new vision for humanity”.

Focus on energy

Nakicenovic noted that the cost per kilowatt hour of power is greater in poorer countries without access to electricity than in richer, more developed countries. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, he said, have the least access. He recognized OFID's focus on alleviating energy poverty, and addressed SDG 7 (ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) which, he said, was key to achieving sustainable development.

To reach the energy goals, Nakicenovic said that US\$40–50 billion of investment per year would be needed. He noted that three billion people currently use cooking fuels such as traditional biomass, with four million dying prematurely because of the resulting indoor pollution. If open cooking fires were



Professor Nebojsa Nakicenovic

replaced with kerosene or electricity, he said, a huge developmental problem would be averted. He noted the importance of stable infrastructure and a reliable supply of energy, and warned that without this, people would fall back into old habits and continue to use traditional biomass, a practice that also contributes to deforestation.

Nakicenovic argued that the journey toward SDG 7 is exceedingly important. He noted that there was no standalone development goal for energy in the Millennium Development Goals (the predecessors to the SDGs) and celebrated the inclusion of SDG 7 in the 2030 Agenda as “really important and a huge achievement.”

The inclusion of SDG 7 in the 2030 Agenda is “really important and a huge achievement.”

Policy and finance

Acknowledging the scale of the sustainable development challenge, Nakicenovic said it was important for policy solutions to address more than one area at once: “Synergies are the way forward,” he said. A good example, he noted, are policies that address energy and water challenges simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the private sector has a major part to play in financing the pursuit of the SDGs, Nakicenovic said. “Governments do not have so many resources,” he argued. “They are there to catalyse and promote through regulatory mechanisms which are part of the policy frameworks...They should fund research and development, produce road-maps...”

Human aspect

Nakicenovic said the most important factor in all SDG-related equations is the human one; noting that SDG 1 focuses on the eradication of poverty. Without the eradication of poverty, none of the other SDGs can be achieved, he said. When poverty is eradicated, people can become educated and more aware, he said.

But he also noted that all 17 SDGs are interdependent and equally important to human progress and prosperity: “It is not one or the other; this is why the 17 goals are so important because this is the agenda for human development, but also for protection of the planet. Our support systems, the Earth's systems, do not care if we disappear or stay. It is not an environmental agenda; it is a human development agenda.”

Our vision

To aspire to a world where Sustainable Development, centered on human capacity building, is a reality for all.

Our mission

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Uniting against Poverty



Uniting against Poverty

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