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# Energy and sustainable development: Back to basics

## Editorial

**I**n the Middle Ages, people believed that the world was flat and that heaven would fall from the sky. Today's preoccupations revolve around climate change and a looming energy crisis, two topics that head the agenda of policy and decision makers. Heightened concerns about the causes of global warming have stimulated the search for alternative sources of energy. In 2005, for example, global investments in the renewable energy sector reached a record US\$38 billion - a trend which seems to have evolved into the latest fashion in development cooperation.

This raises three basic questions. First, to what extent will the huge investments in renewable energy secure the world's energy future by helping to meet the growing demand for clean and cost-effective energy? When considering this, it should be borne in mind that methods for generating energy using renewable natural resources are not necessarily affordable and accessible to the poor. Moreover, uncertainty remains about the implications for the environment of the production of renewables such as bio-fuels. Therefore, whereas the role of renewables in the energy mix is expected to gradually increase over time, their overall contribution towards reducing energy poverty and helping meet the expected energy demand of the next 25-30 years is likely to remain small.

Meanwhile, there is no need for concern about a looming energy crisis, which could trigger a final scramble for oil with unwelcome repercussions for the oil-rich developing countries. According to experts, fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) will, in relative terms, remain the most stable, safe, reliable and cost-effective source of energy for development. It is projected that fossil fuels will meet 85% of the increase in primary energy demand for the next two-and-a-half decades. Also, advances in technology, incremental recovery from existing fields, and non-conventional reserves could add another 4.5 trillion barrels of potentially recoverable oil over the next quarter of a century. This translates into more than 140 years of supply at today's rate of consumption. With almost 70% of total proven world oil reserves and 40% of total proven world gas reserves, there is little doubt that the Middle East – home to the majority of OPEC Member Countries – will continue to be the world's "energy safety valve."

As OPEC Member Countries have maintained, cleaner fossil fuels and more efficient combustion engines will better support the global drive for a cleaner environment. However, additional investments will be needed to promote clean fossil fuel technologies, including carbon dioxide capture and storage. This will help secure energy for sustained economic growth in the interests of both developed and developing nations. But then, such effort should be balanced by security of oil demand at adequate prices.

*The second question* is to what extent the reduction of greenhouse gases, as envisaged in the February 2005 *Kyoto Protocol*, can help in halting global warming. Some argue that global warming is a consequence of man-made greenhouse gas emissions. Others, however, have presented compelling physical and historic evidence that global warming is a process of natural and moderate warming that occurs every 1,500 years, as a result of a solar-linked physical cycle.

The *last question* is to what degree the policy agenda on energy and sustainable development reflects the priorities of the South, rather than those of the North. It may be recalled that this agenda was set out in the *Gleneagles Communiqué* and *Plan of Action on Climate Change, Clean Energy, and Sustainable Development*; and in the *Saint Petersburg Plan of Action on Global Energy Security*. These documents were issued by the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized nations at their annual summits in July 2005 and July 2006, respectively. Undoubtedly, the South contributes the least to climate change and has more basic concerns than the North, the most pressing of which are the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and capacity building. There remains a need to enhance the participation of the developing countries in setting the development agenda in institutions for global governance. It is equally necessary to move toward a multiple and culturally sensitive definition of sustainability.

OFID recognizes the importance of raising the level of energy services available to the poor through an appropriate mix of fossil fuels and renewables. Over the past 30 years, therefore, OFID has committed more than US\$1.7 billion or one fifth of its cumulative public sector lending to help reduce energy poverty, especially in the poorest countries – the institution’s traditional area of focus. OFID has always taken a *double dividend* approach by linking clean energy to the MDGs and poverty in all its dimensions. In addition, OFID has extended scores of grants totaling several million US dollars to strengthen the capacity of national and local authorities. The key aim of these grants is to assist in the planning and implementation of environmentally integrated energy poverty reduction policies and strategies in developing countries worldwide.

The importance of reducing energy poverty is indisputable. However, undue concerns about energy security and climate change should not deflect global attention and funding from ongoing efforts to reach the poverty reduction and related MDGs in full and on time. Certainly, these issues are as important as global warming and energy security, and all of them need to be tackled vigorously through a coordinated global effort. ■

# Ministerial Council holds 28th Session in Carinthia

## Chairman calls for greater efforts to aid development



Dr. Ibrahim Al-Assaf addressing the Council

The Ministerial Council of OFID, the institution's highest policy-making body, held its 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Session in Pörtschach, Carinthia, Austria, on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The Council re-elected HE Dr. Ibrahim Al-Assaf, Honorable Finance Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as Chairman. The Honorable Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance of IR Iran, HE Dr. Davoud Danesh Jafari was elected as Vice-Chairman.

Dr. Al-Assaf addressed the Council, describing OFID as a healthy, forward-looking institution. He said OFID was "assiduously working to enhance human capital, build productive infrastructure and help develop utilities; all in the context of sustainable development." And the reason OFID does this work, said the Council Chairman, is mainly to help lift people out of poverty.

He went on to emphasize that the needs of the world were actually increasing, rather than diminishing; and everyday, it seemed, "more challenges emerge." These include, he said, "global warming, energy security, capacity building, technological innovation and food security." Dr. Al-Assaf pledged that OPEC Member States, as a donor group, would continue to provide what they could to ensure a healthier and more equitable global environment.

In his own address to the Council, HE Mr. Jamal Nasser Lootah, Chairman of OFID's Governing Board, gave an overview of the global economic environment in which OFID operated in 2006 and surveyed prospects for 2007. He said the global economy saw continued, strong and broad-based expansion in 2006. Thus, glob-

al economic output reached 5.1%, underpinned by an upturn in investment, favorable financial market conditions and "accommodative macro-economic policies." On prospects for 2007, Mr. Lootah said the expectation is that world economic growth will decelerate to 4.9% (largely triggered by a slowdown in the US and Europe).

Focusing on developments in OFID, Mr. Lootah said the institution "stood firm in upholding its solemn mandate of fighting poverty in all its ramifications, by making available a sustained and predictable stream of financing for development." As at end-March 2007, some US\$7 billion had been committed to public sector operations, benefiting 120 developing countries, worldwide. This amount covered over 1,100 operations, including 17 loans extended under the Blend Facility, and 34 debt relief loans under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. As at the end of March 2007, the Governing Board had approved 98 operations worth over US\$530 million to support small- and medium-scale private enterprises in a broad range of sectors.

OFID Director-General, Mr. Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish, presented an overview of the institution's operational status. He prefaced his presentation with a comment on 2006, which he said was a particularly eventful year for the institution. He said 2006 "would be remembered as a defining period for OFID. It was the year that marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of OFID, and one that witnessed the emergence of a more dynamic institution with a new corporate image."

On operational matters, the Director-General informed the Ministerial Council that by December 31, 2006, OFID had extended a total of 1,113 public



PHOTOS : B. BABAJIDE

Opening session of the 28th Ministerial Council convening in Poertschach, Carinthia, Austria

sector loans, worth US\$6.7 billion. Around one-half of this has gone to Africa. An additional US\$518 million had been approved under the Private Sector Facility. Assistance amounting to US\$379.5 million had been committed in grant aid, while another US\$10 million had been provided as trade financing, under the newly-created Trade Finance Facility (TFF), which was established following last year's Council meeting in Jeddah. OFID's total commitments, therefore, as of year-end 2006, amounted to US\$7.6 billion. This sum, Mr. Al-Herbish said, excluded the substantial contributions channeled through OFID by Member States to the resources of the International Fund for Agricultural development (IFAD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Mr. Al-Herbish also spoke about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and OFID's efforts to continue toward accomplishing some of the goals. He said OFID's new 17<sup>th</sup> Lending Program would seek to deliver increased resources, with a pro-poor bias, to some 81 priority countries, in pursuit of MDG targets.

The Ministerial Council considered and adopted OFID's Annual Report for 2006 (see separate story, page 8). It reviewed and approved audited financial statements for fiscal 2006 and appointed external auditors for 2007. The Council also examined other reports on the implementation of OFID's Corporate Plan; the 17<sup>th</sup> Lending Program and Blend Facility; and progress on

the Trade Finance Facility. The Council unanimously approved replenishments for OFID's two Special Grant Accounts, namely, the Grant Account for Palestine and the Grant Account for HIV/AIDS Operations. Each received US\$15 million in fresh funds.

At the close of the Council Session, the second *OFID Annual Award for Development* was presented by the Council Chairman to *SOS Kinderdorf*, an Austrian humanitarian, non-governmental organization (NGO) engaged in child- and orphan-care, worldwide. The first OFID Annual Award for Development was presented in Jeddah, 2006, to *HUMANA People-to-People*, an NGO based in Zimbabwe. ■

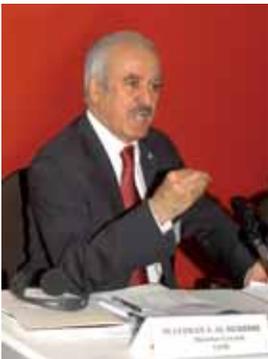


OFID Director-General Mr. Al-Herbish (right), congratulates Dr. Helmut Kutin (left), Chairman of SOS Kinderdorf, the recipients of the second OFID Annual Award for Development.

# Al-Herbish addresses IFAD Governing Council

In a powerful message delivered to delegates at the 30<sup>th</sup> Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), OFID Director-General, Suleiman J. Al-Herbish, has appealed to the world's richest nations to show greater commitment to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Such commitment, he stressed, would necessitate greater focus on addressing the plight of the rural poor.

PHOTO: IFAD PUBLIFOTO



Mr Al-Herbish was one of the keynote speakers at the conference.

The Director-General was addressing the Council's opening plenary session in Rome on February 14.

Noting the predominantly rural nature of poverty, Mr. Al-Herbish pointed out that the link between rural poverty eradication and attainment of the MDGs was self-evident. "Already, we are seeing progress towards the poverty and hunger goals in those developing regions where investment in agriculture has increased. Where such investment has lagged behind, so too has progress," he said.

The Director-General called upon G-7 nations to push the MDGs higher up their agenda, arguing that the goals were "just as important as issues like global warming and energy security."

Continuing, Mr. Al-Herbish highlighted aid effectiveness, globalization and climate change as three of the biggest challenges confronting developing countries and the donor community in their joint bid to spur socio-economic development in the rural areas.

On the issue of aid effectiveness, Al-Herbish underlined the importance of capacity building and institution strengthening as necessary complements to the provision of infrastructure.

"When we invest in rural roads or electrification or irrigation schemes, we must ensure that the relevant authorities have the knowledge, training and institutional capacity to operate, maintain and manage the new investments well into the future. This is development that is truly sustainable," he said. "It is also an approach that makes optimal use of resources, which are nowhere near adequate enough for the task in hand."

The Director-General remained cautionary about the benefits of globalization. If not properly harnessed, he argued, the market forces unleashed by globalization and liberalization had the potential to marginalize rural areas further still. Governments and aid institutions alike had a responsibility "to ensure that any deepening disparities caused by market-oriented development be corrected by pro-poor development policies." Such policies would have to include greater investment in social services and public infrastructure, specifically in rural areas. Only by pursuing such strategies could the economic gap between urban and rural populations be prevented from widening.

According to Al-Herbish, the biggest barrier in the way of rural development is environmental, in particular climate change. Problems caused by floods, drought, desertification and land degradation have had a serious impact on agricultural productivity, "making a hard life even harder for the rural poor." For the rural sector to remain viable, ways must be found "not only to combat climate change, but to adapt to it as well."

A large part of this burden, he continued, would fall on the specialist organizations involved in agricultural research and development. Greater support was



IFAD Governing Council in session.

needed to help these bodies carry out their “sterling work,” and to develop hardier varieties of seeds and livestock, together with farming methods that respond specifically to the needs of the rural poor.

Concluding his statement, the Director-General drew attention to the worrying trend towards urban migration, a development that was threatening the “erosion of rural economies.” It was imperative to halt this trend “by focusing on empowerment; on providing the tools and creating the environment that will allow the rural poor not only to preserve their way of life, but to prosper.” The foundations for this, Mr. Al-Herbish concluded, lay in “participation, cooperation and partnership.”

IFAD is the specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries, and is a key partner of OFID. Globally, the two institutions have financed over 60 projects together.

## OFID and rural development

As an institution whose mandate requires it to tackle poverty where it is most deeply felt, it should come as no surprise that the bulk of OFID’s development financing - which cumulatively exceeds US\$6.8 billion – has gone to rural areas. In addition to direct support to agriculture, OFID has invested heavily in rural infrastructure and in projects that promote private enterprise development both on-and off-farm. OFID financing has been given as soft loans, as outright grants and as private sector funding. Hand-in-hand with the *financial resources* it provides is OFID’s support to the formulation of *policy frameworks* that com-

Checking an irrigation canal. Improving rural infrastructure is a key focus of OFID’s work



PHOTO: ICARDA

plement and strengthen its efforts to promote sustainable development.

OFID believes that rural development, with its potential to generate employment and raise living standards, should be a key priority in the development plans of poor countries and in the strategies of donor organizations. OFID is further con-

vinced that, to be sustainable, poverty alleviation must be achieved through genuine growth and not by way of a simple redistribution of wealth. It is for this reason that OFID supports development policies that are inherently pro-poor.

# Annual Report 2006

A year of “milestones, firsts and breakthroughs”

The 2006 Annual Report of the OPEC Fund for International Development was released June 13, following its adoption by the Ministerial Council, meeting in Pörschach, Austria. Published in English, Arabic, French and Spanish, the Report details OFID’s activities during 2006 and gives an overview of operations since the institution’s inception in 1976. Some important highlights are detailed below:

- By the end of 2006, cumulative commitments stood at US\$8,606.1 million and total disbursements had reached US\$5,492 million.
- In the course of 2006, US\$699.7 million was committed in loans and grants, and US\$304.8 million was disbursed.

In his foreword to the Report, OFID Director-General, Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish described 2006 as “a defining year in the history of the institution.” Among the many milestones, he noted in particular the institution’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance and the many events and activities organized to mark the occasion. Chief among these, said Al-Herbish, was the crafting of “a new corporate identity to better define OFID’s image as a modern, progressive, outward-looking institution.” A logo and website redesign had formed the key pillars of this re-branding exercise.

The Director-General also highlighted landmarks on the operational front, notably the launch of a new trade financing window and a record US\$700 million approved in fresh commitments. The US\$500 million Trade Finance Facility, he said, was seen as “a natural progression in the evolution of OFID, as it strives to embrace the diverse and changing needs of the countries it works with.”

Yet another noteworthy event was the two major meetings held at OFID Headquarters in May: the *Tenth Conference of Heads of Arab Development Institutions* and a High-level Roundtable on *Partnership for Arab Development: a Window of Opportunity*. “That OFID was deemed a worthy host and that the meetings attracted such high profile participants is testament to the respect in which the institution is held among its peers in the international development community,” said Al-Herbish.

Also in May, OFID was honored to receive a stream of top-level visitors, including the Presidents of Bolivia and Nicaragua and the Prime Minister of Belize. Mr. Al-Herbish described the visits as “a unique opportunity to discuss collaboration at the highest level and evidence of the strong ties OFID enjoys with its partner countries.”

Further significant highlights in 2006 were: the granting to OFID of observer status in the UN General Assembly; participation in several international conferences, including AIDS 2006; and a number of productive missions to cooperating countries.

## Public sector lending in 2006

In 2006, OFID approved 44 project loans worth US\$524.2 million to 32 countries, thus helping to finance development operations in a range of sectors, with energy (34.8%) and transportation (30.1%) taking the largest share. Substantial resources were also direct-

ed toward the agriculture, water supply and sewerage, health and education sectors. A number of projects were multi-sectoral in nature. A further US\$34.4 million was committed within the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative, and US\$10 million was given in trade financing.

## Private sector operations in 2006

Through its private sector window, OFID approved US\$100.2 million in fresh commitments in 2006, shared between the financial sector (34%) and the non-financial sector (66%). The funds will support activities

ranging from micro-financing, copper mining, oil refining and mobile telecommunications to stainless steel and cement production, among others.

## Grant operations in 2006

In 2006, resources committed in grant financing totalled US\$31 million and supported 78 projects. As well as substantial approvals from the Special Accounts for HIV/AIDS and

Palestine, eight grants were provided as Technical Assistance for a diverse range of causes, such as avian flu control, cancer care, marine resource management and vocational training for women. Research grants numbered 17, while US\$3.5 million was given in emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters.

The 2006 Annual Report is available by post (in both digital and printed formats) or online at [www.ofid.org](http://www.ofid.org). ■



# Azerbaijan: Oil boom trickles down to small business sector

by Audrey Haylins

PHOTO: L. CECHURA



Mr. Andrew Pospelovsky, General Manager of MFBA, at the interview.

As the oil flows out of Azerbaijan by the million-barrel load, so the petro-dollars are flooding into this former Soviet Republic on the shores of the Caspian Sea. The resulting foreign exchange earnings have galvanized the country's economy, which grew by a phenomenal 35% in 2006 – higher than anywhere else in the world. The catalyst for this remarkable transformation is the giant BTC (Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan) oil pipeline, which unlocked one of the world's biggest energy reserves when it came online in July 2006. Today, Azerbaijan is basking in an economic climate that is brighter than at any time in its history.

As the hydrocarbons industry develops apace, the spillover effect on other sectors is becoming ever more visible. Construction and trade are booming, while major rehabilitation programs are underway to improve public infrastructure, especially in the areas of transportation and telecommunications. At the same time, the demand

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With the giant Caspian oil pipeline up and running, the Azerbaijan economy has hit boom time, creating a host of new opportunities for private entrepreneurs. To help meet the demand for financing, OFID recently gave a US\$5 million line of credit to the Micro-finance Bank of Azerbaijan. In this interview, Andrew Pospelovsky, the Bank's General Manager, describes how oil has breathed new life into the country's small business sector.

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for labor is increasing, pushing up incomes and making more money available for consumer spending.

All this is great news for Azerbaijan's private sector, according to Andrew Pospelovsky, General Manager of the Micro-finance Bank of Azerbaijan (MFBA), who spoke to the *Newsletter* during a recent visit to OFID.

“There is a direct link between Azerbaijan's oil income and the small- and micro-business sector,” he said. “The money now coming into the country is providing funding and demand in the services sector, as well as in light manufacturing and agro-industry.”

At present, the Azeri economy is heavily dependent on oil, with the sector providing an estimated 90% of export earnings and more than 50% of GDP. For long-term sustainable growth, however, this narrow base needs to diversify. ►



MFBA is the only specialist micro-finance bank in Azerbaijan. Providing a full spectrum of financial services, its clients range from home-run micro businesses to small-scale enterprises such as truck rental.

◀ “In terms of job creation and developing the domestic economy, micro and small businesses offer the greatest prospects,” says Pospelovsky, who identifies the agro-industry and services sectors as providing the biggest potential.

“Azerbaijan is traditionally an agricultural country. It’s extremely fertile and produces all kinds of fruits and vegetables that could be processed for export. Russia, for example, is a huge export market. Instead of importing its red peppers or tomatoes from much farther afield in winter, Russia could get these more cheaply from Azerbaijan. The services sector is also ripe for expansion. As the economy grows, so will the need to service the local requirements of the country.”

Despite the favorable economic environment, however, micro and small businesses still have to overcome one major obstacle – access to financing and financial services. This, explains Pospelovsky, is where MFBA is breaking new ground.

“When MFBA opened its doors in 2002, nobody was interested in lending to micro or small businesses. There was a belief that one couldn’t work in this sector profitably and manage the risk. We have proved the doubters wrong and in doing so paved the way for other banking institutions to follow suit.”

Today there are over 20 micro-finance institutions in Azerbaijan. MFBA, however, remains the only special-

ist micro-finance bank, providing a full spectrum of financial services to clients, including current, deposit and savings accounts, and remittance transfers, together with more sophisticated products such as trade financing.

“We are the only bank that is really lending at the micro-level,” explains Pospelovsky. “Around 95% of all loans are under US\$5,000, although you can borrow as little as US\$300, which is the kind of small sum that street traders need to buy stock for their stall or kiosk. In fact, the vast majority of our portfolio finances small enterprises of this kind.”

For many traders, this modest start is just a beginning. Pospelovsky cites various examples of small ventures that have been able to expand, thanks to the financing made available by MFBA.

“A trader might initially take a small loan to set himself up in furniture sales, for example. As demand grows, he branches out into importing. After a while, he realizes that he could cut out transportation costs by producing the goods locally and so moves into manufacturing.”

Pospelovsky speaks with satisfaction about the numerous small family businesses he has seen flourish over a very short period of time.

“We have a customer – a bakery in Baku - to whom we have just given a ninth loan. They were one of our first clients in 2002 with an initial credit of US\$10,000. Today, they have a whole chain of bakeries and employ

over 100 people. Now, we're giving them loans of several hundred thousand dollars."

Evidence that MFBA's services are in great demand can be found in the bank's astonishing growth. In just four years, it has extended a remarkable 47,000 loans. Over the past 12 months alone, the value of its portfolio has more than tripled, rising from US\$17 million to US\$57 million. Its client base has mushroomed from 5,000 to 15,000 customers.

"In February [2007]," says Pospelovsky, "we disbursed 2,500 business loans, of which 1,700 were to new clients. That's almost 100 clients a day – an amazing rate."

Since setting up its main office in Baku, MFBA has opened 12 other branches, a network that will be expanded over the next few years to cover the entire country.

MFBA's success is all the more exceptional given the history of corruption in Azerbaijan and the people's inherent mistrust of the banking system. Pospelovsky attributes the bank's success to its quality of service.

"We're very quick at processing loans. We turn around micro-loans in less than 24 hours from the client coming into the bank to him having the cash in his hand. For larger loans, especially if it's a repeat loan to a client, we can do it in 2-3 days, whereas other banks might take months. We also operate very transparently. We're bringing European standards to the Azeri banking community and this is what our customers appreciate us for."

For MFBA, the greatest challenge seems to be growing fast enough to satisfy the demand for its services. This means securing more financing and recruiting and training the staff to manage its burgeoning portfolio.

"We're currently having to find an additional US\$5 million every month to feed the demand we're servicing. If we had the money and sufficient staff, we could be doing US\$10 million a month. These two requirements are the only things that are limiting our growth at the moment," says Pospelovsky.

"Nevertheless, we can derive great satisfaction from the impact we have had so far on the small business community. We are pleased as well that, having taken the lead in working with the sector, we have encouraged other competing banks to downscale their business and also start lending to micro and small entrepreneurs.

"I believe MFBA is making the largest single contribution to the development of the Azeri economy and to the development of people's lives and job creation through the financing we're providing. Our aim is to continue to grow, not only in terms of numbers, of portfolio size and penetration, but also in terms of the services we offer. And not just to our micro and small business clients, but to ordinary Azeris as well." ■



## The conduit to prosperity BTC pipeline – fact file

- Stretching 1,760 km from the Azeri capital, Baku, to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean Sea, it is the second longest oil pipeline in the world.
- Construction began in September 2002, and it was officially inaugurated on July 13, 2006.
- It was constructed from 150,000 individual joints of line pipe, each measuring 12 meters in length.
- It crosses more than 1,500 rivers and climbs to an elevation of 2,800 meters before returning to sea level at Ceyhan.
- It holds a total of 10 million barrels of oil, which flows at the rate of two meters per second.
- The first oil pumped from the Baku end of the pipeline on May 10, 2005, took 12 months and 18 days to reach Ceyhan.
- Pipeline throughput is expected to reach one million barrels per day by 2008.
- The first tanker loaded with crude oil from the pipeline sailed from Ceyhan on June 4, 2006, marking the start of export of Azerbaijan's oil to world markets.

# OFID delegation undertakes comprehensive mission to Sudan

## President Al-Bashir acknowledges long-standing ties

In a high-level mission to the Republic of the Sudan in late January, an OFID delegation headed by Director-General, Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish, met with senior government officials, visited project sites, and engaged in meetings with partner organizations headquartered in the country.

The highlight of the visit, which Mr. Al-Herbish described as one of the “most comprehensive ever” to a beneficiary country, was an audience with Sudanese President, HE General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir. The President told Mr. Al-Herbish that Sudan was pleased with its long-standing ties with OFID and conveyed his appreciation for years of “uninterrupted cooperation.”

Responding, Mr. Al-Herbish thanked President Al-Bashir for his country’s “sustained readiness” to cooperate with OFID on all its projects and programs, and commended the pace of economic development in the Sudan.

He informed the President and his aides that OFID was committed to working with the developing world to accelerate social and economic progress and alleviate poverty, and emphasized that the poorer countries would continue to enjoy pride of place in the apportionment of assistance by OFID. The Director-General reminded the President that relations between the Sudan and OFID had begun as far back as 1976, the very year of OFID’s establishment. OFID’s operations have since continued in all sectors of the Sudanese economy, including the private sector.



Sudanese President, General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir (right), welcomes OFID Director-General, Mr. Suleiman Al-Herbish.

PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN



PHOTOS: T. ALNASSAR

The OFID delegation took advantage of their presence in the Sudan to visit the Kenana Sugar Company, the world's largest integrated sugar producer and recipient of OFID financing. The delegation received a guided tour of the estate, its facilities and operations.

In adjacent meetings with senior government officials, including the Minister of Finance and National Economy, the Minister of Investment, the Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, and the Minister of Energy and Mines, the OFID delegation reviewed cooperation to date between OFID and the Sudan and discussed ways to enhance it further.

The mission also provided an opportunity to oversee some of the many ongoing operations that OFID is funding in the Sudan in cooperation with both the government and other partners, including the private sector. Of particular interest was a visit to the Kenana Sugar Company, south of Khartoum, which has recently undergone expansion with the help of a US\$10 million OFID loan.

Further meetings were held with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development. In addition, representatives of the OFID delegation, including the Director-General, attended the Board Meeting of Byblos Bank Africa.

Since its inception, OFID has provided more than US\$183 million in lending to the Sudan, as well as a substantial amount in grant financing for a wide range of projects. ■

## OFID provides US\$25 million to the White Nile Sugar Company

Building on its already strong support to the Sudanese agriculture sector, OFID in January gave a US\$25 million loan to help establish a new sugar producer, the White Nile Sugar Company. To be set up in public/private partnership, the new venture will consist of a large-capacity, fully-integrated and diversified sugar production and processing plant.

In recent years, Sudan's sugar industry has shown remarkable growth, with appreciable quantities produced for export. Today, Sudan is ranked among the top ten least-cost producers in the world. The White Nile Sugar Company will help consolidate this position, creating around 4,200 new jobs in the process.

The loan agreement was signed on January 31, by OFID Governing Board Chairman, HE Jamal Nasser Lootah, and by Mr. Hassan Satti, General Manager of White Nile Sugar. A guarantee agreement was subsequently initialled by Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish, OFID Director-General, and HE El Zubair Ahmed Al Hassan, Minister of Finance and National Economy of the Republic of the Sudan.

# OFID receives Qatari 2nd Deputy Prime Minister Al-Attiyah

## Al-Herbish honors long-standing friendship and collaboration

On March 16, OFID welcomed to its premises, HE Mr. Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry of Qatar. Mr. Al-Attiyah was at OFID at the head of a high-level delegation which also included the Secretary-General of OPEC, HE Mr. Abdalla Salem El-Badri, and a number of ranking OPEC Secretariat officials. They had come on a courtesy call, to exchange views and learn about the worldwide reach of OFID.

In his welcome statement, the Director-General of OFID, Mr. Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish spoke of an important family visit. He recalled years of working together in the oil industry with Al-Attiyah, who is a key OPEC Energy Minister. Mr. Al-Herbish took the time to summarize the aims and aspirations of OFID, as a development finance institution working in partnership and cooperation with others (in a rapidly globalizing world) to battle deprivation and poverty. Al-Herbish recalled the diverse successes the institution has thus far accumulated. He spoke of a need to intensify efforts at OFID and elsewhere to give greater exposure to these accomplishments via public information strategies. It was important, he declared, that the world took cognizance of the noble work of OFID and sister development finance institutions of OFID Member States, “especially in this day and age, when the varied contributions of Member States to development cooperation often go unreported or under-reported.” Said Mr. Al-Herbish: It is vital that greater awareness be created across the world regarding the work we are doing. The Director-General also dis-

cussed OFID’s preparatory work and proposed participation at UNCSD-15. Al-Attiyah is chairman of the UNCSD-15. OFID is attending the conference as an observer (see separate story, page 20).

In his response, Mr. Al-Attiyah assured the gathering that he was in full cognizance of the work of OFID, as well as continuing efforts by Management to create greater awareness about the institution. He was in agreement, he said, that the significant contributions of Member States to development should be made known. Al-Attiyah, like Al-Herbish, was at the birth of OFID, 31 years ago. They were both young civil servants on the official delegations of their respective countries to Algiers, Algeria, in March, 1975, when the foundation was laid toward the creation of OFID. This was the First Summit of Sovereigns and Heads of State of OPEC Member States. Al-Attiyah had followed, with interest, the growth and progressive development of the institution ever since, he disclosed. He encouraged OFID to continue with its projects and programs, worldwide, to the benefit of the poorer countries of the world. He advised that OFID “should do even more to sell itself and publicize what oil exporting countries are doing jointly to finance sustainable development in developing countries.”

On the work of the UNCSD-15, Al-Attiyah reminded the gathering that this was the first time the task of managing a development conference of this magnitude had been entrusted to an OPEC Member State and national. He promised to do his best to ensure that the conference was a success.

Concurring, OPEC Secretary-General El-Badri said he thought OFID should work even harder to let the world know that it has a presence in 50 African, 40 Asian, 25 Latin-American and Caribbean and four European countries, totalling 119. It was important, Mr. El-Badri submitted, to assure the international community that OPEC, as a donor group of countries, “does care about our world.”

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) is an inter-governmental body set up by the UN General Assembly in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) also known as the Earth Summit. The Commission is composed of 53 members elected for a three-year term of office. It meets annually for a period of two to three weeks. Thirteen members are elected from Africa; 11 from Asia; 10 from Latin America and the Caribbean; six from Eastern Europe; and 13 from Western Europe and elsewhere. The Commission reviews progress in the implementation of *Agenda 21* and the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*; and for policy guidance to follow up on the Johannesburg Plan for Implementation.

At OFID, Mr. Al-Attayah and his delegation listened to a brief presentation on the institution. They were informed that OFID had a strong base; that its strength was its Member Countries; that its cooperating countries and peer-group comparators considered it a partner of choice; and that its performance record was solid. Furthermore, OFID was making real development impact; by helping to enhance human capital



Mr. Al-Herbish (left) greets Mr. Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah.

and productive infrastructure. The PowerPoint presentation by Mr. Said Aissi, Assistant Director-General, Department of Public/Private Sector Operations, showed that OFID’s “cumulative activities” were valued at US\$8.6 billion, with the public sector accounting for 78% of the resources; the private sector 6%; and grants operations 4%.

Some 842 grant activities, said Mr. Aissi, had thus far delivered a total of US\$380 million to projects and programs, worldwide. He said global recognition for OFID had, meanwhile, encompassed membership of various multilateral finance institutions; participation at multiple high-level meetings; involvement in Arab coordination processes; and observer status with the United Nations System, as well as with major regional development banks. Mr. Aissi concluded that OFID’s resource delivery was flexible and responsive to needs; and the institution was consolidating new facilities, such as trade financing, and looking forward to measured growth in the next three years. ■



The Vienna Headquarters of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

PHOTO: D. GOLPASHIN/OPEC

# El Badri reveals vision and future plans

## Interview with OPEC'S new Secretary General

When HE Abdalla Salem El-Badri assumed his new position as Secretary General of OPEC this January, he was no stranger to one of the world's most high-profile energy institutions. As an oil man by profession and a former President of the OPEC Conference, Mr. El-Badri is thoroughly versed in the entire spectrum of global oil and energy issues. The Secretary General spoke to the OFID Newsletter in the following interview with **Abdulrahman Alkheraigi**.

**NL:** *Some analysts argue that OPEC was caught off guard by the very strong market demand in 2006, thereby causing its Member Countries' capacity expansion plans to lag far behind. What role does OPEC intend to play to help improve the situation in the medium to long-term?*

**SG:** One of OPEC's stated goals is to stay ahead of the market and keep it well supplied at all times. OPEC seeks a stable oil market, without sudden price changes or excessively high or low prices. As an organization, we

meet regularly with other oil producers and consumers in an effort to improve understanding and trust in the oil industry and to seek policies and measures that do not create unnecessary economic hardship for oil producers or consumers. Additionally, we continue to work on capacity expansion planning in our Member Countries. Many of these plans are in the early stages and take place in an industry where planning cycles are generally around five years. Yet, we continue to constantly monitor the market to insure that it is well-supplied. This is reflected in the investment strategies of our Member States.

**NL:** *To what extent does OPEC influence oil prices? In other words, does it have enough power to bring them down whenever the need arises? Also, what are the advantages and disadvantages of such action?*

**SG:** Like I have said, one of OPEC's stated objectives is to ensure stability in the oil market. To do so, representatives from OPEC Member Countries sit in

Conference to review the international oil market and look at demand over the short, medium and long-term. It is also at these meetings that they coordinate and unify petroleum policies in order to promote stability and balance in the world oil market. The Conferences provide an opportunity, too, to examine the current situation and forecasts of market fundamentals, such as economic growth rates and petroleum supply and demand scenarios. Member States can then consider what, if any, changes should be made in their petroleum product agreements. In previous Conferences, for example, Member Countries have decided variously to raise or lower their collective oil production in order to maintain stable prices and steady supplies to consumers in the short, medium and longer-terms.

**NL:** *The Third Summit of OPEC Heads of State is to convene in Saudi Arabia later this year. What is the significance of such a meeting, and what would it achieve?*

**SG:** This year's Summit holds great significance for OPEC and its Member Countries. Only twice before in OPEC's history have heads of state met face-to-face in a formal OPEC setting: in 1975 in Algiers and 2000 in Caracas. At both meetings, OPEC took a step back from the daily affairs of the international oil market and examined issues at the national leadership level; issues that pertained to the fundamental objectives of the organization. Both previous Summits sought to help reduce the plight of developing countries, and in fact, it was at the first Summit that the groundwork was laid for what would later become the OPEC Fund for International Development, OFID.

At the conclusion of both Summits, Solemn Declarations were issued that encapsulated the discussions and agreements put forth by all parties in attendance. In 1975, the Heads of State agreed that the Organization should cooperate with all the world's countries to establish a new international economic order based on justice, mutual understanding and concern for the livelihood of all peoples. The most recent Summit in 2000 emphasized the importance of sustaining order and stability in the international oil market, with the goal of reasonable prices and a fair return to investors in mind. For the upcoming Summit in Saudi Arabia, we look forward to deliberations among Heads of State and Government that will build on the outcome of the two previous Summits. We also anticipate discussions on issues relating to the broader global economic



PHOTO: B. BABAJIDE

Abdalla Salem El-Badri,  
OPEC Secretary General.

and political landscape, as well as taking a longer-term look at the international oil market.

**NL:** *As OPEC's Chief Executive, what are, in your view, the Organization's major challenges in the next few years, and how would you tackle them?*

**SG:** Perhaps the biggest challenges facing OPEC today come from uncertainties surrounding future global oil demand, environmental considerations, and growing support for energy sources alternative to oil. In terms of questions regarding future demand, there remains a clear expectation that oil will retain its dominant position in the global energy mix for the foreseeable future. Our own reference case scenario puts average annual oil demand growth at 1.6% to 2025. What this figure represents becomes distinctively more challenging when talk turns to the investment it will take to meet this continued demand. The expected range of investment is somewhere between US\$230 billion and US\$470 billion: a huge sum for any country's economy, especially OPEC Member States, all of which are at various stages of development. It should also be remembered that in the oil industry, investment requirements are not only very large, but subject to long lead-times and pay-back periods. The issue of future demand and investment is a huge challenge for the Organization going forward.

In terms of its impact on the environment, we must examine the issue on two levels – local pollution and climate change. With regard to local pollution, the industry has a long tradition of working to lessen the ►

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“...the world will continue to rely on oil for its energy needs, and OPEC will have the responsibility of providing most of that oil.”

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Mr El-Badri (left) made a courtesy call on OFID shortly after taking up his new position.

◀ impact of the production and use of oil on the environment. We have been actively involved in UN-sponsored negotiations on climate change, and OPEC is a proponent of carbon capture and storage as well as the *Clean Development Mechanism*.

Finally, with regard to the burgeoning support for new energy source development, it is simply too early to tell what technologies might have the chance to become a significant source of commercial energy. These alternative fuels will take a long time to develop and are likely to come with their own drawbacks. Bio fuels, for example, would inevitably reduce the amount of arable land available for growing essential food crops. So, the world will continue to rely on oil for its energy needs, and OPEC will have the responsibility of providing most of that oil.

**NL:** *Apart from OPEC's constant efforts at taking measures to help stabilize the global oil market and ensure security of supply, what sort of actions would you like to see among Member Countries in terms of exchange of technical expertise in the oil industry and other areas of their economic development?*

**SG:** OPEC Member Countries have been collaborating and exchanging technical information since the Organization was founded in 1960. Most recently this has led to the development of Annual Meetings of Officials of Petroleum Research Institutions in OPEC Member States, the latest of which took place in Venezuela at the end of 2006. The meetings provide a

platform to aid Member Countries develop common and joint approaches to research and development opportunities. In fact, these meetings have their origin in the Solemn Declaration of the 2nd OPEC Summit. In the Declaration, our Heads of State and Government expressed their desire to establish links between Member Countries' research institutions. Whilst we realize that this is an evolutionary process that has room for improvement, this collaboration is certainly benefiting both individual Member Countries and the Organization as a whole.

Additionally, there have been preliminary discussions about establishing an 'OPEC University,' whose goal would be to oversee research and development of new technologies for the oil industry. Let me add, however, that these are in addition to the continuous and on-going collaboration at bilateral level between Member Countries. So, at every point in time, there is exchange of expertise between and among Member Countries.

**NL:** *Finally, turning to OFID which was established 30 years ago, what in your view has been its greatest achievement so far, and what more needs to be done?*

**SG:** Since its formation 30 years ago, OFID as an independent entity has made great strides. It played a significant role, for example, in the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), channelling US\$861 million in contributions from OPEC Member Countries towards the Fund's initial capital and first replenishment. Perhaps, OFID's most impressive achievement, however, is its total approved commitments which currently stand at over US\$8 billion. This is a remarkable sum, especially when one considers that OPEC Member Countries' average per capita Gross Domestic Product stands at roughly US\$2,000. This amount is one-seventeenth of that of the US and one-thirteenth of the average of the EU states. In fact, relative to their per capita income, OPEC Member Countries have done substantially more to alleviate poverty in developing countries than the richer nations of the world. Saudi Arabia, for example, has consistently earmarked about four percent of its annual budget for the purpose of aid, which it provides through bilateral and multilateral channels. Clearly, OFID's body of work to date has been impressive, but there is certainly plenty left to do. We look forward to the next 30 years and beyond. ■

## OFID co-sponsors inaugural Diplomatic Arab Women's Forum in Vienna

The Vienna-based Diplomatic Arab Women's (DAW) Forum held its first symposium late March under the auspices of HRH Princess Loulwa Al-Faisal Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia. Entitled "A Glimpse at Women in the Arab World: Achievements and Aspirations," the event was sponsored by HRH Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, with additional support from the State of Kuwait and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).

The symposium's opening address was delivered by respected Saudi biologist and DAW Forum President, Dr. May Al-Jasser, who read a statement on behalf of Princess Loulwa. In her message to delegates, Princess Loulwa noted that women around the world were facing "daunting challenges" in different professions. Arab women, she stated, had gained tremendously from a process of "intensified self-examination" and had consequently found themselves "in new roles of leadership in all walks of life."

Also contributing to the opening session was Dr. Ursula Plassnik, Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs. Dr. Plassnik spoke of the importance of "cooperation and collaboration" and of "moving beyond stereotypes." She stressed the "transforming power of networking," describing it as "a tool that can increase awareness among women and men and ultimately improve women's involvement and participation in all spheres of social, economic and political life."



Dr. Ursula Plassnik, Austrian Foreign Minister for European and International Affairs (left) with Dr. May Al-Jasser, DAW Forum President.

The discussion sessions that followed covered a wide range of topics relating to women in the Arab world, including science, the arts, literature, sociology and education. Arab women from varying backgrounds spoke about their experiences and the different roles they play in their societies.

Dr. Nada Al-Mutawa, a professor of political science at the Arab Open University, discoursed on the participation of Kuwaiti women in politics and international relations and described the significance of this experience in bringing about change. Dr. Rafia Obaid Ghubash, President of the Arabian Gulf University in the Bahraini capital Manama, presented her work on epidemiological psychiatry focusing on women in the Arabian Gulf region. "Sixty percent of Arab society is illiterate and that's a problem, and that's why women are behind," she said.

The symposium also included a presentation by Lebanese artist Nidal Al-Achkar, who played a leading role in launching the

theatrical movement in the Arab world. "The theatre is the best mirror of life," she said. Al-Achkar founded the cultural establishment Masrah Al-Madina in 1994, which quickly became the center for all things cultural and artistic in Beirut. "The theatre is a platform of free speech," she said. "It creates a space for free expression."

PHOTO: D. GOLPASHIN/OPEC

Alia Arasoughly, a filmmaker and sociologist of culture and cinema and director of *Shashat*, a non-governmental cinema organization in Palestine, showed a film she directed in 2006 titled "After the Last Sky," about three women - two Israelis and a Palestinian - who signed a peace agreement among themselves. "Cinema is a non-threatening tool and a very dynamic medium," she said. "It can confront and transform assumptions and images."

Ms. Iman Al-Shammary, an Officer in OFID's Grants Unit presented work on her experiences at OFID. She highlighted projects that focus on improving women's status globally and spoke about the work of Arab women in the international arena.

According to Dr. Al-Jasser, the DAW Forum was formed to help promote "a more realistic image of women in the Arab world and how they are living up to the multiple responsibilities borne by them." Al-Jasser concluded that the Forum would continue its efforts to bring together groups of women from across the Arab region to "shed light on different aspect of Arab women's lives and to move beyond stereotypes predominant in the media today." ■

# OFID active in UNCSD-15 in New York

## Al-Herbish sharpens focus on energy for the poor

The 15th United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) held April 30 – May 11, 2007, continuing its focus on the key areas of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change. The Conference was attended by the heads of concerned UN agencies, international bodies and NGOs, while numerous countries were represented at ministerial level. With a keen interest in the tabled issues, OFID was an active participant in the event.

PHOTO: UNCSD



The High-Level Segment of the Conference commenced on May 9, with opening remarks by the Chairman of UNCSD-15, HE Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry of Qatar, who said: “We have a historical responsibility to current and future generations to make progress here, and we have a historical opportunity to do so.”

In his own statement to the Conference, UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon stressed the importance of UNCSD-15 to Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Programme of Action and reiterated his support to the CSD’s efforts to advance progress across the sustainable development agenda. Climate change, he said,

was at the top of that agenda, and three special envoys had been appointed to explore prospects for advancing a multilateral solution within the context of the UN Framework Convention process.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called for “a major push to generate new technologies for combating climate change, to make existing renewable technologies economically viable, and to promote a rapid diffusion of technology,” which he said, “can create jobs, boost industrial development, reduce air pollution and help to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.”

The opening session at the High-Level Segment concluded with a statement from Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former Norwegian Prime Minister who previously served as Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Mrs. Brundtland was responsible for developing the broad political concept of sustainable development as was first published in April 1987 in a report entitled *Our Common Future* also widely referred to as the *Brundtland Commission*.

In her address, Mrs. Brundtland shared the learning experience which established the International Commission and spoke of the many challenges facing the international community, including its responsibility to try to eliminate the threats presented by climate change. She stated boldly that “the time for diagnosis is over. The time to act is now.”

The Ministerial Roundtable Discussions that followed the opening session were held under the title “Turning Commitments into Action: Working together in partnership” and focused on pollution, climate

change, and energy for sustainable and industrial development. The discussions examined measures to speed up the implementation process and mobilize action to overcome obstacles and constraints in implementing Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

At the Roundtable on Energy and Sustainable Development, OFID Director-General, Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish presented a statement covering the intertwined issues of energy poverty, economic growth and social development, all key ingredients in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Describing energy as central to developmental progress, Mr. Al-Herbish said there was no “one-size-fits-all model” to satisfy the poor’s basic energy needs. The energy mix for the poor needed to rely on diversified fossil fuels, as well as renewables, he argued. Renewables could only cover a limited share of the energy mix for the poor, and their increased use could only be achieved with “substantial financial and technical assistance from industrialized countries.”

In his address, Mr. Al-Herbish noted that more than two billion people, mainly in rural Africa, Asia and Latin America, lacked access to modern energy services. According to the World Health Organization, he said, more than 1.5 million people died every year from inhaling biomass smoke from firewood, dung and plant residue. Mr. Al-Herbish reiterated: “It is necessary to ensure continuous access by the poor to affordable modern energy services. This could be achieved through a variety of technical and financial assistance programs that require appropriate and balanced energy policies.”

The roundtable discussions concluded that the serious effects of climate change were mainly the result of past industrial development activities and although harming the global population, the extreme affects were particular to the poor due to their geographical location and increased vulnerability. Since environmental protection is a global issue, industrialized nations in particular should continue implementing sustainable solutions such as the development of advanced fossil fuel

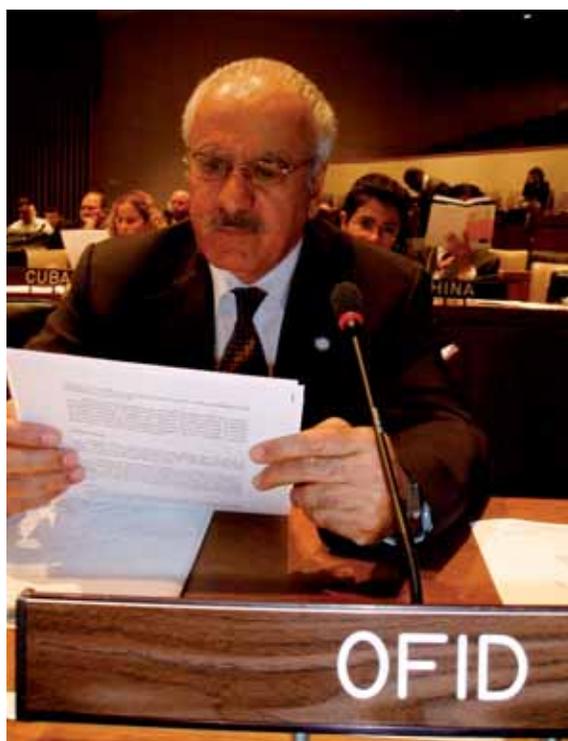


PHOTO: UNCSO

Mr. Al-Herbish at the Opening Session of the 15th United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

and renewable energy technologies. There was a large focus on increased financial resources for the intensification of technological research and development, as well as emphasis on the crucial role the private sector has to play through the “Business Action for Energy” initiative.

Parallel to participation in the Conference, Mr. Al-Herbish held side meetings with various high-level UN personalities such as Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary General, HE Munir Akram, Chairman of the Group of 77, and HE Sheikh Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the 61<sup>st</sup> UN General Assembly.

Throughout the two-week Conference period, OFID held an interactive exhibit, showcasing its activities and commitment toward the MDGs. In addition, a reception was organized for OFID Member Country Ambassadors and Representatives of Member Country Permanent Missions to the UN, at which OFID presented its goals, missions, and endeavors at length. ■

# What the OFID Scholarship means to me

by Leah Jean Manuzon

Earlier this year, Ms. Leah Jean Manuzon was granted OFID's first-ever Scholarship Award to pursue her Master's degree in Public Administration at the University of Southern California, USA. OFID introduced its annual Scholarship as a manifestation of its support to human capacity building in the developing countries. The initiative seeks to prepare young men and women to take on the mantle of leadership in their local communities. Before leaving Manila to begin her two-year graduate program, Ms. Manuzon described her aspirations and ambitions.



Ms. Leah Jean Manuzon,  
OFID's first scholarship winner.

OFID's aim to help students like me in achieving our educational endeavors is a very noble one. The scholarship will provide me with an opportunity to grow as an individual. It will help enhance my knowledge and overall perspective as a government employee, a researcher, a student and a Filipino.

I will be taking Public Administration as my graduate program of study; the same program I took for my undergraduate degree at the University of the Philippines. Professionally, the scholarship will allow me to develop further as a government officer through the education and training that I will receive from the School of Policy, Planning and Development (SPPD) at the University of Southern California. The SPPD offers an excellent graduate program in Public Administration. The school is known to educate and train future leaders who can create multi-disciplinary approaches to governing, managing and building contemporary urban communities – issues that are considered complex and challenging in the area of public administration. This can be an integral part of my education and training as I pursue a career in the government.

As a researcher and graduate student, the scholarship will allow me to engage in an active environment that would enable me to have a global perspective in conducting research. The research environment at SPPD encourages its students to produce high-quality research in the field of public administration. As a graduate student of SPPD, I hope to make a significant contribution in this field, as I get the chance to work and collaborate with renowned SPPD faculty.

On a personal note, the scholarship will enable me to live and study in a country that has established historic ties with the Philippines. To be exposed to the American culture will be interesting, since it will help me appreciate and understand the country, its history and its people. Also, I will get the chance to share the Filipino culture and traditions as well.

The scholarship will help me meet the financial demands of pursuing graduate studies at a foreign university. The cost of graduate education is a challenge to students. In most cases, they find themselves burdened by a huge debt after graduating. Worrying about the finances can be very stressful to students. Indeed, the OFID scholarship award will serve as a great relief to me financially. After I earn my Master's degree in Public Administration, I look forward to giving back to the Filipino community. OFID has been providing assistance to the Philippines, among other nations, in the areas of agriculture, energy, transportation and education. In keeping with OFID's endeavors, I hope to make available the knowledge that I will gain under the scholarship.



PHOTO: L. CECURIA

I thank OFID for giving students an opportunity to pursue advanced education. I am certain that this scholarship will serve its purpose towards my goal of obtaining a Master's degree, and consequently in helping the Filipino community.

As a student, my long-term goal is to pursue a PhD degree. Aside from being a government officer, I also hope to explore a career in academe. In teaching, I will be able to utilize more channels to share my knowledge and train potential leaders.

I hope that OFID will continue with its aim of contributing to the social and economic advancement of developing countries. Overseas development assistance plays an important role in the development of a country. In the Philippines alone, assistance from the different funding institutions has significantly contributed to the improvement of its economic and social service facilities.

Furthermore, I hope that OFID will continue its scholarship program to assure young students, particularly those coming from developing countries, of the opportunity to pursue graduate studies in a world-class university. Opportunities like this scholarship are needed to prepare them for their future role in national development.

Indeed, it is a privilege to be granted the OFID scholarship. It is encouraging to know that my hard work gets to be recognized, especially by a very respectable institution. I hope that my experience will inspire other students as well to pursue their aspirations and noble endeavors. ■

## Graduate students of the German University of Hamburg visit OFID

Among several groups and individuals visiting OFID in May were students of the University of Hamburg Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH). The students came for a briefing on the work of the institution. They were received by staff of OFID's Department of Information, who welcomed their interest in development and the issues involved.

In a presentation, the students were informed that OFID was working in partnership and cooperation with numerous international organizations and various countries to accomplish poverty alleviation and, possibly, eradication. They were told that research and studies were of priority importance to OFID and that a considerable number of grants had gone toward funding research efforts across the world to help improve conditions in developing countries. The students were encouraged to consider research on OFID and on development cooperation *per se*.

The students were informed that OFID operations today emphasized:

- smaller-scale projects to benefit mainly the social sectors;
- co-financing with others to implement larger-scale projects;
- private sector endeavors to promote private enterprise and initiatives; trade financing; and
- poverty eradication as well as social misery alleviation.

The students also learned that OFID offers grant assistance to, among other endeavors, battle HIV/AIDS, assist Palestinians and deliver emergency relief where needed.

The University of Hamburg is one of Germany's oldest and most accomplished institutions of higher learning. It has a student body drawn from across the world, and its Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy does critical work aimed at enhancing global peace and security. OFID was one of a number of institutions the students visited in Austria, to broaden their knowledge on practical work in peace and security issues.

# OFID welcomes ICARDA Director-General

## Presents work program of institution

PHOTO: B. BABAJIDE



Mr. Suleiman Al-Herbish (left) and Dr. Mahmoud Solh, Director-General of ICARDA.

OFID recently welcomed the Director-General of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Dr. Mahmoud Solh, who paid a courtesy call aimed at bolstering working relations between the two institutions. During the visit, February 12, discussions revolved around successful accomplishments by ICARDA, working on agricultural research projects supported by OFID's grants over the last 27 years. Also discussed was the specific impact of research on farmers' income as well as the role of National Agricultural Research Systems in ICARDA beneficiary countries.

Dr. Solh gave a power-point presentation on the priority programs of ICARDA and the funding required to continue with these programs. OFID made its own presentation, focusing on its 30 years of partnership and cooperation with developing countries and with development finance institutions.

ICARDA was established in 1977 as one of 15 centers sited across the world and supported by the CGIAR, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. ICARDA's main research station and offices are located in Aleppo, Syria; and the organiza-

tion functions through a network of partners comprising national, regional and international institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations and ministries in developing countries. They also cooperate with advanced research institutes in the industrialized countries.

Dr. Solh related that, at its Headquarters in Aleppo, ICARDA has a 948-hectare farm, offices and laboratories. Also, there are extensive greenhouse and other controlled environment facilities at the station, together with specialized laboratories, a modern library and a computer and biometric services unit. ICARDA's mission is "to improve the welfare of poor people and alleviate poverty through agricultural research and training in the dry areas of the developing world, by increasing the production, productivity and nutritional quality of food, while preserving and enhancing the natural resource base."

At present, ICARDA is focusing on the improvement of barley, lentil, and *faba* beans. It is also targeting "on-farm management of water, improvement of nutrition and productivity of small ruminants (sheep and goats)," as well as the rehabilitation and management of rangelands. In Central and West Asia and North Africa, ICARDA is working to improve production of *durum* and bread wheat, chickpea, pasture, forage legumes and farming systems. The institution is also concerned with the protection and enhancement of the natural resource base of water, land and biodiversity.

OFID Director-General, Suleiman Al-Herbish, paid tribute to the work of ICARDA and said he was pleased at the state of cooperation and partnership between ICARDA and OFID. Mr. Al-Herbish said he looked forward to further collaboration in pursuit of advancement and progress in the developing countries. Thus far, OFID has extended a total of 25 grants to ICARDA in the cumulative amount of US\$8.1 million. ■

# OFID recognized by Crans Montana Forum

## Al-Herbish accepts prestigious Prix de la Fondation

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has had its achievements honored by the influential Crans Montana Forum. Director-General, Suleiman J. Al-Herbish, accepted the prestigious *Prix de la Fondation* “on behalf of OFID and its partners in 119 countries” at a special ceremony on June 29, during the Forum’s 18<sup>th</sup> Yearly Session in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The Prize is awarded for special contributions to society.

Conferring the Award, Mr. Jean-Paul Carteron, Chairman and Founder of the Crans Montana Forum, described OFID as an organization with “a strong sense of social responsibility.” Although “rarely seen in the spotlight,” OFID had made a valuable contribution over the years toward helping people in the poorest regions of the world “lead better lives,” he said.

In a brief acceptance speech, Mr. Al-Herbish said that the Award was not just an acknowledgement of OFID’s achievements, but also served as “broader recognition” of the contributions being made by all OPEC Member



Mr. Al-Herbish (far left) with fellow *Prix de la Fondation* recipients and *Monaco Ambassadors Award* winners.

Countries toward “world peace, security, stability and development.” These efforts, he noted, were often misunderstood or overlooked.

During the Forum’s Plenary on June 30, the Director-General delivered the keynote address at a Panel Session on the theme *Industrial development and poverty eradication with particular emphasis on Africa*. The Session was chaired by Mr. Daniel Warner, Deputy Director of the International Graduate Studies Institute in Geneva, with a special contribution by HE Mr. Ephraïm Inoni, Prime Minister of Cameroon.

Mr. Al-Herbish noted that a “one-size-fits-all solution” could not be applied to African countries because of the diversity of their economies. He affirmed, however, that certain general ideas could be considered key to helping the continent achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The first of these involved fostering both North-South and South-South cooperation wherever relevant and appropriate. The second was the creation of a suitable

environment for attracting Foreign Direct Investment, a goal that would only be reached with a concurrent “massive boost in public sector investments.” The third strategy Mr. Al-Herbish identified was development of the agriculture sector, which forms the “backbone of many African economies.” In particular, he said, it was crucial to encourage the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises for the processing of primary agricultural products. Finally, the Director-General emphasized the need to focus on an industrial development strategy tailored to Africa’s needs.

After the Session, Mr. Al-Herbish chaired a lunch for 20 VIP guests of the Forum, where many issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Created in 1986, the Crans Montana Forum is an international organization that works for the promotion of international cooperation and contributes to global growth while ensuring a high level of stability, equity and security. Its aims include the fostering of best practices and the encouragement of global dialogue. ■



## OFID DIARY

January - June 2007

## JANUARY 17

**Loan agreement signed**

ARMENIA. US\$10 million.  
Productive Infrastructure  
Rehabilitation.

## JANUARY 31

**Private Sector financing agreement signed**

SUDAN. US\$25 million.  
White Nile Sugar.

## FEBRUARY 8

**Emergency grant extended**

INDONESIA. US\$200,000.  
The grant helped support emergency operations for victims of severe flooding in the Indonesian capital Jakarta. OFID's contribution, which was channeled through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), helped procure urgently needed items and supported emergency operations undertaken by the Indonesian Red Cross Society.

## MARCH 13

**118th Session of the Governing Board held in Vienna****Project loans approved**

BURKINA FASO. US\$7 million.  
Samendeni Valley Integrated  
Development.

BURUNDI. US\$10 million.  
Transitional Program of Post-  
Conflict Reconstruction.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE. US\$5 million.  
Jacqueville Bridge.

THE GAMBIA. US\$4 million.  
Third Public Works.

LESOTHO. US\$6 million.  
Metolong Water Supply.

MADAGASCAR. US\$2.8 million.  
Saint Marie Island Infrastructure  
Rehabilitation.

MOROCCO. US\$25 million.  
Fez-Oujda Highway Reconstruction.

PARAGUAY. US\$26 million.  
Concepcion-Puerto Vallemi Road.

YEMEN. US\$11 million.  
Third Public Works.

**Technical assistance grants approved**

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INSECT PHYSIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY (ICIPE). US\$600,000. Sericulture and Apiculture Technologies for Income Generating Activities in the NENA Region. The grant will help boost rural incomes in Egypt, the Sudan and Yemen by teaching communities beekeeping and silk-worm raising technologies.

PAKISTAN. US\$400,000.  
The Social Development Project in Sindh, Pakistan. The grant will support a social development project that aims at reducing infant/child morbidity and mortality from diarrheal disease and boosting literacy by establishing adult literacy centers.

**Grants approved under HIV/AIDS Special Grant Account**

CLINTON FOUNDATION. US\$4 million. OFID/Clinton Foundation Joint Response to Adult and Paediatric HIV/AIDS Care in Africa. The grant will co-finance an initiative to boost the availability of adult and paediatric HIV/AIDS medical services in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal and Tanzania. It is anticipated that some 45,000 children and 231,000 adults will be able to receive high-quality care and treatment.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) US\$1.5 million. OFID/UNHCR Joint HIV/AIDS Program for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. The primary goal of the joint initiative is to insure that vulnerable groups receive a full spectrum of HIV/AIDS support services.

**Grants approved under the Special Grant Account for Palestine**

PALESTINE. US\$1.5 million.  
The Palestinian Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007. The grant will sponsor a population census that will be carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, along with assistance from the United Nations Populations Fund. The census will cover the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, and will help provide the Palestinian Authority and local government with the data needed for development planning, policy formulation and administration.

PALESTINE. US\$3 million.  
Strengthening the Health System in Palestine. The grant will be distributed among 15 health centers, clinics, hospitals and rehabilitation centers to enable them to continue carrying out their urgently-needed services to the Palestinian community. Proceeds will help finance activities ranging from procuring medical equipment and supplies, to expanding facilities and providing inexpensive/free healthcare to low-income families.

**Research grants approved**

AUSTRIAN DOCTORS FOR THE DISABLED (DfD). US\$75,000. This grant supports an aim to improve the quality of life among the disabled in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where rehabilitation and other medical assistance is scarce. A mobile medical team will provide physical therapy, psychological counseling and other services to some 100 beneficiaries. Also envisaged is a vocational training scheme and the provision of orthopedic devices. DfD comprises a group of orthopaedic physicians who offer free medical treatment and other services to needy European countries.

**ARAB URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (AUDI).**

US\$100,000. AUDI will use this grant to introduce City Development Strategies (CDS) to its members throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region,

PHOTOS (L+C): B. BABAJIDE

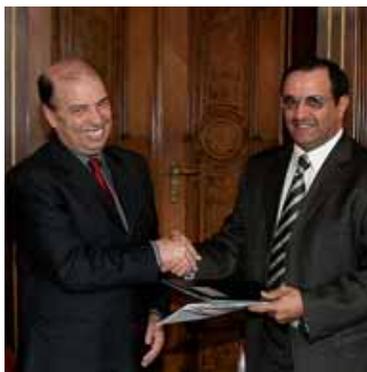


PHOTO: EBRD

Left: HE Dr. Omar Zniber, Ambassador of Morocco (right) and HE Jamal Nasser Lootah, OFID Governing Board Chairman conclude the loan agreement. Center (left to right): H.E. Brian G. Bowler, Ambassador of Malawi, Mr. Suleiman J. Al-Herbish and H.E. Jamal Nasser Lootah after the signing ceremony. Right: OFID delegation with representatives of EBRD following signature of the Cooperation Agreement.

particularly in the least developed cities. CDS is a modern concept tool introduced by the World Bank for urban development and governance, used to help cities reduce poverty by creating sustainable and healthy urban environments. Proceeds will be used to support the setup and management of CDS facilities in the beneficiary cities, which will include establishing an information network and holding three regional CDS workshops.

**MARCH 21**

**Loan agreements signed**

**BANGLADESH.** US\$9 million. Secondary Towns Water Supply and Sanitation.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.** US\$5.95 million. Rural Enterprise Enhancement.

**CUBA.** US\$10 million. Havana Electricity Rehabilitation (Phase III).

**MALAWI.** US\$10 million. Thyolo-Makwasa-Bangula Road.

**MALAWI.** US\$10.7 million. Nkhata Bay District Hospital.

**MOROCCO.** US\$25 million. Rural Roads Rehabilitation and Construction.

**RWANDA.** US\$4 million. Butare Water Supply.

**SEYCHELLES.** US\$5.65 million. Health Sector Facilities Upgrading.

**SEYCHELLES.** US\$10 million. Oil Product Imports.

**Private Sector financing agreements signed**

**AZERBAIJAN.** US\$5 million. Micro Finance Bank Azerbaijan.

**PARAGUAY.** US\$4 million. *Vision de Finanzas*.

**APRIL 19**

**Courtesy visit by CEO of NEPAD Secretariat**

OFID Director-General welcomed Professor Firmino Mucavele, Chief Executive Officer of NEPAD (The New Partnership for Africa's Development). The two discussed matters of mutual interest in the area of development.

**MAY 16**

**OFID signs Cooperation Agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**

The cooperation agreement signed with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will enable OFID to share risk in EBRD's Trade Facilitation Program, and will initially benefit five banks in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

**JUNE 5**

**Emergency grant approved**

**LEBANON.** US\$150,000. This grant helped procure essential relief supplies for victims of a crisis that occurred at the Palestinian *Nahr Albarad* refugee camp in Tripoli, where clashes erupted between the Lebanese armed forces and a group within the camp. As a result, around 25,000 people fled the compound and sought refuge at the already-overtaxed *Beddawi* camp. Proceeds from the grant were used to purchase urgently-needed items such as hygiene kits, bedding, medical supplies and equipment,

and was channeled through the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization.

**JUNE 6**

**SOS Children's villages receive OFID Annual Award 2007**

OFID announced the presentation of its Annual Award for Development 2007 to SOS Children's Villages, a non-governmental organization based in Innsbruck, Austria. The Award is given to institutions or individuals whose work contributes to sustainable development. This year's US\$100,000 Award is in recognition of SOS Children's Villages' work with orphaned, abandoned and destitute children worldwide for over 58 years.

**JUNE 13**

**OFID Ministerial Council holds 28th Session in Carinthia**

In addition to replenishing the Special Grant Accounts for Palestine and HIV/AIDS operations, reviewing the Reports on the Implementation of OFID's Corporate Plan and adopting the Annual Report for 2006, the Ministerial Council, the institution's highest policy-making body, presented the Second Annual Award for Sustainable Development to SOS Children's Villages.

**Research grants approved**

**GLOBAL WARMING: AN UNSTOPPABLE 1,500-YEAR CYCLE.** US\$50,000. This grant will be used to procure 3,000

copies of a book examining the controversy surrounding the global warming debate. Written by climate physicist S. Fred Singer and Dennis T. Avery, a Hudson Institute Senior Fellow and Economist, the book postulates that global warming and climate change are related to natural 1,500 year warming cycles as opposed to human-made causes. The books will be distributed among educational and scientific institutions in developing countries and development organizations.

**ISLAMIC RELIEF (IR).**

US\$100,000. Over the past five years IR has been assisting 15 deprived villages in the Chikwawa and Nsanje districts in Malawi by providing food supplies, seeds and agricultural tools. Other aims include improving the population's access to potable water. The grant will help purchase a drilling rig to install 25 boreholes with pumps in the two districts, benefiting some 7,500 families. The communities themselves will help provide labor and will receive training in the maintenance and management of the new facilities.

**ROME CHAPTER OF THE G-77.**

US\$50,000. This grant helped finance a *Capacity Building Program to Support South-South Cooperation*, which will entail the preparation of a briefing on topics of interest to the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, ranging from governance issues relating to agriculture and environmental reform, to financial and budgetary matters and technical matters relevant to the organization. Researchers from developing countries will be encouraged to participate. ▶

JUNE 14

## 119th Session of the Governing Board approves some US\$157 million in fresh financing for development

### Project loans approved

**BANGLADESH.** US\$30 million. Balancing, Modernization, Rehabilitation and Expansion of Eastern Refinery.

**BENIN.** US\$8 million. Cotonou East Coast Protection.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.** US\$12 million. Railways Reconstruction (Sarajevo-Bradina, Section I).

**THE GAMBIA.** US\$4 million. Highway and Streets Lighting.

**GHANA.** US\$8.5 million. Primary Schools.

**HONDURAS** US\$5 million. Complementary Works for the CA-5 North Road.

**JAMAICA.** US\$20 million. Rural Roads Rehabilitation, Phase II.

**KENYA.** US\$6 million. Bura Irrigation Rehabilitation.

**LEBANON.** US\$10 million. Northern Coastal Road, Phase II.

**MYANMAR.** US\$20 million. Thonze and Kabaung Irrigation.

**THE SUDAN.** US\$20.6 million. Rahad Scheme Rehabilitation.

**VIETNAM.** US\$7 million. Lai Chau Province Irrigation Development.

**ZAMBIA.** US\$6 million. Copperbelt Feeder Road Rehabilitation.

### Technical assistance grants approved

**CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR).** US\$1.2 million. The grant will help finance agricultural research at eight research centers sponsored by the CGIAR, which aims at increasing food production in developing



H.E. Jamal N. Lootah addressing the 119th Session of the Governing Board. The Board approved 13 new loans and five grants.

countries through research, training and technical assistance to national and regional programs.

### INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS SPECIAL FUND FOR THE DISABLED.

US\$500,000. Ho Chi Minh City Rehabilitation Center for the Disabled, Vietnam. The grant will support the provision of new-technology prosthetics and physical therapy services to those injured by landmines, particularly in underserved, disadvantaged communities.

### INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA).

US\$300,000. Provision of Cancer Treatment Equipment for the University Hospital in Uruguay. This grant will support an IAEA scheme to purchase radiotherapy equipment for the University Teaching Hospital in Montevideo, Uruguay. This project will not only enlarge treatment coverage for cancer patients, but will also strengthen capacities of medical students, oncologists and other specialized personnel.

### Grant approved under HIV/AIDS Special Grant Account

#### WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

(WFP). US\$1.45 million. WFP/OFID – Universal access to HIV treatment, prevention and care in Latin America and the Caribbean. The grant will co-finance a joint OFID/WFP Initiative to enhance

the availability of HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services in Latin America and the Caribbean. The project will help strengthen the capacity of national governments and other relevant actors to integrate nutrition-related interventions within national HIV/AIDS programs.

### Grant approved under the Special Grant Account for Palestine

**PALESTINE.** US\$2.5 million. Provision of School Text Books. The grant will help finance a project aimed at improving the quality of education in Palestine by introducing new-curriculum textbooks. Some 9.4 million books for grades 1-12 will be printed and distributed among Palestinian schools, benefiting at least one million pupils.

JUNE 26

### Emergency grant approved

#### DISPLACED IRAQIS IN SYRIA AND JORDAN.

US\$1 million. Due to the extremely volatile situation in Iraq, an estimated two million Iraqis are seeking safe accommodation abroad, particularly in Syria and Jordan. Due to administrative and legal limitations in these countries, access to basic healthcare and other services are only available to those holding legal residency status. The International Federation of



PHOTOS: B. BABA/IDE

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in coordination with the Jordan and Syrian Arab Red Crescent Societies, established a joint plan of action for humanitarian intervention. OFID grant proceeds were channeled through the IFRC.

### OFID hosts 61st Coordination Group Meeting

The Coordination Group of Arab National and Regional Development Institutions held its sixty-first meeting at OFID's headquarters. The Coordination Group is a collective body of three bilateral and five multilateral agencies set up to provide greater cohesion and effectiveness in the delivery of Arab Aid. Other attendees included senior representatives of the Bank for Economic and Social Development of Venezuela (BANDES) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The three-day meeting covered a broad agenda, with particular attention to: enhancing cooperation and coordination during the implementation of projects and on new activities; group interventions in Palestine; trade financing; and the establishment of an Arab World development portal. Together, the Group's members have provided a cumulative US\$75 billion in development assistance.

## Meetings attended by OFID

January - June 2007

**JANUARY 8-11**

**CAIRO, EGYPT**  
Third Regional Annual Coordination Meeting of the Project "Community based Optimization of the Management of Scarce Water Resources in Agriculture in West Asia and North Africa".

**FEBRUARY 3-5**

**KUWAIT, KUWAIT**  
High Level Meeting of the Heads of the Coordination Group of Arab/OPEC/Islamic Development Institutions and International Donors and Development Institutions.

**FEBRUARY 13-15**

**WASHINGTON, DC, USA.**  
Liberia Partners' Forum at the World Bank.

**FEBRUARY 13-15**

**ROME, ITALY**  
Thirtieth Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

**FEBRUARY 26-27**

**ROME, ITALY**  
Forty-first Meeting of the Chairmen/Coordinators of the G-77 Chapters.

**FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 3**

**NEW YORK, U.S.A.**  
Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

**MARCH 5-9**

**CEBU, THE PHILIPPINES**  
The Philippines Development Forum 2007

**MARCH 8-9**

**AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**  
Development Finance Institutions Conference on Corporate Governance.

**MARCH 15**

**VIENNA, AUSTRIA**  
144<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the OPEC Conference of Ministers.

**MARCH 16-20**

**GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA**  
Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank Group.

**MARCH 17-24**

**BAMAKO, MALI**  
Kidal Forum for the Development of the Northern Region.

**MARCH 20-22**

**MANAMA, BAHRAIN**  
International Public Relations Association – Gulf Chapter Conference.

**APRIL 3**

**REGENSDORF, SWITZERLAND**  
SAP Conference.

**APRIL 3-5**

**CAIRO, EGYPT**  
Annual Meeting of the Egyptian Housing Finance Company

**APRIL 5-6**

**PARIS, FRANCE**  
Eighth International Oil Summit.

**APRIL 11**

**BEIRUT, LEBANON**  
Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

**APRIL 12**

**DAMASCUS, SYRIA**  
Byblos Bank Board Meeting.

**APRIL 13-14**

**WASHINGTON, DC, U.S.A.**  
Seventy-fifth Meeting of the Development Committee (Joint Ministerial Committee of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and the IMF on the Transfer of Real Resources to Developing Countries).

**APRIL 16-18**

**WASHINGTON, DC, U.S.A.**  
World Bank Executive Forum on Central Bank Reserves Management.

**APRIL 17-19**

**LONDON, U.K.**  
2007 Human Resource Development Conference

**APRIL 19**

**BERLIN, GERMANY**  
Ministerial Conference under the German Presidency of the EU on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency – Innovative policies and financing instruments for the EU's southern and eastern neighbours.

**APRIL 23-25**

**AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**  
Forty-third Meeting of the Executive Board of the Common Fund for Commodities.

**APRIL 30-MAY 11**

**NEW YORK, U.S.A.**  
Fifteenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

**MAY 4-7**

**KYOTO, JAPAN**  
Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank.

**MAY 14-15**

**LONDON, U.K.**  
Meeting with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

**MAY 16-17**

**SHANGHAI, CHINA**  
Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank.

**MAY 30-31**

**CARACAS, VENEZUELA**  
Caribbean Development Bank Meeting.

**JUNE 6-9**

**PARIS, FRANCE**  
Crédit Agricole Asset Management Forum.

**JUNE 11-14**

**DOHA, QATAR**  
International Donors Conference on Strengthening Food Autonomy in Niger. Staff.

**JUNE 17-18**

**DOHA, QATAR**  
Meeting on Financing Development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

**JUNE 18**

**VIENNA, AUSTRIA**  
Byblos Bank Africa Board of Directors meeting

**JUNE 20-22**

**SANA'A, YEMEN**  
Yemen Consultative Group Meeting.

**JUNE 26**

**BRUSSELS, BELGIUM**  
Development Partners Consultation for Central African Republic.

**JUNE 28 - JULY 1**

**MONTE CARLO, MONACO**  
Crans Montana Forum.

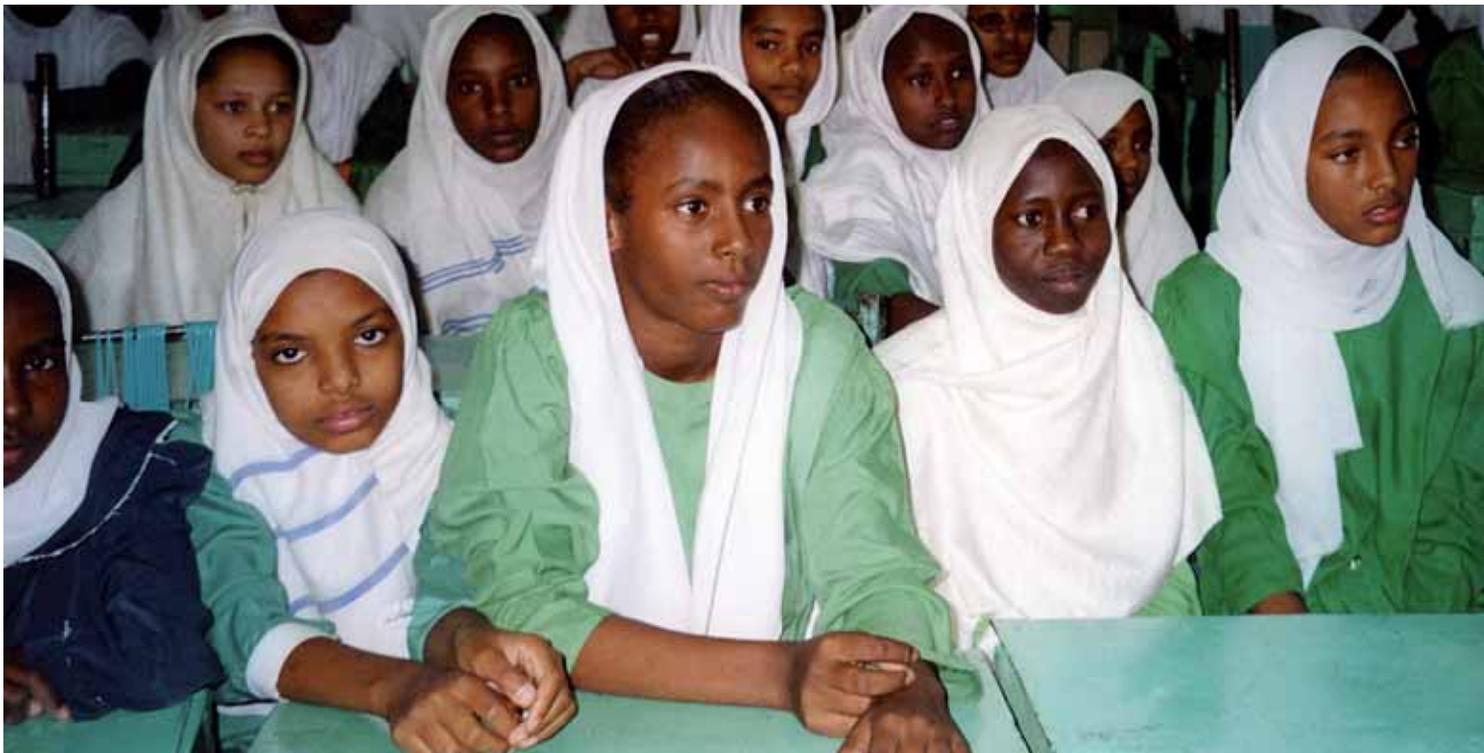


PHOTO: M. LAJOURNER

Eliminating gender disparities at an early age is a first step toward greater female participation in economic and political life.

## Gender mainstreaming as smart economics

The best ways and means of harnessing the potential contribution of women to sustainable economic growth in the developing countries was the focus of a recent conference held in Berlin, Germany. The conference, entitled *Women's Economic Empowerment as Smart Economics*, also addressed how best to raise women's productivity and earnings through the enhancement of their equal participation in social and economic life, as well as decision making.

According to the conference, which was attended by representatives from multilateral and bilateral development cooperation agencies, civil society, the private sector and academia, women are a key factor in economic growth. Yet, observed the participants, economic opportunities remain extremely unequal for men and women.

This is despite the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in September 1995. Also worthy of note is that limited progress has been made toward promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, as embodied in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the June 2000 *Political Declaration* adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 23<sup>rd</sup> special session. Nevertheless, women make up about 70% of the world's poorest people, or those who live on less than one dollar a day, and 60% of the world's working poor. Furthermore, two thirds of the world's illiterate are female, and although women produce up to 80% of all staple foods in the developing countries, they own just one tenth of agricultural land, and only 1% of all land. Similarly, women constitute the majority of the 40 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS worldwide, and about 90% of them live in the developing countries.

However, participants agreed that poverty and inequality can be overcome only if the participation of women in economic life is enhanced and gender equity is promoted. Doing so, the participants emphasized, would be in line with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in the 1948 UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and the 1979 UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW). To achieve such goals, women must get better access to education, land ownership and capital, as well as regular and gainful quality employment, in accordance with core international labor standards. Conversely, lack of progress towards gender mainstreaming will obstruct present and future economic growth and development by passing on poverty, illiteracy, and disease from mother to child, and also by facilitating the further spread of HIV/AIDS.

Conscious of the importance of unleashing the economic potential of women in the developing world, OFID is firmly committed to promoting gender equity, in line with its ongoing efforts to help achieve the MDGs. OFID plays a key role in empowering women and alleviating poverty. This is evidenced by its wide range of global projects and programs aimed at supporting disadvantaged groups and individuals, fostering social change and helping to meet basic needs among the poor.

Women are also at the heart of OFID's community-based programs designed to prevent the spread of HIV and provide clean water and sanitation. Other aims include the expansion of economic opportunities, protecting natural resources, and enhancing access to and improving the quality of basic education.

OFID has invested heavily in future generations by helping to increase school enrollment for girls in order to ensure that gender disparities are reduced at an early stage. Numerous students have benefited from the OFID-sponsored projects in the education sector, which has received 11% of OFID's cumulative public sector funding.

In the health sector, which has received 7% of cumulative public sector commitments, OFID's assistance has contributed toward the prevention of maternal and



PHOTO: BMZ, GERMANY

German Chancellor, Mrs. Angela Merkel (left), welcomes participants to the conference.

pre-natal deaths, especially in rural communities. Thousands of women have been able to enjoy safe deliveries and good newborn care, thereby reducing child mortality as envisaged by the fourth MDG. Similarly, OFID's funding helps provide safe water and sanitation as well as training in hygiene skills. These abilities keep families healthy and reduce women's burden of gathering water and caring for the sick. OFID also helps combat HIV/AIDS (MDG number six) by supporting projects in several areas. These schemes include advocacy and awareness building, strengthening surveillance systems, upgrading prevention capacities and enhancing access to medicine.

Through its Private Sector window, OFID additionally funds numerous micro-finance projects that improve access to credit and sustainable business training, particularly in rural areas. Results from even modest investments in women in the developing countries are showing success. For instance, small loans have helped alleviate poverty by empowering women to start successful businesses. Consequently, women's productivity, incomes and economic status have improved, while many of them have moved into non-agricultural and better paying jobs.

These and related OFID interventions have contributed to gender mainstreaming by reducing gender disparities. The achievements have been in partnership with partner countries and other relevant stakeholders in economic development. ■

# Services sector overtaking agriculture as main source of employment

The services sector - comprising finance, banking, tourism and retail - will soon overtake agriculture as the largest global source of employment. This is according to a recent report by the United Nations Commission for Social Development entitled *Promoting full Employment and Decent Work for All*.

The Report further reveals that the global labor force (people who were either working or looking for work) grew by 400 million to 2.85 billion between 1995 and 2005. In addition, about 84% of the global labor force resides in the developing countries, with Asia and the Pacific accounting for about 60% of total world employment. However, global unemployment rose from 6% to 6.3%, or by 192 million people during the same period. An increasing share of the labour force works under conditions of job insecurity, instability and discrimination. Remarkably also, about half or 1.4 billion of those working do not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the two-dollars-a-day poverty line. Among these, 485 million workers live on less than one dollar a day.

Turning to agriculture, the Report found that although it remains an important source of employment, its share in total global employment is on the decline, falling from 44.5% in 1995 to 40% or 1.1 billion people in 2005. On the other hand, the share of industry in total employment has remained steady over the past decade at 21% or about 600 million people. However, there was a marked decrease in the share of industrial employment in the developing countries. By con-

trast, the services sector in total employment is rapidly growing, from 34.5% in 1995 to 38.9% or 1.1 billion people in 2005.

As a result of the shift from agriculture towards services and industry, the informal sector also grew considerably, accounting for between one half and three quarters of non-agricultural employment in most developing countries. In line with this overall trend, self-employment and home-based work also grew significantly, accounting for about 65% of informal work outside of agriculture in the developing countries. However, many in the services sector and the self-employed are not covered by labour laws. The consequent lack of technical support, training and regulatory oversight, exposes workers to greater health and safety risks, as well as poor working conditions. Other costs to society include the growth of slums, increased congestion and poor health.

Although young people make up only 25% of the working-age population, almost half of the world's unemployed are aged 15-24. As if to compound the problem, youth unemployment rates increased globally from 12.1% to 13.7% between 1995 and 2005. This has affected stability and safety, and in many places juvenile crime has risen.

Another trend discovered by the report is the continued migration of people across borders. For example, in 2000-2005, out-migration from Asia was 1.3 million people, from Latin America and the Caribbean 0.8 million, and from Africa 0.5 million. Net immigration was largest in North America (1.4 million) and Europe (1.1 million).



Rapid development of the informal sector has accompanied the shift away from agriculture toward services and industry.

To address these challenges, certain measures are required. They include active labour market policies, as well as formalization of the informal sector and its incorporation in social protection programs. Undoubtedly, these factors are essential for attainment of the poverty reduction and related UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is in line with the objectives of the *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Program of Action* adopted by world leaders at the conclusion of the 1995 *World Summit for Social Development*. The objectives, it may be recalled, focused on the interrelated goals of promoting poverty eradication, social integration and full employment. Ten years later, at the 2005 *World Summit*, world leaders reiterated their commitment to these goals, resolving to make full and productive employment and decent work for all “a central objective of national and international policies and development strategies.”

The report also stressed that specific efforts should be made to address the marginalization of various segments of the labor force, especially women and the most vulnerable. Doing so, the Report emphasized,

would make the objectives of full employment and decent work for all attainable. This calls for the establishment of incentive structures that promote employment creation by directing investment to sectors that are productive and labor-intensive. The sum total of the efforts would be the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises.

In addition, worldwide political support, including the commitment of key global actors and a strengthening of global institutions will be required to establish an international and national enabling macro-economic environment. Such situation would boost the goal of full employment and decent work for all – an objective that should become central in national and international policies and development strategies. Finally, continuous education and training in basic specialized fields will be needed. These would help create a skilled workforce that is flexible enough to adjust to new technologies and the changes in the business environment that have resulted from trade liberalization and rapid globalization. ■

## Nigeria to build an African Institute of Science and Technology in Abuja

US\$25 million allocated by Federal Government

The Federal Government of Nigeria has allocated US\$25 million to build the first phase of a proposed *African Institute of Science and Technology (AIST)*. Construction of the Institute was scheduled to begin February 20 in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. The institute will be located on a 240-hectare site and is due to open in September, 2007. Research at the institute will cover multiple fields of endeavor, including biological, environmental and mathematical.

The Abuja campus will be one of four primary sites of AIST's "centres for excellence," first proposed in 2005. The other campuses will be located in South Africa, Burkina Faso and Tanzania. AIST is also expected to encompass smaller affiliated centres throughout sub-Saharan Africa. According to various sources, the plans for the Burkina Faso campus are well advanced, with most effort now focused on fundraising. In Tanzania, the government has formed a local committee to assist with local plans.

AIST, also to be known as the *Nelson Mandela Institute*, is a public-private sector partnership aiming to produce more African scientists to help accelerate development on the continent. AIST proposes "to recruit Africa's best students and scholars to address the continent's problems, including public policy, energy, water and the environment through quality teaching and research." To ensure a "world-class academic environment," three external groups will provide governance and scientific direction at the highest levels. The three will be a global board of directors, an international scientific advisory board and a committee of scientists from Africa and its diaspora.

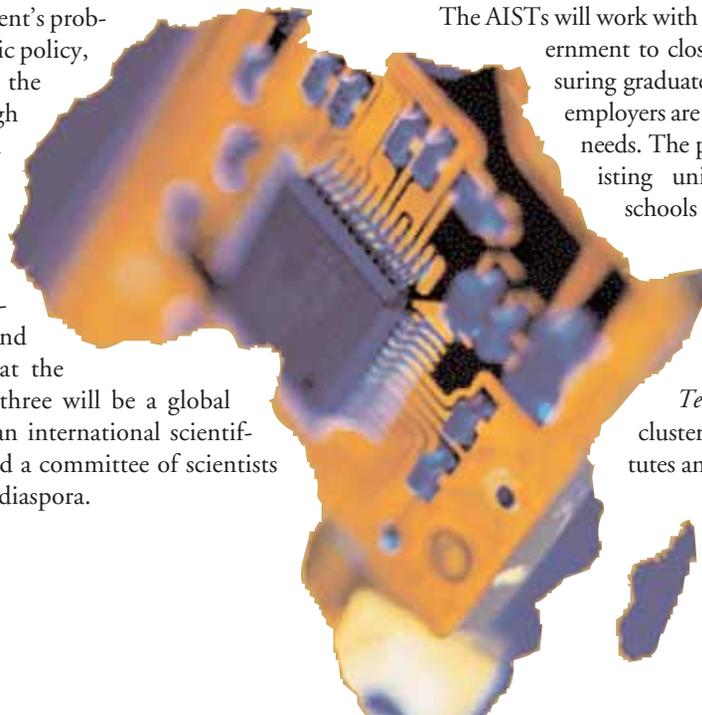


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

AIST plans to recruit Africa's best students to help close the continent's skills' gap.

According to Dr. Wole Soboyejo, a professor at Princeton University and chair of the African Scientific Committee for AIST, the institute also aims at the potential to turn the current African 'brain drain' to 'brain circulation' by encouraging African scientists working abroad to temporarily, or permanently, return to the continent. The African scientists may even lead to a 'brain gain' by attracting new foreign talent. Essentially, the AISTs "will use education, research and innovation to develop an Africa with the potential to transform ideas and human capacity into globally competitive products and better living conditions." Ultimately, it is hoped that the AIST network will be a catalyst for economic and social development, as well as a source of a true African renaissance.

The AISTs will work with industry, business and government to close Africa's skills gap by ensuring graduates have the capabilities that employers are looking for, and that Africa needs. The proposal is to work with existing universities, using affiliated schools for postgraduate training and offering other African universities access to facilities and resources. The Abuja AIST will form part of an *Abuja Technology Village* - a planned cluster of leading research institutes and high-tech companies. ■



## Nigerian educationist appointed World Bank Vice President



PHOTO: WORLD BANK

Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili.

The World Bank announced in March the appointment of Nigeria's erstwhile Education Minister, Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, to the position of Vice President for the Africa Region. She replaces retiring Ghanaian, Gobind Nankani, whose exit triggered a competitive international search.

In its *laudatio*, the Bank referred to “the high degree of competence associated with the Nigerian intellectual and the respect she enjoys within the international community.” The Bank described her as “someone who believes passionately in the Bank’s development work across the world, including Africa.” Also highlighted was “her passion for, and commitment to, Africa” and her “high degree of integrity and optimism.” These, said the Bank, would bring invaluable strengths to the organization. Ezekwesili was “a great reformer and a very courageous woman.”

In her own remarks, Ezekwesili said she was delighted to join the institution. She was speaking to “a town-hall type of meeting of Bank Staff and Management.” She pledged to work with staff to try to turn around the fortunes of Africa. Ezekwesili called on colleagues to be patient with the slow pace of development in Africa. “I did not come here with a script, but I feel that together we can move Africa forward,” she said.

Dr. Ezekwesili began her career as an auditor and management consultant, with special focus on financial planning, SME financing, audit and regulatory compliance. She was a founding member (1994 to 1999) of *Transparency International* (TI) where she held the position of Director, Africa. TI monitors and seeks to battle corruption, worldwide. In 2000, Ezekwesili went on to serve as Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Budget Monitoring. At the national Price Intelligence Unit, she spearheaded institutional reforms through the establishment of due process mechanisms and strategies. Ezekwesili subsequently served as Minister of Solid Minerals Development. She was also Chairperson, Nigeria’s Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

and became Minister of Education in June 2006. Ezekwesili holds a Masters degree in International Law & Diplomacy from the University of Lagos and a Master of Public Policy & Administration from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard. She is also a chartered accountant.

According to the World Bank, Ezekwesili’s “unique blend of first-hand experience, especially in the more challenging and complex areas of energy sector reform and education, positions her as the ideal person to serve as the Vice President for Africa.

The World Bank annually lends some US\$4.7 billion to African countries. The Vice President for Africa is in charge of coordinating lending programs for the continent, specifically for sub-Saharan Africa. (At the Bank, North Africa is grouped with the Middle East.) ■



PHOTO: WORLD BANK

World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC.

## Improving cross-cultural understanding

Bahrain conference explores ways to reverse negative Arab stereotyping

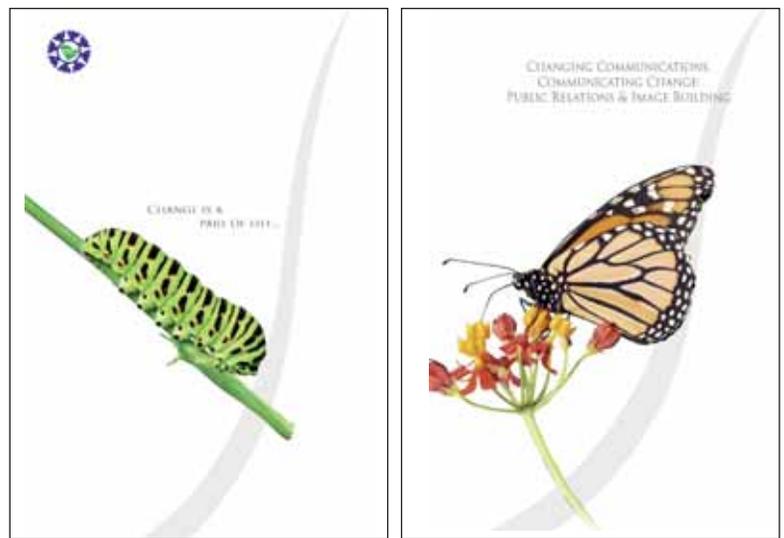
In March, an international conference entitled “Changing Communications, Communicating Change: PR and Image Building” was held under the patronage of the Prime Minister of Bahrain, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman. The conference was organised by the International Public Relations Association Gulf Chapter. More than 400 public relations and international relations practitioners from the Arab world, Europe and the United States attended the three-day event.

The conference opened with a keynote speech by Prince Turki Al Faisal, former Saudi Ambassador to the UK and Ireland, and to the United States, and Chairman of the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh. The seasoned diplomat underscored the difficult task of changing negative stereotypes about Arabs - particularly nationals of Gulf Cooperation Council states - in the US. He argued that the best course of action to accomplish better cross-cultural understanding was through diplomacy.

Bahrain’s Information Minister, Dr Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar commented that the public relations industry in the Gulf had an immense role to play in stopping the spread of Islamophobia in the world. He said that the profession had increased importance in the new world order and should use its position to help correct misconceptions in the Western world about Muslims and their faith. The Minister said that globalization and technology had made the world a smaller place; and that those within the industry now had a unique opportunity to pave the way for integration and co-existence among diversified cultures.

Bahrain’s Labour Minister, Dr Majeed Al Alawi warned, on the other hand, that the influx of expatriates and “cheap” labour was reaching frightening figures. He admitted that “this tidal wave of immigrants looking for a better life” threatened to obliterate the identity of Gulf nationals in the next 10 years.

Mr. Abdulrahman Al Rashid of Al-Arabiya, a leading pan-Arab TV Station, said that the Middle East region had become a hub for “bad news.” He argued that it was



up to the media to bridge the gap between Western and Muslim societies. He called on media professionals in the “troubled” region to strive toward achieving balanced and unbiased news in their reporting. Khaled Al-Maena, Editor-in-Chief of the Arab News in Saudi Arabia, however, urged the Arab media to focus more on the home front. “Charity begins at home” he emphasized, arguing that the media had greater responsibilities toward their societies and local communities. “What others think of us is not a top priority,” he claimed.

Speakers also addressed public relations as an effective partner in regional and multinational organizations. Panellists agreed on the importance of corporate reputation management and stakeholder relationship management to enhance any organization’s image and public perceptions.

A session on the challenges facing women practitioners in the public relations and media sectors highlighted the prominent gender bias in the field and underscored the importance of eradicating these barriers. Speakers agreed that women, particularly in the Arab region, were struggling to break into the media industry because employers preferred men. Lack of training opportunities was hampering women from achieving their goals. Furthermore, the conservative nature of the Arab culture meant that women’s positive role within the media often went unnoticed.

One of the highlights of the conference was a session on the “image of oil.” The consensus was that the image of petroleum and oil exporting and producing countries was, rightly or wrongly, disreputable. In the face of fierce tactics by environmentalists and special-interest groups, panellists urged that a new communication strategy by OPEC and other oil producing countries and companies should be implemented urgently. Representatives from OPEC and oil companies debated the need to educate and inform audiences in consumer countries of the contribution of oil to economic growth and improving standards of living not just in developing countries, but in the industrialized world too. ■

# Neglected tropical diseases: Why they merit greater attention

by Anna Ilaria-Mayrhofer

Mention HIV/AIDS, and very few people are unable to produce at least one or two rudimentary facts about the disease; many, in fact, can reel off daunting epidemiological statistics and possess a comprehensive understanding of its transmission. Mention *tropical diseases*, however, and while malaria might spring to almost every mind, the majority, at best, can conjure up only vague recollections of parasitic or protozoal illnesses.

Although they attract far less attention than their more “famous” counterparts, a host of tropical diseases plague at least one billion people, most of whom live in the poorest regions of the world. Referred to by the World Health Organization (WHO) as *neglected tropical diseases*<sup>\*</sup>, their effects, while seldom fatal, are far-reaching and tragic. Some cause permanent disfigurement, scarring and crippling pain; others inflict blindness, organ damage and long-term poor-health. As is often the case, infants and children are the worse affected and end up with permanent physical and developmental disabilities.

The resultant socio-economic consequences are enormous. Afflicted individuals become too ill to work and household incomes plummet. Children are unable to attend school. Food security is threatened, as crops lie unharvested in the fields and people move away from rich agricultural areas that are infected with disease-carrying insects. Individuals stricken with disfiguring diseases face social isolation and stigmatization.

The reasons why these diseases are deemed *neglected* are multifold. Impoverished communities tend to have the least political voice and little say in the prioritization of health concerns. Many developing countries



A young woman uses a cloth water filter to help protect her family from Guinea worm disease.

are experiencing prolonged civil wars, resulting in internally displaced and refugee populations who often fall off the radar. Some illnesses are difficult to diagnose, and there are still facets of some tropical diseases that are not yet fully understood. In addition, research funding is often not as forthcoming as with the more highly-publicized illnesses.

## Parasitic illnesses

For much of the developing world, clean drinking water and safe sanitation systems are unaffordable luxuries. And more often than not, a village’s primary water source is the culprit for spreading the disease in the first place. ►

<sup>\*</sup> Buruli Ulcer; chagas disease; cholera (and other epidemic diarrhoeal diseases; dengue fever; dracunculiasis (Guinea-worm disease); endemic treponematoses; human African trypanosomiasis; leishmaniasis; leprosy; lymphatic filariasis; onchocerciasis (river blindness); schistosomiasis; soil-transmitted helminthiasis; and, trachoma.

◀ Such is the case of *schistosomiasis*, a blood infection transmitted through the skin when bathing or swimming in water containing freshwater snails that are hosts to fluke worm larvae, which damage internal organs such as the liver, kidneys and intestines, and cause neurological and developmental problems.

*Dracunculiasis*, or Guinea-worm disease, is caused by drinking water containing tiny guinea-worm larvae, which mature into long, threadlike worms that emerge from the body, usually the limbs and joints, via a slow, excruciatingly painful process. The sufferer unwittingly continues the transmission cycle by bathing in water sources to seek respite from the pain, stimulating the worm to eject hundreds of larvae.

### Stigmatizing diseases

Ancient documents dating back as far back as 600 BC are thought to be some of the earliest records describing leprosy. Those stricken were shunned by their communities and forced to live out the rest of their lives in isolation. Even today the disease is still shrouded in myth, and although rarer than in earlier times, leper colonies still exist in some parts of the world. Many people – in both developed and developing countries alike – believe that leprosy can be easily transmitted by simple contact and falsely think of it as a “flesh-eating” disease.

Leprosy is, in fact, a bacterial infection, and although its mode of transmission is still being investigated, strong evidence points to the respiratory system – similar to the way the common cold is spread – although one must be in long, multiple contact with a symptomatic individual. Untreated cases lead to complications such as skin and nerve damage, often requiring amputation of the affected digits or limbs.

Another stigmatizing illness is lymphatic filariasis, or elephantiasis. Transmitted in larval form by mosquitoes, millions of tiny parasitic worms (microfilaria) block areas in the lymphatic system, which is responsible for maintaining blood and fluid level equilibrium and is an important component of the immune system. The sufferer develops edema in the limbs and other parts of the body, and in severe cases, the affected area enlarges to grotesque proportions.

### Insect-borne afflictions

The elusiveness and daunting number of insect vectors place enormous obstacles in the way of preventing

insect-borne illnesses. African trypanosomiasis, or sleeping sickness, for example, is transmitted by the tsetse fly; dengue fever by mosquitoes; and the blackfly is the vector for onchocerciasis (or river blindness). Insect populations generally overlap different regions, placing communities at risk of contracting multiple diseases.

Most of these diseases are preventable. Many can be cured for just a few cents per day. And while total eradication is impossible as long as there are mosquitoes and other insect vectors in the world, millions of people can be spared needless suffering.

### Fighting back

Although the situation appears bleak, the dedicated and united efforts of governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, donor institutions and the affected communities themselves have initiated campaigns that will hopefully relegate many of these scourges to history.

One good example is the fight against Guinea worm disease. In 1985, some 3.5 million people across 20 countries were infected; two decades later, numbers plummeted to 10,000 among nine countries. This hard-won achievement can be attributed to extensive campaigns that taught communities how the disease is spread, along with the supply of simple cloth filters to remove the parasite from drinking water. Other interventions involved treating water sources with a safe chemical larvicide and digging boreholes and wells. Eradication efforts are still firmly in place in many of the affected countries.

Thanks to the advent of modern drugs, leprosy has proven to be highly curable through the administration of multi-drug therapy (MDT). Over the past twenty years an estimated 14 million individuals have been cured of the disease, and elimination measures are still underway. Since 1995, WHO has distributed MDT packs, free of charge, to all affected countries and has created a number of strategies for the “final push” to eliminate leprosy.

### Strategic weapons

Donated drugs from pharmaceutical companies have had a tremendous impact on combating tropical diseases. For instance, Merck & Co. Inc. has provided Mectizan® (*ivermectin*) to kill the microfilaria that cause onchocerciasis and have recently expanded their program to help treat filariasis with the same drug. GlaxoSmithKline has



Increasing public awareness is a key strategy in the ongoing Guinea worm eradication campaign.

partnered with WHO to combat filariasis by donating a number of medications. Pfizer has provided antibiotics to treat trachoma (a debilitating eye infection that can lead to blindness); Medpharm, anti-parasitic medication for schistosomiasis; and, Johnson and Johnson has given drugs that kill soil-transmitted helminths (intestinal worms).

Insecticide-treated bed nets have done much to ward off mosquitoes, and methods have been employed to reduce insect populations, such as large-scale, controlled pesticide spraying and treating water sources with a harmless larvicide.

Time after time education has proven to be one of the most formidable tools in combating disease. Aid workers have tirelessly trekked their way to even the most remote villages to teach inhabitants about the cause and prevention of illnesses and provide information pamphlets and other materials. Educational materials have been widely distributed to communities and schools. Health workers also receive special instruction in diagnosing and treating

the illnesses.

### Future strategies

While poverty eradication and improving health indicators remain high on the development agenda, more resources need to be directed towards the neglected afflictions. This includes providing crucial support to research aimed at developing new drugs to fight the emerging drug-resistant strains and medication that produces fewer side effects. Greater funding is also needed for more widely-encompassing screening programs to catch infections at an early stage, as well as good surveillance and reporting methods. Incentive programs to recruit health care professionals in the neediest countries and other capacity building programs are also needed. And deprived areas need to be provided with the basic infrastructure to enable them to enjoy a healthier environment.

The list goes on, but success is not a far-fetched dream. With the political will and adequate funding, most of these “neglected” illnesses are controllable if not eradicable. ■



PHOTO: B. BABAJIDE

Members of the Vienna Foreign Press Association enjoyed a presentation by the Department of Information on the aims and record of OFID.

## Vienna's Foreign Press Association members visit OFID

### Director-General fields questions

Ranking members of the Foreign Press Association, Vienna, Austria, paid a visit, April 4, to OFID Headquarters, where they were welcomed by Director-General Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish and a number of his senior staff. The journalists, many of them resident correspondents of their national media, were at OFID for the first time to learn of the aims and record of the institution.

The Director-General informed the 35-strong group that OFID welcomed growing interest by the media in its global work. He said it was important that the story of the institution be told around the world to underline the considerable contribution of OPEC Member States to development cooperation.

Describing OFID as a noble gesture by OPEC States, Al-Herbish told the journalists that OFID had been engaged with partners and cooperating countries over a period of 31 years, listening to their concerns and working in cooperation with them to move development forward. He said OFID had remained flexible and relevant by developing new products for assistance delivery;

among them the private sector and blend facilities as well as trade financing. Fielding questions, Mr. Al-Herbish pledged that OFID would continue with its projects and programs in the years ahead, seeking to deliver even greater impact on poverty levels across the world.

The journalists listened to a presentation on OFID by Mr. Sam Ifeagwu of the Department of Information. They were told that OFID began life as a temporary financial account with all of US\$800 million. Today, the institution has total commitments of US\$8.6 billion, of which US\$5.5 billion has been disbursed. OFID funds projects and programs, worldwide, laying emphasis on schemes that benefit the neediest and the poorest countries. The institution also supports research and extends financing for the pursuit of contemporary issues. Among other sectors, OFID is involved in energy, transportation, agriculture, education, health, industry and telecommunications. "We construct bridges; we build roads; we build infrastructure and we fund utilities," Mr. Ifeagwu said. ■