

OPEN SOCIETY

SOROS FOUNDATIONS NETWORK NEWS
WINTER | 2007-08

NEWS



**New Challenges to Building
Open Societies in Africa**

OPEN SOCIETY NEWS

WINTER 2007–08

SOROS FOUNDATIONS NETWORK

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Page 6, Chuck Sudetic

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Pages 14-5, Benjamin Lowy

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Panos Pictures (front and back) FRONT A young man working at a building site, Zimbabwe, 2005 (Crispin Hughes). BACK Children taking turns filling buckets and cans with water, Zimbabwe, 2001 (Trygve Bolstad).

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI builds alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. OSI places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of marginalized people and communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1993 created OSI as a private operating and grantmaking foundation to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each Soros foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

Open Society News, published by the Open Society Institute in New York, reports on programs and issues critical to advancing open society throughout the network and the world.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The return of *Open Society News* (OSN) to Africa after several years finds civil society confronting challenges new and old. The last time OSN focused on Africa was in the summer of 2001. As with the rest of the world, the events of September 11, 2001, and the resulting aftermath have had long term implications for the continent.

Global and local antiterrorism efforts have undermined human rights and the rule of law. African Muslims, most recently in the Horn of Africa, have endured increased levels of unlawful harassment and detention as a result of joint antiterrorism activities by the United States and the governments of these African states. As reported in this issue, OSI has responded by supporting local efforts to document rights violations and conducting advocacy to remind officials of their obligations to abide by national laws regarding detention and the rights of detainees.

As the Middle East has become increasingly insecure and oil prices continue to rise, Africa's natural resources, particularly oil, have received renewed and growing attention from the West and rapidly developing states such as China. The interview in this issue of OSN with OSI grantee the International Crisis Group (ICG) helps illuminate how conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan and the future of the North-South peace agreement are inextricably linked to the management of Sudan's growing oil wealth.

HIV/AIDS remains one of the most substantial challenges to sustainable development in Africa. OSI supports groups that work to prevent HIV/AIDS infection by empowering women and combating the stigma of the virus. The article on Swaziland provides a portrait of the devastation that has resulted from an unaccountable government disregarding the rights of women and largely ignoring a mushrooming epidemic. Another article underscores the importance of continued OSI support for journalists and editors in South Africa to freely comment on public health issues, especially HIV/AIDS.

By revisiting Africa, *Open Society News* aims to examine problems and topics that have often not received enough attention from policymakers, the media, and the public. While the challenges are substantial, African civil society can effectively respond to these issues and move forward in building open societies throughout the continent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Civil Society in Africa: Countering Adversity with Hope and Justice
- 4 Who Defends the Defenders?
- 5 Freeing a Country from Its Liberator
- 6 A King Dithers as HIV/AIDS Thrives
- 9 Free Press Facing New Pressure in South Africa
- 11 Preventing Oil from Fueling Conflict in Sudan
- 14 Statelessness in Africa: Turning Citizens into Nomads
- 16 The "War on Terror" Comes to the Horn of Africa
- 18 Soldiers as a Force for Human Rights and HIV Prevention



Civil Society in Africa: Countering Adversity with Hope and Justice

Children play at a center for orphans from Zimbabwe and Mozambique run by Seeds of Light, a civil society organization in Malelane, South Africa, 2006.

Julie Hayes, OSI's regional director for Africa, describes African civil society's ability to persevere in the midst of a multitude of pressing problems.

JULIE HAYES

THIS ISSUE OF *Open Society News* presents a multitude of seemingly ominous developments in Africa—from the Sudanese government's diversion of oil revenues to fund war in Darfur to editors and journalists facing new media repression in postapartheid South Africa.

These and other situations described in the following pages are alarming and carry dangerous implications for open societies. But just as the articles reveal conflicts and problems, they also highlight the strength, resilience, and determination of African civil society. In Sudan, public outcry over corruption in the south is driving efforts to monitor the Government of Southern Sudan through a newly created anticorruption commission. In Swaziland, despite the appalling HIV statistics, community-based NGOs are working to help women improve their status and to protect orphans and others who are left most vulnerable by the epidemic. In Zimbabwe, human rights defenders are defying the repressive regime and asserting their rights in the face of widespread political violence. In Kenya, a Muslim human rights group is shining a light on abuses committed against Kenyan nationals in the shadowy theater of the “war on terror.” In South Africa, the editors of the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian* are defending freedom of expression despite government intimidation and manipulation. The challenges are substantial. Yet it is clear that there are groups and individuals willing to take risks and continue promoting open society throughout the continent.

Beyond the national level, OSI is helping to strengthen continental institutions and advance human rights and democracy. African heads of state adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in January 2007. The bolstering of intracontinental institutions, such as the African Union, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Pan-African Parliament, and the African Court, as well as more integrated regional economic communities, indicate measured progress in governance and rights protection. Over 20 countries have signed up to be

evaluated by their peers on standards of good political and economic governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Building organizations and institutions that foster vibrant and tolerant democracies at the local, national, and continental levels in Africa is a priority for the Open Society Institute and the Soros foundations network. OSI Africa foundations—the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, the Open Society Initiative for East Africa, and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa—are at the heart of the network's activities in Africa. They work in a total of 33 countries across the continent with a combined annual budget of approximately \$45 million.

The foundations also work in partnership with AfriMAP, the Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project. Together with national civil society organizations, the foundations and AfriMAP monitor and audit government performance in establishing and maintaining the rule of law, facilitating political participation and democracy, and delivering public services. In addition, the foundations collaborate with OSI programs such as the Open Society Justice Initiative, the International Women's Program, the Public Health Program, the Network Information Program, the Media Program, and education and youth programs in their grant making and advocacy efforts.

The Africa foundations work with civil society in their respective regions and countries to forge a renewed sense of leadership, sustainability, and partnership to mobilize people to promote social change and develop open societies. The current challenges facing the Open Society Institute, its programs, its African foundations, and the governments and civil society groups they work with are daunting. Yet the networks and capacities these groups are developing and the vital and humane responses they are providing continue to serve as sources of social justice and hope.

EYES ON ZIMBABWE

Who Defends the Defenders?

As the rule of law crumbles in Zimbabwe, lawyers are finding themselves the target of increasing state repression. Isabella Matambanadzo, a board member of Voice of the People Radio in Harare and Zimbabwe program manager for the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), pays tribute to a colleague and notes the dangers that he and other human rights lawyers have faced.

ISABELLA MATAMBANADZO

EVER SO GENTLY, the undertaker folded back the few yards of gold-trimmed fabric covering the casket and lifted the lid. A male voice rose to lead other mourners in a song of farewell. Just the slightest timbre of sadness shook the otherwise steady sound, filling the chapel with a tune popular at funerals in Zimbabwe.

Family, diplomats, senior attorneys, feminists, politicians, law professors, and students sat in tight rows or stood shoulder to shoulder inside the chapel. Others waited patiently outside. They all listened as speaker after speaker paid final tribute to human rights lawyer Lawrence Chibwe, killed in a motor vehicle accident in Harare on November 3, 2007. There are suspicions about the accident, but no hard evidence of foul play has emerged.

“There are two kinds of Lawyers,” said Lovemore Madhuku, a senior law professor at the University of Zimbabwe and chairperson of the National Constitutional Assembly. “There are lawyers who simply practice law. And then there are lawyers who are in service to human dignity. Those are the kind of lawyers this country needs most, and that is the kind of lawyer our beloved Lawrence was.”

Chibwe, once a student of Madhuku’s, more recently worked with other lawyers to represent Madhuku and dozens of activists who were arrested and beaten in March 2007 on their way to a prayer rally. Madhuku was among those who sustained severe injuries, including a deep gash to the head and a broken right arm.

As deputy secretary of the Law Society of Zimbabwe, Chibwe was a frequent and outspoken critic of the excesses of state violence. He and other members of the society documented and challenged the relentless and un-



Arnold Tsunga, a Zimbabwean human rights lawyer living in exile since 2006, displays an alleged government of Zimbabwe “death list” naming him and others as assassination targets, New York, United States, 2007.

justified harassment lawyers faced at police stations and in courtrooms.

In one incident, a senior police officer slapped Tafadzwa Mugabe of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. Mugabe filed a complaint, but has yet to be notified about the status of his case. The year before, Mugabe’s mother, herself a police officer, was hounded out of her police housing because of her son’s political activities. She is now unemployed.

Another time, a police officer crumpled a court order, served by Otto Saki, now studying law at Columbia University, and threw it into his face, saying he would “disappear” mysteriously if he kept bothering the police with his human rights work. The spouses of lawyers have received anonymous phone calls and threats to their lives for supporting their partners’ human rights-related activities.

Today, with elections expected in March 2008, activists in Zimbabwe are under constant intimidation and surveillance and face a wide variety of violations of their fundamental freedoms of expression and association.

Chibwe’s colleagues in the legal profession will ensure his legacy by continuing to defend those who stand up to Mugabe’s abuse of power. As Mugabe’s regime becomes more desperate and violent, regional leaders and members of the international community must ask themselves: Who will defend the defenders?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about what OSI and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa are doing to aid democratic development in Zimbabwe, go to: www.osisa.org and www.soros.org/resources/multimedia/zimbabwe

“There are lawyers who simply practice law. And then there are lawyers who are in service to human dignity. Those are the kind of lawyers Zimbabwe needs most.”



EYES ON ZIMBABWE

Freeing a Country from Its Liberator

Tawanda Mutasah, executive director of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, outlines how President Robert Mugabe has destroyed a country he helped liberate and the choices facing advocates for democracy in Zimbabwe.

TAWANDA MUTASAH

“Democracy will not be possible until human rights are protected and Zimbabweans can participate in governing without fear of reprisal.”

Riot police block road leading to political rally, Harare, Zimbabwe, 2007.

ZIMBABWE IS A COUNTRY IN CRISIS. President Robert Mugabe's regime has closed independent newspapers and radio stations, bombing one station and arresting and prosecuting its directors, including Isabella Matambanadzo, Zimbabwe program manager at the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa.

Human rights abuses include more than 4,000 documented cases of the torture and abduction of prodemocracy activists and political opponents in 2007 alone, including the globally televised aftermath of the deadly crackdown against peaceful demonstrators on March 11. Mugabe's reign of terror is decades old. Even in the early years of independence from Britain, Mugabe's systematic silencing of all real political opposition resulted in the murder of 20,000 Zimbabweans in western and southern Zimbabwe—genocide by any name.

In the winter of 2005, the government razed to the ground the homes of 700,000 Zimbabweans, destroying the livelihoods of 20 percent of the population and drawing condemnation from the United Nations (UN). Mugabe's militia was responsible for an orgy of state-sanctioned and state-organized looting, rape, and violence. The violence provided the requisite smokescreen behind which Mugabe and his supporters could shut down newspapers, bomb radio stations, purge the bench of independent judges, beat up lawyers, murder opposition politicians and political campaign staff, starve political opponents, and enable senior military, police, intelligence, and ruling party people to amass stupendous levels of wealth.

The Zimbabwe crisis has demonstrated important weaknesses in the international protection of human rights. In spite of rhetorical commitments about the “responsibility to protect,” the global system has yet to de-

velop and wield a truly effective mechanism for protecting victims of abuse who cannot find relief in domestic jurisdictions. The regime in Harare has ignored recommendations for human rights and democracy restoration from the UN's Human Rights Commissioner, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and the Southern Africa Development Community's Parliamentary Forum, among many others. It has resisted the sending into Zimbabwe of human rights rapporteurs from the UN system and human rights investigators from the Pan-African Parliament. With the aid of the South African administration, it has resisted having Zimbabwe on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Council and the Security Council.

Zimbabwe's African neighbors can use their proximity to effectively crack the whip on Mugabe's human rights infractions, or they can shield him from international rebuke. While South African President Thabo Mbeki has made an important contribution to his country's democratic development, he remains reluctant to address the true nature of Mugabe's abuse of power and enables him to buy time as he decimates dissidents. A *bona fide* transition to democracy will not be possible until human rights are protected and all Zimbabweans can participate in governing the country without fear of reprisal.

The end is not yet in sight, but the work must continue.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about what OSI and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa are doing to aid democratic development in Zimbabwe, go to: www.osisa.org and www.soros.org/resources/multimedia/zimbabwe

A King Dithers as HIV/AIDS Thrives

The subordination of women and an unaccountable monarch have been a boon to HIV/AIDS in Swaziland. OSI Senior Writer Chuck Sudetic reports on what the epidemic has done to one woman and her daughters in a village on the outskirts of Swaziland's largest city, Manzini.

CHUCK SUDETIC

BY LATE AFTERNOON on the last Thursday in November, King Mswati III, monarch of Swaziland, was reigning over a million souls in his predominantly Christian realm landlocked between the eastern edge of South Africa and the southern stub of Mozambique. The world's worst pandemic of HIV/AIDS had combined with diseases like tuberculosis, meningitis, and pneumonia to slash the life expectancy of Swaziland's citizens to just 31 years. About half of the kingdom's pregnant women, and about half of all its women between the ages of 25 to 29, were HIV positive. In just a decade and a half, tuberculosis, which ravages people with HIV/AIDS, had increased more than sixfold in prevalence. About 130,000 of the kingdom's

children—13 percent of its overall population—were orphans. And as the summer sun descended over Swaziland on that November afternoon, three Swazis, an emaciated 39-year-old woman named May and her two daughters, seemed about to deliver themselves to the statisticians.

A barren avocado tree shaded May and her daughters as they sat in front of a hut of crumbling red-mud bricks. HIV was coursing through her veins. A cough erupted from the depths of her chest, muffled by a kerchief cupped over her mouth. The little girls were surviving on a bowl a day of bean porridge from a nearby drop-in center for orphans that is closed on weekends. "I have only whatever food the children bring me," May said.



May and her two children wait for a ration of porridge, Manzini, Swaziland, 2007.



King Mswati III arrives at the \$1 million celebration he threw for his 37th birthday, Manzini, Swaziland, 2005.

Somehow, perhaps because she was too weak, her words lacked the whine of a complaint.

In patriarchal Swaziland, women like May have little choice but to submit to men. More than 60 percent of Swaziland's women between the ages of 17 and 24 have already suffered sexual violence sometime during their lives.

"All the ills of society are blamed on women," said Doo Aphane, director of the country's Lutheran Development Service. "Wives cannot demand safe sex. Men can marry as many wives as they want. The king marries 16-year-olds, and other men are envious. Young girls are infected by older sugar daddies. There is a lot of incest and violence. Much of the government's inability to deal with the health consequences of the abuse of women are rooted in lack of good governance and massive corruption."

Despite the odds, May worked to improve her family's situation by taking a temporary job in a distant garment factory after two of the men who fathered her children abandoned the family. A third father, the only one to beat May, left the family a year or so ago.

"Their father left before I found out I was HIV positive," May said. Before another eruption of coughing, she accused him of infecting her: "After each time he came around I would develop a rash with pus."

By that November afternoon, HIV had eroded May's health and she could no longer work and had no income. Had she died that evening, her daughters would have had no support beyond porridge from the drop-in center. No relatives willing to take them in. No state orphanage. No metal roof over a hut of red-mud bricks with a soggy bed inside.

In 1993, public health officials had cautioned Swaziland's parliament and government that, if the HIV/AIDS outbreak went unchecked, it would

ravage the country's population. Members of parliament shouted down the warnings; they accused the health officials of toying with them.

"It is amazing how closely we got it right," said Rudolph Maziya, who helped present the report and is now director of AMICAALL, a community-action organization collaborating with the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa to fight HIV/AIDS. After the report's release, the government, which works under the royal thumb, as Swaziland's laws, civil and traditional, make King Mswati's will absolute, took no effective action. As the epidemic careered out of control, the king purchased new BMWs and Mercedes Benz sedans for his family and pursued a fixed routine of age-old rituals and traditions. He took new teenage wives. He fathered new children.

It was 1999 before King Mswati declared Swaziland's HIV/AIDS epidemic a disaster. On his birthday in 2001, the king barred Swazi women under the age of 18 from having sex for the next five years and ordered them not to wear trousers or even shake hands with men. A few days later, Mswati made a 17-year-old girl his eighth bride. He paid a fine of one cow for violating his own decree.

During 2003, ARVs, the antiretroviral drugs that block the onset of AIDS, became available in significant and affordable quantities in many parts of Africa, including Swaziland. By that last Thursday in November 2007, about 28 percent of the HIV-positive people in Swaziland who require these medications were actually getting them. May was among the 72 percent who were not receiving the drugs. Doctors have told her she could not receive ARV treatment until she overcame her malnutrition, because the drugs' side effects would be devastating.

Swaziland's government health service, like many others in the world, does not consider food to fit the definition of medicine, and it has left

May on her own, in a weakened state, to fight against starvation and infectious disease.

Hunger weakens many of Swaziland's people. Almost 70 percent of the population lingers in abject poverty even as the kingdom's factories and mines and its sugarcane fields and pulp plants produce significant amounts of foreign currency. Ironically, though the HIV/AIDS pandemic combines with massive corruption by a kleptocratic monarch to impoverish most Swazis and bend the country's population and economic-growth curves downward, the kingdom statistically still produces enough income per capita to rank it among countries enjoying a middle level of development. This renders Swaziland ineligible for significant international and bilateral funding made available to lesser developed countries, funding that might, if well managed, help lift the vast majority of Swazis like May and her children out of penury.

In an air-conditioned office, on the morning of that last Thursday in November, diplomats from a prosperous, and generous, European country asked officials from Swaziland's government about who was benefiting from the revenues generated by the kingdom's industries.

"Rich individuals, rich companies, and the rich royal family," answered one of the officials before making a plea for more financial aid. "We are in the jaws of a pandemic that is not letting up. With the few resources we have, we cannot manage to fight this disease."

The previous evening the diplomats had heard the same explanation from a large group of Swazi activists. Given the corrupt practices of many Swazi officials, civil society groups are determined to develop new channels for funding that go directly to local and international civil society groups working with the Swazi people. Until these plans are implemented, however, the country's response to HIV/AIDS remains largely determined by an aloof king.

By the afternoon, the royal palace had announced that King Mswati had gone into seclusion. The time had come for purification. Traditional midsummer rites practiced by many throughout Swaziland were approaching. If the ceremonies pleased the deities, they would send rains to green Swaziland's fields and forests, rains that would dampen the king's palace and his family's new cars, rains that would fall upon the graves and the barren avocado trees, and rains that would soak the crumbling homes where people like May struggle against illness and neglect.

POSTSCRIPT *After May was interviewed for this story, she was taken to a hospital, diagnosed with pneumonia, and given intravenous doses of antibiotics. May and her daughters then went to Hope House, a relief center operated by Roman Catholic nuns, where they received shelter and food to supplement May's new regimen of ARVs.*

SWAZILAND AND HIV/AIDS

The unfolding tragedy in Swaziland highlights what can happen when a country marked by poor governance and human rights standards is confronted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) has responded by helping civil society in Swaziland improve governance and human rights, particularly the rights of women.

OSISA support for local NGOs such as Swaziland Positive Living works to increase the rights of women and others affected by HIV/AIDS by focusing on inheritance laws and preventing the rampant property grabbing that has followed the epidemic.

The initiative has also supported a coalition of gender-focused NGOs and civil society organizations in their efforts to participate in the development and implementation of Swaziland's Round 7 Global Fund proposal.

Signs of Progress...

- Annual national surveys indicate that HIV prevalence rates among women 15 to 19 years old dropped from 32 percent in 2002 to 29 percent in 2006.
- Government surveys show that the HIV/AIDS epidemic peaked in 2002 and infection rates among men and women ages 15–24 had stabilized by 2006.
- By 2006 Swaziland was beginning to meet UN standards by providing antiretroviral treatment to about 28 percent of the estimated 37,000 people who needed it.

And Enduring Challenges...

- Among Swaziland's population of 1.1 million, an estimated one out of every three adults is infected with HIV.
- Comprehensive plans for HIV/AIDS testing, antiretroviral treatment, and providing for the country's growing orphan population exist but are severely hampered by stigma and lack of funds and human resources, and have lagged behind the epidemic's spread.

- While antiretroviral drugs are more accessible, effective treatment is undermined by a 70 percent poverty rate that prevents most patients from eating nutritiously and traveling regularly to treatment centers.
- As of 2007 less than 20 percent of Swaziland's population knew their HIV/AIDS status.
- The unequal economic, legal, and social status of women in Swaziland makes them particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. If the rights of women are not protected and improved, and issues like polygamy and denial of contraceptives to women are not confronted and changed, women in Swaziland will continue to bear the brunt of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- People who are HIV positive in Swaziland face substantial stigmatization and have very little direct involvement or participation in the development of Swaziland's HIV/AIDS policies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To review assessments of Swaziland's HIV/AIDS treatment efforts, go to www.who.int/3by5/support/june2005_swz.pdf and www.osisa.org



Members of the Treatment Action Campaign carry *Sunday Times* clippings critical of South Africa's health minister during a protest against the government's poor response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, Cape Town, South Africa, 2007.

Free Press Facing **New Pressure** in South Africa

Justice Malala, political correspondent for the South African *Sunday Times*, reports on growing efforts by the South African government to control the press.

JUSTICE MALALA

AT A PUBLIC FORUM in October 2007, a journalist asked South African President Thabo Mbeki if he had recently fired the country's chief prosecutor because he was about to arrest the chief of police—a known Mbeki ally—for corruption. Mbeki became visibly angry. A cabinet member standing beside Mbeki shouted at the reporter: "You are out of order, you are out of order!" Bodyguards descended upon the reporter and Mbeki and several cabinet ministers laughed as she was thrown out of the room.

Until recently, South Africa appeared to have moved far beyond this type of crude repression of journalists, with much of the country's post-apartheid history marked by significant press freedom. The government does not shut down newspapers. Soldiers do not arrest editors or shoot

journalists. And the country's growing print and electronic media seem to reflect a vibrant free press marked by a spectrum of views from extreme left to right.

Yet as President Thabo Mbeki heads toward the end of his term in 2009, the media has come under increasing attack from government and ruling party officials. In most cases, Mbeki's government has avoided crude, public spectacles and used more refined techniques of press manipulation based on political and economic influence.

The new assault on South Africa's media has two forms: first, the government has stripped the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)—the nation's public broadcaster—of much of its talent and edito-

rial independence, banned critical voices, and loaded its board with individuals who support the SABC's airing of almost exclusively progovernment news.

The second front of the government's assault focuses on print media. For years, Mbeki's government has threatened to regulate the print media, launched sustained attacks on individual editors and columnists, and encouraged attempts by progovernment business leaders and government officials to buy controlling interest in newspapers critical of the government.

At the SABC, whose multilingual TV and radio stations reach more of South Africa's diverse and significantly illiterate population than any other media outlet, the government gave key positions to African National Congress (ANC) members like Snuki Zikalala, head of SABC news in 2004. In October 2006, an independent government commission found that Zikalala, who has said he is committed to running "nation building" stories, prevented the use of independent analysts and journalists critical of the

massive outcry by civil society organizations in open letters in the media and public gatherings, the police backed off but said they would continue investigating.

The government also tried to gain deeper economic control of the *Times*. At the end of October, Koni Media Holdings (Pty) Ltd made a R7 billion bid for Johncom, the owner of the *Sunday Times*. The offer baffled financial analysts since Johncom was valued at R4.3 billion. Media observers suggested the deal had political undertones by noting that a political adviser, a foreign ministry spokesperson, and a former chief of state protocol with close ties to Mbeki all had shares in Koni Media Holdings.

The South Africa National Editors' Forum (Sanef) noted in a November press statement that such deals were perfectly legal but "undesirable because a newspaper's owners must choose between serving the public's right to know and serving the government or a political party." Sanef added that "the bid by Koni Media Holdings is of particular concern given that it

“Mbeki’s government has avoided crude, public spectacles and used more refined techniques of press manipulation based on political and economic influence.”

government. Despite the finding, the SABC board, a number of whom were nominated by Mbeki, expressed full confidence in Zikalala, and issued a warning to veteran journalist John Perlman, the whistle-blower who initiated the investigation. In January 2007 Perlman left the SABC in disgust.

SABC chief executive and editor-in-chief, Dali Mpofu, has denied any bias at the network. Yet in 2006, Mpofu commissioned and then pulled a documentary on Mbeki because it was critical of the president. Mpofu then tried to stop the producers from screening the documentary privately.

The government's most severe efforts to control the press have targeted print journalists and publications, particularly Mondli Makhanya, editor of the country's highest-circulation newspaper, the *Sunday Times*.

Under Makhanya, the *Times* has been a credible and consistent critic of the Mbeki government's health minister and AIDS skeptic, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

"Tshabalala-Msimang is unsuitable for office," declared a *Times* op-ed in August 2007. "She has spectacularly failed to deal with the biggest challenge her ministry has faced, the AIDS pandemic. Thousands and thousands of South Africans have been robbed of life while her department touted crackpot remedies such as garlic, lemon and beetroot as substitutes for anti-retroviral therapy."

In the same month, the *Times* published one article featuring allegations about abusive treatment toward hospital workers by Tshabalala-Msimang when she received a liver transplant. Another article investigated her possible involvement in thefts from a hospital in Botswana where she worked while exiled from South Africa.

The government's anger and retribution was immediate. Although Tshabalala-Msimang and the government have not denied any of the *Sunday Times'* claims, Cape Town's chief of detectives was assigned to investigate the paper. In October, police said they would arrest Makhanya and his chief investigative reporter for improper use of sources. After a

takes place amid serious tensions between the government and the country's largest weekend newspaper, the *Sunday Times*."

Mbeki responded by denying any direct government involvement in the deal and dismissed critics as making "big headlines about something that doesn't exist."

Press freedom activists have also challenged a number of government legislative initiatives. According to the Freedom of Expression Institute, a recent ANC proposal on government media regulation implies that "the ANC may be considering state regulation as a viable alternative to self-regulation, which will threaten media freedom."

An ANC-sponsored bill amending a film and publications law to protect children from pornographers contains a clause that could give the government sweeping review powers. If accepted, the clause would require government review of any articles or reports that describe topics ranging from HIV/AIDS education to religious leaders or terrorist organizations that could invoke hatred.

"The media shares with government the fight against child pornography," Sanef declared in a statement to parliament. "But we believe the Bill in its current form is unconstitutional and will render the media dysfunctional."

A new era of media policies reminiscent of apartheid has not yet descended upon South Africa. But recent government actions and policies are beginning to evoke memories of those dark days as the country's free press faces new dangers. In a 1997 farewell address, Nelson Mandela described the role a free press played in the new South Africa by "keeping us in touch, disseminat[ing] both the good news and the bad [and contributing] to a more informed and hence a better world." It is a sad irony that Mandela's ANC comrades are now intent on undermining these achievements.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

To learn more about OSI's media work in South Africa, go to www.osf.org.za



Preventing Oil from Fueling Conflict in Sudan

The International Crisis Group, an OSI grantee, uses field research and high-level advocacy to prevent conflict across the globe. David Mozersky, director of ICG's Horn of Africa Project, spoke to OSN about the relationship between oil revenues and conflict in Sudan.

1. How do resource revenues contribute to armed conflict in Sudan?

Oil production that began in Sudan in 1998 has increased national revenue enormously and provided the government with significant new funds for buying weapons. The government has purchased new MIG planes and helicopter gunships for use against rebel groups in southern Sudan and, increasingly, in the west against rebels in Darfur. Since the start of the Darfur conflict in 2003, the government has also used oil revenues to mobilize a massive counter-insurgency campaign by arming and supplying its Janjaweed proxy and integrating militias into semiofficial paramilitary groups.

Resource revenues have also caused conflict by prompting the government and a multitude of rebel groups to fight for control over resource-rich areas. The fighting has had a devastating impact on civilians, particularly in the Upper Nile region where oil development from 1998–2003 turned the area into the frontline battlefield between government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). During the conflict, the government and its allied militias cleared civilian populations out of oil areas to make way for oil infrastructure and development.

2. If conflict ends, is it possible to create structures and prompt a willingness on the part of the government to use resource revenues for development that benefits a majority of Sudan's citizens?

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the 21-year North-South civil war in 2005, established structures to manage resource revenues and principles for good governance that were integrated into the Interim National Constitution. Little has been implemented, however, due to the ruling National Congress Party's (NCP) control over Sudan's political institutions. The NCP and a network of allied businesses continue to reap the most benefit from Sudan's resources. The greatest challenge for Sudan is creating the political will to effectively use existing resource management and governance structures.

Sudanese President Omar El-Beshir (right) and other officials inaugurate Sudan's \$1 billion Red Sea export oil pipeline in 1999, Higeig, Sudan.

3. Has the Comprehensive Peace Agreement improved the transparency of oil revenues?

Yes, but only marginally. The CPA established a joint National Petroleum Commission between the government and the SPLA's political wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), to be an oversight body for the petroleum sector. The SPLM also received the deputy minister position in the energy ministry, but this is little more than symbolic, and the SPLM does not yet have any real power within the ministry.

The commission has brought little noticeable change to the oil sector. It was deadlocked for over a year as the NCP tried to minimize SPLM involvement by keeping the commission weak and the NCP-dominated energy ministry strong. In 2007, the government and the SPLM resolved most of the commission's procedural difficulties but made little progress. The SPLM is still unable to clearly determine how much oil it controls and the necessary demarcation borders for revenue sharing with the energy and finance ministries. The CPA grants the SPLM the right to review all contracts, yet the government denied the SPLM access to these documents for a year.

The CPA also contains provisions for the sharing of southern oil revenue—previously enjoyed exclusively by the NCP-dominated government in Khartoum—with the newly established SPLM-led Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS). In the three years since the CPA was signed, nearly \$2 billion in oil revenue has flowed to the GoSS. The influx of funds has overwhelmed the revenue management abilities of both the GoSS and SPLM. Southern Sudan now faces major challenges in keeping track of revenue and controlling corruption.

4. What role can civil society organizations play in promoting resource revenue transparency?

Local media as well as civil society groups, businesspeople, and trade unions have generated and disseminated substantial information on corruption in Sudan. Civil society organizations in Sudan can play a key role in challenging corruption by monitoring revenues and publicizing irregularities. Public outcry over corruption in southern Sudan resulted in the formation of an anticorruption commission in 2006. There are no commissions or similar anticorruption agencies in the north or at the national level, and development of such institutions would be an important first step toward comprehensively addressing corruption.

5. Have oil resources influenced efforts by the international community and powerful states like China and the United States to end conflict and promote greater accountability in Sudan?

Sudan's oil boom has ushered in a wave of external investment, primarily from China—the largest investor in Sudan's oil sector—and other Asian countries. Corruption, transparency, and accountability have not been

high on the agenda of Sudan's oil partners, nor of the broader international community. The United States and other western and African countries have tried to punish the NCP government for its ethnic cleansing campaign in Darfur, and pressure the regime with multilateral economic and diplomatic sanctions. These efforts have been largely resisted within the UN Security Council by China, among others, who have protected the Sudanese government's interests because of its heavy investments in Sudan's oil sector.

6. What are the key challenges to civil society monitoring of resource revenues?

The challenges are greater in the north than in the south. In the north, the NCP runs a security state that tightly controls information and is supported by networks of officials and companies that profit from illicit resource extraction and revenues. These networks are quite developed and supported by front companies and complex political and financial arrangements. In the South, systems of corruption are less developed. This lack of sophistication coupled with the fact that the regional government makes revenue information public should make it easier to account for government use of revenues.

7. What are some critical steps Sudan could take to improve resource revenue transparency? If the country pursued these actions now, what might Sudan look like in 5 or 10 years?

A lot can be done. It is important to realize that the only active conflict as of December 2007 is in Darfur. Nationally, the NCP and SPLM have enough governance power to effect changes that could alleviate the grievances that have driven conflict in the country, including in Darfur. Resource transparency would dramatically improve if the current government allowed the National Petroleum Commission and the Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission to function properly. Another step should be to improve public trust. Allowing a third party auditor that included civil society representatives to conduct research and publicly distribute resource revenue information would do much to restore public faith in the government's ability to manage resource revenues.

Khartoum is undergoing an economic boom, yet the benefits are only enjoyed by a select few. The vast majority of Sudan's citizens are left out and alienated. Seriously pursuing accountability and transparency could help distribute the benefits of oil revenues more widely, thus reducing poverty and the risk of future conflicts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about natural resources and conflict, visit www.ecosonline.org, www.hrw.org, and www.crisisgroup.org. For information about resource revenue transparency issues, go to www.revenuewatch.org.

“Public outcry over corruption in southern Sudan led to the formation of an anticorruption commission. Development of such institutions in the north and at the national level would be an important first step toward comprehensively addressing corruption.”



Sudan People's Liberation Army soldier outside the village of Tam, the scene of frequent conflict in oil-rich southern Sudan, 2002.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

Scientists at work on the world's foremost global-warming watchdog, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, are warning that vast numbers of Africans are exceptionally exposed to potentially devastating effects of changes to the earth's climate resulting from humanity's introduction of vast quantities of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere. Ironically, of all the earth's people, Africans have contributed least to global warming.

No existing computer simulation can forecast how, exactly, the warming atmosphere will impact the continent. Panel scientists, however, advise erring on the side of caution, and cite the drought in 2005 that threatened the lives of millions of people from Ethiopia to Malawi and Zimbabwe and the floods that inundated the same countries in 2006 as examples of what the future holds in store.

The scientists warn that it is highly likely climate change will severely compromise agricultural production and food supplies across broad swathes of Africa. By 2020, crop yields in some countries could drop by as much as half. The number of people at risk of increased water stress is projected to number 75–250 million by the 2020s and 350–600 million by the

2050s. The impact of climate change on agriculture might cripple entire countries, because agriculture is the keystone of their national economies.

Grasslands and marine ecosystems in southern Africa are already showing signs of stresses related to climate change. More-frequent and more-powerful storms as well as the rising sea levels threaten to inundate coastal lowlands; and the cost of adapting to the rising seas might amount to 5–10 percent of the gross domestic product of the affected countries.

Despite the real and potential dangers, African leaders have yet to turn their attention to efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change upon their countries and peoples. “The African governments are not really conscious of the climate change problem,” said Youba Sokona, executive secretary of the Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel in Tunisia and a contributing author to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. “They have acute problems. They won't look at anything beyond five years. They have no mechanisms, nothing in place to adapt.”

Scientists working on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change advise that the African countries must develop their own adaptation plans but that the international community must assist them in reducing vulnerability.

“Unfortunately, most governments in Africa see

climate change as an environmental problem. But it is a developmental problem,” Sokona said.

The ultimate, long-term solution is a worldwide change in production and consumption patterns. A mid-range solution is adaptation: people using resources and technology to reduce the negative impact of environmental change. Adaptation would require a massive transfer of resources, capacities, and technology to the most-vulnerable areas. This is likely to present enormous challenges as people still have not developed a coherent set of priorities and procedures for adapting to environment change. The most immediate response—migration—is one that many people in the poorest countries are resorting to as more powerful and developed states do little to change practices that damage the environment.

“People are leaving rural areas to go to urban areas,” said Sokona. “They are leaving difficult countries for countries that offer hope. It will continue. It is their only choice.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Recent reports on resource use, development, and climate change in Africa can be found at www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg-chapter9.pdf and www.uneca.org/csd/CSD4_Report_on_Climate_Change.htm

Statelessness in Africa: Turning Citizens into Nomads

In an edited excerpt from a longer article, Chidi Odinkalu, senior legal officer of the Open Society Justice Initiative, considers citizenship and statelessness issues that continue to sow division and conflict in Africa.

CHIDI ODINKALU

TO CURRY FAVOR with nationalist supporters and grab the wealth of others, Ugandan dictator Idi-Amin Dada in 1972 nullified residency to anyone living in Uganda who was a citizen of, or had originated from, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, or Great Britain. Thousands were expelled. Many had no country to officially return to because they had lived in Uganda for decades. Jobs, businesses, homes, and friends disappeared with the stroke of a pen.

To eliminate political competition in 1994, the government of Zambia expelled two powerful members of the country's former ruling political party. Both men were declared dangers to "peace" and "order" in Zambia and forcibly removed to Malawi where the government refused to recognize them as citizens. After spending their lives in Zambia, they had gone from being statesmen to stateless in a matter of days.

In 2006, the government of Niger announced plans to expel 150,000 of its 200,000 "Chadian Arabs" living in the rural state of Dittu. Niger is a Muslim country, yet officials singled out Chadian Arabs as "foreigners" for expulsion because of alleged criminality and environmental damage. The Chadian Arabs, who fled drought and war in Chad during the 1970s and 1980s, claim they have no country to return to and have firmly settled in Niger, rising to high positions in the military, local government, and business. They also live in an area marked by increasing water scarcity.

These examples reveal that government manipulation of citizenship and creation of stateless populations is a practice unconstrained by time or place. It is something states continue to do for political and economic gain with almost absolute impunity and often devastating results. Postcolonial Africa is perhaps unique in the world for the frequency with which large numbers of people—regardless of whether they are wealthy businesspeople, influential politicians, or simple farmers and shepherds—are rendered stateless.

Citizenship crises in Africa are driven by a combination of factors, including historical migration, state succession in the aftermath of arbitrary colonial and postcolonial territorial arrangements, and conflicts based on postindependence nation-building and scarce resources. Ironically, growing democratization over the last couple of decades has also indirectly in-



“Give us our identity cards and we hand over our Kalashnikovs.”

fluenced citizenship policies. Some African leaders have embraced statelessness as a means of removing candidates who might defeat them and disenfranchising voters who might not elect them.

With the end of colonialism, geographically large and ethnically diverse colonial territories were divided into new African states, each supposedly with its own citizens. New borders that often scattered and isolated ethnic and religious groups gave some African leaders opportunities to hold or gain power by revoking citizenship and creating statelessness among national minorities. They developed propaganda and ideologies about which groups were “truly” native or indigenous to a territory and which ones should be considered “outsiders” worthy of persecution or even extermination. Often these definitions coincided with efforts to gain access to valuable and scarce resources and have led to violent conflict.

Electoral politics are the most recent context in which African leaders have pursued narrow interests by selectively denying citizenship. According to Congolese political scientist Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja: “[D]uring the current wave of democratization in Africa, incumbents bent on prolonging their stay in power have used exclusionary notions of citizenship to bar their most challenging rivals from the electoral process.”

In Côte d’Ivoire, President Henri Konan Bédié in 1995 began changing long-standing policies that had effectively managed the country’s diverse mix of ethnic groups and immigrants. Faced with the prospect of competitive elections, Bédié disenfranchised his main political rival through a constitutional provision that prevented people whose parents were not both born in Côte d’Ivoire from running for president. After winning the elections, Bédié continued to alienate various ethnic groups and migrant laborers by restricting their rights and denying them nationality and identity documents. Bédié’s poor leadership and a sinking economy prompted a military coup in 2000, followed by a civil war during which rebel leader (and current prime minister) Guillaume Soro declared, “give us our identity cards and we hand over our Kalashnikovs.”

People citing lack of official documents as a reason to pick up a machine gun says much about the importance of citizenship and the anger that comes with statelessness.

If governments and human rights advocates want to reduce the tensions and conflicts arising from citizenship issues and statelessness, they should consider Africa’s history and carefully review some of the conti-

ment’s key policy documents. The Open Society Justice Initiative is helping foster this process by working with local partners to document patterns of ethnic, racial, gender, and citizenship-based discrimination in Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Uganda, Zambia, and nine other African states. The Justice Initiative also helps identify opportunities for litigation to challenge discrimination, and advocates for comprehensive protections based upon international and regional standards.

The history of African nation states strongly points to a need for a regional regime of citizenship rights protection. A guiding principle for such a regime would be that one country cannot, without reference to a second country, unilaterally determine that a person previously treated as its national suddenly has the nationality of the second country.

While the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child explicitly guarantees the right of citizenship for children, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights protects *rights in* citizenship but not a *right to* citizenship. The omission of a citizenship guarantee from the African human rights charter can be remedied through a regional protocol. The protocol would guarantee a legally enforceable right to nationality for persons or members of all races and ethnic groups in Africa. It would also prohibit statelessness and measures that lead to statelessness; propose concrete measures for resolving nationality and citizenship disputes; place the burden of proof on the state in citizenship cases and fix the standard at a high level; and provide interim remedies pending resolution of citizenship disputes. Determination of claims under such a protocol would lie with the proposed African Court of Justice and Human Rights.

As long as African governments believe in branding people or their communities as stateless and thus valid targets for expulsion or even death, stability, development, and individual freedoms throughout the continent will be undermined.

The African National Congress’s Freedom Charter of 1955 strongly proclaims that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it.” This affirmation of inclusiveness and South Africa’s efforts to implement it have been crucial to dismantling apartheid and building the continent’s most developed political economy. It is a proclamation and set of principles that other African countries could learn from and consider.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reports and updates about efforts to monitor and challenge statelessness in Africa and across the world are available at www.justiceinitiative.org/activities/ec. To read the entire article as it appeared in the journal *Open Space*, go to www.osisa.org



The “War on Terror” Comes to the Horn of Africa

Snatching people off the streets seemingly at random may not be the best way for the United States and its allies in East Africa to prevent terrorism. Binaifer Nowrojee, director of the Open Society Initiative for East Africa, provides an update on how U.S.-led antiterrorism efforts in the region might backfire.

BINAIFER NOWROJEE

KAMILIYA TUWENI, a 42-year-old mother of three, was accused of having terrorist links and arrested in January 2007 while traveling through Kenya. Tuweni says she was beaten while in custody in Kenya, flown to Somalia on a chartered plane, and held in a small room with 22 other women and children before being flown to Ethiopia where she was interrogated by male U.S. intelligence agents.

For Tuweni, the abduction, mystery flights, interrogations, and beatings were a terrifying introduction to the growing U.S.-led “war on terror.” East Africa appears to be the latest center of renewed U.S. military operations.

Tuweni is one of the lucky ones. After several days, she was released without being charged with any crime and flew home to her family in the United Arab Emirates. Other families in Kenya continue to search fruitlessly for any word of loved ones who have disappeared. Several other individuals similarly detained in Somalia have surfaced in Guantánamo, weeks after their arrests, and little is known about the conditions they endured prior to their arrival in Cuba.

The governments of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia are closely cooperating with U.S. counterterrorism efforts. These operations—characterized by incommunicado detentions, the denial of access to consular or legal assistance, interrogations, and renditions—have resulted in the disappearances of over 100 people in Kenya since December 2006. These abuses have been detailed in *Horn of Terror*, a comprehensive report recently released by the Muslim Human Rights Forum, an Open Society Initiative for East Africa grantee.

The current U.S. campaign in East Africa gained momentum in late 2006 when U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces overthrew the Islamic government in Somalia. The fighting precipitated the flight of thousands of refugees who were intercepted at border points and screened by Kenyan, U.S. and U.K. military forces. According to Human Rights Watch, some 150 individuals from 18 different nationalities suspected of terrorist links were then transferred to Nairobi where they were held illegally. A number of Kenyan Muslims were also arrested in this crackdown. Dozens of individuals were held in incommunicado detention in and around Nairobi for several weeks at a time, without regard to Kenyan legal procedures or court orders.

Kenyan authorities working with U.S. and other intelligence services during the interrogation phase of the operation in Kenya denied detainees access to family members, legal counsel, diplomatic representatives, and members of the Kenyan National Human Rights Commission (which by law has access to all detention facilities). On a number of occasions, family

members inquired at police stations where their relatives were held, but police officials deliberately turned them away.

In another incident in January 2007, at least 85 people were secretly transferred in three plane loads from Kenya to Somalia in what appears to be a rendition operation. Among them were more than a dozen children under the age of 15, including a nine-month-old infant. It is believed that they were taken to Somalia, and then Ethiopia, to facilitate further interrogation, including mistreatment, torture, and perhaps even execution. As a result of growing international publicity, Ethiopia finally acknowledged it was holding detainees, and released approximately 40 individuals between April and June 2007, mostly non-African nationals, including the women and children.

The location of many other detainees, including eight Kenyans who were allegedly released in June, remains unknown to date. At the time of their deportation, a number were the subject of pending habeas corpus applications in the Kenyan courts. Some of the individuals sent to Somalia were Kenyan citizens, legal residents or possessed valid Kenyan visas. In March 2007, Kenyan security forces handed over an alleged al Qaeda suspect to U.S. authorities; he was subsequently transferred to Guantánamo Bay. Kenyan legal and rights activists have protested the contravention of Kenyan laws and the expulsion of Kenyan nationals to Somalia. They are urging the government to deal with terror suspects in accordance with due process under Kenyan law and not buckle under pressure from the United States. In the meantime, the United States has squandered what goodwill it may have had among the Muslim community in Kenya. “There is a risk that the continuing abuses will simply radicalize and spur new recruitment among youth,” said Leslie Lefkow, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch’s Africa division.

In East Africa, the United States is increasingly perceived as violent and militaristic. If U.S. policymakers believe that radicalism and terrorism thrive in weak states, then current tactics that erode due process protections, jeopardize individual security, and weaken the rule of law are more likely to foster terrorism than reduce it. In the long run, U.S. military strategists need to strongly consider whether adopting approaches that have had limited success in Guantánamo Bay will work any better in Africa.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

To learn more about human rights and antiterrorism efforts in East Africa, contact info@osiea.org or www.osiea.org.



Kenyan women demonstrate against the detention of their relatives due to suspicion of terrorism, Nairobi, Kenya, 2007.

“Kenyan legal and rights activists are urging the government to deal with terror suspects in accordance with Kenyan law and not buckle under pressure from the United States.”

Soldiers as a **Force** for Human Rights and HIV Prevention

Hortense Gbaguidi Niamke, HIV/AIDS program officer for the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, examines efforts to raise awareness about gender issues and HIV/AIDS among West African soldiers.

HORTENSE GBAGUIDI NIAMKE

PEACEKEEPING FORCES using soldiers from West Africa can provide security, stability, and new opportunities for war-torn societies to pursue peace and reconciliation. But the arrival of peacekeepers or the presence of soldiers to restore order in conflict zones can also bring new threats to human rights and public health. Some peacekeepers and soldiers return from the battlefield not only with medals, but also with new wives, women for use as sexual and domestic servants, and infections such as HIV.

As African states take on more peacekeeping operations or look to their militaries to preserve the rule of law and defend civilian authority, policymakers are exploring strategies for minimizing the role military forces play in perpetrating human rights abuses and contributing to Africa's HIV/AIDS crisis.

The combination of soldiers and unfamiliar, tense environments marked by desperate citizens, dysfunctional economies, and absence of the rule of law can be a recipe for abusive and risky behavior. In such contexts, sexual encounters among soldiers, sex workers, and local residents can be frequent, casual, and violent. These situations not only compound the risks of infection for soldiers and civilians in conflict areas, but also for people in the cities and villages that soldiers return to when they go home.

Bringing civilians and soldiers together to discuss human rights and gender issues is one way of reducing these risks. At a 2007 workshop in Côte d'Ivoire sponsored by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), women who survived abuse from soldiers, including peacekeeping forces, shared their experiences with psychologists, military officials, and soldiers. While none of the attending soldiers were perpetrators of abuse, all either had peacekeeping experience or were preparing for peacekeeping deployments.

During the workshop women described being offered to soldiers in exchange for money or security for families and communities, and episodes of repeated rape that resulted in some of the women contracting HIV. As they listened, the participating soldiers hung their heads in disbelief that such cruelty could occur, in some cases in their own countries or perpetrated by troops from their own armies.

Such exchanges are part of a number of new efforts by OSIWA, ECOWAS-WAHO and governments and civil society organizations in Ghana, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire to give peacekeepers and soldiers better training in human rights, gender issues, and HIV prevention.

When it comes to HIV and peacekeeping, armies across the region do not necessarily present the same levels of risk. For example, data on Ghana suggest that its armed forces have a lower HIV infection rate than the

general public. In Senegal, the rates for the military and the public are the same. Yet, a majority of the armed forces in West Africa have higher rates of HIV infection than civilian populations.

Prior to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, peacekeepers preparing for deployment received only rudimentary health services and instruction in personal hygiene. With the advent of HIV/AIDS, all troops selected for external peacekeeping operations undergo mandatory medical examinations including HIV screening. Senegal is one of the few countries where HIV-positive soldiers are allowed to go on peacekeeping missions if they do not require heavy medication. The majority of West Africa's armies monitor and withhold HIV-positive soldiers from peacekeeping deployments. Greater challenges to preventing HIV infection and human rights abuses occur once peacekeepers have been deployed.

During the course of deployments and military service, some soldiers have sex with people other than their steady partners such as sex workers or members of the local civilian population. Peacekeepers and soldiers can also take advantage of unequal power relationships, and use their status as men and members of military groups to abuse and rape women. Soldiers and their partners often do not use condoms and other safe sex practices, or one person, usually the man, insists on and forces the woman to engage in unsafe sex. In other cases soldiers come home with women they took as domestic or sexual servants, or they develop relationships with women who return with them as new wives. Both scenarios work to increase the risk of transmitting HIV to more and more people. For example, the Republic of Guinea reported that about 8 percent of its peacekeepers in Sierra Leone contracted HIV after one year of deployment.

In addition to preventing abuse by raising awareness about violence against women and punishing peacekeepers who commit acts of rape and abuse, some West African countries are reducing casual sex between peacekeepers and populations in deployment areas by allowing soldiers to return home for family visits. Some states allow soldiers to go home every three months, but military officials have yet to develop a system of standardized, rotating home visits. A number of armies in the region are also implementing mandatory safe sex training and condom distribution.

Some countries have turned to soldiers' wives for help in reducing risky behavior. In Ghana, the wives of noncommissioned officers are elected by the other wives in the unit to serve as "Magajias"—informal leaders and peer educators trained in basic counseling and safe sex and HIV prevention practices that the wives can apply to themselves and their spouses.

These efforts represent only the first steps toward a comprehensive strategy for training West African peacekeepers and soldiers in general.

If such programs can increase respect for human rights and reduce the spread of HIV, then West African soldiers, particularly those on peacekeeping missions, will be much better able to practice the principles that they are deployed to protect.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about gender awareness and HIV prevention activities directed at West African militaries, contact osiwa-dakar@osiwa.org or osiwa-abuja@osiwa.org

Nigerian UN peacekeepers conduct routine search, Monrovia, Liberia, 2004.

“Bringing civilians and soldiers together to discuss human rights and gender issues is one way of reducing risks.”





Children taking turns filling buckets and cans with water, Zimbabwe, 2001.



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