

FOCUS

ACTION FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE



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INSIDE EPAs: an honourable tradition dishonoured / Deportation - In the state's interest? / Campaigners' victory over 'New Issues' at WTO / The EU's new 'Human Security' doctrine



The rediscovery of Argon oil production has given the Berber women of Morocco a degree of economic independence (Photographer: Boris Heger / www.extremimages.co.uk)

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We have tried, sometimes without success, to contact all relevant photographers and agencies to seek their permission to use photographs. We apologise to those we have been unable to trace.

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Co-ordinator's welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the newly redesigned Focus Magazine.

In a time of burgeoning possibilities, this issue represents an important step in a vigorous renewal of our commitment to building a truly global movement for social and economic justice, a commitment upon which Comhlámh was founded 30 years ago.

Across the developing world, voices of civil society and people's movements are emerging (see page 8) with unprecedented confidence, urgency and political strength. In response, we aim to deliver more focused opportunities for you to take action. We begin with the launch of our contribution to the African-led EPA campaign (see pages 4 - 6), in answer to an urgent call to action sent by African civil society to Europe earlier this year.

This is an exciting time. The present moment could be pivotal in the fight against global injustice and poverty. Amidst publicity around the 20th anniversary of Live Aid, and building on successes of the past year (see page 12), 2005 will be packed with opportunities to reach people. The EPA campaign will feed into April's Global Week of Action (see page 13), where we have the chance to join an estimated 50 million people across the world in a week long mobilisation for justice in international trade. This will be followed in the summer by the UN conference to assess progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. 189 countries have pledged to do their "utmost" to meet these goals, by halving global poverty by 2015.

Governments can be made to take seriously their pledges to social justice and poverty elimination. But what is by now absolutely certain is that this will only happen (pages 12 - 13) if people everywhere make it abundantly clear that this is what we expect, and that this is what we demand, from our politicians.

2005 could be the year where justice and poverty issues begin to seep into the mainstream in powerful new ways, generating real political will for change. There is no longer any excuse for our actions to be on behalf of people in the global South – we must now act with them, as fellow global citizens.

Bringing the energy, dynamism, urgency and passion of Southern voices and movements to Ireland, north and south, will be a central and ongoing part of our work. We are seeking to fundamentally shift and develop public understanding of the developing world.

We invite you to be a part of it.



Emma Lane-Spollen

A Call to Action from Africa - Act now to stop the EPAs.

Sign and mail the "STOP EPA" postcard and insist that EU not exploit aid relationships to wring damaging trade concessions from some of the poorest countries in the world. Ireland must not allow the EU to do this in our name.

With this issue of Focus, we relay a call to action to anyone who wants to end poverty, to anyone tired of hearing about how poor countries seem only to get poorer, and to anyone who wants the EU to start dismantling the global structures that seem to trap billions in poverty.

Across Europe, citizens are being asked to pressure their government into ceasing efforts to create a series of trade deals, called EPAs.

If allowed to continue unchallenged, the EPAs trade deals (see pages 4 to 6) will destroy livelihoods, increase poverty, and further increase dependency and undermine the development efforts of the 77 affected countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The call to action comes directly from the countries affected: "It was a very straightforward call," recalls Lizz Dodd, a policy analyst with the UK's TradeCraft, who was at the first meeting where the call was received, "saying you are not doing enough in Europe, it's your governments who are the problem, and we don't see enough action from you and we can't manage this by ourselves. We're doing what we can in Africa, but we can't do this without your support. So please, support us."

Posting a single postcard in Ireland may seem a small and ineffective gesture. But by answering this call as a part a campaign now spreading across Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, you really can make a difference. Act now! (You could also collect signatures of others in your area.)

If you live in Northern Ireland, please indicate this when sending the card to Comhlámh and we will redirect your card to Patricia Hewitt, UK Secretary of State for Trade and Industry via the UK Stop EPA campaign.

Help get Focus Read

We believe Focus magazine can encourage more Irish people to campaign for international justice. To do this, we need to expand our readership.

You can really help by finding outlets that are willing to sell

Focus. Ask your local newsagent, coffee shop, student union or even pub or club if they would be willing to stock a few copies.

And with Christmas coming, why not think of offering a subscription to Focus as a present for your friends and family?



*We express our sincere condolences to the family of Margaret Hassan, her friends and the staff of CARE International.
Her commitment to the people of Iraq is warmly remembered.*

“Stop EPAs”: An Honourable Tradition Dishonoured

The EU are twisting their honourable aid-giving tradition by wringing damaging trade concessions from some of the world’s poorest countries. Comhlámh Trade Justice meets with a leading member of African civil society who is calling on Europeans to get behind a campaign to stop the EU’s “Economic Partnership Agreements” (EPAs).

Aid and Trade: “Giving with one hand and taking away with the other”

“I believe that very many citizens in Europe want to do good,” says Nancy Kachingwe, an analyst with the civil society watchdog Third World Network. “[They] want their governments to do the best thing possible to help poor countries. I think many of them end up despairing that oh, all the aid that we give, the countries are still getting poorer. But there’s also a need ... to realise that very often what you’re giving with one hand, you may be taking away with the other hand.”

Originally from Malawi, Nancy has travelled to London from Ghana for the launch of a new European campaign seeking fairness in Europe’s trade relationships with developing countries.

“[M]aybe it’s a bit technical,” Nancy admits “and a maybe it looks obscure, but it does make a difference to people’s lives.”

What are EPAs? And what have they to do with chickens?

EPAs are the “Economic Partnership Agreements”: a series of free trade agreements the EU is negotiating with the 77 countries of African, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Collectively this group is called the ACP, and it includes many of the poorest countries in the world. The EPA negotiations seek to liberalise – or force open – the markets of ACP countries. This would deliver new markets to European exporters, and give them a significant advantage over

US and Japanese competitors who have not yet managed to open these markets for themselves.

“At the moment we can see many communities that are being hurt by liberalisation processes” says Nancy. “One of the famous examples is poultry producers. They are finding that they have to compete with very cheap poultry products coming from European markets... [T]hey’re actu-

“The EU is abandoning this 30-year tradition and pursuing an aggressive agenda of liberalisation”

ally being wiped out of business because of the combination of low tariffs and subsidies.”

In Ghana, however, when farmers found they faced being dispossessed, they fought back. Although under intense pressure to liberalise from foreign creditors, the Ghanaian government was forced to respond to its citizens, and the tariffs that protected its farmers from unfairly subsidised European imports were reinstated.

But if the EPA negotiations are completed by 2007 as planned, liberalisation would be mandatory. Trade rules would then explicitly prevent governments from intervening to foster or protect local industries. The experience of poultry

farmers in West Africa gives a very real indication of the destruction of livelihoods likely to ensue.

An honourable tradition dishonoured

It wasn’t always like this. ACP countries have been allowed some market access to Europe, without being required to open their markets in return. This market access, integrated with EU development aid, was spelled out in the Cotonou Accord, named after the capital of Benin, where the agreement was signed.

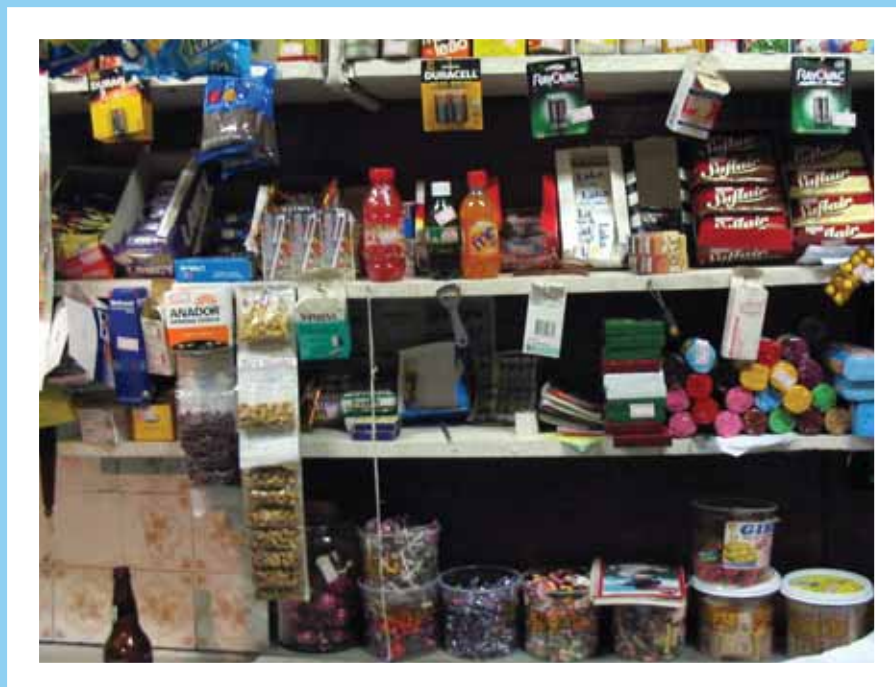
The success of Cotonou (and its predecessors) has been less than stellar. Access to European markets has not boosted development by encouraging poor countries to export. What’s more, many critics say it has made it easier to strip Africa of its natural resources. Nevertheless, it has hitherto been one of the few elements of EU trade policy that we can be proud of, since it combined development aid with opportunities to trade.

Now, however, the EU is abandoning this 30-year tradition and pursuing an aggressive agenda of liberalisation, and forcing countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific into the EPA negotiations.

The Scramble for Africa

Critics are also castigating the EU for ignoring the efforts the ACP countries are already making to achieve economic integration. To better understand the situa-

Open to trade (Photograph by Tiago Pantaleao / www.stockxchng.com)



tion some ACP countries find themselves in, consider how damaging it would be if, say, the US suddenly declared that Ireland had to team up with Canada for trade negotiations, or how absurd it would be if the EU demanded that California be paired with Mexico. It seems ludicrous, but that is precisely what is happening in the EPA negotiations, as countries are finding themselves grouped with others far removed from their regional bodies.

Oduour Ong'wen of SEATINI, another African organisation working for a just trade system for developing countries, is just one of many who find these groupings suspicious.

"If you look at what is happening in EPAs now, it is like a repeat of the Berlin conference once again", he says, referring to the 1884 conference in which Africa's borders were arbitrarily drawn by European colonial powers with brazen disregard to local populations. "...EPAs are undermining our efforts at regional integration."

"But more importantly," he continues, "the thread that runs through is that Africa remains a source of primary commodities exported to Europe, and then we import back value-added processed material [...] That is how it was at the end of the 19th century, and that is how it is now at the beginning of the 21st century[...] And this is the situation EPAs are reinforcing."

"We want to trade, but we want to trade in a way that will be beneficial to us,

just in the same way as it will be beneficial to our trading partners."

"Dragged Kicking and Screaming": The carrots and sticks of aid and market access

"I feel quite upset about the way the EU is moving the negotiations forward, because they are definitely in the driving seat," says Nancy. Many countries fear losing the market access they now receive. Dependence on foreign aid further makes them vulnerable to the sort of bullying tactics that the EU has frequently demonstrated towards poor countries in trade negotiations. "I think what they have tried to do is find countries that are maybe more desperate very often for aid, [...] the EU has really exploited these weakness within the ACP group"

How then, Comhlámh asks Nancy, are African governments responding to the EPA negotiations?

"My description would be that they've been dragged kicking and screaming into it", she replies.

Call to Action from Africa: Putting our Governments on Notice

After months of fruitless lobbying, it became clear to people like Nancy that ACP governments could not realistically stand up to the EU without encouragement from their citizens. They called for a massive popular campaign to stop the EPA negotiations. In order to create the political space for ACP negotiators to take a stand, they sent a similar call to action out to Europe.

When we spoke, she had just returned to Europe to see the result of that call.

"I think it's very exciting that so many organisations in different countries have decided to be part of this Stop EPAs campaign. ... [I]f it becomes a big issue in Europe and lots of citizens are expressing concern, I think it could actually change the way the process goes."

"Without that kind of campaign to put governments on notice that we are watching what is happening, and we like it or we don't like it, the process will continue as it is to our detriment I think"

Partnership, going forwards.

"There are good ways of using aid that really do benefit, and many people have benefited," Nancy concludes. "But very often we're just taking away with the other hand so that the overall result is a negative one in terms of more poverty and more famine. "

Having launched a partnership between people across continents on a scale that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago, activists such as Nancy are convinced that the EU and the ACP can forge a strong, mutually-beneficial relationship, involving aid and trade, but based on fairness, and solidarity between people.

To get involved, see page 3. For more detail, see overleaf.

Words by Ian McDonald

What are Economic Partnership Agreements?

1

1975-2000: A tradition to be proud of
How the EU helps developing countries: ACP-EU Lomé Partnership Agreement

- Aid: EU gives money for development
- Trade: EU gives each ACP country some access to EU markets for its exporters
- Political dialogue: Exchanges between EU and ACP ministers and parliaments to promote democracy

2

2000: Cotonou Agreement

Like Lomé, except a commitment to form 'WTO compatible' trade agreements (no mention of reciprocity). The ACPs need the aid. 2002 EPA negotiations started.

3

What's new in EPAs?

- 'Reciprocity': Developing countries must open their markets to EU goods to get EU aid and trade package
- 'The 'New Issues' refused by poor countries at the WTO in Cancun are to be included in EPAs (see page 13)
- Services liberalisation is to be more than is required at the WTO
- Counter-terrorism clauses are to be included - may risk human rights

These add up to forcing the poorest countries into full Free Trade areas with the EU

What are EPAs?

Economic Partnership Agreements are new free trade agreements between the EU and a group of developing countries in a region. They are to be operative from the end of 2007, but the poorest countries already have supposed access to EU markets, so there is little gain for them in EPAs.

And what's the fuss about?

Who are the ACP?

They are 77 developing countries, mostly former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific

The process is not fair

- When ACPs agreed to form EPAs, many opt-outs were included, but in the negotiations the EU is taking a different line
- The 51 Least Developed Countries are exempt from 'reciprocity' at the WTO, but not in EPAs
- The power balance is unequal - ACPs depend on the EU for aid, trade access and debt relief
- Sleight of hand: Trade lawyers are negotiating what should be a development aid agreement
- ACP trade experts are already overstretched at the WTO talks
- Divide and conquer: The EU previously dealt with all 77 ACP countries. For EPAs it is dividing them into regional groups

5

What should happen instead?

- The EU 25 should work with the 77 ACP countries for WTO flexibility to allow the EU to favour poor countries
- No reciprocity should be required of countries below the poverty line
- Impact assessment, including gender impact of existing agreements before further liberalisation goes ahead
- EU should reduce technical barriers which protect EU producers from developing country competition
- Any changes must keep within the poverty reduction objective of the Cotonou Agreement

4

What will be the impact of EPAs in poor countries?

- Opening developing country markets to unfair competition. Local producers will be exposed to unbeatable competition from the EU
- Some poor countries will lose much government revenue as EU products will enter without tax. How will schools, etc, be funded?
- Undermining existing regional integration

For more on EPAs see:
www.stopEPA.org
www.EPAwatch.org
www.comhlamh.org

Southern voices

The dispossessed of neo-liberal globalisation begin to organise

Manuel Perez Rocha, activist with network of social movement, Mexico

“The people of Ireland and the people of Mexico have more in common than the colour of our flags and a love of beer ... What you suffered in the 19th century - the Great Famine - is very similar to what’s happening in Mexico now. The peasants are almost non-producing because of cheap imports of basic grains”

Jayati Ghosh, Economist, Jawaharlal Neru University, India
“Many of us in India find it ironic that India is seen as a success story of the Globalisation decade...”

What the government did is throw these farmers open to international competition at a point where we all know that world trade in agricultural commodities is not free... And then we say ‘well, you should learn to stand on your feet, this is globalisation. There’s nothing to be done about it.’ Whereas actually, there’s a lot to be done about it, there’s a lot that the government could do.

I went to Africa recently – identical situation. Across Africa there is an agrarian crisis... Latin America, very similar... So there’s a kind of devastating systematic attack on agriculture across the developing world.”

Rudolf Amengɔ-Etego, Campaign Coordinator and Founder, Ghana National Coalition Against the Privatisation of Water
“People are really angry [about the privati-

sation of water]...I go to Newma, go to Soucra, go to Ashaima, which are working class areas, there are protesters daily, ...we are very resentful of the intrusions into our daily lives by the World Bank...”

The social movement is organised on a community basis, and then through the labour movements, so we have the community activists who are working directly in residential areas linking up with the labour movements...

Because our governments are weak in terms of the power relations between them, the World Bank and the multinationals and the bilaterals ... the only meaningful response to the onslaught is people power, where we mobilise citizens to say no to certain things. I think the social movement is where our hope lies”.

Shalmali Guttal, Policy analyst and activist with Focus on the Global South, India

The groups that we are working with, and who we do support, they want autonomy, they want self-determination, they want their rights to be respected, and they want to have the capacity and power to implement their rights. So, farmers want the right to produce. Workers want the right to work, safety and employment, good wages. People basically are fed up of people sitting in London or Washington DC or Paris or wherever, and deciding for them how their lives should be run.

Farmers in India, Thailand, the Philippines or Indonesia know very well what the WTO [the World Trade Organisation] is. They may not know each

and every article of agreement, but they know full well the impact of the WTO on their daily lives, and on whether they will be able to sell their produce in the market tomorrow or not. And they are organizing; you must have heard of Via Campesina, which is very large. There are lots of people making links.

Yamentiti Namposa, UNAC (a peasant farmers organisation), Mozambique

[W]e need to join together as a world to face this problem. ...as we talk as a peasant movement in Mozambique only, the possibility of being heard worldwide is very remote but if there is an international organisation that works at the global level, the struggles of millions of peasants can be heard and things may be changed.

When we say ‘another world is possible’ it means that a world of food sovereignty, for example, is possible. A world in which the peasants in Mozambique are the owners of the process of development, are the owners of their ideas, they produce what they want, they use the inputs according to their own need, with knowledge and wisdom which is passed from generations to generations. ... A world where all the farming communities, farming families, have employment, hospitals, schools, but it’s a result of the process made by themselves, not imposed from outside. So this is the kind of world we are dreaming of, and we think that that world is possible.

Compiled by Ian McDonald

The EU's new 'Human Security' doctrine

Irish NGOs appeared for a moment to have scored an impressive victory, but closer inspection reveals otherwise

During the country's recent EU Presidency, NGOs called for the EU to make "human security" the cornerstone of its foreign policy and seemed to have succeeded when, in September, the EU launched its 'Human Security Doctrine'. In this the EU declares it will send a rapid-reaction force of up to 15,000 troops to quell crises like the current one in Sudan.

The doctrine certainly has good points: it pledges to respect human rights, recognises that so-called collateral damage is unacceptable and places the emphasis firmly on building local authority rather than "winning the fight." It even tells troops to support the special role of women in building security. As a military doctrine, it's as good as you can get.

However, this approach only reflects half of the human security picture. The UN says Human Security means 'freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to act on one's own behalf'

When it comes to the 'freedom from want' bit, the EU doctrine stays strangely silent. Which is a mistake: because the only way to prevent crises from breaking out in the first place is to try much harder to stamp out poverty.

Another problem is that little effort has been made to ensure the doctrine is not abused: while the EU says it will only intervene multilaterally, it does not make a UN mandate a necessity. Indeed, interventions will not need to be approved by the European Parliament. Even George Bush must get clearance from Congress!

In what may seem a bizarre stance, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, speaking in Dublin in October, encouraged this EU plan. This is a tacit admission that the UN as is does not work: after the organisation's disastrous withdrawal from Rwanda ten years ago, the world cried "never again", but now, as a similar catastrophe unfolds in Darfur, the Security Council cannot agree a mandate for intervention.

The current review of the Security Council is urgently needed.



Refugees cooking at a camp in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Photograph: Peter Wilhjelms / www.stockxchng.com)

Oil and human lives

No respite for the people of Darfur in Sudan. With the rainy season looming large, the misery of more than a million displaced people is set to increase, as the UN Security Council twiddles its thumbs.

Why won't the UN act? Because some of its members have vested interests in protecting the Sudanese government, which is responsible for the agony.

Unsurprisingly, those interests relate to oil. China has invested an estimated \$15 billion in oil projects in Sudan, which provides up to 7% of China's oil imports.

Beijing has shown where its priorities lie by repeatedly forcing the Security Council to water down condemnations of the Sudanese government. Oil, it seems, is more important than people.

The real price of diamonds

Dazzled by the sparkle, many European do not realise that by buying diamonds they may be funding brutal gangsters in Angola and Sierra Leone.

Investigations by the International Crisis Group have revealed that criminals are earning vast sums by channelling gems from mines in Sierra Leone through diamond-cutters in Tel Aviv and Amsterdam to high-street jewellers throughout Europe. With their loot, they buy weapons.

In Angola, both sides in a 25-year civil war funded their fighting by stripping the country's massive natural resources, with the government using oil to buy arms and UNITA rebels using diamonds to do likewise.

With so much hidden blood and pain in Sierra Leone and Angola, can we really say diamonds are a girl's best friend?

Coke is it (unless you're an insect)

Coca Cola has had many claims made about it over the years, but its use as a pesticide spray certainly wasn't part of the original product description. Yet farmers in Andhra Pradesh in India say that Coke protects their crops better than Monsanto and other commercial pesticides.

In the public interest?

Thousands of families are living in limbo as the Minister for Justice ponders what to do with them. Unable to plan their future, the parents of Irish-born children have been told they may be deported “in the interest of the state.”

“I’m in a limbo. I don’t know what the next day will bring.” For Nigerian immigrant Susan (not her real name) and her Irish born daughter, life in Ireland means waking up each morning wondering if this will be her last day in the country. Susan received a letter from the Minister for Justice in September, informing her that she is to be deported. Since then, she has been living with the fear that she and her daughter will be taken from their home and bundled aboard a plane to an unknown fate.

Susan has hired a solicitor and is doing her best to persuade the state to let her stay. If unsuccessful, the first notice Susan will receive will probably be a dawn or night-time raid from the Gardaí, who will slam her into Dublin’s Cloverhill prison until a charter plane is ready to fly her to Nigeria. Chances are she’ll be held in an overcrowded cell, in flagrant violation of the state’s legal obligations to detainees. If she is treated like other deported parents, her daughter’s passport will likely be confiscated—because it is “property of the state.” Her mobile phone may also be taken, even though it is legally hers. The authorities, however, may ignore that particular right just in case she uses her phone to call for help, and thereby complicate deportation procedures. Forcing Susan to leave the country where her child was born will cost the tax-payer some 3,000.

There are many Susans. The Campaign Against the Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC) reckon some 11,000 families were thrown into similar turmoil when, in January 2003, the Supreme Court decision in the Lobe and Osayande case stripped non-national parents of Irish born children the right to automatically gain residence here.

“Thousands of families are living in limbo as the Minister for Justice ponders what to do with them”

The situation has slightly changed since then, especially after last June’s Citizenship Referendum, the outcome of which meant that even people born on this island are not automatically entitled to citizenship. Some of the families affected are nationals of the new EU member-states, and were therefore able to claim residency after last May’s expansion of the EU. However, for the thousands that remain, life is still an anxious wait for letters from Michael McDowell, the Minister for Justice.

Minister McDowell says that, as of October 2004, letters like the one Susan

received have been sent to another 3,239 immigrant parents of Irish born children. Aisling Reidy of ICCL, who has been in regular contact with the Department of Justice and who fears the Minister is determined to keep churning them out.

As soon as parents receive such a letter, their legal standing becomes blurred. The process of applying for leave to remain in Ireland is complex and requires very expensive legal expertise – and the hapless recipients must somehow fork out for that themselves, since all access to free legal aid is immediately withheld. According to Jean-Pierre Eyanga of Integrating Ireland, solicitors are quoting fees of up to 3,000 to make representations for clients. Ronit Lentin, professor of Sociology at TCD, claims she knows of people who have had no choice but to borrow from extortionate money-lenders in order to hire solicitors.

The final decision over deportation remains at the discretion of the Minister for Justice. He has so far given final rulings on 429 cases of parents, issuing deportation orders in 384 and granting leave to remain in a mere 45 cases. Just how he comes to his decisions is unclear, as he will not reveal how or why he decides who can stay and who is to be exiled.

It is impossible then, to know for sure that he is complying with the law. When reaching decisions on deportation, the

Potential deportees at an O'Connell Street vigil marking UN Universal Children's Day, organised by the Campaign Against Deportation of Irish Children (CADIC) (Photograph: Paul Ryan, Rinofoto)



Minister is obliged - under Section 3 of the 1999 Immigration Act – to take a range of factors into account, including the immigrant's employment status and prospects, domestic circumstances, standing in the community as well as any humanitarian circumstances affecting the case. He must also explain his reasons for issuing a deportation order. But Minister McDowell has refused to disclose such details for the 429 cases on which he has delivered final verdicts. Instead, he has fobbed inquiries off with a nebulous "it's in the interests of the state." This sort of secrecy means people awaiting decision from the Minister have no way of predicting whether or not they will be deemed worthy of life in Ireland.

Section 3 also obliges the Minister to decide whether a deportation is "conducive to the public good." Professor Lentin believes deporting these parents is precisely the opposite, arguing that it sows despair and distrust in Irish society.

"People are in a state of fear," she says,

"there are people who don't go out after dark, there are cases of people moving from house to house at night, or giving their children away to avoid deportation. The notion of living in a society where people are rounded up at dawn and deported is deeply disturbing."

There are material concerns too. Deported Irish children could conceivably sue the state in the future for denying them their social and educational rights, and neglecting their constitutional right to the protection of the state.

What makes the current situations so sadly ironic, according to Professor Lentin, is that many of the parents facing deportation are highly educated and capable of making a rich social and economic contribution to Ireland. Susan, indeed, serves as perfect example of what could be lost: an intelligent and highly articulate woman, she is a qualified accountant and, while awaiting news of her fate, has devoted her creativity and energy to helping foster understanding

and friendship between immigrants and locals in the small town where she lives.

Comhlámh supports CADIC's call on the government to end the anguish of the non-national parents of Irish born children by declaring a once-off amnesty, whereby these parents would acquire residency rights. Allowing those involved to stay would not cost the state or Irish society much—the numbers are limited and relatively tiny.

Susan says that if she could speak personally to Minister McDowell, she would ask him to regularise her situation, to allow her to make Ireland her home: "Minister, please do something positive. I didn't come because of passport tourism—if that was so, I would have left long ago. I want to work and to contribute to Irish society."

You can support CADIC by signing their on-line petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/dric1954/petition.html>

Words by Stephen Rigney

Campaign Victory: WTO 1, Trade Justice 3

Trade Justice campaigners celebrated a crucial victory after last July's WTO negotiations, when developing countries successfully rejected three of the four new areas of trade (together called the 'New Issues'), previously slated for liberalisation within the WTO.

Although widely criticised for the way they would further skew global trade imbalances, the EU had previously refused to budge on the Singapore Issues, insisting they be included in the current round of WTO talks. That would have made the markets and resources of poor countries even more vulnerable to predatory industrialised nations. It would force them to liberalise, i.e. eliminate the government's ability to regulate, in the areas of competition and government procurements, and investment.

"The problem", explains Nancy Kachingwe, a Malawian policy analyst with the civil society organisation Third World Network, "is that foreign investors can do as much harm as they can do good. You need to have a set of regulations that allow governments and that allows the state to make sure they can make the best out of investment. But the types of proposals that are being put in these investment agree-



Protesters at the WTO conference in Cancun, Mexico in 2003 (Photograph: cancun.indymedia.org)

ments area very much biased towards corporations. They are biased so that the corporations can make a lot of money, and leave with it, without having really invested that much or brought many benefits to the countries where they're operating."

Had these proposals been passed, governments in the developing world would have been powerless to direct investment into the most needed areas or to require them to link to the local economy. Their local development plans would be undermined.

The defeat of these issues comes as a

real affirmation of the efforts of people campaigning across the world. "There were groups from everywhere," recalls Nancy, "There was mobilisation from Latin America, from Asia, from The US, from Europe, From Africa, from many regions, and that collective protest and those many voices expressing concerns means also that the governments have to respond to them in some way."

Comhlámh members and supporters can celebrate as they too were active in the campaign to stop these new issues being added to the WTO's power.

Keeping our word

Ireland's Commitment to 0.7% GNP by 2007

6th September 2000.

"Today, on behalf of the Government and people of Ireland, I wish in this forum publicly to make a commitment to fully meeting the United Nations target of spending 0.7% of GNP on Official Development Assistance."
Bertie Ahern, Taoiseach, addressing the UN Millenium Summit

5th October 2004.

"I don't realistically think we're going to achieve that within the time-frame we set out."
Conor Lenihan, Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, News At One, RTE Radio One

6th October

"Is the Minister telling us that Ireland will renege on its promise to the world's poor? Further slippage from our promises will condemn more of the poorest people in the world to continuing misery and hopelessness."
Dr. Brian Scott, Executive Director of Oxfam Ireland



Source: www.dochas.ie

Get up! Stand up! Join the Global Week of Action

Happy that the world's wealth is in the hands of a few while the majority suffer and die? No? Then join an estimated 50 million people from around the world in a week long mobilisation for justice in the rules of international trade. Preparations are underway across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas for the Global Week of Action, which will run from 10th-16th April 2005 and will see all kinds of events aimed at conveying two loud and clear messages:

NO to the rich and powerful imposing unjust trade agreements, indiscriminate liberalisation and privatisation on the poor.

YES to everyone's right to food, a livelihood, water, health and education.

The idea emerged from a marathon brainstorm among trade justice campaigners from across the world as they met in India last year. But people and organisations from all over the planet are making it their own, promising a global mobilisation the like of which the world has seldom seen. You too can get involved in near-by events or devise your own plans of action. Comhlámh is just one of the organisations in Ireland that will be very active that week. For more information on what it's all about and how you can make a difference, visit www.april2004.org or www.tradejustice.ie.

Volunteer Options 21 Programme

More and more people want to get involved in volunteer work overseas and last October Comhlámh launched a new project to provide them with information and support. Called Volunteer Options 21, the project aims to help would-be volunteers to make informed decisions and also to help ensure that when they do go abroad, volunteers actually contribute to improving matters rather than making them worse. The project is funded by Development Cooperation Ireland and will strive to ensure that short-term volunteer assignments help achieve long-term development goals.

The programme will:

- Create a website and hard-copy publication featuring comprehensive information on overseas volunteering, both short- and long-term;
- Devise and refine a Code of Good Practice for sending organisations;
- Draw up and finalise a Volunteers' Charter;
- Design workshops to help potential volunteers explore their options before and after going overseas.

If you have worked as a volunteer overseas for any period of time up to one year, we would love to get your views. We would also like to hear from any organisations involved in volunteer placements overseas. For further information, please contact Barry Cannon, Project Officer (email: barry@comhlamh.org), or Dervla King, Information Officer (email: dervla@comhlamh.org).

Sign the petition at www.keepourword.org

7th October.

"In the week when the new Minister for Foreign Affairs sits down with Brian Cowen to bargain for increased aid spending, the Minister of State for Overseas Development, of all people, should be fighting his corner and not preparing the ground for the government to break its promise."

Margaret Boden, Christian Aid

13th October

"When the Taoiseach made the announcement at the UN millennium summit in 2000 he was doing so on the basis of a Government commitment and decision. That decision has not been reneged on and has not been changed."

Mary Harney, Tanaiste

18th November

"I am providing an additional €60m for the Vote for International Cooperation (in 2005) ... I have agreed that an additional €65 million will be provided both in 2006 and 2007 which we estimate should represent, based on present calculations, at that stage 0.5% of GNP."

Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen TD

2007

19th November

"Not only has the government broken its promise to the poorest countries but it is now putting out misleading figures regarding what little increases it is going to achieve"

Hans Zomer, Director of Dóchas, the umbrella body for Irish development NGOs

0.5%

or

0.44%

???

Female Genital Mutilation

A campaign is underway to secure specific legislation to outlaw the practise in Ireland

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) means removing some or all of a woman's genitalia, often in the name of tradition. This frequently has grave consequences for the victim's health. According to the World Health Organisation, up to 132 million women and girls worldwide have been subjected to FGM, and at least two million girls a year are at risk. Including some in Ireland.

The health and development group in Comhlámh has formed a coalition with the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), Labour Women and Akidwa, the African Women's Network to raise awareness in Ireland about FGM and to develop legislative and educational strategies for tackling the problem.

It is not an easy issue to deal with, and emotions often run high as, in addition to being a very intimate subject, some people say clamping down on FGM equals cultural imperialism. So the issue has to be handled with great sensitivity. The FGM



Irish citizen Remi Bisuga with her children Wunmi, Lekan and Ireti Elizabeth (Photograph: Maria Callen, Press 22)

coalition is engaging with those most affected by the practice of FGM. Not only does it provide important information to

individuals and communities who practice or have practiced FGM, but it also educates organisations, health care professionals and immigration officials on resolving the concerns that surround the practice.

Comhlámh believes that education alone is not sufficient to stop FGM and so wants to see the practice outlawed by specific legislation. We were successful in getting a private member's bill introduced in the Dail to ban FGM. But the bill was defeated because the government claimed that existing legislation is enough to prosecute FGM cases. Many experts disagree, however, and fear that unless changes are made to the law, prosecutions could fail in court.

The coalition would welcome anybody who is willing to help the campaign against FGM. If you are interested, please contact Astrid in the health and development group at astrid@comhlahm.org.

Who is Akidwa?

Akidwa, the African Women's Network, have played a major role in raising awareness about FGM. Akidwa's Chairperson, Salome Henry, stresses the importance of educating Irish people, especially health care workers.

Akidwa believes that FGM cannot be excused as a cultural practice, but must be treated as a violation of women's human rights. Nor can it be considered in isolation, but should be linked to the wider problem of violence against women.

Akidwa have organised seminars on FGM throughout the country, involving Irish people as well as the immigrant community. They receive some funding from the Department of Justice as well as from Comhlámh for their work, but need more resources to build a wider campaign.

Contact Akidwa at: akidwa@eircom.net

European Social Forum

When the European campaign against the EPAs was officially launched, it was at a London gathering of over 20,000 activists, campaigners, trade unionists, and assorted individuals for the 3rd European Social Forum last October.

The three-day event contained countless workshops and seminars, a flurry of networking, strategising, and sharing of experience. Throughout these rich days there ran a sense of the increasing importance of the Social Forum as a space to nurture and grow the many campaigns for global justice, and of the growing

strength of the overall movement.

From the 4th World Social Forum which attracted nearly 100,000 participants to India last January, to the somewhat smaller Irish Social Forum; from Africans at the ESF describing the launch of their EPA campaign at the African Social Forum and calling for European support, to Latin Americans promising that campaign coordination would be continued in Brazil at the 5th World Social Forum this January, the social forum slogan of "Another World is Possible" edges ever closer to reality.



Caption Competition!

We would like to hear your suggestions of captions for this photo. In the next issue we will publish the top three suggested captions. Send your entries to 'Focus Photo Captions' at info@comhlamh.org.

Market survey

Please fill in the questionnaire on the card inserted and return it to Comhlámh by FreePost. You might even win 1 of 3 'Fairtrade Hampers' in a draw for respondents.

“Malachi ya Maut”



‘Mazarain vs. Rangers’ - Shouting the slogan of “Malachi ya Maut” (Ownership or Death), children of Okara district play Mazarain (Tenants) vs Pakistan’s Army Rangers. The villages of Okara in the heartland of the Pakistani Punjab have been a flashpoint of the “Anjuman Mazarain Punjab” (literally, “Tenant’s Association of the Punjab”), a land struggle of roughly 1,000,000 tenants resisting dispossession. In an atmosphere of substantial foreign pressure to do so, their landlords are forcing a move to a more overtly corporate model of agriculture.

But awakening from 100 years of oppression under a semi-feudal system of agriculture inherited from the British Empire, the people of the AMP are not prepared to accept this form of “development”, seeing in it only dispossession and death.

Comhlámh has been active in challenging EU policy that threatens to contribute to this dispossession. Read Focus Magazine for the full story, coming soon.



Join Comhlámh, Action for global justice / www.comhlamh.org