Panambizinho, Brazil—The sun was still rising and Delma Gonçalves, 41, had already spent two hours trekking to the place where she and the rest of her settlement collected firewood. The return trip was even worse: under the hot sun, she carried a bundle of wood weighing 20 kilogrammes on her shoulder. Gonçalves is a member of the Kaiowá Guarani indigenous people, the nation’s second largest indigenous group, who live on the Panambizinho land located 250 kilometres from the capital city of Mato Grosso do Sul state in west-central Brazil.

Three times a week, for many years, this has been Gonçalves’s morning routine. “I had a really sore back. I would get home so tired that I couldn’t find the energy to cook,” says Gonçalves. Every day she would make the fire for lunch on the floor, using a few cans to protect it from the wind and a refrigerator cooling coil as an improvised grill.

In addition to worsening her back pain, the floor fire filled the house with smoke, hurting the health of Gonçalves’ children, who suffered from respiratory problems like asthma, pneumonia and bronchitis. But all this has started to change with the arrival of high-efficiency wood stoves that have helped to transform the lives of dozens of indigenous families in Panambizinho.

The technology to construct these so-called “eco-stoves” was developed by a group of Brazilian non-governmental organizations through a UNDP project promoting low-cost and green energy access in Brazil’s semi-arid northeast. It is currently being adapted to serve the needs of the Kaiowá Guarani people in the Brazilian tropical savannah. In contrast with traditional wood stoves constructed with materials like cement and iron, this new stove uses low-cost materials that are found in the region like mud, sand and clay.

The UNDP initiative is part of a joint programme developed with other UN agencies, with the goal of promoting food and nutrition security within indigenous communities, especially for women and children. In all, the project benefits about 53,000 indigenous people across the country, both directly and indirectly. The stove has been considered a model for sustainable technology and will hopefully be used in other similar projects throughout the region like mud, sand and clay.

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The Clay Plate over the Fire Acts as a Barrier to Energy Waste and Conducts Heat Better. As a Result, the Plates Stay Hot for Up to Five Hours, Even After the Fire Has Gone Out, Making It Easier for People to Cook Food Without Constant Supervision.

Thanks to the new stove, the health of everyone in Gonçalves’s family has improved, especially that of her children who, in addition to eating better, now have fewer respiratory problems. The new stove uses a chimney to keep the house well-ventilated and removes smoke and other by-products. The environment also benefits from such stoves, since they produce significantly less greenhouse gases due to a more efficient use of firewood. The stove’s high energy efficiency makes it possible to use thin twigs, dry leaves, corn shucks and bark as fuel products that are ready to retain heat longer; a special clays plate over the fire acts as a barrier to energy waste and conducts heat better. As a result, the plates stay hot for up to five hours, even after the fire has gone out, making it easier for people to cook food without constant supervision.

BRAZIL: ECO-STOVES

The stove’s materials and design help to retain heat longer; a special clay plate over the fire acts as a barrier to energy waste and conducts heat better. As a result, the plates stay hot for up to five hours, even after the fire has gone out, making it easier for people to cook food without constant supervision.

Across the globe, a major goal of the programme.

BENEFITS OF ECO-STOVES

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Dhaka, Bangladesh—In the past decade alone, Bangladesh has slashed its poverty rate by half, rapidly decreased family size by two-thirds, ensured that roughly 90 percent of its girl children are enrolled in schools and reduced child mortality by 60 percent—a development feat recognized by a United Nations award two years ago.

The story of Shyamola Begum, 43, is one personal example of this larger success in Bangladesh’s development landscape.

Shyamola says she understands why her husband left her. Under the pressures of crippling poverty, with too many mouths to feed, he left their one-room shanty in the capital one morning and never came back, she explains.

“We came to this city looking for a better life but my husband Jamal struggled to find work and ended up pulling a cycle-rickshaw. When I got pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, he wasn’t happy,” Shyamola says.

Less than a year later, Shyamola got pregnant again, with another girl. Soon after, Jamal left for work one day and never came back.

“For several weeks in my pregnant state, I frantically searched for him in hospitals and morgues but the people from the slum knew he had left me,” she says. “They told me to stop looking.”

Shyamola shares her fate with tens of thousands of other women, whose husbands, driven by poverty and lack of employment opportunities, leave their homes every year.

But Shyamola’s story has a comparatively happier ending, and she has managed to turn her life around thanks to a partnership between UNDP and the United Kingdom’s Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction.

Three years ago, through this project, she was awarded an entrepreneur grant of Tk 2,500 (roughly US$30) earmarked for the extremely poor. She matched this money with the $30 she had managed to save working as household help, and set up a small tea stall in the slum where she lives.

In just two months, Shyamola’s profits exceeded her own investment.

“Until I became destitute, I had never imagined I could run a business, that I could do accounts, that I could be successful,” she says.

This particular success story is not the exception either. Over 53,000 families like Shyamola’s have received such grants over the past five years, with encouraging results. In many places, these men and women have started making monthly contributions to their own local savings groups, so that there is a source of a larger loan in cases of emergency.

**INVESTING IN WOMEN**

The Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction does more than hand out seed money. It also provides apprenticeships and educational stipends that equip young men and women to acquire vocational skills they can use to earn a living. According to a review by the UK’s development agency, as a result of better opportunities for youth, school dropout rates in participating slums have declined. Meanwhile, the project’s work in helping these communities build infrastructure in their slums has seen 130,000 households gain improved access to sanitation and water.

The initiative has directly resulted in better healthcare, allowing the poor to dedicate more time to finding jobs or keeping the ones they already have.

“The Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction has played a strong role in bringing urban poverty into the Government’s policy focus, while changing the lives of roughly three million urban poor for the better,” says Stefan Priesner, Country Director at UNDP Bangladesh.

Investing in women yields dividends for the entire family, specifically for children’s education and nutrition. UNDP’s work in combating rural and urban poverty is proof of this.

Stefan Priesner
Country Director
UNDP Bangladesh

"Investing in women yields dividends for the entire family, specifically for children’s education and nutrition," Priesner says. "UNDP’s work in combating rural and urban poverty is proof of this.

When a different UNDP programme started providing cash-for-work schemes for destitute and abandoned women in rural Bangladesh, school enrolment rates for participants’ children nearly doubled to more than 90 percent. As the country, once defined by rural poverty, wakes up to the fact that it now needs a strategy to address pockets of extreme poverty in its growing urban areas, UNDP’s pioneering satellite mapping of 29 slums is aiding a targeted approach by the Government.

"In Bangladesh’s current development trajectory, Shyamola’s story could very well cease to be an exception," Priesner says. "With a national ethos that believes in making the most of challenging situations and few opportunities, we can expect many more socio-economic success stories from Bangladesh in the future."
Dang Juru smiles as he collects an apple from his orchard in Luochuan County, Shaanxi Province. Seventy—China’s Loess Plateau perfect for average altitudes of 1,100 metres and deep mineral-rich soil make conditions along this part of China’s Loess Plateau perfect for growing nutritious fruit. Like most farmers he knew, however, Dang felt he had to rely on chemicals to protect his fruit from the leaf mites and quick solution to the problem. What Dang didn’t know was that these pollutants include DDT and organic pollutants’ altogether. These pollutants include DDT and have been linked to serious health complications in people who come into contact with them. Many of the new pest management techniques are simple, such as cultivating grass around the base of trees to provide a habitat for natural mite predators. Others involve more complex scientific technologies, with UNDP project experts providing scientific and biological guidance on the safe introduction of new predatory mite species into local ecosystems. And despite the larger investment in time and management that is required, interest has spread quickly and many farmers have already graduated and become trainers themselves in Luochuan County, where Dang has his farm.

Similar success in Hubei and Shandong provinces has seen thousands of citrus and cotton producers turn their backs on DDT-based pesticides in favour of healthier, more sustainable farming practices.

**RESULTS**

- 100,000 farmers in three provinces are being trained each year to adapt their farming techniques to international conventions and trading standards
- Production has reached 700,000 tonnes of apples per year in Luochuan
- DDT emissions cut by 180 metric tonnes and DDT waste release cut by 350 metric tonnes by production plants in three provinces

**MONITORING PROGRESS**

Over time, farmers have learnt to record the effectiveness of their new cultivation methods in personal logbooks, allowing communities to monitor the quality of their produce and take measures to avoid potential problems before they emerge. These efforts have been further enhanced by pest monitoring and forecasting centres, and a pesticide residue testing station set up under the project has provided regular guidance in compliance with international agricultural production standards.

In line with China’s compliance with the Stockholm Convention, the project has helped minimize the amount of DDT released at a factory in Jiangsu Province and shut down production lines at two other factories in Hubei and Shandong. As a result, the project has realized annual reductions of 180 metric tonnes in DDT emissions and 350 metric tonnes of DDT-contaminated waste released during production.

Thanks to the reduced use of DDT on most of Luochuan’s 300 square kilometres of apple orchards, as well as the farmers’ newly-minted skills, annual apple production has reached 700,000 tonnes—equivalent to an average of 3.5 tonnes for each of the 200,000 people living in the county. Better quality apples now sell for 6 yuan ($0.90) per kilogramme.

As for Dang, now a trainer himself, he is busy making preparations to join the growing number of farmers who are selling their apples to markets in Europe. And with a good harvest, offering his family the chance to earn 12 percent more per hectare than they did last year and invest in his grandson’s education, who could blame him?

One thing he is sure about though is that he won’t be going back to chemicals anytime soon.

**Donors:** China, GEF

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**China FARMERS PLANT A SEED FOR A CHEMICAL-FREE FUTURE**

BY ADAM PIT

**Shaanxi Province, China—**Seventy—Dang Juru dreamed of sending his grandson to university but until recently his lifelong ambition seemed destined to remain unfulfilled. His apple orchard in Luochuan County, Shaanxi Province, simply did not make enough money. But just two years since he took the bold step of abandoning toxic DDT-based pesticides, his grandson’s university fund is now growing almost as fast as his apples.

Average altitudes of 1,100 metres and deep mineral-rich soil make conditions along this part of China’s Loess Plateau perfect for growing nutritious fruit. Like most farmers he knew, however, Dang felt he had to rely on chemicals to protect his fruit from the leaf mites that thrive in the region’s semi-arid monsoon climate.

“If you had asked me to stop using chemicals a few years ago, I would have just smiled and carried on spraying my trees,” explains Dang. “I thought I couldn’t afford to stop using pesticides and that they were the only way to safeguard my income, but it turns out they were actually limiting it.”

With the ability to destroy entire mite colonies, DDT pesticides offered farmers a cheap, effective and quick solution to the problem. What Dang didn’t know was that those same pesticides he thought were protecting his family’s income were the very reason his apples had never sold for more than 2 yuan ($0.30) per kilogramme.

International treaties like the Stockholm Convention that aim to control the use of DDT, and strict health and safety standards in other countries, meant more profitable overseas markets were not an option for Dang as long as he continued using DDT pesticides.

**TRAINING IN FARMING TECHNIQUES**

Now, with the establishment of three demonstration projects and regular training provided by local and international experts, Dang is one of 100,000 farmers in three provinces being trained each year to adapt their farming techniques to international conventions and trading standards. This joint four-year project was initiated by UNDP and China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection.

With $6 million funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project is also helping farmers to remove their dependence on so-called persistent organic pollutants’ altogether. These pollutants include DDT and have been linked to serious health complications in people who come into contact with them.

Many of the new pest management techniques are simple, such as cultivating grass around the base of trees to provide a habitat for natural mite predators. Others involve more complex scientific technologies, with UNDP project experts providing scientific and biological guidance on the safe introduction of new predatory mite species into local ecosystems. And despite the larger investment in time and management that is required, interest has spread quickly and many farmers have already graduated and become trainers themselves in Luochuan County, where Dang has his farm.

Similar success in Hubei and Shandong provinces has seen thousands of citrus and cotton producers turn their backs on DDT-based pesticides in favour of healthier, more sustainable farming practices.
The Development Advocate

Koen

omen are opening their own small business ventures—such as this fish fry stall—
ey Jin-Hee Dieu an hundred thousand.

region, is now dreaming of a bet-
neh district of Kalu, South Wollo Zone, in
droughts that have ravaged his dis-
following on-again, off-again

AFRICA

Democratic Republic of the Congo

COMMUNITY CENTRES HELP PEOPLE LEARN TO LIVE AGAIN

By JIN-HEE DIEU AND FLORENCE HARCAL

Mangina, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo — Conflict has
targets among armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic
Republic of the Congo (DRC) since the late 1990s. The humanitarian and
security situation there is very alarming,

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DONORS: Ethiopia, UNDP, GEF

• 4,500 people reintegrated into economic life
• 2,000 people have joined the community credit union

DONOR: UNDP

classes offered in their local centre.
The special community centre approach is offering women and
young people from isolated rural areas who have suffered decades of violence
an opportunity to improve their ab-

FLORENCE HARCAL is a Communications Specialist and

By WUBIA MEKORHEN

Kalu, Ethiopia—Throughout most
of its 55 years, Mohammed Hassen and
his family have faced much suf-
fing during on-again, off-

a big smile.

Now in its third year, the drought-

• 100,000 Ethiopians are benefiting from the drought-

DONORS: Ethiopia, UNDP, GEF

The centres will soon receive a kind of
legal status that respects commu-
nity management while allowing
support from the Government.
The centres’ current budget totals
approximately US$ 6 million, with
funding primarily provided by UNDP.

I felt worthless,” Maman Miriam says, “I would cry, watching my children dying of hunger. I had no money and my health was destroyed.”

Today, I am alive again. I am proud of myself and I know that I can be independent, make deci-
sions and take action,” she says with

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In 2008, UNDP’s ICT Trust Fund established the Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology—joined forces with the World Health Organization, Vodafone Foundation and the Siwa Community Development and Environment Conservation Association to launch a US$300,000 initiative aimed at both eradicating female illiteracy and helping women to find new or better employment.

In addition to teaching 8,800 women how to read and write, the initiative is providing women the kind of skills and materials needed to effectively take control of their lives and surroundings. For example, the programme put a special emphasis on computer skills, so as to in addition to providing training in business development and problem solving, it equipped the participants with their own personal computers.

As a result, women who enrolled in the programme learned to read and write, improved their agricultural and handicraft production abilities and acquired online marketing skills. Siwa women now promote their products through a custom-made online store (http://kenanaonline.com/siwa). Aware of prevailing social norms in the oasis, programme instructors brought the classes into women’s homes. They transformed the traditional tablèya—a low, round, dining table around which rural Egyptians sit cross-legged and eat—into a so-called tablèyer. A tablèyer is a customised, ergonomic computer embedded in the tablèya; the computer hosts a single central processing unit that can run up to four independent computers. The newly tailored tablèyeras foldable, making it easy to carry around from home to home.

In 2012 alone, the initiative trained 120 women on the device, in addition to 10 more who were taught how to be literacy instructors, ensuring the ongoing life of the project. Fatma Ibrahim was among the first group of women to complete their literacy programme on a tablèyer.

As a result, for the first time in her life, she has fulfilled her dream of being able to read the Holy Koran on her own; she is also able to help her children with their studies.

Ibrahim did not stop at reading and writing. She joined the programme’s business development training course and eventually opened her own successful tailor- ing business. The business which not only helps her make money but has also created employment opportunities for her neighbour who now works as tailors to her.

“From the first day I joined the literacy programme I was told that learning to work on computers can make our lives easier and help reduce inequality between men and women,” Ibrahim says. “I found in computers life itself. Now I can read and write, I can earn my living and give my children a better life. And as a mother, I am a better role model for them to follow.”

The project team is currently training non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the Siwa governators in using the tablèyer to teach reading and writing. UNDP is also working on putting together a business model for these NGOs that will enable them to offer literacy classes for free. Going forward, UNDP and its partners are preparing to bring the entire initiative—including literacy classes, business training and tablèyer use—to five governorates in Egypt.

Ibrahim now devotes her life to helping other women in her village overcome illiteracy.

“Who knows, maybe one day I might go beyond,” she says.

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Siwa, Egypt—Fatma Ibrahim, a poor mother of six, has been illiterate all her life. As a child her hard working parents made simple handicrafts and sold them to make ends meet.

Like many girls growing up in Siwa, the largest oasis in Egypt’s western desert, Ibrahim was deprived of an education due to her family’s poverty and a community tradition biased against girls’ education. These factors, in addition to the oasis’ harsh living conditions, resulted in an illiteracy rate reaching 40 percent among women there, who make up half of Siwa’s population of 23,000.

In Egypt’s Western Desert, Ibrahim’s life was very weak. Mdalal frequently had to buy drinkable water from vendors roaming the streets in a tense house, trade water shifts every night to check water pressure, and have access to the water we needed to lead normal lives,” she says. “I no longer reach our roof tanks without the lift-pump. That was a great feat!”

The Rafah water tank became operational, MdalalIRCLEDB. Today, water reached our roof tanks without the lift-pump, a project that was a record for us.”

“The Rafah water tank changed our lives,” he continues. “No longer need to compromise hygiene, live in a tense house, trade water shifts with my brothers, and worry about the exorbitantly high cost of water.”

UNDP has completed over 200 water supply and sanitation projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Projects ranged from strengthening water and sanitation authorities to the construction of water supply and distribution networks, storage reservoirs and house connections.

The water tank in Rafah is part of an emergency water supply and rehabilitation programme that UNDP is implementing in the Northern Governorates of the Gaza Strip, at a total cost of $5.4 million, provided by the Government of Japan.

“I wish this project was done earlier,” Mdalal says. “It would have spared a lot of suffering. Now, we all save money and have access to the water we need to lead normal lives.”

“We turn on the tap at any time and we get water. It may be too mundane to you but for us it is a great feat!”

Salem Mdalal, Rafah Resident

Gaza Strip, getting water is no longer a daily hardship. Mdalal heads a family of 12 and lives with his brother in the same building, which houses 30 people.

The building’s residents consume 5,000 litres of water every day, until recently, the city could only provide water via pipes for three to four hours, twice a week, and the flow of water was very weak. Mdalal frequently had to buy drinkable water from vendors roaming the streets in their water tank trucks. Each 1,000 litres cost NIS 30 (US$ 8.28).

“We had a water crisis,” Mdalal says. “I had to take extreme measures at home. We only flushed the toilet twice a day to conserve water. Imagine a family of 12 flushing the toilet twice a day only!”

“I also set a schedule for showers and urged my children to get out of the shower if they were in for too long. This caused tensions in the family but what could we do?” he adds. The family’s situation eased after UNDP built a 3,000 cubic metres water tank serving Rafah and provided booster pumps to supply water to Rafah’s residents through a $1 million project funded by the Government of Japan.

Along with the people living in Mdalal’s building, 50 percent of the city’s population of 102,000 people experienced a huge improvement in the water supply reaching their homes, after eight years of constant water shortages.

Power supply is also scarce in the Gaza Strip, only available eight to 10 hours a day.

Because of uncoordinated supply of water and electricity, Mdalal and his brothers had to schedule shifts every night to check water supply and to turn on booster pumps as soon as electricity and water were available at the same time. Things are different now.

“We celebrated the day when the Rafah water tank became operational! Mdalal exclaims, “Yesterday, water reached our roof tanks without the lift-pump that was a record for us.”

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The Development Advocate

Women in El Fasher, North Darfur, march for “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence,” an annual campaign beginning on the International Day to End Violence Against Women. (Albert Gonzalez Farran/UN Photo)

ARAB STATES

LEGAL AID HELPS THE VULNERABLE IN DARFUR PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS

BY YOUSIF AHMED AND HANNA SCHMIDT

Garsila, Sudan—Women and girls continue to suffer from widespread insecurity in the conflict-ridden region of Darfur in Sudan. For 13-year-old Aisha, her childhood ended when she was brutally raped by a man while on the way to the market in the small town of Garsila, in former West Darfur, now Central Darfur. Unfortunately Aisha’s case is not an isolated one. As law enforcement agencies in Darfur have insufficient resources and incentives to uphold and protect human rights, crisis-affected populations there continue to suffer from arbitrary violence and the deprivation of physical and legal safety. Women and girls face the daily threat of sexual violence. Given the lack of adequate and responsive law enforcement in the region, women in particular are reluctant to seek justice and file complaints against attackers. Aisha’s story shows why. Defying prevailing stereotypes and social taboos, Aisha’s family took her case to the local court in town. The court, however, dismissed the rape case and convicted Aisha of adultery with a punishment of 100 lashes after delivery of her baby, who she became pregnant with as a result of the rape. Shocked by the court’s ruling, the family turned to UNDP for support.

In September 2004, UNDP embarked on an ambitious rule of law programme in Darfur. With funding of over US$113 million from Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the project is raising awareness of human rights and rule of law among these vulnerable populations. It is also working with local leaders, organizations and authorities to help prevent and end ongoing violations of internationally-recognized human rights standards. The goal is to restore people’s confidence in both formal and informal rule of law institutions and to gradually build a culture of rule of law and justice in the region.

Since the start of the programme, UNDP has successfully supported the establishment of eight legal aid centres in Darfur as well as a legal aid network that includes over 60 Darfuri lawyers. Through the legal aid centres, paralegal volunteers provide free legal advice and mediation services in over one thousand cases and the quality of the court representation and provide technical advice and guidance as required.

CONTINUING THE FIGHT

In the case of Aisha, UNDP legal aid lawyers immediately filed an appeal to the General Court in the nearby town of Zalingei, arguing that the age of the girl and the fact that she was raped should reverse the decision of the local Garsila Court or annul it at least. However, the General Court upheld the ruling of the local court. Determined to support the girl’s fight for justice, the lawyers took the case to the West Darfur State’s Appeal Court in the state capital of El Geneina, where the conviction was upheld, but the sentence was reduced to 10 lashes. As the ruling was still incompatible with both national and international standards on children’s rights, the legal aid lawyers addressed the Sudan High Court, the highest appeal court in the country. After lengthy deliberation the Court’s justices issued a remarkable landmark verdict, overruling the Court’s justices, reversing all previous verdicts and acquitting the girl of all charges.

Against this background, legal aid initiatives such as the one supported by UNDP remain a critical element of development support in the region. The demand for such legal aid services is growing. “Over the years, we have witnessed a steady increase in requests for legal support by community members,” says Christopher Laker, the regional programme manager for the project. Since 2007, the legal aid centres have provided legal advisory and mediation services in over 3,500 cases and legal aid lawyers have provided free legal assistance and representation in over 1,070 instances. In addition, over 15,000 community members have been exposed to human rights campaigns every year. UNDP’s work to provide legal aid in Darfur is not only helping children and victims like Aisha and her family to deal with these daunting challenges to basic justice and human rights; it is also working toward a future where any and all can expect swift, fair and impartial administration of justice.

RESULTS

• Eight legal aid centres established
• More than 3,500 cases since 2004
• More than 60 Darfuri lawyers provide free services

DONORS: Norway, Sweden The Netherlands and the United Kingdom

Since 2007, the legal aid centres, paralegal volunteers provide free legal advice and representation to crisis-affected populations. UNDP rule of law officers on the ground in Darfur continuously monitor the referral of cases and the quality of the court representation and provide technical advice and guidance as required.

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BY YOUSIF AHMED
HANNA SCHMIDT

UNDP’s Rule of Law Officer in West Darfur, Sudan

HANNA SCHMIDT is UNDP’s Coordinator of the Partnerships, Communication and Advocacy Advisory Unit Sudan.
The Development Advocate

BY MIDDLE Paxton

Akhbastau, Mongolia—Naranbek Ristan slings his binoculars and notebook around his neck and mounts his horse with graceful ease. He is setting off on a monthly patrol of 6,000 hectares of community land to check on wildlife.

The country he will cover inspires many adjectives: harsh, magnificent, daunting. But for Ristan it brings to mind the most important word of all: home.

Ristan comes from the Kazakh ethnic group and he lives in the community of Akhbastau (literally “White Springs”) in the Altai Mountains of Mongolia’s extreme west. People here are herders and horsemen living in gers (yurts) that are decorated with colourful floor and wall carpets.

The Altai Mountains, which straddle China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia, are a critical area for global conservation. They harbour a number of endangered species, such as the snow leopard and Argali sheep.

Life here is tough. The winters are long and brutal. Fierce gales combined with drought create a catastrophic phenomenon called the dzud. The 2009 dzud killed one in five domestic animals in the country. Wildlife numbers are declining as a result of overhunting and overfishing, and livestock pastures land are deteriorating.

Overgrazing is one of the main causes of environmental degradation in the range, worsened further by the harsh effects of climate change on precious water and land resources. Many herders have stopped traditional rotational grazing methods, which require moving seasonally in search of good pasture, leaving time for other pasture lands to recover.

Problems, though, invite solutions. Over the past six years, the Altai Sayan Project has worked with communities to manage natural resources such as pastures, wild animals and plants, while also improving and expanding livelihood opportunities for herders. The project was supported by UNDP, the GEF, the Government of The Netherlands, and several other partners, who made a combined financial contribution of US$11.2 million.

TRAINING HERDERS IN NEW TRADES

Through project support, more than 7,000 herders received training in new trades, including weaving and felt-making, dairy product processing and marketing, tourism and wildlife management. The project provided small loans and grants to community groups in the region to help develop tourism, grow vegetables for the first time, repair winter shelters and improve the quality of their milk and wool products. Diversification of livelihoods makes the herders more resilient to external shocks such as dzuds, and reduces pressure on pastures.

The initiative instigated 20 environmental units within the local government office to support community groups. Altai and Sayan conservation plans were developed through expert support from the project, which provided essential biodiversity information for land use and local development planning. The project also helped create “eco-clubs” to foster environmental education in 20 local primary schools, each equipped with a meeting room and library materials.

Once these groups of nomadic herders began organizing and managing their own natural resources, they started to support each other in additional ways. They came together to shear sheep, collectively rotated their livestock on pasture lands and worked together to make hay ahead of winter. Many communities even decided to decrease the number of livestock to reflect what the grasslands could support. They also established a hospitality ger for tourists who want to experience the nomadic life and the region’s breathtaking vistas. Horse trekking has also proven a success with tourists. Fifteen percent of tourism income is put into the community fund and the rest is divided among the households.

“We now have more options and different income sources,” Ristan says. “And we are better prepared for harsh winters. The dzud impact in this community was minimal last year, which I believe is owing to our organization.”

In large and sparsely populated countries, herders like Ristan must be the keepers of their resources if they are to maintain them for future generations. He has participated in several activities funded by the project, including training courses on wildlife monitoring.

“Before the training, wild animals looked rather similar,” Ristan says. “But now I can recognize individual animals and I enjoy observing the different behaviours of snow leopards.”

In 2011, the initiative culminated in important, nationwide changes. As a result of the project advocacy efforts, Mongolia’s Environmental Protection Law was amended to include clear legal provision for community-based natural resource management. The Government designated 12 nationally protected areas totalling 7.97 million hectares, an area three times as large as The Netherlands. The 64 officially registered community groups, which include 912 herder families, manage natural resources on land covering more than half a million hectares. After the project ended, the local government environmental units took over to support the community groups and their conservation efforts. The Government officially expanded the overall project approach to conservation and livelihoods nationwide through a June 2011 Ministerial decree.

Perhaps the most important achievement has been the change in herder and local officials’ mindset about biodiversity conservation and resource management.

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Vocational training equips youth for careers

Georgia

Nino Narmania, Student Tailor

Two years ago, I would not imagine that it was possible to get an education like that in our city. This college is my future.

Georgia’s system of professional education has been questioned by advocates who argue that it needs to do much more to equip people for the labour market.

In 2006, with funds from the European Union, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, and the Governments of Norway and Romania, UNDP began collaborating with the Ministry of Education to reform Georgia’s system of professional education. As a result, participating colleges are now better aligned to the demands of the local labour market, there are uniform standards for qualifications, teachers have received critical retraining and vocational training sites have been refurbished.

After the outbreak of military conflict in 2008, UNDP began aiming these efforts at conflict-affected areas, where a professional education would help people return to self-reliance, especially those experiencing disruptions in education and careers due to displacement.

One of the first initiatives took place at Gori University in Shida Kartli, the region most affected by war. Now recognized as one of the best-equipped professional education sites in the country, it offers a full range of vocational courses. On-the-job training includes mini-workshops for the production of agricultural products, such as traditional Georgian cheeses and canned fruit and vegetables, some of which sell in the largest supermarkets of Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital. The workshops allow students to begin work while learning the practical application of new skills.

RESULTS

• 3,000 trainees graduated with 70% now employed
• Nine professional education centres providing training in 25 high-demand careers

DONORS: Norway, Romania, European Union, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation

They are also viable as small enterprises, offering a double return by contributing to the income of the university.

By the end of 2011, as part of its support to Samegrelo, a region in western Georgia that hosts around 80,000 displaced people, UNDP had helped professional colleges in Poti and Zugdidi establish their own new curricula. About 1,500 students—half of them IDPs—can enrol in the courses each year. The colleges have opened furniture-making and tailoring workshops based on the model in Gori.

By 2012, upgraded training in 25 professions—mainly in higher-demand sectors like agriculture, food-processing and construction—was available in nine professional education centres across the country. Each of the educational courses was equipped with new training programmes, guidebooks for instructors and students, and special qualification courses for teachers.

Of the 3,000 people who have graduated so far, 70 percent have quickly found employment.

Levan Lakia, 22, lives in a small village with his parents and two younger brothers. Today, he is the only person in his family with a job, having started work on a school rehabilitation project after completing vocational training at the college in Poti.

“Vocational training changed my life for the better,” he says. “I feel more confident and know what to do. It’s not only about income. It’s about experience that improves my chances to become professional and competitive.”

People like Nino Narmania and Levan Lakia are making full use of their chances for a better future. An underlying belief is that it is never too late to learn is helping thousands of people in Georgia to cultivate hope and skills to reshape their lives.

Sophie Tchitchinadze is a Communications Analyst in USAID Georgia.

By Sophie Tchitchinadze

Poti, Georgia—Last year, 19-year-old Nino Narmania learnt she needed computer skills to do her favourite job—sewing and making clothes. Intrigued and excited by the project, she enrolled in a college-level professional tailoring programme in Poti, a provincial town in western Georgia. Together with 50 other young women, she was the first to reap the benefits of quality education supported by practical training in a well-equipped tailoring workshop.

“I am learning how to work in Photoshop and Corel, and how to use modern sewing machines,” Narmania says. “That is not always easy but our teachers are great. We have university professors to teach us computer technology and there are online classes from a professional college in Germany.”

Up-to-date curricula, modern equipment and qualified trainers make Phasis College one of the most reputable educational institutions in the region. The tailoring programme accepts 50 students at a time and classes fill up eight months in advance.

Almost half of the college students are, like Narmania, from families displaced by conflict, known as internally displaced persons or IDPs. For them, professional training is one of the most direct ways to find employment and rebuild their lives disrupted by violence.

“Two years ago, I would not imagine that it was possible to get an education like that in our city. Now I feel confident that I can become a good professional and find a nice job. This college is my future,” Narmania says.
As a schoolboy, I began using crutches and had to do my homework lying on my back. As the years passed, I realized that life would only become more difficult.

Ali Amanbayev
Advocate for the Disabled

Thanks in part to UNDP’s advocacy, Kazakhstan signed the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2008. More recently, UNDP has been working with the Government to promote national disability policies and the establishment of basic support services, such as opportunities to receive college degrees through distance learning, in addition to jobs training and rehabilitation services.

IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICES

With UNDP’s advice, Kazakhstan has amended key laws to improve social services for vulnerable groups, with special attention given to those with disabilities. As a result, US$200 million of government funding has been allocated, allowing over 2,000 people with disabilities to receive special services. Amanbayev now has his own personal assistant who helps him in his wheelchair around the city and within his own home. These days, more than 7,000 disabled people in Kazakhstan receive these critical services.

It’s made such a difference,” Amanbayev says of his assistant. “He’s the extra oomph to help me face the challenges of each day.”

These days, Amanbayev and other NGO leaders are busy lobbying the Ministry for Transport and Communication to revise standards for providing the disabled access to public spaces and public transportation. As a result, Amanbayev was invited to take part in several hearings and meetings at the Ministry, where he convincingly pointed out the urgent need for change in a country where such standards lag far behind the international norm. The Ministry has reacted, promising to make all railway platforms and trains accessible for wheelchair users within the next two years.

“You can’t imagine how vital this is,” Amanbayev says.

Improving transport infrastructure is just one part of a wider national campaign to provide inclusive access to public spaces. This is bringing fundamental change to Kazakhstan, where more than 70 percent of public infrastructure is inaccessible to the disabled. With UNDP’s help, the Government is surveying the accessibility of public buildings and services and making cost estimates for necessary upgrades.

Since its inception, UNDP’s programme has been successful at raising public awareness and fostering a culture of inclusion for those with disabilities. In addition to a short film, photo exhibitions and national and international conferences, over 5,000 copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been distributed to major public institutions, libraries and universities.

Results

- 500,000 disabled now benefiting from the social protection system
- 5,000 copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities distributed

DONORS: Kazakhstan

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marked a crucial signal of fundamental change.

UNDP, in partnership with the Government, also produced a National Human Development Report that, for the first time in any Central Asian country, advocated an end to exclusion and the promotion of equal rights for those with disabilities. The Report drew a lot of publicity and media attention.

Kazakhstan
CHAMPION FOR THE DISABLED

Participants in a ballroom dance competition in Kazakhstan, UNDP has worked closely with the Government to support the rights of people living with disabilities. (UNDP Kazakhstan)
La Argentina, Colombia—The 21st century was just beginning when Salomón Manuel Petro—a troubadour and farmer—and his family were forced to leave their home in northern-western Colombia. They took only what they could carry with them, along with their memories, shattered dreams and popular songs stuck in Petro’s throat. That was when he and his family became internally displaced persons, or IDPs.

Petro, better known as “Don Manuel,” was a peasant farmer, or campesino, from the region of Bajo Cauca Antioquia. Like Colombia’s other millions of IDPs, he left his lands to escape almost certain death due to ongoing armed conflict. He and his family fled to Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, where they met with countless other displaced people selling trinkets or begging at the traffic light in order to survive in the harsh cement jungle.

Don Manuel saw his life change dramatically. He left his home while his body was still recovering from the six machete blows he received from paramilitary groups in Caceres, a little village in the Bajo Cauca region, and he was being threatened with death if he did not leave within 15 days.

“I had to leave, I was lucky that I received only blows, others were killed,” Don Manuel says. “And my family was unharmed. Others did not live to tell the story.”

Don Manuel’s case is not unique. Internal displacement as a result of ongoing armed conflict continues to occur in Colombia. Almost 3.9 million IDPs have been recorded since 1997. The search to resolve the situation of this huge population has become a priority for the Government and there are many donors who are waiting for an opportunity to become full members of society and live with dignity.

Colombia

**MOVING FROM TRAGEDY TO DEVELOPMENT**

BY ANFARDO DÍAZ

In 2012, UNDP partnered with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Government of Colombia to improve the quality of life for the country’s IDPs, specifically focusing on moving beyond immediate humanitarian assistance to helping them to build a long-term future for themselves and their families. The programme receives financial support from Sweden, the United States, and Colombia’s Ministry of Labour, in addition to support from local governments.

**QUALITY OF LIFE**

For example, the initiative is working to improve the overall quality of life for both the IDPs and the communities they are being located into. Funds are used to provide land, housing, basic services and local economic development programmes that help enrich the host communities along with their new neighbours. The programme also works to strengthen and support the government institutions tasked with protecting the rights of victims of armed conflict.

With the programme’s support, Don Manuel and his family finally ended up in the city of La Argelia, where he and other IDPs arrived with the promise of receiving a plot of land to support their relocation.

“Paradise,” he describes life today in La Argelia, located in southwestern Colombia. “This region is very poor in natural resources but it is peaceful and calm with regard to public order. I feel more at peace.

Here there is no war, like there was back home, where people could be killed for no reason and thrown in the river!”

The initiative is already showing substantial results, currently benefiting 22,000 people in five communi-

**RESULTS**

- 22,000 IDPs benefit from access to housing, basic services and economic development programmes
- Newly built community centres and schools

**DONORS:** Colombia, Sweden, United States

**SMILES AND TEARS**

But his smile is laced with tears that he tries to control: “Yes, yes I am thinking of staying...but I really miss my land, I can’t deny it. But here we are, alive and with a future.”

Indeed, more important than new buildings, community con-

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**Top Soccer Players Shine in UNDP’s 10th Annual Match Against Poverty**

Porto Alegre, Brazil, 20 December 2012—Twelve-year-old soccer fan Clara hugs her idol, Brazilian superstar Neymar, and refuses to let go. As the players for the Match Against Poverty assemble before the start of the game, it takes a lot of gentle persuasion before Clara, overcome with excite-

The annual match is supported by the UNDP, which is associated with the Ministry of Labour, in addition to support from local governments.

**DONORS:** Colombia, Sweden, United States

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In El Salvador, UNDP promoted a law on access to information through an eight-hour “tweetathon” that generated 4,427 tweets.

In Hungary, UNDP’s human development initiative has provided vocational training—snack-making, food preservation, knitting, bag and basket weaving—to 9,000 internally displaced people.

In Peru, the initiative has helped rebuild an earthquake-ruined road to Jaan’s village, benefiting more than 12,000 residents.

In Afghanistan, Conflict Mediation and Conciliation Units, promoted by UNDP, have dealt with a total of 5,546 disputes, of which 3,057 were mediated or successfully reconciled.

In Kosovo*, Bujar Kadriu—a 43-year-old married father of five who is partially sighted—has headed Kosovo’s Association of the Blind for eight years. One of his proudest accomplishments was the June 2011 passage of a new law protecting the rights of the blind, who number around 3,000.

In Cuba, to ensure food security, the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture, the European Union and UNDP have developed a joint project in which 13,200 farmers have been trained in business planning and animal feed production.

In India: the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme has provided training in agricultural techniques to 32,500 women, allowing them to feed their families and sell produce in local markets.

In Cameroon: women — trained in India to install solar panels — subsequently trained other women upon their return, who went on to set up 98 household solar systems in their villages. Children can now study at night and there is less risk of fire and asphyxiation from gasoline generators.

In Mozambique: the GEF Small Grants Programme has provided training in agricultural techniques to 32,500 women, allowing them to feed their families and sell produce in local markets.

In Pakistan: Juan started a local women’s community organization, one of more than 1,000 such organizations aided by UNDP’s Refugees Affected and Hosted Areas programme. The initiative has helped rebuild an earthquake-ruined road to Juan’s village, benefiting more than 12,000 residents.

In South Sudan: With funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNDP has focused on strengthening the country’s health care system. Last year alone, over 4,000 people received anti-retroviral medications and 85 percent successfully completed tuberculosis treatment.

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