Islam and the Modern World

A leading Muslim scholar explores alternatives to the 'political and cultural vise.'

BY CHRISTOPHER REARDON

Atlanta—Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im is a man who wants to go home and can't. As a political dissident from Sudan, he has spent the last 16 years in exile, writing and teaching about Islam, human rights and criminal law in Egypt, Sweden, Canada and the United States. Now, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, his view of the tensions that shape many Arab and Muslim societies holds even greater currency.

An-Na'im, 55, describes himself as an Islamic modernist, a practicing Muslim who seeks to reconcile his religious heritage with the realities of an ever-changing world. "The Koran is a powerful sacred text," he says, "but we must recognize that our understanding of it is both historically conditioned and shaped by human agency."

He traces this theological premise to his mentor, Mahmoud Mohammad Taha, the founder of a pro-democracy movement in Sudan known as the Republican Brothers. Taha, a devout Muslim, argued that worship and political discourse cannot flourish without a clear separation of religion and state.

Yet the movement came under attack in 1983 as President Gaafar Numeiry's military regime sought to shore up its power by appeasing Islamic conservatives. An-Na'im was jailed, along with 49 of his peers, and held without charges for 19 months. Meanwhile the government incorporated *sharia,* or Islamic law, into the penal code, and in January 1985 Taha was hanged for heresy.

The Republican Brothers were caught in a political and cultural vise familiar to advocates of human rights and democratic reforms in many countries. They are squeezed on one side by corrupt, authoritarian governments that denounce their work as unpatriotic and seditious; on the other side they are reproached by spokespersons for a public that sees them as elitists advancing a secular, Western agenda.

Silencing reformers buys time for those in power, but sometimes not much. Numeiry was overthrown in a military coup less than three months after Taha's execution, and by 1989 Sudan was controlled by Muslim fundamentalists.

Nevertheless, many activists and scholars continue working to open the vise, to ease the pressure on both sides and expand the space for constructive political discourse. "Human rights advocacy can help secure this space," says An-Na'im. "But it will only be effective if these rights are shown to have legitimate roots in Islam or Arab culture."

An-Na'im grew up in the village of al-Maghaweer, 100 miles down the Nile River from Khartoum. His father, having taught himself to read and write, attained the rank of brigadier general in the Sudanese Defense Force. His mother raised their eight children, all of whom graduated from college. Abdullahi, the oldest, earned law degrees from the University of Khartoum, Cambridge University and Edinburgh University, where he wrote his dissertation on comparative pretrial procedure.

Abdullahi An-Na'im on the Emory campus. He sees a need for internal discourse "that has to be done by Muslims."

Since leaving Sudan in 1985, he has written more than 40 scholarly articles and two books, including *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law* (Syracuse University Press), which has been translated and published in Arabic, Indonesian and Russian. He was scholar-in-residence at the Ford Foundation's Cairo office from 1992 to 1993, then served as executive director of Human Rights Watch/Africa from 1993 to 1995.

An-Na'im has spent the last six years in Atlanta, Georgia, where he holds the Charles Howard Candler chair at the Emory University School of Law. He is also the founder and director of the school's Religion and Human Rights Project, a network of scholars and activists working to foster a deeper understanding of human rights in African and Islamic societies. In an interview with Christopher Reardon, An-Na'im discussed his ideas about Islam, politics and human rights.

Ford Foundation Report: *A recent article in The Economist said that "Muslims who think the West must be fought and defeated are not going to be bombed into changing their minds. And they're probably not going to be talked into changing their minds by outsiders." In your view, what particular responsibility now falls on moderate Muslims?*

Abdullahi An-Na'im: The only legitimate and sustainable discourse that will change attitudes is an internal discourse. It's a mission that has to be done by Muslims. There are Muslim voices—human rights activists, democracy activists, intellectuals and so on—who need space and protection to convey their message from the inside. The question is: What is the rest of the world doing to make that possible, to facilitate or to obstruct that process? I don't think there's a lack of voices or ideas or energy, but there is a lack of political space, a lack of resources and a constant struggle to maintain credibility in a region that feels besieged by global cultural and economic forces.

Economic desperation is often cited as a major cause of resentment and rage in the Arab world. So is the suppression of political discourse. Why do you think so many Arabs feel so frustrated?

The lack of political rights and the lack of economic resources are inherently connected. But economic desperation is probably the more powerful factor. It inhibits the possibility of an awareness of political oppression. When people are racing about trying to make ends meet, trying to survive, they don't see the connection between political opportunities and economic justice. They see political rights as concerns of the elite, when they should be everyone's concern. Economic deprivation goes hand in hand with a lack of education and a lack of time and resources to take on political issues. This has been shown very clearly in Africa, for example. A lack of political freedom compounds economic development problems because there is no space to critique things like bad planning, corrupt practices and unaccountability in the economic domain.

Gandhi said poverty is the greatest form of violence. The Koran, similarly, speaks of poverty as an affront to human dignity. How

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Christopher Reardon writes for The New York Times and other major publications.

More Than Tolerance

In times of rapid social change, real and apparent religious divisions often help create political strife, and the ways the world's belief systems contribute to social patterns of exclusion become more visible. But precisely because they play a powerful role in shaping such social and cultural values as justice and compassion, religious traditions can also serve as a major resource for mediating conflicts and addressing other challenges facing modern societies. This is especially true when they are open to new practices and points of view.

In 1997 the Ford Foundation launched a program to support scholars and activists who are developing new perspectives on religious traditions and new strategies for bringing their resources to bear on modern social challenges. The Religion, Society and Culture program seeks to enhance understanding of religious pluralism—the diversity of views and values within and across religions. It also explores ways to draw on religious values in efforts to build more equitable, tolerant and humane societies.

One goal of the program is to develop knowledge about the world's religious traditions by supporting scholars like Abdullahi An-Na'im, an expert in Islamic law and an internationally prominent human rights activist (see p. 18), and Elaine Pagels, who studies the history of early Christianity (see p. 28). Their work belongs to a growing body of scholarship that reinterprets religious traditions in ways that better address pressing social concerns and reflect a wider array of human experience. Scholars at Drew University, for instance, are studying the beliefs and practices of immigrants, street people and other worshippers in storefront religious settings in Newark, N.J., in an effort to understand religious values and practices that find expression outside the institutions of mainstream traditions (see p. 24).

Another goal of the program is to foster women's leadership within religious institutions and in civil society. For example, the foundation supports the Interfaith Hospitality Network, led by a laywoman, which develops volunteer programs and curricula on policy and faith to address poverty and homelessness in communities around the country. The foundation also supports the work of Leila Ahmed, a professor of women's studies at Harvard Divinity School, who is analyzing and mapping changes in Muslim women's theological perspectives, institutional status and roles in Islam as it becomes an American religious tradition.

The increasing religious diversity of the United States has been well documented by Diana Eck, who directs the Pluralism Project at Harvard University (see p. 27). The foundation addresses this new reality—shared by many societies—with support for groups that seek to build bridges across religious divides not simply for dialogue but for shared action. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, for example, helps form international interreligious coalitions to act on issues of common concern, such as the fate of AIDS orphans in Africa and the civil war in Sierra Leone. The foundation also plans support for efforts to build innovative partnerships for local action among Jewish, Christian and Muslim congregations in communities around the United States.

The Religion, Society and Culture program hopes to do more than merely strengthen tolerance of religious diversity. It seeks to develop the capacity of religious traditions and societies to engage diversity in many forms respectfully and constructively, on the assumption that such engagement will enrich civic and democratic values as well as advance justice. —*Eds.*

is this message received in a region where so much wealth and suffering exist side by side?

The Koran has a powerful message about social justice. One of the Five Pillars of Islam is *zakat*, the giving of alms. What's new in the last half century is that we are talking about entitlement to certain basic needs as a right and not as charity. The nature of modern economies, state institutions and civil society organizations is such that we now have the capacity to institutionalize and deliver on the moral promise of the Koran. In fact, one of the most powerful entry points to a discourse about human rights in Islamic society is to invoke the Koranic imperative for social justice and say: Here is a pragmatic, sustainable way to achieve it in the modern context.

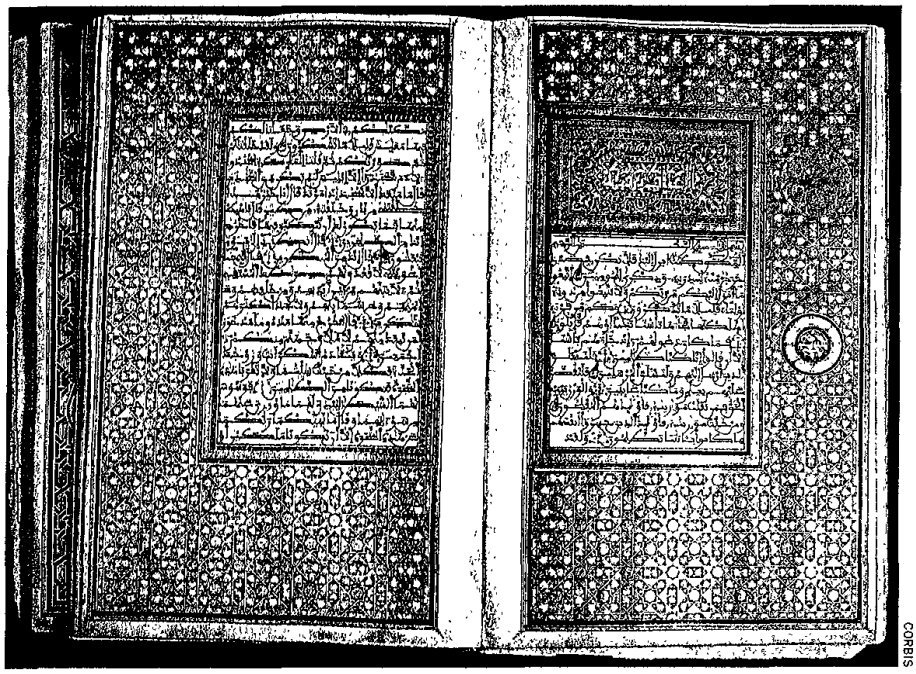
Yet we have to recognize that disparities of wealth and power are felt not just within the region, but globally. Clarence Dias, an Indian scholar, said that North and South are not geographical units; they are concepts. There are pockets of the North within the South, and pockets of the South within the North. I think the appeal of the international human rights movement is that it has built solidarity and alliances on social justice issues across religious and regional bounds.

Very few Muslim countries have strong records on human rights or democratic reforms. Is that a failure of Islam, or a legacy of colonialism and the postcolonial transition?

Postcolonialism, not Islam, is what's really at issue here. Islam just happens to be the religion of a people who have been denied the possibility of experimenting and learning. It takes time, and certain conditions of stability and prosperity, for societies to relax their defenses and actively allow civic engagement. It took the Americans 200 years, including a horrendous civil war and a long civil rights movement, and still you have far to go.

Also, remember the history: Every Muslim country today was either colonized by the West or subjected to tremendous Western control, like the quasi-colonialism in Saudi Arabia and Iran. Colonialism was not in the business of promoting democratic values or institutions. And after independence you get oppressive regimes that are supported by Western powers for strategic interests. So people never had a chance to develop these values and processes.

There are internal reasons, too, for these poor human rights records. In fact, I would argue that the primary causes and solutions reside within the region. These include the lack of polit-



CORBIS

An-Na'im points out that a rationalist, liberal tradition in Islam more than 1,000 years old argues that reason and inquiry are the primary ways to approach the teachings of the Koran.

ical experience, the lack of economic opportunities and the lack of honesty about Islamic discourse on the issues. But all of these are compounded by Western foreign policies and Western support for oppressive regimes.

It seems that these authoritarian regimes have waited so long to introduce democratic reforms that the opposition has grown increasingly radicalized. Without legitimate channels for political debate, people move to the extremes.

That's right, but once you have that sort of cancer you can't keep pushing it underground. The delay has radicalized the opposition and these countries now have to pay the price if they want to get back on track again. Algeria delayed and therefore risks radicalized opposition. Egypt delayed. Saudi Arabia delayed. But there are 56 Muslim countries in the world. Four or five have been through, or are likely to go through, this fundamentalist phase. The other 50 don't have to, and they can benefit from the experience of the unfortunate four or five. You have to give people the right to make their choice, no matter how misguided or dangerous you think it is. Fundamentalists may be elected in some cases, but that is what democracy is all about.

How do the politics of oil and the politics of religion intersect in the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea regions?

Oil has been extremely corrupting in the Middle East because it brought huge wealth without real social, political and economic development. As with any human society, it is a struggle over resources. Religion, in this case Islam, happens to be the medium of discourse through which this struggle has been conducted in the Middle East. You see the same dynamics in Angola, Nigeria and other oil-producing nations where Islam is not such a factor. The Islamic dimension of it here is simply the local expression of a global type of conflict.

There tends to be too much emphasis on how Islamic societies are either like every other society—meaning they should conform to the Western model—or that they are too exceptional ever to fit. This is one of the most damaging intellectual and political analyses we hear, the so-called "clash of civilizations" thesis. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy that resonates with the most antagonistic actors.

Instead of seeing the clash of civilizations as inevitable, we should explore the reality of cultural pluralism, of cultural diversity, globally. Albie Sachs, who's a member of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, said human rights are about the right to be the same and the right to be different. That really sums it up for me: I want to be treated like every other human being—no discrimination, no oppression—but at the same time I want to be distinctive in my identity.

Many experts have weighed in lately with their interpretations of when jihad, *or holy war, is justified and what form it should take. What's your position?*

Like my teacher, Mahmoud Mohammad Taha, I think that realities have shifted so much in favor of the rule of law in international relations that jihad is no longer legitimate as aggressive war. It is only valid when it's defensive, and defensive within the rule-of-law paradigm. We now have international law, we have the U.N., we have international institutions that should mediate and adjudicate differences and conflicts between nations and between communities rather than vigilante justice or wars of revenge. The U.S. attack on Afghanistan appears to negate the premise of Islamic modernism, which favors the rule of law internationally. It undermines the possibility of a more moderate Islam by showing that power and force prevail and that counterpower and counterforce have to be developed. That's how the clash of civilizations plays into the hands of the extremists.

How do you convince people that healthy religions are dynamic, that they have to grow and develop? How do you get Muslims, for instance, to agree that the gate of ijtihad, *or independent reasoning, should remain open?*

Some intellectuals and scholars clearly appreciate the fact that nobody had the authority to close the gate of ijtihad in the first place. It is not a door that you lock. And in Islam, unlike the Catholic Church, for example, there is no centralized religious authority that can proclaim an edict like that. It was more an inertia problem, as people settled down to familiar ways of thinking and feeling and reacting to the texts and to social issues. But I think we have gotten as far as we can with this form of Islam.

'It is both in the interest of the West—with regard to economic and strategic security concerns—and in the interest of Muslim societies in the region that human rights and democratization should be given the highest priority.'

The vast majority of Muslims do appreciate, and will appreciate more, the need to challenge established understanding of Islam and to see it as a dynamic, evolving religion. They want to remain Muslims and at the same time to be part of modernity—to be part of democratization, economic liberalization, development. And so they have needs that Islamic tradition as it exists now does not seem to address. They need it to respond to immediate existential facets of life: questions of *riba*, or interest; questions of banking and insurance and economics; questions about women going to school and working outside the home. There are many, many practical issues that they have to face.

What is your understanding of Muslim teachings about tolerance and diversity?

There's a *hadith*, a saying of the Prophet, that says it's a blessing of God that there is diversity among the opinions of one community. The modern translation says the disagreements among the scholars of my community are a blessing. So there is a strong tradition of Muslims celebrating the possibility of difference of opinion.

For example, there is a rationalist, liberal tradition in Islamic discourse that dates back to the 8th century. A group known as the Mu'tazala maintained that the Koran was created, that it was not ahistorical or prehistorical, and that reason is the primary means to vindicate the faith and develop laws. This rationalist line has continued throughout the history of Islam, so here you have a form of intellectual diversity that goes back a thousand years.

That's one reason I challenge the possibility of an Islamic state. Sharia ceases to be sharia by the very act of enacting it as state law, because then it becomes the political will of the state, not the religious law of Muslims. If it is the religious law of Muslims, it should remain a matter of free choice. As a Muslim I'm entitled to chose one opinion over the other, but if you make it state law you deny me that right.

Shortly after September 11 an American rabbi, Jeffrey Wohlberg, noted how people were finding solace in religion. He told a PBS interviewer: "I think religion helps us to face that which we don't understand, that which overwhelms us, that which makes life hard. It helps us to gain an anchor, it gives us a kind of rudder to direct us, often when life seems rudderless." Political Islam seems to tap into this same power, offering answers and explanations for things that many people find hard to comprehend, like economic and cultural trends.

Yes, I agree. Religion is what we make of it. There is no such thing as Islam in the abstract sense, just as there is no such thing as Christianity or Judaism in the abstract. Islam and Christianity and Judaism are what the believers make of them. They are what the believers believe and do. And so I take issue with all this talk about Islam's innocence or culpability. It's not Islam—it's Muslims we are talking about.

Religion is a resource, a powerful, profound resource that most people appreciate. But what they make of it—what moral, political and economic actions they take—is the responsibility of the believers as they struggle with the scriptural or theological discourse.

Islam can be used as a force of peace or a force for war, a force for human rights or a force against human rights. The question is which interpretations or understandings of the religion are likely under what conditions. And how to promote the conditions that are conducive to what we favor the religion to be used for, as opposed to condemning the religion as a negative force.

Much of your work seeks to show that human rights are not a Western imposition, that they have roots in virtually every culture and religion. Can you explain these efforts to identify culturally specific foundations for human rights?

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was introduced in 1948, it simply proclaimed these rights without saying or suggesting that they come from any one source or foundation. I think it was unavoidable that it used that neutral

UNITED NATIONS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by a committee representing eight nations and led by Eleanor Roosevelt. According to An-Na'im, the Arab and Muslim world remains suspicious of the document as long as it is presented as a western paradigm.

AP/WIDEWORLD

Scottish judges in the Netherlands preside over the Lockerbie case. "Justice will only come through a judicial approach."

language in the beginning. The problem lies with the failure to continue the effort to legitimatize and to root human rights in local cultures in different parts of the world. Because people need to justify these rights in their own terms and context if they are to have political viability.

Nobody would challenge that freedom of expression, for instance, is a fundamental, universal human right. But what does it mean? What are its limitations? How does it deal with things like blasphemy and hate speech? To practically implement the rights for those sorts of issues, you need a frame of reference for defining and mediating competing claims.

How can the distrust of the human rights movement that is evident in many Arab and Islamic societies be overcome?

As long as the human rights paradigm is presented as a Western, liberal agenda focusing primarily on civil and political rights, people in the Arab world or the Muslim world will remain profoundly distrustful. And rightly so, I think, given the colonial and postcolonial relationship with the West and given the West's inconsistent respect for human rights. It's willing to trade human rights for other interests whenever that's expedient.

But if human rights are presented as an internal agenda, and shown to be legitimized by Islam or Arab culture, people will be less resistant. The rights discourse must take a view that is comprehensive of all human rights, including economic and social rights. It must emphasize the interdependence between these sets of rights. And it must be cast in terms of global power relations and structural factors, rather than just chasing after individual violations by very legalistic methods. That reactive approach is an important part of the strategy, but it cannot be the whole strategy.

Let's go back to the current context. Some have suggested that if Osama bin Laden is captured alive, he should be brought before an international tribunal that includes one member of the U.S. Supreme Court and one Islamic cleric or judge, among others. Would that be effective?

The bombing is never going to achieve justice. It may destroy Afghanistan further, if that's possible, but justice will only come through a judicial approach in which you can verify guilt and punish accordingly. The Americans and the British may feel that they don't have the type of evidence that will stand up in a court of law. But when Timothy McVeigh committed the ultimate terrorist act in this country before September 11th, there was no talk of getting him dead or alive. There was talk of investigating, producing the evidence, submitting it to court and seeing if it would lead to a conviction. He was given every due process protection like any other suspect person.

We also have a very recent precedent for this internationally in the Lockerbie case. After the U.S. bombings and 10 years of U.N. sanctions, eventually it came down to negotiating a forum acceptable to the Libyan, British and American parties. The two Libyan suspects were handed over to a tribunal in The Hague and tried earlier this year. One was convicted and the other was acquitted.

Yes, but critics fault this criminal justice approach because it seldom reaches beyond the immediate perpetrators—who are eminently replaceable—to punish the primary sponsors of terrorism.

I think this is a shortsighted view that tends to fixate on the case at hand, whether it's Muammar el-Qaddafi or Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. We should be more concerned about maintaining the principle of justice and making long-term investments in institutions and structures that will make terrorism less likely to occur and make terrorists more likely to be caught and punished effectively.

In America's own experience with organized crime in the 1920's and '30's, the struggle was whether to pursue vigilante justice or to abide by the rule of law. The government, wisely, chose the rule of law. The true measure of a society is its willingness to stick to the rule of law even in the face of extreme situations. When everything's fine there is no particular honor or distinction in sticking by the rule of law; only when it's the hard choice.

I would argue that the moral and the pragmatic coincide. That it is both in the interest of the West—with regard to economic and strategic security concerns—and in the interest of Muslim societies in the region that human rights and democratization should be given the highest priority. You cannot suppress and you cannot conspire with oppressive regimes to maintain your interests in the region. As long as people are frustrated and angry, they will find ways of hitting back. And even the most powerful are vulnerable. ■

■ National Council of Applied Economic Research (India)
$90,400
To analyze the effects of trade liberalization and other changes in global and national markets on employment, wages and working conditions of women garment workers.

Mexico and Central America

Development finance and economic security

■ Alternatives and Social Participation Processes (Mexico)
$100,000
To design legal, operational and administrative components for a new rural financial services cooperative, train its staff, directors and members and begin offering services.

■ Anadeges, A.C. (Mexico)
$150,000
To develop a strategic planning and evaluation capacity, prepare training materials and disseminate its model for rural development in general and rural finance in particular.

■ Guatemalan Network of Microfinance Institutions (Guatemala)
$70,000
To strengthen the network's training, information generation and policy analysis.

■ Integrated Services for Women Entrepreneurs (Mexico)
$100,000
To train indigenous Mexican women in microfinance practices and microentrepreneurship and to refine and disseminate a gender-sensitive approach to microfinance.

■ Interdisciplinary Group on Women, Work and Poverty (Mexico)
$235,000
For fellowships for Mexican university students to study how poor women use remittance income to improve their livelihood opportunities and the welfare of their families.

■ International Labour Organization (Switzerland)
$100,000
To develop courses to improve the quality and increase the supply of professionals offering technical assistance to microentrepreneurs in Central America.

■ International Network for Production System Research Methodology (RIMISP) (Mexico)
$70,000
To develop a methodology to certify the skill levels of executives and staff members of Mexican development finance institutions.

■ Juan Diego Foundation (Mexico)
$60,000
To develop an equity investment fund to channel capital to microenterprise institutions that promote poverty alleviation in disadvantaged Mexican communities.

■ Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Costa Rica)
$100,000
For research on the potential utility of inserting Central American microenterprises into global circuits that might facilitate flows of technology, investment and trade.

■ Mexican Association for Advancement and Social Culture (Mexico)
$20,000
For two meetings to discuss how a philosophy of ethics and an understanding of human development can frame a more socially oriented approach to microfinance.

■ Mexican Council for Popular Savings and Credit (COMACREP) (Mexico)
$100,000
For a coalition to help Mexican development finance institutions implement programs that respond to a new regulatory environment for popular savings and credit.

■ National Association of Social Sector Credit Unions (Mexico)
$100,000
To institute a decentralized technical assistance program, develop financial management tools and design a federation for microfinance organizations serving disadvantaged people in Oaxaca and Puebla.

■ Nicaraguan Association of Microfinance Institutions (Nicaragua)
$100,000
To strengthen its training, information and policy analysis programs.

■ ProDevelopment: Finance and Microenterprise (Mexico)
$100,000
For strategic planning and organizational development to enhance its capacity to help development finance institutions respond to the challenges and opportunities of a new regulatory framework.

■ ProDevelopment: Finance and Microenterprise (Mexico)
$45,000
For participation by Latin Americans in the MicroCredit Summit Campaign's October 2001 Latin American Regional Meeting in Puebla.

■ Union for Rural Efforts (Mexico)
$60,000
To publish and disseminate analytical and training materials on development finance and to assess the diffusion and adoption of an innovative microfinance methodology.

Middle East and North Africa

Development finance and economic security

■ Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (West Bank)
$50,000
For research on the performance of the Palestinian economy in light of the current conflict and for a survey of foreign trade in services.

Community and Resource Development

United States and Worldwide Programs

Community development

■ Aspen Institute, Inc. (Washington, DC)
$1,500,000
To manage the Rural Development and Community Foundations Initiative.

■ Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (Brooklyn, NY)
$250,000
For a strategic planning process to develop new program directions, improve its organizational structure and strengthen its financial management and fund-raising capacity.

■ CLF Services, Inc. (Boston, MA)
$150,000
To establish a community land trust in Harlem, select appropriate sites available for purchase and design a development and financing plan.

■ Development Training Institute, Inc. (Baltimore, MD)
$150,000
To increase understanding among community development practitioners of the importance of regionalism and smart growth and to enhance their capacity to set agendas for metropolitan development.

■ First Nations Development Institute (Fredericksburg, VA)
$200,000
To help launch an endowment campaign for the Eagle Staff Fund, the institute's grantmaking and technical assistance unit.

■ National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community (New York, NY)
$150,000
To establish a research and public policy program.

■ North Carolina Council of Churches (Raleigh, NC)
$500,000
To build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (Reno, NV)
$500,000
To build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ ProTex Network for a Progressive Texas, Inc. (Austin, TX)
$500,000
To build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ Rural Organizing Project (Scappoose, OR)
$500,000
To help the Oregon Collaboration to build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ Save Our Cumberland Mountains Resource Project (Lake City, TN)
$500,000
To help the Tennessee Partnership on Organizing and Public Policy to build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ Southern Echo, Inc. (Jackson, MS)
$500,000
To build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations.

■ Washington Association of Churches (Seattle, WA)
$500,000
To help the Living Wage Movement to build statewide partnerships between community and policy organizations in Washington.

■ Washington, University of (Seattle, WA)
$71,000
To help the Center for Labor Studies to promote appreciation of and demand for models of labor-management cooperation in the public sector.

■ Washington, University of (Seattle, WA)
$50,000
To enable the Fiscal Policy Center to analyze and report on budget and tax policy issues affecting low-income residents of Washington state.

Overseas Programs

Andean Region and Southern Cone

Governance

■ National Foundation for the Eradication of Poverty (Chile)
$228,500
To establish a Network for Innovation in Citizenship within the Innovations Awards Program.

■ Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (Peru)
$100,000
For country and regional comparative research on relations between civil society and democracy over the last 20 years.

Brazil

Governance

■ Brazilian Association of NGOs
$25,000
To organize a seminar for judges and prosecutors on preventing electoral corruption.

■ Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis
$50,000
For research and dissemination to promote the concept and practice of social auditing by Brazilian firms.

■ Campinas, State University of
$100,000
For the Brazil component of a comparative analysis of Latin American civil society.

■ Joaquim Nabuco Foundation
$38,000
For a workshop on police training in Brazil and an international conference on the social effects of police training.

■ Minas Gerais, Federal University of
$265,000
For the Center for Criminology and Public Security.

China

Civil society

■ Rural Women Knowing All
$500,000
For its endowment and for outreach and training activities for rural women.

Governance

■ California State University (Fresno, CA)
$75,000
To provide training and technical assistance to help the academic, business and government communities in Guizhou Province to support economic and small-business development.

■ Carter Center, Inc. (Atlanta, GA)
$32,700
For the conference Villager Self-Government and Rural Social Development in China.

■ China Agricultural University
$10,000
For the 2001 Annual Conference of Young Agricultural Economists in China.

■ China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation
$70,000
For research, publications and an international conference on the role of NGOs in poverty reduction in China.

■ China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation
$8,500
To publish the proceedings of a regional meeting on corporate governance.

■ China Research Center for Comparative Politics and Economics
$7,500
To identify and encourage promising reforms in local governance in China through an awards program modeled after the Innovations in American Government program.

■ Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
$40,000
For comparative research on welfare states in transition and the implications for China's social security reforms.

■ Development Research Centre of the State Council
$85,000
For research on the changing institutional context of township and village governance.

■ Foundation-administered project (New York, NY)
$153,350
For exploratory activities to develop a program on local governance and community participation in urban China.

■ National People's Congress, Research Office of the General Office of the Standing Committee
$50,000
For research on public participation in direct elections to local people's congresses in China.

■ Peking University
$29,000
For research on rural women's political participation.

■ Qingdao Bureau of Civil Affairs
$24,500
For research and publications on urban community development and local government reform in Qingdao.

■ Stanford University (Stanford, CA)
$110,000
For research on the urbanization of rural areas on the outskirts of established cities (peri-urbanization) in China and the challenges for governance.

Online meeting place for investors and entrepreneurs

'By building a portal for social entrepreneurs in the developing world, we make it possible for donors anywhere in the world to discover these entrepreneurs, to interact with them, and to support them financially.' This is how Mari Kuraishi describes DevelopmentSpace, of which she is a co-founder. Launched in February 2002, DevelopmentSpace is an online global social capital marketplace.

Called 'the eBay of international aid' by James Fallows in the *Atlantic Monthly*,[1] it seeks to harness the power of the web to fight poverty in the developing world.

Co-founders Mari Kuraishi and Dennis Whittle, both previously at the World Bank, saw a huge demand for an online marketplace for development projects seeking aid – particularly one that is open to everyone in the world, not just well-connected entrepreneurs in the development industry.

'We know from our experience experimenting with social entrepreneurship competitions at the World Bank that some of the best ideas for development come from the local community, and the best NGOs work hard to connect with such people. But we also know that unless the NGO went looking for them, these communities often couldn't get access to support or funding. So we thought it was important to create a portal for them to come to.'

The goal is thus to directly connect social investors with projects that are effective and personally relevant. 'We give investors and entrepreneurs greater access to their target audience, while decreasing the time and hassle required,' Whittle explains. 'Our costs will be below other channels used for fundraising and project development.'

DevelopmentSpace first gives social entrepreneurs the tools to develop sophisticated business planning documents to target potential investors. The documents are then uploaded on to the website and made available to a community of philanthropists (ranging from foundations and companies to affinity groups and individuals) who wish to get directly involved in the development process. DevelopmentSpace also connects these entrepreneurs to a global network of technical experts and service providers who can help with the preparation of business planning documents, ease the process of implementation and help facilitate high-impact social projects.

For more information, visit the website at www.developmentspace.com

1 For the full article, visit the *Atlantic* website at http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2002/02/fallows.htm

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problems, and supporting the poor and the struggles to end poverty. At the same time it's very important that we use the standards and values of journalism in order to deserve and hold the trust of our audiences.'

This vision of a new type of journalism has not been restricted to NGOs operating on the Internet. Traditional mediums are beginning to recognize that the role of the 'impartial' journalist is changing. 'Newspapers have finally gotten the message that the press too often emphasizes conflict and controversy to the exclusion of explanatory and public service journalism,' explains Jack Nelson, chairman of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, which recently conducted a survey of the editorial policy of every US newspaper with a circulation of over 20,000.

OneWorld has positioned itself at the frontline of these editorial experiments in transparency and 'values-based journalism'. Its reputation as an organization that reports on the work of its 1,000 partners in a fair and unbiased way will be tested in the coming year.

IN BRIEF

Virtual Microfinance Market to be developed

UNCTAD and CGAP have signed a letter of intent to launch a Virtual Microfinance Market (VMM), a comprehensive web-based service to link investors, donors and MFIs worldwide. It will act as a one-stop shop for information on the microfinance market. On the demand side, this will include financial information on all reporting MFIs, key performance indicators and social impact. On the supply side, it will provide information on MFI investors and apex bodies, including selection criteria, financial instruments and performance indicators. It will also contain macroeconomic and regulatory information to enable the potential investor to assess the environment and MFI market at country level.

For more information, contact Frank Grozel at UNCTAD at Frank.grozel@unctad.org or Xavier Reille at CGAP at xreille@worldbank.org

Go to www.vmm.dpn.ch to see the latest demo version of the VMM

Aid agencies connect online to fight global AIDS crisis

OneWorld today announced the launch of a new multimedia web portal on HIV/AIDS. AIDSchannel.org went live on 1 December 2001 to coincide with World AIDS Day. It launches with a partnership of over 100 leading aid agencies, human rights groups and campaign groups worldwide. The site aims to promote understanding, knowledge sharing and action on AIDS. It includes news, campaign actions, opinion pieces by leading commentators, in-depth analysis, events listings, a beginner's guide to HIV/AIDS and a dedicated search facility on AIDS.

For more information, visit www.aidschannel.org