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#### **■ TODAY'S WEATHER**







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TAIWAN'S LEADING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER SINCE 1952

# 'Time' features Tsai on cover

TV / Comics

15

### Magazine calls Tsai frontrunner dential election loss to incumbent Ma Ying-jeou galvanized supports be with when we were an opposition party," Tsai said in the artical Note to the party of the party o for 'Chinese' democratic leader

By YUAN-MING CHIAO

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairwoman and 2016 presidential contender Tsai Ingwen (蔡英文) was featured in the cover story of the Asia edition of Time Magazine published yester-

The cover could give Tsai prestige yet its description of Taiwan as a "Chinese democracy" in the cover headline also points to the challenge in cross-strait policy faced by the "Taiwan-centric" can-

In Time's article, reporter Emily Rauhala, who is based in Beijing, accompanies Tsai, the DPP chairwoman, from breakfast time (in which Tsai shows off her cu-

linary skills by preparing a meal from locally sourced ingredients) to her various campaign stops throughout the day. Time portrayed Tsai as "the early frontrunner" in the 2016 presidential election with a "proudly, defiantly, and earlier by influential U.S. Taiwan-centric" policy outlook in which she calls for a new model that weans the island's high-tech proposed cross-strait policy, the economy from its dependence on report also acknowledged that

**■ INSIDE** 

Impact Journalism Day

Aside from noting Tsai's unlikely rise as the DPP's standard that includes the corporate world bearer following a series of woman's personal branding as a calculated thinker was seen as having limited resonance initially

ers when she asked them "not to lose heart." Tsai, who described herself as "quite adventurous," was also shown to have a witty sense of humor.

#### **Challenge in Economic Policy Formulation**

However, just as Tsai has been criticized by her opponents academics with ties to policymakers for the vagueness in her Tsai faced challenges in formulating a new economic model without going against the more electoral defeats, the DPP chair- traditional DPP China-skeptic support base.

"Our challenge is to produce something that is sensible to both until her emotional concession sides without being considered as speech in 2012 after the presi- a traitor to the friends we used to

ticle, while seeming to refer to the DPP's status as opposition party in the past tense.

The Time story, however, does allude to the potential salience of Tsai's more conservative attitude toward the role of China's laborintensive economy on Taiwan's innovation-fueled economy that is nevertheless dependent on lower labor costs with the growing disaffection of the island's youth as symbolized in last year's Sunflower Movement.

Tsai, in answering questions from local media with regard to the high-profile Time feature, said that her intention was to "allow the international community to understand how the people of Taiwan want to protect democratic values." She added that she was very pleased that the magazine chose to highlight the value of Taiwan's democratic values on

#### Tsai Not Concrete Enough: Hung

Deputy Legislative Speaker and likely Kuomintang presidential candidate Hung Hsiu-chu told Time that she did not believe Tsai to be a "strong opponent." As Tsai's most likely opponent in the race, Hung also reiterated criticism toward the DPP chairwoman's definition of the "status quo" in relations between Taiwan and China.

Referring to yesterday's publication featuring Tsai, Hung said that it was "very good," though she questioned Tsai's "new model" for Taiwan, saying that a nation's leader needed more substantive ideas rather than "constructing sentences full of adjectives only.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen portrayed on the latest edition of Time Magazine (Asia edition) released yesterday.



### Impact Journalism Day: newspapers unite for uplifting, solutions-based news

By Christian de Boisredon AND THE SPARKNEWS TEAM

Reading the news on a daily basis can be a depressing affair. Worldwide, readers and audiences repeatedly report that they are put off by how negative the news seems to be.

Yet the media's role is to bring major issues and problems to the foreground and to keep us alert. Must the headlines conform to the age-old adage that "when it bleeds, it leads"?

nalism Day is to show that the movement in the press to feature media also fulfill their role by stories of hope and change. reporting on inspiring solutions to the world's problems.

Impact Journalism Day is just the beginning. Each edition has The alliance of 45 newspapers, seen a steady increase in the numunited by Sparknews, presents ber of newspapers and newsrooms a different vision of journalism: onboard, excited to show their problems AND solutions can commitment to solutions-based remake the news together. This porting. Some journalists were iniview, along with the conviction tially concerned this content might that quality, solutions-based news be naive or simplistic, but are now is something readers aspire to eager to participate and uphold

activities. They are fueled by conviction and also by seeing firsthand that this type of reporting has a measurable impact on the ground.

When the public learns of real solutions, the results can be tremendous. Readers gain greater understanding of the problems and are given the means to engage and the hope to believe that they can become changemakers.

Every reader can and does make

helped contribute to the growth of the projects featured, via an increase in awareness, volunteering, orders, investments, donations or even via replication in new countries.

Now it's your turn to be part of the movement!

Show the media that this kind of news matters. Tell your friends and family about Impact Journalism Day, buy an extra copy for your children or your colleagues,

web and be part of the conversation on Twitter and Facebook.

You can take part in our selfie contest by posting a photo of yourself and this newspaper via Twitter (#ImpactJournalism and add the @ of your newspaper) or the Facebook page of our founding partner, AXA (facebook.com/ AXAPeopleProtectors).

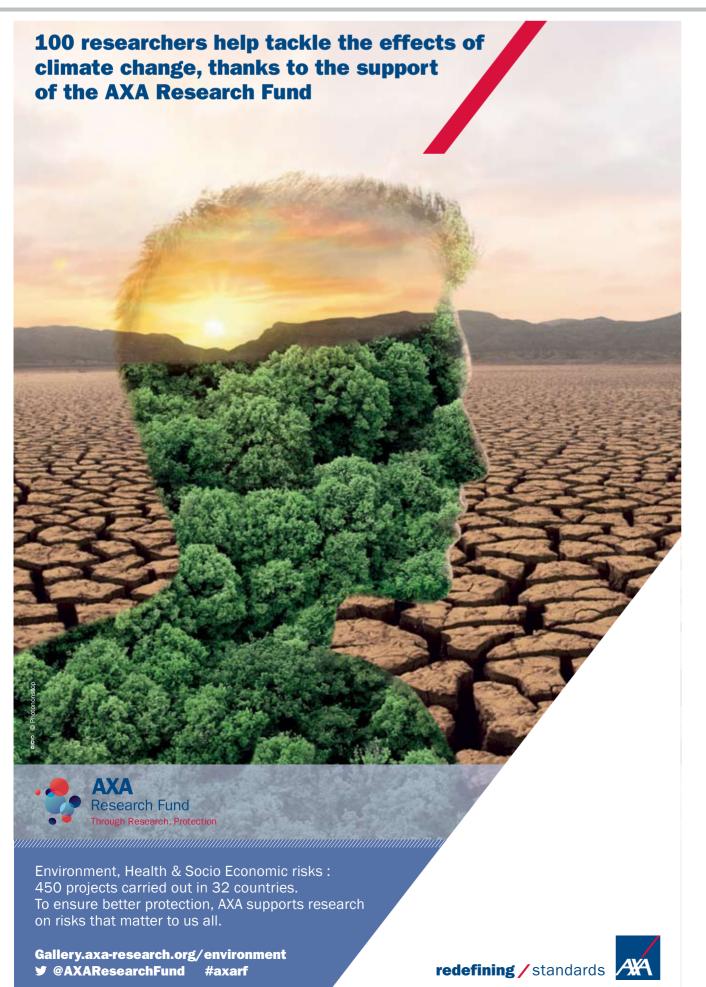
Help the innovators and entrepreneurs featured in these stories

The idea behind Impact Jour- have more of, is part of a growing this philosophy in their day-to-day a difference. Last year's articles share the articles you like on the to overcome the challenges they face by joining a brainstorming session (beta.makesense.org/ijd).

> And suggest projects we might consider for next year's Impact Journalism Day (www. sparknews.com/ijd).

Enjoy your read!

Christian is the founder of Sparknews and an Ashoka Fellow. For more information: impact@sparknews.com





### What goes around, comes around

A team comprising American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) officials and staff participates in a dragon boat racing vesterday as part of the celebrations for Dragon Boat Festival in Taiwan. See story on page 16

## Greece hopeful of last-ditch bailout

## solution despite warnings of default

Greece on Friday insisted a lastditch deal on its debt was possible and dismissed "terror scenarios" of a default that is looking increasingly likely, as emergency European meetings continue in a bid to break the deadlock.

"Those who invest in crisis and terror scenarios will be proven wrong," Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's office said, amid reports that Greeks banks are struggling to cope with a rush of deposit withdrawals, fuelled by the ill-tempered talks with Greece's EU-IMF creditors.

#### **ECB Raises Emergency Liquidity for Greek Banks**

The European Central Bank on Friday raised the level of emergency funding for Greek banks by an unspecified amount following a request from the Bank of Greece, a Greek bank source said.

'There was no problem with the financing of Greek banks," the source said, adding that bank governors were expecting a "positive result" at an emergency eurozone leaders summit on Greece on Monday

According to state agency ANA, the funding cap was increased by 3.3 billion euros (US\$3.7 billion).

The Bank of Greece had earlier insisted that the country's banking system was stable amid a rush of deposit withdrawals this week fuelled by fresh deadlock in Greece's loan talks with its EU-IMF creditors.

Bank of Greece governor Yannis Stournaras had earlier met with the top Greek negotiator in European Union-International Monetary Fund talks, junior for-

eign minister Euclid Tsakalotos. A billion euros were with-

drawn from Greek banks on Thursday, following another 1.6 billion euros over the two previous days, financial website euro-2day reported.

EU President Donald Tusk has called an emergency summit of the leaders of the 19 eurozone countries in Brussels on Monday after finance ministers failed Thursday to break the five-month deadlock between the anti-austerity government in Athens and its international creditors.

French President Francois Hollande insisted Friday that "everything" must be done to seal a compromise on the Greek debt crisis.

We must "do everything to relaunch negotiations, so the talks can achieve a compromise, but one in line with European rules,' said Hollande, following talks in Bratislava with his Slovak counterpart before speaking with German Chancellor Angela Merkel later in the day.

#### Monday Summit 'crucial'

Hollande said Monday's emergency eurozone summit would be "crucial." "I don't want us to meet only to come to the conclusion that we have failed," he said.

The Athens stock exchange on Friday was alternating between small gains and losses.

In a move that seemed calculated to irk other European leaders amid tensions with Russia over Ukraine, Tsipras was visiting Saint Petersburg as the star guest at President Vladimir

Putin's investment drive forum. The Greek and Russian leaders were due to hold talks Friday,

as Moscow and Athens signed a preliminary agreement to set up a joint venture to extend the TurkStream pipeline through Greece, a long-term project which the Greek government hopes will translate into an up-

front payment of some sort. Greece has until June 30 to agree a reform deal in order to secure the remaining portion of its multi-billion-euro bailout, which it needs to avoid defaulting on a debt payment of around 1.5 billion euros to the International Monetary Fund.

Analysts have long warned that a default may set off a chain of events leading to a 'Grexit' --Greece leaving the eurozone.

Tsipras warned in an interview with an Austrian newspaper on Friday that a Greek exit would be "the beginning of the end" of the euro.

The famous Grexit cannot be an option either for the Greeks or the European Union. This would be an irreversible step, it would be the beginning of the end of the eurozone," Tspiras told the Kurier daily.

Tsipras's own office was more conciliatory, adding in Friday's statement: "We hope that the final negotiations take place at Europe's highest political level and we are working toward the success of this summit.'

One source described the 90-minute Eurogroup talks on Thursday as "tragic," saying that Greece had not even raised the issue of a possible bailout extension.

Creditors have refused to pay the remaining 7.2 billion euros of the bailout if there is no reform deal, and the cash will be lost forever if there is no deal for an extension

#### E D I T O R I A L

### Youth need more support to overcome weight obsession

ccording to a recent survey, most Taiwanese aged 18 to 29 are dissatisfied with their body shape. When you're overweight, it's not only the clothes that don't fit anymore. For young people, everything else can go downhill from there, including relationships and studies.

Although teenagers and young adults long to be slimmer, it is not always easy to overcome eating habits, especially when the environment you live in puts too much emphasis on brands, snacks and healthy lifestyles.

In response to such concerns, the Taipei City Government launched a free diet consultation hotline to help overweight people in the city and across the island to overcome weight obsession. But, this is not enough.

Diet promotion should be part of a wider initiative to tackle this growing social problem in schools and universities. Most people don't know that Taiwan now ranks 16th worldwide for the highest overweight population, while the vast majority of the island's population has been overweight since childhood.

Contrary to all expectations, Taiwan is a country of convenience stores, lunch boxes and street foods; an island nation where too many meals are eaten on the side of the road or in the office. The resulting increase in obesity is symptomatic of an overworked, sedentary society where the cost of groceries is disproportionately high, especially compared to the cheap and abundant but ultimately unhealthy alternatives.

Obesity is not an illness that can be cured with a pill, but instead requires radical changes in habit. To begin with, Taiwanese society needs to slow down. Slow Food International, a gastronomic movement that began in Italy in the 1980s encouraging the slow cultivation and consumption of food, could be a possible answer to this growing social problem.

Of course, not everyone will have the luxury of eating organic food everyday, but if an appreciation for eating and the source of those ingredients can be cultivated then perhaps this will influence parents' decision on what to feed their children.

Recall that the government in 2005 passed laws to restrict the selling on school premises of the junk food that is still widely available on school grounds and just outside the school gates. Interestingly enough, it is a misconception that Taipei has the most overweight children. It is in fact rural Taiwan that has the highest proportion of overweight children. This could be because of a number of reasons: a lack of public health information, a sudden influx of fast food restaurants and a lack of sports centers and sporting venues.

Common problems include high-calorie candy and sugary drinks and, in recent years, a sharp rise in the consumption of meat as well as a general lack in fruit and vegetables.

World Health Organization (WHO) statistics shows that there are 43 million overweight children under 5 around the world and that junk food was the main contributing factor. The WHO suggests that children prefer recreational areas as well as schools that serve foods high in sodium, sugar and fat.

A debate is now raging across the Pacific. U.S. first lady Michelle Obama and British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver have stressed that healthy food in schools is a civil rights issue while Sarah Palin, on the opposing side, has fired back saying government interference in children's diets would be against their human rights and that parents should decide what their chil-

But what if parents are not adequately informed about healthy eating or do not have the means to buy healthy alternatives? With this, compounded by pervasive advertising and free children's toys offered by fast food restaurants, the pressure on parents is sometimes overwhelming.

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Letters to the editor are welcome. All letters must include the writer's real name, address and phone number for verification. Names will be withheld upon request. Letters should be brief, and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. We assume no responsibility for opinions expressed. Letters intended to be published in this paper should not be sent to other publications.

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mented home-DANIEL J. BAUER the Ximen area has particularly affected those of us

high school stu-

who work with local youth. It is shocking enough to know the students poured human excrement onto the faces of people sleeping in public areas of Ximen. The realization that the youth filmed their cruel antics and dashed off to post their prank on line only increases our sense of dismay and anger. What a mix of twisted bravado, what a sick need for attention.

It is not surprising then that new letters in recent hours to the editor of The China Post and discussants in other forums as well have continued to question the reactions of authorities. Should officials at the boys' high school have expelled

them, as they in fact did? Would not counseling have been a more news story these beneficial route in the end? There has also been debate about keeping about a pair of the boys in school, thus a "no" to the expulsion question, but a "yes" to a plan to transfer the errant students to a different school.

Let us briefly step aside from this

I want to walk now on precipitous terrain. Perhaps I need a good head doctor, or perhaps I am trying too hard to level the playing field here. Still in all, I must do this. I must confess.

Long ago and far away (as James Taylor puts it), I was once a boy. Boys can be nasty. Boys can be cruel. I'll leave it to readers at large to handle the question of girls. My hunch is that, on occasion, teenage girls can also be nasty and cruel.

One time a friend and I had the incredible luck of coming upon a large and beautiful soft-shelled turtle that was floating, dazed and barely conscious, in the placid

waters of a small lake in southern Michigan. It was obvious that the propeller of an outboard motor had badly clobbered the poor groggy creature.

Teen behavior a call for reflection

Had we left the turtle to its own devices, it very likely would have survived quite nicely and gone on doing its share to bring countless cute little soft-shelled turtles into the world for many a year to come. But, nasty and cruel kids that we were, we took no pity on the fellow. We gloated over the creature in all its misery, and dragged it into our fishing boat. We took him to the

Then my friend and I called two other buddies for "help." We tied a rope around the hapless reptile's shell, and dragged him off into the woods. I am too ashamed to say more about what we wound up doing that day to this innocent crea-

I am not comparing homeless human beings in Ximen with reptiles that live in swamps and Michidwells within each of us a person capable of true human compassion, and a person as well who can be cruel and unfeeling beyond descrip-

To those who want to make scapegoats of the boys who acted so horribly to the homeless that recent night in Ximen, I say, look into the mirror, the mirror of our society and the mirror of your own life. Let us at least not deny that there are all sorts of ways to pour excrement on the defenseless, and many a way to be unfair and cold-hearted to the vulnerable and marginalized

What those boys did was despicable, and they should make restitution. The cliche about having a debt now to pay to society doubtlessly applies to them.

When political parties refuse to work together for the good of the people simply because they want to embarrass and make life miserable for the opposition, they are no

gan water. I am saying that there better than nasty teenagers. When as individuals or societies we taunt and reject others simply because of gender, sexual orientation or racial or national or religious background, we are pouring you know what on

The Thina Post 英文中國郵報

human faces. Those boys need counseling, yes. And whenever we find ourselves in moments of cruelty to others, we

need counseling too.

The worst suggestion I heard was to keep the students in school, but in someone else's school. Ship them someplace else, make them someone else's problem! Heaven

In time of great need, almost always the best place to begin to heal is at home, at home in familiar surroundings and in the presence of people who know us and care

(Father Daniel J. Bauer SVD is a priest and associate professor in the English Department at Fu Jen Catholic University.)

### NATO Chicago summit places political policies in the spotlight



D. Eisenhower's farewell address two terms in the

ARTHUR I. CYR White House, sustaining remarkably strong public support throughout that tenure. At the time, the speech was largely ignored by reporters and professors, who generally underestimat-

ed Ike. Down the decades, however, Eisenhower's warning has resonated with increasing impact, and has become a shorthand reference for the inherently dangerous collaboration of enormous corporate capital and the armed power of the state

Eisenhower, the first supreme commander of NATO, had an outlook and career helpful in understanding the import of the Alliance summit in Chicago. This is particularly true given superficial media emphasis on inconvenient security measures for foreign dignitaries, and the possibility of disruptions by demonstrators.

The North Atlantic Treaty dates from the earliest days of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and allies. The Soviet empire and associated Warsaw Pact military structure collapsed two decades ago, yet NATO endures. Part of the explanation is the alliance is conflicts. useful to business of the largest United States.

Chicago is heavily involved with the CIA and Texas A&M University carthage.edu

industrial com-General Dynamics are the most plex" was the obvious examples, but in addition a wide array of firms in the Greater Chicago region provides weapons, materiel and services to the U.S. Department of Defense and foreign nations.

In July 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates visited Chicago to address the Economic Club, the first defense secretary to speak before the largely business group. In earlier times, Pentagon heads usually chose the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. Before a notably attentive audience he bluntly discussed the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and beyond.

Big money is unavoidably important but that should not be the primary concern of government officials handling national security. References to weapons were balanced by considerable attention to personnel, an even more complex dimension than contemporary

Gates emphasized the tragedies of military suicides. The man some criticized as a bloodless bureaucrat proved to be the reverse.

The speech included post-Cold War threats, and the importance of our allies. He criticized Pentagon emphasis on preparing for unlikely major wars with China, Russia and other major powers, while our most serious immediate challenges involve unconventional

Gates savaged defense industry arms merchant in the world — the inefficiency and profiteering. In and author of "After the Cold

defense industries. Boeing and provided key insights into what is probably the most complex management challenge on earth.

Dwight Eisenhower was a brilliant manager, whose record at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces greatly furthered his career. The College was established to rectify the logistical disasters which plagued American military performance in World War I. Ike's exceptional skills were fully utilized in World War II in Europe.

Chicago was the scene of the tumultuous, hotly contested 1952 Republican convention which nominated Eisenhower. The initial front-runner for the nomination was isolationist Ohio Sen. Robert Taft, an opponent of NATO and the U.N.

Newly elected California Sen Richard Nixon played a pivotal, and controversial, role in the ultimate Eisenhower victory, in consequence securing the vice presidential slot.

Gates in June 2011 delivered a farewell address to NATO in Brussels. He generated controversy with blunt criticism of allies for insufficient spending on defense.

Managing alliances, in domestic politics or across the ocean, is extremely tough work.

Chicago, past and present, effectively demonstrates this reality

Arthur I. Cyr is Clausen Distinguished Professor at Carthage College in Wisconsin direct manner, the former head of War." He can be reached at acyr@

### JPMorgan takes big gamble with change to firm's risk model

BY DAVID HENRY

JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s decision to radically change the way risk was measured in its Chief Investment Office is likely to dog the bank in the developing crisis over the big trading losses it has suffered.

The move, which allowed the bank to disguise the level of risk that the CIO was taking in its trading, could become a major focal point of investigations by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the FBI, former regulators said. It also will likely become part of investor cases in lawsuits against the bank and its execu-

When JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon announced on May 10 that the company had lost at least US\$2 billion through "egregious mistakes" in trading, he also said for the first time that the bank had changed its model for measuring so-called value-at-risk in the CIO where the derivatives portfolio was managed.

The change made the CIO's portfolio, which totaled about US\$375 billion, appear to be a lot safer than it actually was and gave traders more leeway kept to more conservative mod-

The old model would have sounded alarms by showing that the CIO could lose \$129 million, or more, in a day during the first quarter — a higher reading than during the financial crisis.

But the new model cut that figure almost in half, to US\$67 million, clouding the view inside and outside the bank of the danger it faced. That figure was lower than the US\$69 million reading at the end of the

So far, Dimon has not revealed exactly when the model was changed, or why.

Those questions now appear certain to be at the center of regulatory and shareholder inquiries into the losses, which are expected to grow. Some traders and analysts at other firms estimate the final loss tally could exceed US\$5 billion as the bank tries to unwind its positions. Dimon has said the losses could total US\$3 billion

#### **Lawsuits About Risk**

Investors have dumped JPMorgan's shares since the loss was announced, pushing them down more than 17 percent and erasing more than US\$27 billion of market value. Two shareholder lawsuits were filed against the company on Wednesday, accusing the bank and its management of taking excessive risk. The SEC is investigating

what happened at JPMorgan, the White House has confirmed. The FBI has also opened a preliminary investigation, according to agency director Robert Mueller.

A JPMorgan spokesman declined to comment. Spokesmen bank. for the SEC and FBI declined to comment.

the SEC will look at this issue" why and how the new model through the cracks?"

was adopted, said Harvey Pitt, a former SEC chairman.

"Regulators are going to want to know if changes were made consistently with the obligation to operate safely and soundly," said Pitt, who is currently CEO of Kalorama Partners, a business consulting

An initial report on the bank's results for the first quarter, made April 13, disclosed the US\$67 million figure, the reading under the new risk model. It did not say that there had been a change in

On May 10, as it explained the losses, the bank showed the US\$129 million risk reading from the old model. On a call with analysts that day, Dimon said the bank had tried the new model, and then reverted to the old one, which it had used for several years.

"There are constant changes and updates to models — always trying to get them better than they were before," Dimon said in the May 10 conference call. "That is an ongoing proce-

That explanation, "does not pass the smell test," said Mike Mayo, analyst at investment to make risky bets. The rest of firm CLSA. "It is a red flag for the bank's divisions apparently them to change the model," said Mayo, author of "Exile on Wall Street," about the inner workings of big banks.

> Banks sometimes refine their value-at-risk, or VAR, models but those commonplace changes do not by themselves produce such dramatically different results, said Christopher Finger, one of the founders of RiskMetrics Group, which pioneered VAR models and is now

a unit of MSCI Inc. The model JPMorgan put back in place shows "a huge, huge increase in risk," Finger

Finding out how the company decided to change the model would reveal a lot about its internal controls and about how the traders apparently got the upper hand over risk man-

agers, said Finger.

Risk controls on traders in the CIO were eased last year without Dimon knowing, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing unidentified sources.

Traditional value-at-risk models are not a perfect predictor - for example, they only estimate the possible losses for most days, losses could be even bigger on a few occasions. But even so, they are widely used as a metric by risk managers, traders, and

Changes in such risk models usually require several layers of approval going up the management ladder, said a risk manager at a large financial company, who declined to be

Mayo said it is important for investors to know who at JPMorgan made the decisions and exactly when, so they can gauge if the loss is the result of bigger problems at the

"I have yet to hear an answer that makes a lot of "It is logical to expect that sense," he said. The lack of transparency makes him of the disclosures, as well as wonder: "What else is falling

### The Chinese search for money leaves too many 'monks holding umbrellas'

By David Kan Ting

Of Mao Zedong's many pithy quotes, one impresses me the most: "I'm a monk holding an umbrella" (我是和尚打傘). Those were the words he told Edgar Snow four decades ago at the height of the Great Cultural Revolution, but the late American journalist and author of "Red Star Over China" did not get it and interpreted these cryptic words as "a lonely old monk walking on a gloomy rainy day." What Mao really meant was a pun understood by even Chinese school kids: "I fear neither law nor heaven" (wufa wutian 無法無天).

But don't blame Snow for having been victimized by the tricky Chinese language, which is full of pitfalls for foreigners. When I worked in Ottawa in the 1980s, I read a dispatch from Beijing in the Globe and Mail about the new leadership of Hu Yaobang, the outspoken party boss, and Zhao Ziyang, the gung-ho prime minister. The story quoted a catchword in Beijing: "Hu talks (胡說), Zhao gets jobs done (趙 The translation seemed flawless at first glance, but the saying was actually intended as a joke, meaning "Hu shoots the bull, Zhao follows accordingly." (胡說,照辦)

Let's not digress too far from the main topic, which is too serious to ignore. This week marks the 46th anniversary of the Great Cultural Revolution, arguably the greatest cultural, political and social disaster in Chinese history. It was launched on May 16, 1966 by Mao Zedong, the tyrant of tyrants who makes Hitler look like Jimmy Carter. Now, nearly ary when his thuggish hitman, half a century later, the wounds Chongqing police chief Wang

inflicted by Mao have barely been Lijun, fled to an American con-

healed, because Mao's legacy of sulate seeking protection, with lawlessness and reign of terror damning information of corruphave proved enduring. There is neither rule of law in China, nor reverence for traditional values and ethics. The madness of Mao's cultural revolution has taken a new form -- the pursuit of money and wealth at any cost.

Kenneth Lieberthal (李侃如), an eminent American-China hand, observed that "making money (in China) is a core goal of people throughout that system ... People are worried that the focus is so strong that it's not balanced by

ethical considerations." A Chinese central bank report reveals that 1,800 corrupt officials have fled abroad and taken US\$120 billion with them. That's about US\$7 million per fugitive. A New York Times report said corruption has become so pervasive that "even good people are on the take because everybody else is." It fuels simmering public anger because the disgruntled poor are getting poorer without any outlet to address their grievances. The disparity and social contradictions pose a grave

threat to the one-party regime. That's why Bo Xilai, who until last month had been a credible candidate for the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee, had tried his "Chongqing model" at the mega-city as its party chief. His populist and egalitarian policies, redolent of Maoist cruelness and bloodiness, were executed with little regard for law. But he had built a grassroots following, to the dismay and consternation of the central leadership in Beijing. As if by happenstance, Bo got poetic justice in Febru-

tion and murder involving Bo and his wife. That started Bo's unraveling.

To add salt to Beijing's em-

barrassment, world-renowned blind human rights activist Chen Guangcheng escaped last month from his house arrest in Shandong and ran all the way to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, touching off a diplomatic crisis that made international headlines. Both cases are evidence that there are too many "monks holding umbrellas" in today's China, who fear neither law nor God. Bo's anti-mafia campaign in Chongqing was often violent and abusive to be sure, but his detention and purge also lacked due process. As for Chen Guangcheng, the self-taught "barefoot lawyer" who dared to defend the defenseless and expose the shocking corruption and abuse of power by officials in his hometown, he deserves a Nobel laurel instead of years of incarceration. Where is the rule of law? Chen was convicted on trumped-up charges of disrupting traffic and damaging public prop-

Premier Wen Jiabao has been fearful of a cultural revolution redux, saying the specter will come back to haunt the nation if "we don't carry out political reform." But this reform-minded "people's premier" has cried wolf year after year, and now time is running out for his decadelong quest for the holy grail. We can only hope that the Sturm und Drang that shook China and the world in recent weeks could be a catalyst for the long-awaited political reform, thus exorcising Mao's ghost by taking his um-





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# The China Host

# The fight to secure the future of the next generation

CHI-HAO JAMES LO The China Post

In 1989, Wendy Kopp, then an undergraduate student in the Princeton University, founded Teach for America (TFA), a nonprofit organization with the goal of eliminating educational inequality in the United

The NPO has since been recruiting university graduates and education professionals to commit themselves into serving as teachers the U.S. for two years of their time.

After years of hard work, the current TFA corps has become a strong organization which recruits over 4000 college graduates annually to the cause so that they may impact the lives of young people.

Inspired by the ideals of Kopp, Anting Liu (劉安婷) from Taiwan began to engineer the blueprint for Teach for Taiwan (TFT) in June of 2012, in response to the growing problem of rural areas in Taiwan lacking the necessary human resources to provide proper education for children.

In recent years, part-time staff and faculties have slowly replaced fulltime teachers to become the norm of the greater education environment of human resource has also correect negatively toward the education education inequality in Taiwan. development of students.

education equality ideals to provide quality education to all, and to make education equality possible to children in rural areas.

Though TFT believes that education equality is a right given to all, the foundation nevertheless acknowledges that education has never been equal in Taiwan. According to TFT, even with the advent of the recent 12-Year Comin urban and rural communities in pulsory Education which promises fair education and enrollment to students in the entire nation, as well as the increase in university acceptances, education opportunities and academic achievements of children remain obviously different due to family background and location opportunities

Even though a report from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2012 displayed that the average mathematics education achievement in Taiwan was ranked 4th in the world, the difference ratio of low achieving students to high achieving students on the subject was and still remains higher than most countries. The phenomenon led PISA to conclude that in the case of Taiwan, the soin the country. The turnover rate cial status of a student's family has a direct correlation to his or her spondingly risen, which resulted in academic achievements in school, unstable teaching qualities that proj-serving as the perfect example of

Local researches in the changing The problem is even more severe social dynamics of the country has in rural areas, where children are also further displayed the problems

teachers or by new faces constantly. such as the high college enrollment Hence, TFT was founded upon population difference between urban and rural areas of Taiwan, regardless of the constant increase in local college admissions.

In hopes of improving such issues of education inequality in Taiwan, the TFT eventually came to be. Currently, TFT holds channeling the full potential of any children as its calling, believing also that education equality is the key to the future of the Taiwanese society.

The foundation now recruits passionate youths to undergo orientation and training with TFT to become qualified educators. Following the program, such individuals would be deployed to rural schools for two years as part of TFT's fulltime teaching program, so that students may have a consistent adult who serves as their teacher and role

#### **Teach for Taiwan Helps to** Make an Impact

Without a lot of resources at hand, TFT was off to a rocky start in the early days of its establishment. However, in January 2013, a development camp that was organized by the Chengji Education Foundation and the Alliance Cultural Foundation which seeks to enhance education, presented an opportunity that enabled all 14 of the nation's major tutoring organizations to consolidate their resources.

Thanks to the opportunity, TFT was able to form its first core memoften times taught by underqualified of educational inequality in Taiwan, fully understand the education diffiast teachers, TFT corps members





to engineer the blueprint for TFT in June 2012 in response to the growing problem of educational inequality. (Right) A teacher from the TFT program and an education alternative service staff member lead children from a rural community in an activity in this undated photo. The TFT model to create a meaningful impact first starts with the recruitment and training of passionate youths from all academic disciplines.

culties faced by rural areas of the na- will also receive training to provide tion, as well as getting a strong grasp on the implementation possibility which TFT may bring. The research conducted by the members eventually proved fruitful enough for the TFT to become an official foundation that is recognized by the Taiwanese government in November 2013.

The TFT model to create a meaningful impact first starts with the recruitment and training of passionate youths. The individual will become teachers who are willing to bring about change and dedicate two years of his or her life to children who live in rural areas across bers, who first used six months to the nation. Aside from serving only

students with supports that are more than just in academics.

TFT's long term goal is to cultivate leaders from rural places who will have the same opportunity as city counter parts. Not only will such individuals contribute to the nation positively, their success would be one of the most important catalysts in achieving education equality.

Following years of hard work was able to recruit more core volunteers as well as online partners in 2013. Though the help of such additional members, who had avidly visited schools, educators and businesses across the country to seek aid and cooperation to further strengthen the structure and protocols of the TFT, the organization was able receive proper funding from businesses, foundations and personal donations for the first TFT teachers recruitment in 2014. TFT's founding staff also conducted symposiums around the country prior to the first recruitment to gather opinions and

experiences from education experts.

With the foundation of TFT properly laid out, the first TFT teachers' recruitment garnered around 200 applicants, from which nine fulltime teachers and seven reserve teachers were selected. After nine weeks of intensive orientation and training, the 16 educators were For more information: http://www. deployed to schools in Taitung and

Tainan, to embark on a journey of great impact for two years.

The first wave of TFT teachers was only the first step toward a goal which will eventually prove it to become a powerhouse in education much like its American founding counterpart. Currently, TFT is readying itself for the second wave of teachers' recruitment, with more opportunities to come in the future, so that education equality could be fully implemented in Taiwan, both for the sake of the next generation, and the greater good of the entire island nation as a whole.



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#### By ENRU LIN The China Post

Weekday mornings in Mthatha, a community on South Africa's Eastern Cape, 40 health care workers embark on a journey past fields and rugged cliffs. Their goal: to reach the small painted

homes that sparsely dot the landscape. Johnson Huang (黃兆聖), head of a Taiwanese team that develops mobile applications for the continent, said that finding the homes can be tough because

Mthatha has no road signs. "For a community health worker going into a fresh assignment, it can be hard simply to locate the patients," said Huang, who leads the research and de-

velopment of a new portable solution. "The notation for a specific home might be something like this, 'Go down tree. Turn right at the tree and you'll see a little village, and in this village there is

#### one house that looks like that," he said. The Community Health Care App

Like many residents in remote parts of the world, the people of Mthatha rarely visit medical clinics. Instead, they rely on traveling healthcare workers for basic services and referrals to hospitals when their condition is serious.

In a pilot study that runs to October, 20 of the 40 healthcare workers are going to work in the mornings with a mobile app developed by Huang's team at Taiwan's Bjorgaas Foundation (畢嘉士基

Provisionally named CHC (Community Healthcare), the app is still in beta testing, though most of its features are com-The app solves the problem of lost

healthcare workers by providing steady and dependable GPS navigation to every patient's location. But the real beauty is that the app is

connected to a cloud database, which allows healthcare workers to do much more than track down patient homes. For one, CHC lets workers download

patient forms on their smartphone, sparing them from carrying heavy boxes and the problems of not having correct forms Workers can also collect data and au-

tomatically submit it to the cloud, a con-

venience that cuts down on human error when handling paper records. "For example, healthcare workers have a blood pressure monitor and ther-

mometer. Via Bluetooth, the readings

are wired directly to the phone and to



along this road and then you'll see a A view of the Mthatha, South Africa, where residents rely on traveling workers for basic health

#### the cloud database," he said. A South African National Health Bank

Huang said that over time, the cloud storage could become something similar to Taiwan's national health insurance database: a common repository of patient information from workers and hos-

pital staff all over the country. In South Africa, patient records are still mainly paper-based, not shared between

hospitals and prone to going missing. If an AIDS patient goes into a hospital he has not visited before, the doctor has no way of looking up his patient history. Even if the patient visits a familiar hospital, his record may be incomplete, and his physician may make mistakes.

Maybe the medicine a doctor prescribes to you depends on whether you received medication in a certain month after your diagnosis. You may have built up an immunity that reduces drug effi-

cacy," Huang said.
With the CHC solution, a doctor can scan the patient's fingerprint and receive a comprehensive picture of the patient's medical history.

"What I mean is that information and technology systems can help medical service providers provide long-term care. In countries where this medical information is not available, the quality of healthcare tends to be poor," he said.

#### **Finding His Way**

Huang, a native of Pingtung County, is in his early 30s but looks younger. With his thick arms and wide chest, he is built like a top-flight athlete, but when he

speaks he has the air of a professor. 'Taiwan happens to have experience in

tech solutions for medical care," he said. "Since the national health insurance program was formed in 1995, hospitals have been required to submit their patient data electronically and firms have worked with them and the state to create an electronic solution that is now quite

mature. As a boy in Southern Taiwan, Huang had wanted to become a doctor, but was diagnosed with a form of attention deficit disorder that caused his hands to tremble. Told he would be unable to use a scalpel, he took a different path and is now chief information officer for Bjorgaas, a social

welfare non-profit that works overseas. Mobile health solutions are particularly suited for underdeveloped countries due to the paradox that they often have excel-

lent technology infrastructure, he said. "South Africa's medical information service system is not so complete. You could say that they do not have one,

Huang said. "But the internet coverage is roughly 76 percent. And it's 3G."

By year's end, Huang and his team will look at the test run's data quality and decide where to take the app from

"We may tweak the app, or if we find it is successful, we can replicate the study elsewhere. Maybe someday we can use it in Southeast Asia - any countries that have an interest in this solution," he said.

"The idea with CHC is to package some of Taiwan's strengths and offer them to the world.

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# 'Everyone seeks his donkey': Farming autonomy



The city of Boromo is a must for all those heading from the political capital (Ouagadougou) to the economic capital. Famous for its grilled chicken and its bread baked in traditional ovens, Boromo is less well-known for an interesting initiative that is being carried out there; one that brings joy to many farmers and that deserves to be known and supported. Some local producers are now able to afford a donkey; an animal essential for field work and the transportation of crops, thanks to an original system of zerointerest microcredit. 40,000 CAD (US\$32,548), without interest.

At this price, "Everyone seeks his donkey." This is the name of the project, which has been implemented since 2009 and funded by donors from France via representatives of the association.

Owning a donkey is not a given for the poor rural population, who often don't have significant income. And yet donkeys are essential for survival in the rugged environment. In Boromo, not far from the place that will now serve "Everyone seeks his donkey" asso-Here people get into line in order thon (in charge of administration

their barrel. In the ranks, there are two donkeys pulling a cart with tens of cans. With one trip, Fatimata Oue-

draogo's family is able to ensure

its water consumption for several

days. No need to walk to the water fountain several times a day. Through the acquisition of a donkey, as recently as January 2015, the issue of water supply is no longer a source of anguish for the family. It is a great relief for them. Fatimata was registered on the

waiting list of beneficiaries of the program a few months ago, and is now a relieved woman. With the hours saved, she can now devote her time to other activities, such as collecting firewood for the kitchen. But one of the main benefits of owning a donkey is its contribution to agricultural labor as a draft animal (hoeing, plowing and transportation of the harvest).

While Fatimata Ouedraogo is a recent beneficiary of the program, Noumassi Tiaho, a farmer based in Ouroubonon village, 5 kilometers from Boromo, prides himself on having been one of the first in his as the official headquarters of the community to receive a donkey. He still remembers it: "I got my donciation, there is a water fountain. key four years ago and Laure Ber-

of arrival to fill their tin cans or and relations with Burkina Faso) but there can be delays, especially recipient of the association in my village. After the first experience with Yacouba Sawadogo's family, I heard that his friends wanted to set up a system to help those who could not afford to buy a donkey, that's why I signed up.' Since then, nearly a hundred

people have benefited from the operation. Currently, six people are seeking to purchase their donkeys and 15 others are on the waiting list. The system is simple, says Souleymane Ilboudo, coordinator of the association in Boromo: "Farmers sign up at local level on a list. When our friends in France are able to raise some funds for a number of animals, we proceed to allocation. But it is the farmer himself who goes to buy his donkey and the program pays for him. We have a monitoring system that allows the beneficiary to pay in installments and the program also deals with veterinary care during the payment period."

Payment in installments, despite some uncertainties inherent in such operations, works well, explained Boureima Sougue, benefiin his spare time. "The farmers distributed. For the beneficiaries, always pay back their allocation, empowerment is in process.

was there. I was the very first when the beneficiary falls sick." The president of the association "Everyone seeks his donkey Burkina Faso," Malick Sawadogo, is more specific: "In principle, the beneficiaries pay 3,200 CFA per month over 12 months. But it can happen that we can't find him or he doesn't have the money yet. These cases happen in villages where farmers do not have enough income-generating activities. "

In Boromo, the epicenter of the program, "there are no such problems, and some beneficiaries even settle their repayment of the donkey before it's due," says the coordinator. Now operational since 5 years, "Everyone seeks his donkey" is diversifying its activities and the association has come up with a new initiative: "shared carts."

The association tries to pair each donkey with a cart and plow, which are indispensable in order to make the producer independent. This time the offer is aimed at families who have already received a donkey. They are obliged to form groups of 5 in order to benefit from a free cart and plow. 19 carts ciary of the program and a painter and 22 plows have already been

## Aiming to prevent land conflict with village maps

By Erwin Edhi Prasetyo

Geared with a GPS (Global Positioning System), three village communities in the Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan created their village maps. By creating maps, they wanted to prevent land conflicts and avoid the threat of land claiming. Three villages are Lela, Tri Mandayan, and Sebagu in Teluk Keramat Subdistrict, Sambas, "Why should (we) create a map? Because between villages, and threats from oil companies to Lela. We are concerned about these threats" said Iskandar, a member of the Lela Village Mapping Team in Sebagu Village,

All this time, said Iskandar, Lela has never had a detailed map of the village that includes region border. As a result, boundaries near neighbouring villages were still unclear and only based on each other claims. Thus, land conflicts between Lela villagers with neighboring villages could occur at any time. "I experienced it

when I was about to clear the forest

for rubber plantation," he said.

Here can be seen Fatimata with her donkey pulling a cart for water transportation.

Iskandar told, a few years ago, he cleared a forest land for rubber plantation on the border of Lela Village. He started to clear the land from shrubs and small trees. However, a few days later a man came to claim the land and stated that the land was not included in Lela Village region. "It didn't end with physical violence, only some arguments, "he said.

Departing from similar experiences shared by other villagers, as there are the threat of land conflicts well as concerns of the threat of land turned the coordinates into an image between member of communities, claiming by the palm oil company map. "Some were tasked to operate that wanted to enter the village that the outside, the entry of the palm time, the community agreed to create their village map. Mapping began in June 2011 accompanied by Wahana Visi Indonesia (WVI) Sambas. Preparation of maps was done with methods of participatory, involving Lela community participation.

"This participatory mapping activities is one of the SOLVE (Strengthening Livelihoods and Reduce Local Vulnerability) programs. The background was the land conflicts in some of our assisted villages. We focus this program in Lela village for the first time, then in Tri Mandayan village and replicated in Sebagu,

WVI Sambas.

#### Simple Image

According to Iskandar, to draw up maps, they formed Team 10 consisting of 10 Lela villagers. This team received mapping basic technique training by Participatory Mapping Network (JKPP), one of WVI's partner. They were taught to measure the coordinates using GPS then the GPS, the others were in charge

After mastering the use of GPS, Team 10 was divided into two groups work towards border village. It took five days to tour the border of Lela village. Team had to go in and out of the forest and villagers' fields to record the coordinates of the bor-"Based on GPS data, we drew the map on millimeters block paper and then copied it onto the tracing paper," said Iskandar.

simply on a sheet of tracing paper. Villagers drew it by hand, no computerization. Although the finished

"said Lina Lumbanraja, Coordinator the village maps, there was one village formed negotiating team. of Economic Development Project important hurdle, that is the bound- The task of negotiation team was aries have not been approved by the neighboring villages, like Sungai Kumpai, Puringan, Pedada, and Berlimbang in Teluk Keramat subdistricts and Jawai sub-district. "Although there is yet approval from neighbouring villages, but now there's alsmost no land conflict. They know we have the village map,

Learning from the Lela village experience, Tri Mandayan communities followed suit in creating their village Keramat Sub-District. "We are hammap. Pardi, Leader of Tri Mandayan Village Mapping Field Team said, mapping team was also trained by JKPP and accompanied by WVI Sambas. "To get the village boundaries coordinates, we slept in the jungle for 10 days, because Tri Mandayan has vast forest, "he explained.

In the thick forests, sometimes satellite signals went weak. Team members had tot climb the tree several times to ensure GPS get a strong signal, to ensure the accu-Lela's region map was drawn racy of the data." For 18 days we collected the data from the GPS," he said. Learning from the weakness of Lela village, Tri Mandayan

to have agreement with the neighboring villages about the borders. Unfortunately the negotiation team which comprised of some community leaders did not move as fast as

the mapping team field. As a result, after the Tri Mandayan village map was finished, the village border had not been agreed yet by the neighbouring villages, namely Semata Village, Sub-District Tangaran; Pedada and Sekura Village, Teluk pered by the map validation, because there is no agreement," he said.

#### More Smoothly

In Sebagu the mapping ran more smoothly. Negotiating team moved ahead of team field. After the village boundaries agreed with neighbor villages, like Tanjung Keracut Village, Teluk Keramat Subdistrict; Piantus village and Sekuduk, Sejangkung Subdistrict; and Tri Kembang Village, Galing Subdistrict, the field team worked with borrowed GPS from WVI. "There is no problem. Once the map was completed, the validation was done by the head of



Piantus Village, Sekuduk, Tanjung Keracut, Tri Kembang and the sub-district government," said Basuni, former head of Sebagu Village.

Once approved at the Teluk Keramat Subdistrict level, Sebagu map was submitted to the Governance Department of Sambas for approval. However, since the 2013 up to now Sambas Government has not yet approved the map made through active participation of the villagers.

According to Basuni, Sambas Government wants to match it first

with Sambas region map. Though they have to undergo several hurdles, Sebagu, Tri Mandayan, and Lela communities now feel relieved and proud. Now they know the exact boundaries of their village. With the village map, the land conflicts between communities have been

prevented successfully. "For the people, the problem of land conflicts nowadays is zero," said Safirudin, villager and also member of Sebagu Village Mapping

### Luwrain: an operating system for the blind

By Thomas Gras

Russian developer Mikhail Pozhidaev, himself visually impaired, has created a free operating system for the blind, which is simple to use and compatible with all platforms. "A. E. E. Enter. Command.

S.U.D.O. Enter...," the "voice assistant" calls out as Mikhail frantically types on the keyboard of his computer. "You see, I'm no slower than a sighted person," proudly announces the young man.

The 32-year-old Mikhail Pozhidaev lost his sight at the age of 17 after suffering a retinal detachment, as he was preparing to enter the first-year computer studies program at the State University of Tomsk in Siberia. "I underwent 14 surgical procedures, to no avail," he recalls bitterly.

Mikhail decided to take a break in his studies in order to get used to his new condition. He completely reinstalled all software on his computer and searched for IT tools available for the blind, such as Jaws For Windows, which reads the text displayed on the screen and allows the person to navigate in the traditional office environment with the help of a "voice assistant." Returning to the university in 2002, the young aspiring developer soon realized that these readily available solutions were not suited to his needs. "These tools do not permit a person to engage in computer programming work, and are extremely slow — they force

originally designed to be operated other interfaces that may seem by a mouse, which is inconceivable for a visually impaired person," he explains.

Mikhail therefore switched to using the GNU/Linux operating system, which allowed him to create customized work environment. Freed from the restraints imposed by windows and other such menus, the young man regained the desirable "cruising speed," completed his studies in 2007, at the same time as his fellow classmates, and has kept in contact with them. In 2010, his peers, impressed by his achievements, suggest the idea to make his program available to all

This is how Luwrain got its first lines of code back in in 2012. Three years later, the draft made by Mikhail turned into an operating system in its own right. It consists of a no-frills blackbackground monitor and a main menu offering various categories news, notepad, audio player, etc. — all accessible with simple tapping on the arrow keys of the keyboard. Navigation through the interface is made possible with an artificial "voice assistant" in Russian or English. "Luwrain offers people with visual impairments the opportunity to access information and functions quickly

and easily, regardless of their

computer skills level. The audio

presentation quickly, in a matter of

minutes, explains how the system

one to work in an environment works, which is not the case for totally incomprehensible to people born blind and having never seen, for example, a window in their lives," says the computer scientist.

A completely free system — the Luwrain is freely available on the Internet and can be installed either as a primary OS or as an application on Windows, MacOS, or GNU/ Linux operating systems. "The goal is that Luwrain remains accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of their financial situation," insists the young man, who, in particular, proposes installing his system on the Raspberry minicomputer, which sells for around of Tomsk special economic zone. 30 euros (US\$33.93).

the fact that this project may have a commercial aspect as well, if private companies undertake to create compatible software. The Linux license does not allow Luwrain to be sold. On the other hand, we could open an online store that would offer downloadable applications for the blind — a totally virgin market for now," he admits.

If Mikhail allows himself to say 'we," it is because he was hired in February 2015 to work as an IT architect by the Moscow-based Elektronnaya Moskva Certification Centre to develop his project. "We plan to release the final version by the end of this year, but before that can happen, there is still a lot of work to be done," he says. Before



Mikhail Pozhidaev, 32, on the territory

However, Mikhail does not hide had spent three years contacting various Russian government and private organizations, as well as foreign ones, receiving refusal after refusal. "Nobody wanted to believe was just trying to do something good for people. We hear all the time about innovations, but when someone really has an innovative social project, people treat him like a fool!" he concludes.

Nonetheless, the demand is real. Worldwide, some 285 million people are visually impaired — 39 million being fully blind, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Nearly 90 percent of these people live in low-income countries. Russia has approximately 103,000 blind people

finding this job, the young man thomas.gras@lcdr.ru

### Brothers For All: Giving ex-convicts and troubled youth a fighting chance

BY REABETSWE MASHIGO City Press

Brothers For All helps people who have served prison sentences to build lives, and helps at-risk youth to skill up for the workplace. South Africa has a youth unemployment rate of 80 percent in places and a re-offending rate of over 80 percent. Both of which staggering statistics this organization hopes to rein in with interventions that break the poverty cycle and help to fight spiraling crime rates. The organization is brother organization to Mothers For All, which takes care of orphaned children or those who have been made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

Brothers for All — based in the Western Cape in the township of Langa — was founded by ex offender Sihle Tshabala who serves as the national coordinator for the organization, ex-offender Mzi Duba who is the community director, co-founder for Mothers for All Linda McCourt Scott as the managing director, and serial entrepreneur and bestselling author Robyn Scott who champions the

ing; another helps people to make

organization's strategy The organization's successful interventions include a youth leadership program that builds tutorials for prisoners. Managing director McCourt leaders around schools through motivational talks and mentor-



At the computer lab in Llanga at risk youth gather to learn skills that can help them get onto the information highway

some money from making jewelry which also provides them with entrepreneurial skills; another is a coding start up program that equips people with the technologi-Unsurprisingly the organizacal skills to help them get onto the tion's biggest challenge is capacity information highway. The prison rehabilitation program, also called the Group for Hope, offers HIV/ AIDS education as well as coding

other impoverished communities around the Western Cape and then nationally. We plan to do the same in correctional facilities."

to help more people. "Our biggest challenges at the moment are insufficient space, computers and data to reach the high numbers of unemployed youth and exoffenders who are trying to access Scott says of their future plans: our free coding training program "We hope to scale our model to



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# Palestine seeks good governance among young generation

#### By BADIA ZEDAN

The idea of Youth Local Councils in Palestine was born in 2009. Then, they were called youth local support councils. The project, a joint initiative by Sharek Youth Forum and CHF International, was based on creating councils that would be similar to local authorities in their

structure, tasks and operations.

The project was born out of a real necessity to provide means and mechanisms that would help enhance youth engagement in serving civil society, within a youthful context, which would give young people the ability to responsibly engage in local governance and represent the needs and future aspirations of the

Youth Local Councils have proven providing needed support. very successful, thanks to numerous initiatives and activities organized during that period of time; heads of youth councils presided municipalities of their locations for three days, (as is the case in Jericho and Bidiya), and some even became

executive directors of institutions in their local community, thanks to networking and dozens of new voluntary activities, as well as youth campaigns that focused on serving the local community (the youth participated, for instance, in easing the traffic crisis in Ram-Kalandia, and organized another campaign to help flood victims in Anabta.)

Youth Local Council activities and initiatives were not restricted to members of public entities: local councils worked on establishing local youth networks, in order to create a balance between local needs and youth interests. Those vouth networks and groups expanded their limits and thanks to the council, they got the opportunity to propose activities and work on

#### **Youth Experiences**

According to Adiba Alkam, member of the Youth Local Council of Beit Amr, in the Hebron Governorate, south of the West Bank, "the training we received was very

ing life experience. The Beit Amr Youth Council is the only one in the Hebron Governorate for the moment ... In it, we do not tackle political subjects directly. However, the occupation sometimes hinders our work, because young people in our council are getting arrested. Youth councils represent an idea that is widespread in the whole country and generally speaking; there is no big interest, among us, in cooperating with officials. We are much more interested in the activities we are pursuing and most importantly, we finally turned into effective groups.

As for the young Daoud Othman, from the Youth Local Council of Qalqilya, he considered the experience "almost unique in the world." The Youth Local Council of Qalqilya started operating in 2010. "Our activities include preparing a touristic map for the visitors of our city, including orientation panels, as well as other entertainment events for

useful; it was essential for me to the children of martyrs, prisoners cipally aim at enhancing the youth jleh, director general of CHF Inter- serve to receive any support neces find a job and I consider it a touch- and orphans." "These councils gave us an opportunity to get introduced to each other, as well as to communicate and interact with the young people in other governorates.

#### On a National Level

According to Bader Zamareh, executive director of the Sharek Youth Forum, "the idea of national elections, organized to form locally elected youth councils, is a nationwide idea that tries to be a channel for the institutionalized, effective and legitimate participation of the youth. Thus, the list of partners includes active members of official and public institutions, who shall share roles and responsibilities, each according to their job and scope of work. This partnership mainly aims at providing the youth with all the facilities they need to establish their councils and pursue their activities with full independence, away from any kind of tutor-

He added that the councils prin-

participation at various levels, in all local instances, in order to achieve a wider and more influent participation in all public matters. Those councils get their importance from the urgent need to get a strong political participation among the youth, and to make them consciously engaged, in an effective and responsible manner, in democratic practices. Besides, organizing general elections to establish those councils helps to confront the exclusion and marginalization issue, and helps young people recover their active role in all political, economic and social sectors, which will be a confirmation of the democratic process.

Zamareh noted that the efforts of the Sharek Youth Forum focused on three themes: building the members' capacities, setting a network of contacts with the local community and executing various youth initiatives on the local level.

#### **Global Communities**

On another note, Lana Abu He-

national, declared that the Youth Local Councils are the result of growing and sustained

efforts, aiming at building and supporting local governing bodies, in the face of huge challenges imposed by reality. All of this reasserts the fact that the youth is the most important component of the Palestinian fabric and that it is important to involve young people in the building process, and prepare them for leadership roles during this phase and in the future.

Abu Hejleh assured that the absence of youth in the development process will be the biggest obstacle hindering the chances of success. She spoke of the deep and positive impact that the youth local councils left on young men and women, who had the chance to effectively participate in the development process of in democratic elections, and give their community, and in designing them opportunities to have leada brighter future. She praised the experience of Youth Local Councils, saying that they are worth the effort. She also added that they de-

sary for their development, for the preservation of their noble value and to make them ingrained in the public consciousness as a major component of the society, which aims at a creating a constructive and positive movement that would help enhance nationalism and community work. During a special event held in

New York City at the end of last year, the John McNulty Prize committee for Exceptional Leadership, granted by the John Mcnulty Organization, honored Abu HIjleh for her leading role in developing and executing the Youth Local Councils initiative in Palestine, which is trying, in cooperation with the local entities, to introduce the youth to good governance practices, promote their participation ing roles in their communities, so they can prepare themselves to be future leaders at local level and



Be My Eyes — an app that connects blind people with volunteer helpers from

### Using the latest tech to help the blind see with a stranger's eyes

App allows sighted volunteers to help blind people all over the world, just by using their smartphones

### By Justin Cremer

The free iPhone app Be My Eyes connects blind users with sighted volunteers. When a blind user needs help, he accesses the app and Be My Eyes rings up the first available volunteer. The two are connected over the blind user's video camera and the sighted user lends her eyes for a task that usually takes just a minute or two, such as checking

the expiry date on food. It's a process that app cofounder Hans Joergen Wiberg refers to as micro-volunteering. "A lot of people want to do something good but they are busy," he said.

"With this app, they have an opportunity to help out if they have time." Nearly 200,000 sighted users have signed up, with connections in 80 different languages.

Be My Eyes also has 18,000 registered blind users. One of them is Copenhagen native Kamila Ryding, who said that she typically uses the app once or twice a week, primarily for help in identifying household goods.

She said that Be My Eyes keeps her from feeling like a burden to her family and friends. "I like to have a friend be a friend and not a helper.

But blind people aren't the only beneficiaries; volunteers also have much to gain. One sighted user posted on Facebook, "This is the first app that has ever affected me on such an emotional level ... I feel like I'm getting more out of this app than the person who called me

### Companions live together, on and off the road A French organization tours the world in

search of solutions to the issues of interreligious relations

#### By Jake Cigainero

Two years ago, Samuel Grybowski and three travel companions arrived in Nagoya, Japan, feeling tired, dirty, and in need of a bit of alone time — a rare luxury during their year together on the road. "We were always one on top of another, there was really no moment when we could be alone other than in the shower," he said. So it was a shock when they learned they'd be bathing in a traditional public bath with about 200 other men. Grybowski recalled, "It

was kind of embarrassing. When Grybowski created an organization devoted to helping people of different religions learn to live together, communal bathing was not part of his plan. The young Frenchman founded Coexister ("Living Together") in 2009 at age 16 after the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians started to

heat up again. Since then, the group has conducted cultural exchange events and community projects. Its biggest undertaking has been its ambitious InterFaith Tour, a journey around the globe to discover how organizations in other countries develop positive relations between different religious communities. The first tour took place in 2013. This July, a new group consisting of a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian and an atheist will start off on the

Religious identity has long been a pressure point of societal his home country has difficulty



The first InterFaith Tour team meets their successors, who will embark on the second InterFaith world tour in July 2015. Victor Grezes, Ismael Medjdoub, Lucie Neumann, Samuel Grzybowski, Ariane Julien, Samir Akacha.

cal newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish grocery store.

"The problem in France today is that people believe unity can only exist between people who look and act the same," said Grezes. "But we are dealing with diversity. Either we try to make everyone the same, or we realize the potential of diversity and build unity based upon it." Following the January attacks, President Hollande asked the group for advice on the wording for a press conference.

said, is not to spread a message annual Berlin-based event called tensions. Victor Grezes, another around the world — "that would the Long Night of Religions, with member of the first tour, says that be presumptuous." Rather, the around 100 places of worship aim is to raise awareness about opening their doors to the public.

confronting these issues. They the breadth of interfaith initiarecently came to a head when ter- tives, as well as to connect orgarorists in Paris attacked the satiri- nizations, enabling them to share ideas and best practices that promote tolerance and cooperation between religious communities.

The first tour visited 48 countries in ten months, meeting 435 organizations. This was followed by two months in France sharing their findings with schools and other organizations. From those presentations, 10 additional Coexister chapters were born, bringing the total number to 21 and grow-

One of the initiatives that stood The purpose of the tour, Grezes out from the debut tour was an

In India, the travelers learned about a sports tournament called "Cricket for Peace" to strengthen Muslim-Hindu relations. And in Buenos Aires, there was a bicycling route for religious discovery.

Now Samir Akacha, Lea Frydman, Ariane Julien and Lucie Neumann will follow in their predecessor's footsteps as InterFaith Tour Team 2, with a 100,000 euro (US\$108,000) budget collected through fundraising, French government grants and various organizations (including Sparknews, who has been a Coexister partner since the first tour).

Although the second team will travel to only 30 countries, it will spend more time at each stop, visiting new locations such as Azerbaijan and Tunisia. The informa-

from the road. The sole woman slated for the first tour's team had to drop out, but this year the gender tables

tion they collect will be archived at the University of Vienna as part of

an ongoing research partnership.

The team will also produce a mul-

timedia Web documentary, and a mobile app will allow users to fol-

low the tour through live updates

have turned with three women and one man. And while traveling in strict Muslim societies might seem challenging for a mostly female entourage, Akacha said it's actually an advantage, as they will have access to traditional gathering places for women — such as private kitchens-that were off limits to the all-male group. For Frydman, a 20-year-old

philosophy student from Paris, the tour is as much a social cause as a personal identity quest. "As a Jewish person, I've been shocked to see antisemitism is present in France," she said. "It has reinforced my conviction that what we are doing in Coexister is not only

important but necessary.' Akacha said he expects the tour to make his faith stronger through interactions with other religions. "I would not be the same Muslim if I was just in my community, if I was not meeting Jews and Christians, going to Christian gatherings or synagogue events, he said. "People ask questions, so I have to answer to defend my religion. I have to question it and learn more, so I become a better

Muslim. Coexister's ultimate goal is not only to encourage a spirit of tolerance among religious groups, but also to foster collaboration to build communities that value diversity.

"Instead of saying despite our differences, we say it's thanks to our differences that we are stronger," said Grezes

### Women taking the wheel in India to drive their own destinies

By training and hiring only female chauffeurs, a taxi service in Mumbai provides a safe service for women

#### By Raksha Kumar Sparknews

The traffic light turns green and Rupa Swali pulls out onto the Western Express Highway in Mumbai, careful to avoid the swarm of motorbikes and autorickshaws zipping past. Suddenly an unruly bus runs the light in the other direction and careens straight towards her, laying on its horn. Swali is used to this and slams her breaks just in time, then glances at the passenger in the back seat to check for a reaction. Fortunately, the woman seems ab-

of the danger just averted. Navigating the jungle of Mumnature for Swali, who drives a taxi

sorbed in her iPhone and unaware

years ago, she had never sat in a car, let alone driven one.

That was when she decided to leave her physically abusive husband of 19 years. Even though she was born and brought up in Mumbai, India's commercial capital, she was unskilled and unsure of how to earn a living. She felt lonely, scared and helpless. To top it off, she had a teenage daughter "I wanted a job that would pro-

vide me with dignity along with financial security," she said. At around the same time, a

management professional named Preeti Sharma Menon was looking to set up an organization that would help women become selfreliant. Of the nearly six million women living in this city, about half are daily wage earners living on the streets or in tiny shanties. Menon created Viira Cabs ("Vi-

bai's traffic has become second ira" means courageous woman) in June 2011 to provide sus-

underprivileged women. She had launched the Viira Motor Training Program six months earlier; Swali was one of the first batch of 200 female drivers it taught to drive. After a rigorous six-month training program, free of charge, 80 earned their licenses. Several have driven for Viira Cabs ever since. (The training program has since been reduced to 12 weeks.)

Today, Viira Cabs has a fleet of 16 eco-friendly cabs and about 20 female drivers who earn an average of 15,000 rupees a month

(US\$240), working day and night shifts. Even though there are a few other women-drivers-only taxi services in the country, Viira is the only one that provides comprehensive training, including grooming, etiquette and self defense. Every driver is equipped with pepper spray and a GPS system with panic

The service provides more than just skills and jobs. In a country she said. "But I work in an adver-

for a living. But until about four tained, dignified employment to where violence against women is tising agency where there are no prevalent, it provides a source of set hours. When I returned at 3 comfort for female passengers. in the morning I used to see my According to the government, a mother waiting anxiously for me woman is raped every 20 minutes at the door. Now I call Viira when in India. And these are just the re-

India catapulted to infamy in December 2012 after the brutal gang rape of a student in a moving bus in Delhi. She later died of her injuries. Two years later, a 27-year-old executive was allegedly raped by an Uber driver in New Delhi; the trial is ongoing. "Given the background of wom-

a woman-drivers-only cab service brought relief to many women who commute alone, especially at night," said Menon.

Her instincts were right. Viira has hundreds of loyal customers, such as Revati Sharma, 32, who lives in a suburb of Mumbai. "My parents are increasingly paranoid about me traveling alone to work," like a celebrity.

I have to return from late nights. And, frankly, I am also much more relaxed when a woman is driving. I can doze off to sleep.

Senior citizens and differentlyabled people are also a large percentage of Viira's customers, claiming that female drivers are more thoughtful, helping them in and out of the cars.

Once the least respected memen's safety in the country, I think bers of their families and communities, these women have now become among the most important. Their income is helping to fund their children's education; Swali's daughter is now a veterinary doctor. The drivers keep the cars with them, and when Swali drives her taxi into the semi-slum where she lives, her neighbors treat her

But Menon said there are chal-

mary caregivers in their families, so whenever there is an illness or death in the family, they are the first to quit their jobs



lenges as well, such as the cost While looking for other investors, of training and the high rate of

Menon is keeping the operation attrition. "The women we employ afloat with her own money. She come from low-income backmight have to shut it down degrounds. Most of them are the prispite the evidence that it is sorely needed. Already, she feels bad that she has to turn customers away. "There is more demand than we can meet," she said



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# From trash to Tchaikovsky, slums kids turn trash into music

Born from the detritus of a Paraguay landfill, the 'Recycled Instruments Orchestra' brings music and hope to slum children

By INES RAMDANE

While many of the kids in Asuncion's Cateura slum pin their hopes for the future on landing careers as soccer players or pop stars, Brandon Cobone's ticket out of the shantytown was something stranger than a soccer ball and rarer than a microphone. It was a Frankenstein of a double bass, cobbled together from garbage plucked from the nearby landfill that gives Cateura both its name and its smell.

The 18-year-old is a member of the Orquesta de Instrumentos Reciclados de Cateura-the Recycled Instruments Orchestra of Cateurawhich uses music to give the children of the slum the skills to build a better future.

The orchestra was created almost by accident by environmental engineer Favio Chavez, a music lover who was working with the gancheros, or garbage pickers who comb the vast land-

"It started with a simple comment," he said, referring to the gancheros' request, after learning of Chavez's musical skills, that he give their kids lessons. Chavez soon ran into a stumbling block. He didn't own enough instruments to go around, especially since his students' zeal sometimes resulted in inadvertently smashed guitars or cracked violins.

And so Chavez resolved to take advantage of one resource he had in abundance-trash. He made a violin out of a strainer, a metal dish and metal tubing. "It didn't sound like much," he acknowledged, adding that the next few instruments, including a "guitar" cut out of a piece of wood with a couple of strings attached, weren't much better. "They were didactic."

Chavez teamed up with one of the gancheros, a skilled carpenter named Nicolas Gamez, to make a variety of instruments that looked more or less like the real thing and sounded like it, too. Now the Orquesta has versions of most of the instruments in a conventional orchestra, concocted out of cooking pots, bottle tops, melted keys and

ternational phenomenon after a of being, to instill in them different

and posted a teaser for a documentary on the Internet in 2012 (titled "Landfill Harmonic," it premiered at Austin's South by Southwest festival this year). Since then it's been flooded with invitations to play stages from Germany to Japan and even toured South America as an opening act for Metallica.

Sandwiched between the landfill and the Paraguay River, the Cateura slum is a collection of lowslung homes, some made from raw brick and others pasted together from corrugated tin and recuperated trash. Sewage runs in muddy streets pocked with giant puddles of standing water and strewn with detritus fallen from the constant comings-and-goings of fetid garbage trucks. The air is sour with the stench of the landfill, where many of the slum's 20,000-plus residents eek out a living as gancheros. And when the river floods, as it did last year, Cateura is submerged.

Chavez notes that the Orquesta is less about forging world-class musicians than turning disenfranchised kids into full-fledged citizens. "Are they all going to be

professional musicians? I don't think so," he said. "What The Orquesta became an in- we want is to teach a different way

group of filmmakers took interest values than those that hold sway in their community."

"There, the role models are the gang leaders, who impose themselves through violence and dominance," he said. "In the Orquesta, the role models are the hardest workers, those with the most dedication, the most commitment."

The 40-plus orchestra members are selected not for their innate musicality but for the assiduousness with which they attend Saturday morning lessons. Once chosen, they must also attend weekly rehearsals, where they prepare a repertory that includes classical stand-bys -- Beethoven's "5th Symphony" and Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" -- as well as traditional Paraguayan tunes.

Thanks to donations, the musicians now have conventional instruments they use in rehearsals. But they continue to play on the homemade instruments, an integral part of the Orquesta's identity, for performances.

"În Cateura, nothing is formal, nothing is planned and everything happens almost spontaneously, said the French-born assistant director, Thomas Lecourt, adding that their first international tours were logistical nightmares because many deaf to the cacophony of hammerof the kids didn't have passports



or even birth certificates. "The re-

Cintia and Amara on their way to the Cateura music school in Paraguay.

hearsals, the trips, the responsibility of being in the Orquesta brings structure to their lives. Inside a narrow lot in the middle

of the slum, workmen are busy building the Orquesta's first permanent space. Already a small cadre of teenage girls scratch out basic notes on their violas, apparently ing, sawing and drilling all around.

Boys making snare drums out of wood and metal scraps, with old X-rays as skins, add to the tumult.

"Joining the Orquesta put me on a different track in life," said Andras Riveros, 20, a saxophonist in his first year of college. "And lucky for that, because a lot of my friends who didn't join are either drug addicts or in prison by now."

countries with the Orquesta, is also away wooden beams.

preparing to go to college. He's already packed more experience into his 18 years than he expected to in a lifetime.

"From the time I was little I always wanted to travel, but I never imagined it would happen ... and especially not because of this," he said, gesturing to his double bass, a dented steel drum that once con-Cobone, who's visited some 15 tained calcium carbide and cast-



#### round-the-world trip in search of low-tech innovation and self sufficiency

In a boat built out of

Frenchman plans a

jute and flax, a young

By Rosalie Hughes

One day in June 2013, 30-yearchased two scrawny chickens across a tropical island in the Indian Ocean. They got away, making his dream of becoming self-

sufficient even more elusive. De Chatelperron had been sailing around the Bay of Bengal on the aptly named boat the Gold of Bengal. He had made it himself out of jute, a plant grown in Bangladesh, where he had been living. His plan was to survive with only what he had on board. But his potato and lemon plants died. His bamboo mast broke after termites ate it. And his chickens, rattled from their time at sea, ran

away the first chance they got. De Chatelperron, an engineer and self-described handyman with sandy blonde hair and a soft face that belies his age, said he learned an important lesson during his six solo months at sea: "When I'm alone, isolated and without the Internet, I am pretty useless. I can't

be self-sufficient by myself." Lesson learned, de Chatelperron returned to his native France to start a new, more ambitious project called Nomade des Mers. or "Sea Nomad." It aims to promote low-tech solutions — ones that are simple, inexpensive, environmentally responsible, and respond to basic needs — across the world.

With European economies floundering and environmental awareness on the rise, interest in low-tech solutions is mounting on the continent, said Kris de Decker, founder of the online publication Low-tech Magazine. By launching Nomade des Mers, de Chatelperron is positioning himself to be not only at the forefront of this movement, but also to expand it outside of Europe. De Chatelperron and his two

full-time colleagues have created a website for sharing existing low-tech solutions and inventing new ones. This spring they will build an 18-meter catamaran out of jute, plus flax, which grows in France. The rough plan is to launch it in early 2016 and sail around the world, from France around the tip of Africa, across Asia, and then to the Americas. They estimate they will reach 50 destinations in three years, promoting low-tech ideas at every

port they dock in.

With close to 800 members and growing, the Nomade des Mers website has already spawned the type of innovation and ideasharing de Chatelperron and his colleagues are hoping for. One member recently posted a video on how to make an energy-efficient stove with a few metal tools and some stainless steel tubes. Another young Frenchman shows how to make rope out of old plastic bags, apologizing for the poor old Corentin de Chatelperron quality of the video, which appears to have been filmed in his

> bedroom. At a cafe in Paris one recent afternoon, de Chatelperron explained his vision for the project. "There are lots of low-tech innovators out there-engineers, NGOs, handymen and women, and people in poor countries, for example. But they're all in their own corners. The idea is to bring them

> Without prompting he opened a waterproof bag, an unusual accessory in a Paris cafe, to show me images of the boat's design. He nervously ripped an empty sugar packet into smaller and smaller pieces while detailing the future boat's dimensions. As he talked it was difficult not to think: This man is out of place. He belongs at

> He explained the kinds of people they hope to collaborate with on their journey-for example, with locals in India who use homemade pressure-cooker-like systems to make diesel fuel from plastic garbage found at sea. De Chatelperron and his crew will invite them on board to demonstrate how to make the contraption, and shoot a video for the website. They'll introduce the creators to the online community, thereby giving them access to new ideas they

> cooker-like device to fuel their vessel when winds are low. At each stop the crew hopes to pick up new low-tech ideas. The boat will become ever more selfsufficient, the online community will grow, and people from rich and poor countries alike will be working together to develop systems that are simple, cheap and good for the environment.

This is the dream. It is not without challenges.

Attracting people outside of Europe will not be easy, said Mathilde Richelet, who works for Roots Up, an NGO in Ethiopia hoping to collaborate with Nomade des Mers. "Most low-tech innovation is happening in poor countries," she said. "It will be difficult to find the people behind these innovations because they're often in remote places.

Most people in the world don't speak French, the only language de Chatelperron and his two colwill the organization convince the have it figured out.







1. Corentin de Chatelperron and Ary Pauget with jute growers at the start of the research project in 2011

2. During his voyage, Corentin de Chatelperron desalinated seawater using a pump for one and a half hours every day — to provide 5 liters of water for the plants,

3. Arthur Penet, Louis-Marie de Certaines, Roland Moreau, Ary Pauget, Corentin de Chatelperron and Elaine Le Floch ... and the red chicken, in front of the Gold of Bengal on Saint Martin's Island in the south of Bangladesh, on the day of Corentin's departure in March 2013.

leagues are fully fluent in. (For now, the vast majority of the website's members are French millennials.) Low Internet penetration and literacy rates in the world's poorest areas also pose problems for a movement hoping to use the Internet to spread its message.

chickens and his personal use.

Another issue is buy-in. How end of the journey, I believe we'll

tech solutions not because they want to, but because they have to. De Chatelperron is not deterred. "It won't work right at first," he admitted. "But by the

world's poorest that it is in their

interest to participate? These are

people who generally develop low-

Seven boys, seven girls — the contestants of "El Mashrou3."

social enterprises succeed in Egypt Reality show teaches Egyptians to start their

own businesses By RACHEL WILLIAMSON

Reality television sometimes seems to be in a race to the bottom, but one woman's germ of an idea is trying to harness its power for good: to create a lasting impact after the cameras are turned

Anna Elliot, 30, was an American college student volunteering in Afghanistan in the late 2000s when the seeds were sown for her social startup, Bamyan Media. She took note when her female Afghan friends worried over how to make ends meet in the country, newly liberated from Taliban rule, and also when Afghanistan's first reality TV show mesmerized

Her theater group always stopped rehearsals in time to watch Afghan Star, a local version of American Idol. "I thought about how powerful it was and how so many people would end their days early so they could tune in to this television program," she said

"I wondered how television could be made more relevant to their situation. That, for me, was how do you get a job? How do you earn an income? How do you start a business with the skills

After helping to launch the first season of the hit show Dream and Achieve in 2008, which pit Afghan entrepreneurs against each other to win a cash prize, Elliot returned to the U.S. in 2009 inspired. She began pitching the idea of Bamyan Media, a social enterprise that partners with local production houses to make reality TV shows designed for impact.

Bamyan Media took off, with support from Ashoka, Echoing Green and USAID, and in 2012 Elliot was in Egypt prepping for its inaugural show: a similar idea to Dream and Achieve that would

try to build on the wave of entre- Bamyan Media, she is designing preneurial activity following the 2011 revolution.

Big ideas on the small screen help

"We wanted to take the momentum in the wake of that euphoric moment, after all these kids have seen the power of what it means to come together, of what it means to achieve an objective that's not so dreamy any-

more," Elliot said. She adds that although Egypt has a thriving entrepreneur class, it's largely limited to the wealthy

and very well-educated. The audience she wanted to find was the graduate from the mid-tier public school, the kid selling olive oil products in Sinai, and the young adult struggling to find the government job his parents demanded. World Bank figures reveal that Egypt's unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 was nearly 40 percent

El Mashrou3 — or The Project in Arabic — was part The Apprentice, part Dragons' Den and part support network to educate Egyptians on how to start and run a successful business.

Airing from December 2013 on the Al-Nahar network, the 13-episode season featured 14 contestants picked from over 1,000 applicants. They completed individual and team challenges from making products using a Cairo rubbish dump and selling them to furniture stores to being street-side juice sellers. The winner was 26-year-old

pharmacist Tina Boules with her startup Taga Solutions, which aims to help poultry farms, bakeries and hotels to make and use biogas. She received a 350,000 Egyptian pound (US\$50,000) cash prize and her project has gone from a vague idea to a pilot program and negotiations with a supplier in India.

Now, with seed funding from

Other runners-up are also making entrepreneurial waves. they are full of ideas, from taking Omneya El-Kady began as a con-El Mashrou3 to other countries to testant with nothing but a dream. developing new shows. Next up:

recycling technologies focusing on agricultural waste and biogas. and is in contact with the Kenyan government to sell her green-

waste machines. Bamyan's global director of development, British former journalist Asim Haneef, loved how the contestants became role models and "mini-celebrities.

"It was amazing to see the tears shed when one of the great underdogs of the series, T-shirt seller Mido, crashed out near the semi-finals after smashing all expectations and going all the way," he said. "The show ended up beating Dancing with the Stars in the TV ratings-proving that people would switch on to a show about start-ups and young people achieving their dreams through business talent if it was fun and dramatic enough.

But the series' real value lay in introducing the idea of entrepreneurship to a wider number of

The year before the show hit TV screens, Bamyan toured regional cities to find contestants, and the attention made an impact in places such as Alexandria and Mansoura where few of the entrepreneurial networks present in Cairo have reached.

Elliot said groups of aspiring entrepreneurs subsequently set up "skills trading" networks. "It's like, I'll trade you a website if you give me 10 hours of pitching ad-However, working in Egypt is

not easy for entrepreneurs-local

or foreign-owing to the opaque

bureaucracy and lack of state support for small businesses. Both Elliot and Haneef admit they've learned a lot, and will adapt the show accordingly. Currently they're trying to nail down the next round of funding from corporate sponsors. And

The Real Maids of Cairo

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A network for asylum seekers: the 'Losone' model

By Serse Forni

opened in a residential and touristoriented town south of the Alps. After initial feelings of resistance, a string of initiatives has helped to promote a spirit of peaceful co-

have passed through Italy after represents a kind of model, an leaving Africa — are fleeing horrific circumstances in their homelands. They have left behind both loved ones and possessions to for Migration (the SEM). "Firstly, embark on a perilous and frightening journey. The Swiss federal positive message. Secondly, a spirit government arranges for them to of peaceful co-existence is being be registered and receive a medi- encouraged between the local popcal check-up at the border town of ulation and the asylum seekers.' Chiasso. They are then transferred need to be housed for up to three months while awaiting a residence permit. One of Switzerland's largest accommodation centers, with room for 170 guests, was opened on Oct. 20, 2014 in an old military barracks in Losone, a residential and tourist-oriented town with a

the form of grievances, petitions for those who request it.

population of around 6,000.

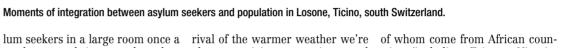
authorities, has melted away in the Support Group composed of One of Switzerland's largest response to the warm smiles of the centers for asylum seekers has first guests. In just a few weeks a representatives from the private welcome network has developed around the San Giorgio accommodation center, as it is now called, involving teams of both institutional representatives and volunteers. The result has exceeded even the The migrants — refugees who most optimistic expectations. "This example to follow," says Antonio Simona, who supervises the center on behalf of the State Secretariat the people who arrive are given a

The model, which is proving reto other locations, where they may markably effective, involves three underlying elements. The first relates to the organization and management of the center itself, within which a range of different activities is organized including sports and creative workshops, while guests can chat and play together in the common rooms. In addition, there are chores, with the different The locals' initial resistance tasks divided up among the guests. to the newcomers, expressed in Spiritual support is also available

local authorities, SEM officials and company that manages the center. Losone town councilors Fausto Fornera and Alfredo Soldati explain how this works: "It's a platform for dialogue, which aims to find solutions to a wide variety of issues both within a short timescale and often in an informal way, too." The town council has also been asked to arrange a public work program, providing a form of employment for those guests who are keen to keep busy and earn some money. For 2015, plans have been made for them to work for a total of 12,500 days. Every day, between 25 and 30 people are being employed to carry out simple tasks for a daily salary of 30 francs (US\$32.49). "These jobs are highly valued by the asylum seekers," Simona adds. "The work gives them back some dignity. In addition, local people are happy to see the asylum seekers working hard on the footpaths, in the forests and in public spaces."

The third element of the Losone model consists of the Welcome Group. This was set up at the initiative of around 25 volunteers, who host between 20 and 50 asy-





week to spend time together play- also organizing excursions and ing games, chatting and undertak- trips around the region," explains ing manual and creative activities. the volunteers' spokesperson, An-These encounters represent a pro- tonio Lisi. The kind support from cess of "give and take" for those inthe local population is expressed in volved — a chance to share activi- a display of solidarity aimed at obties and discussion with the aim of taining clothes and essential items bringing comfort to those in need. such as toys, furniture and a wide Such special opportunities help to range of tools and utensils. These create a positive relationship be- are collected and taken to the fortween people who may be far apart mer army barracks, where they in terms of culture but who are now close neighbors. "With the ar-

are distributed to those in need.

The guests at the center, most

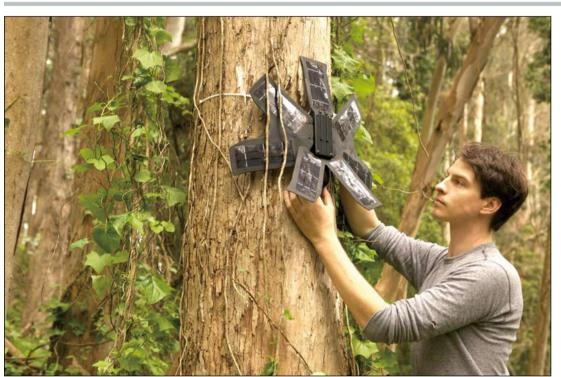
tries (including Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia and Senegal), express their gratitude for these acts of generosity with an equally generous spirit. They are grateful to those who are trying hard to help them feel at home.

There is, though, a flip side, including a few incidents that recenter. Outside the center there Within the local community some tries of origin.

pockets of resistance to the newcomers still remain, expressed mainly in the form of fear-mongering and attempts to fuel animosity on social media.

Ti Press/Pablo Gianinazzi

Even so, this negativity is diminishing over time in the face of what many see as an example of the warm welcome that, as on so many occasions before, has been quired the police be called to the given by Switzerland — and by Ticino — to migrants fleeing from have been no clashes, however. horrifying situations in their coun-



Rainforest Connection founder Topher White. His high-tech device made from discarded smartphones listens for trucks. chainsaws and other sounds of encroaching loggers. When installed high up in tree canopies, Rainforest Connection

### The Amazon rainforest is calling

To combat illegal logging, a non-profit equips trees

with cellphones

By Astrid Christophersen In a narrow patch of the Ama zon rainforest surrounded on all

sides by clear-cut pastureland, members of the Tembe indigenous tribe have pinned their hopes for survival on an implausible idea: that by equipping trees with cellphones they can save both their forest home and their millennial way of life. The Tembe have paired up

with a San Francisco-based non-profit called Rainforest Connection, which uses a treetop cellphone device to listen for the trucks, chainsaws and other telltale sounds of encroaching loggers. The brainchild of physicistturned-forest crusader Topher White, the device looks like a daisy, with a weather-proofed cellphone from which solar panels radiate out, to charge it. Hidden in the tree canopy, the device transmits ambient sound to the cloud, where software programmed to recognize the sound of chainsaws sends realtime alerts to rangers when such noises are detected.

It's already been tested in West Africa and Indonesia, where it brought an end to logging on a small sanctuary for one of the world's most endangered primates, the gibbon.

But White said the stakes on the Tembe reservation, in the Brazilian state of Para — ground

zero of the fight over the future of the Amazon — are even higher. "It's the difference between

fighting against annihilation and



Rainforest Connection's high-tech device made from discarded smartphones listens for trucks, chainsaws and other sounds of encroaching loggers. When installed high up in tree canopies, Rainforest Connection hardware is considered virtually invisible.

fighting against the destruction are quite passionate about that, of the environment," said White. but the urgency we see from the "Most of the people we work for Tembe is especially palpable.

### By SIMONETTA CARATTI

tural outskirts of Bern.

BELLINZONA, Switzerland It is possible for very different rituals and beliefs about life and the afterlife to co-exist: this little great miracle happens every day at the House of Religions, in the multicul-

While the fear of jihadist terrorism is rife in Europe, a seed of hope blooms within the heart of neutral Switzerland: a place of dialogue.

Five places of worship live together under the same roof: a mosque, a Hindu temple, an Alevi "dergah" a Buddhist center and a church ney. "We will not save the world, (used by eight different communities, we are not missionaries, but we including the local Ethiopian and Moravian communities).

A new two-story glass-and-concrete complex hosts the five places of worship (funded and organized by the communities). The design also features a shared common area for all the communities, with conference rooms, a library and a restaurant.

Behind this miracle, three men of different religions stand out: a Moravian priest, an imam and a rabbi. More than ten years ago, when the world was shaken by 9/11 and the media focus turned to cultural differences, these men shared a dream: peaceful coexistence among reli-

That seed has now bloomed. The road has not been easy. The discouraging reaction of a public adminis-

trator in Bern, as he listened to the worked," Hauck explains. idea for the project for the first time, is just one telling example: "This project is unnecessary and destined to fail," he commented. It took time, a lot of good will and

determination, but the results finally Overcoming the fear of those

who are different by getting to know them, but also transforming prejudice into tolerance through dialogue: these are the pillars upon which Bern's House of Religions was built. It has been a long, ten year jour-

practice dialogue: not the abstract one among religions, but the concrete one among people of different faiths who built their temples under the same roof and share common spaces. There's been no shortage of problems, we've had conflicts, but we found solutions," explains Gerda Hauck, president of the association "House of Religions — Dialogue

among Cultures. Different approaches to rituals could heat up the situation: a festive day of prayer for one religion could be considered impure by another.

"We prevent one community from restricting the activity of others. There have been frictions, but we have come up with a rule: we must discuss and find solutions in a limited time. And this has always

The Hindu minister confirms:

"Our prayers are festive, explosive, musical, noisy. Nothing to do with Muslim rituals. We have had disagreements but we have learned that we have to discuss and find a solution." Sasikumar Tharmalingam, 38 years old, holds celebrations six times per day and follows 450 Hindu families, particularly Tamil, devoted to Shiva. This divinity stands out in the colorful temple, which counts 350 plaster statues sculpted by artists who came from Tamil Nadu.

Christians, was a strange one at the beginning, but this formula works. There are points of contact among religions and all of them, after all, say the same thing: God is love," the Hindu minister says.

The joyful explosion of colors in his temple clashes with the sober Alevi "dergah" upstairs: a cream-colored room with no images, a table, a cauldron and 12 niches in the wall representing as many philosophers.

The mosque is elegant but sober, built on two floors: downstairs for men, upstairs for women. The walls are decorated with geometric designs on a black and purple background featuring the names of the 28 prophets; a huge crystal chandelier (brought disassembled from Turkey) dominates the center.

5 faiths sharing 1 roof at House of Religions "We are a model of interreligious coexistence. The mistrust towards Muslims exists in particular among those who don't know us. That's why it is important to promote knowledge of different faiths. Next generations will reap the benefits," explains Mustafa Memeti. The Albanian imam has his own vision: "We promote dialogue, but not mixture. Each one of us maintains our own religious identity in their respective place of worship," he underlines. His mosque borders with the Buddhist center: a large room where "The idea of living side by side, on the orange color of yoga mats the same doorstep with Muslims or stands out, together with the gold of a guiet Buddha that seems to be observing everything. It comes from Thailand and is the only religious symbol in the room. "We receive visits from people who do not have a faith but seek a way to live better. We teach methods, such as meditation, that are useful against stress; we don't lead anybody to believe in anything," explains Marco Genteki Roess, vice-president of the Buddhist Intercultural Association in Bern. "The House of Religions is an important social lab for promoting dialogue and knowledge of different religions. We have different faiths and rituals, every one of us has their own space and specificity, but we can meet and know one

### The dog that can smell when diabetics are at risk

By Simonetta Caratti

"Izzy" is a 5-year-old German Shepherd, a very special one: he has been trained to smell when his master is about to have a hypo-glycaemic crisis, lose consciousness and slip into a coma. He can sense the crisis coming 20 minutes in advance. Day and night, Izzy is alert for imminent danger: he is a lifesaving dog, a guardian angel for people suffering from diabetes. His support has changed the life of Angel Fraguada from Geneva, who has suffered from Type 1 diabetes for the last 14 years. His pancreas, all of a sudden, stopped producing insulin; which regulates sugar levels in the blood. Angel is now forced to inject himself with insulin every day, more than once a day. In Switzerland, 40,000 people share this fate,

including many children. Particularly when sufferers are very young, keeping sugar levels under control can be a marathon for their parents, who are forced to wake up various times dur-

ing the night to avoid dangerous hypo-glycaemic crises. Angel Fraguada has worked for numerous years as an acro-starts barking 20 minutes before bat in shows such as "Cirque du the sugar begins to drop or rise Soleil." He struggled with man- alarmingly." This gives Angel

caemia could catch him at any sugar levels, by either having time. "Many factors influence sugar levels in the blood; from stress to physical activity. It has happened to me that I've had to be rescued by the ambulance, he explains. During one of these occur-

rences, seven years ago, a first aider told him about dogs for diabetic people. Angel was in the United States at the time, where training programs for such dogs had been in existence for many

That's how Angel started searching for a service dog. He attended courses in the States and he is now a trainer of lifesaving dogs himself.

Angel trained his German Shepherd who has warned him of changes in his sugar levels, night and day for the last four years, preventing dangerous hypo-glycaemia as well as damaging hyper-glycaemia. "I trained Izzy to alert me when sugar leaves a determined safety range," he said, and Izzy often senses the change before it is

detected by the glycaemia measuring machine. "Sometimes he

aging his diabetes and hypogly- the time to rebalance his blood something sweet or injecting in-

#### The Dog Senses in Advance the Changes in Sugar Levels

Dogs for diabetics are trained to recognize a specific smell, undetectable by humans, which signals a change in their master's blood sugar levels, preluding to a hypoor hyper-glycaemic crisis.

Izzy and Angel have now become inseparable. The German Shepherd follows him everywhere.

Carol, Angel's wife, is happy too, in particular for the help Izzy provides during the night time, when hypoglycaemic crises can reach patients as they sleep and lead them to slip into a coma without anyone noticing. "That's why Izzy sleeps in our bedroom," she

#### The Training Could Last One Year

Not any dog can become an "alerting friend" and assist a diabetic person. What makes the difference is the sense of smell, the type of dog and, even more importantly, the feeling between the dog and its master. "The dogs must have a very sensitive nose, it takes between 6 and 18 months to train

them. But the master must be trained as well, the bond between the two is very important: they have to become a tight-knit team. My dog, for example, follows me everywhere, even in the plane,"

another in the common areas," he

concludes.

explains Angel Fraguada. In Switzerland Angel is helping a few families with diabetic kids and adults to find and train a service dog, so that they can manage dangerous sugar peaks, in particular during night hours. Each dog is trained to assist a single and specific diabetic master, because it has to detect the smells produced by that particular person. It is therefore a unique bond.

The alert system is also person alized and it is decided together with the patient: it becomes a sort of intimate language between the person and the dog, who reacts to the peaks or drops of glycaemia to keep it within the safe range.

Everything is very personal. "It is a hard job to train a dog for diabetics but the results are very positive. We should not forget though that they are not machines and they can be mistaken," says Angel. He explains that there is a big market for these dogs in the States and buying one that is already trained can cost a lot. Angel Fraguada evaluates each situation and issues a quote for the training.

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# Bagging the energy of the sun in South Africa

By Reabestwe Mashigo

Reabetswe Ngwane and business partner Thato Kgatlhanye into school bags which have built personify the buzzphrase social in solar power packs. These packs entrepreneurship. The pair have are charged all day in the sunlight found an innovative solution to while the children are at school, one of society's most pressing and are fully charged when the problems — affordable energy in economically depressed communities without reliable access or walking home safely. to electricity. They have designed schoolbags, through their company to a persistent problem was borne Rethaka, that do more than carry books — they help children read

Rethaka recycles plastic bags — woman was named first runner business partner Ngwane, who pose Schoolbags," said Ngwane. African landscape — turning them sun goes down providing much need light for doing homework -

This clever and simply solution out of a school assignment. Thato Kgatlhanye came up with the idea and unsurprisingly the young nity. This all with the help of her stitching and delivery of the Repur-

easy to come by across the South up at last year's (2014) Anzhisha Prize. The prize, now in its fifth year, awards young entrepreneurs from Africa who have developed and implemented innovative solutions to social challenges or have started successful businesses in their communities.

As a runner up, Kgatlhanye bagged US\$15 000, which became the seed capital to take her solution and convert it into what it has become — a successful business rooted in the North West commu-

says that their business is not only lighting the way for learners, but is also creating jobs for their community in the North West province of of luxury clutch bags using the South Africa. In this way, she says, they are tackling two social problems with one solution — helping children learn and injecting jobs into the area.

"We currently have eight employees who are responsible for the entire process from the collection, washing and sorting of the plastic bags, through to the final The ground-breaking pair's

creative juices keep flowing and they have now developed a range same abundant waste material. Like any sustainable business, the pair are continuing to innovate. Says Ngwane: "There definitely are future plans to create more innovative, sustainable and functional products. But we have chosen to continue furthering our reach with regards to the Repurpose Schoolbags for now.'

Solar panels on

Weingartner.

solar furniture.

By Christian Zercher Tages-Anzeiger (Switzerland) Niederglatt

our roofs will soon

past, says Markus

That's why the part-

time inventor builds

The table in the garden of a fam-

ily home in Niederglatt, not far from

Zurich, looks like many a garden

table — simple design, chromium

steel, matt finish. But there's a dif-

ference: one leg reveals a cable that

runs along the ground and ends up

in a power point. The table leaf is

black and turns out to be made of glass, covering a set of solar pan-

els. "My solar table — an energy-

producing piece of furniture," says Markus Weingartner, an engineer,

father of two, hobby innovator and furniture creator. The "solar table"

generates 280 kilowatt-hours of

electricity a year, enough to cover 30 percent of a person's energy con-

sumption or to power an e-bike for

The Swiss authorities did not

warm to Weingartner's concept for

a long time because unlike rooftop panels, the electricity generated

by the table is fed directly into the private grid through a power point.

It does not have to be sold into the public grid and then repurchased,

and it can be used instantaneously. "Most people don't even know

that this is now possible," We-

ingartner says. Although the

Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations (ESTI) took

a lot of convincing (Weingartner:

"It was a battle") it eventually

sanctioned the idea. This made

Switzerland only the second

70 kilometers every day.

be a thing of the

product she helps to manufacture. candles". She is delighted to be working for the company and says that the schoolbags have made a direct positive contribution to her daughter's education. As if that isn't enough benefit for her family, Maithufi says that it also helps her manage down the household budget.

"The bags we make have also made a difference in my daughter's education as she now has a to conserve energy — after all bag, and is able to use the solar sunlight is free and clean — the light at night to study and finish buzzwords of the future of energy Rethaka employee Maphefo her homework, which also helps globally.

Maithufi is also a consumer of the us save money on buying more In South Africa where the coun-

try's energy shortage has led to rolling blackouts every week, the schoolbags Rethaka makes might just be the solution for everyone who needs to burn the midnight oil for study and work. Even for those who are lucky enough to never have a shortage of lights, perhaps this is a way for anyone anywhere

## Electricity thanks to a merry-go-round

AND OLIVIER GASSELIN L'Actu — Mon Quotidier

Generating electricity through play. That's the simple but inspired idea of an American humanitarian organization: Empower Playgrounds, which specializes in electricitygenerating playground equipment for children in deprived countries.

In Pediatorkope, a tiny impoverished island in southeast Ghana, the locals don't have electricity. The island is not linked to the national energy grid. To bring them electric light, Empower Playgrounds had the idea of installing a special merry-go-round in the playground of a local primary school. When the children push and spin it around, it powers a turbine which creates energy. The merry-go-round also recharges batteries which can power energy-saving LED lamps for more than 40 hours.

The children are responsible for recharging the batteries during their playtime. In the evening they take these lamps home. The idea is life-changing, because until now, it was difficult to have light when night fell. Thanks to these lamps which are less dangerous than the oil-lamps which many villagers use — they can continue their studies and do their homework at home. As a result, students are getting better results at school because of this

ingenious invention. Before, we couldn't give the children work to do at home because it was dark when they got back after school. As a result they had poor results at school, whereas now, thanks to these lamps, they are making progress," a teacher told the media. students being able to continue their

education after primary school. The merry-go-round project is already in place in 42 schools out of the 40,000 across the country. This African nation is often affected by electricity shortages which interrupt the everyday lives of its inhabitants,



This has the further advantage of When the children push and spin the merry-go-around, it powers a turbine which creates energy and recharges lamp batteries.

particularly those who live out in the countryside.

The humanitarian organizaproducing solar energy — which Africa has no shortage of! — on

the island. Locals can buy a battery which will power several lamps, as well as charge their 1.30 euros (US\$1.47) to recharge.

at the solar energy plant. This invention looks set to have a bright future. It's estimated that tion is also launching another mobile phones. The battery lasts throughout the world, around 600 project, setting up a small factory a month and costs approximately million people do not have the means of lighting their homes, with This money pays for maintenance Africa the continent worst affected.

#### country after the Netherlands to allow such a feed-in

**South African Railway Adventure** Originally, railways were Weingartner's abiding passion. He studied electrical engineering, joined ABB, the Swiss-Swedish engineering group, and began developing railway software programs. He moved to South Africa for several years to help develop the country's railway network. Upon returning to Switzerland in 2005, Weingartner redirected his professional career by adding a post-graduate diploma in photovoltaics. ("I'd been interested in this area since I was 18," says Weingartner, who is now 49.)

He founded his own business for solar installations and employs five people. He calls it his "routine business." He broke out of the routine in 2013, when he designed his solar table because he anticipated a change: "Ten years from now we won't be seeing a lot of solar panels on small roofs anymore." Although solar technology becomes ever cheaper, he says, installation costs will remain high while feed-in tariffs (i.e. compensation rates) will fall. For an individual, installing rooftop panels will become less and less viable. "The trend goes towards largescale installations and cost-efficient solar parks.' Weingartner, who also builds so-

lar panels for flower pots and side or coffee tables, sees a niche market for his solar furniture: "Ecology-minded people can do something for the environment without needing to obtain a building permit and having to spend 30,000 francs (US\$32,476) on a solar installation." So, is the table,

which costs CHF 3,400, also a mis-





(Top) Markus Weingartner from Niederglatt, near Zurich, Switzerland, with his solar furniture.

(Above) The energy flows directly into the private power grid of its owner. sion statement? "Possibly," Weingartner says, but he prefers to paint a broader picture. He uses phrases

like "The sun is a democratic source of energy" or "The electric grid is today's energy internet." Anybody can feed into the grid and purchase from it, it has become a "free market." While energy producers once pretty much cornered the market with their power plants, photovoltaics now gives many people the opportunity to become electricity suppliers. In short: for Weingartner, the solar and inventions," he says, because table is the first step on his family's

path to "energy self-sufficiency." At least that's the idea, his vision. The reality is different: Weingartner's solar table is hardly a bestseller. He has sold some 30 pieces so far, but he needs to sell at least 300 to cover his expenses high in the hundred thousands. It's difficult to find his furniture on the Internet, let alone on social media. "There's room for improvement," he concedes. Nor have any of the big furniture chains, such as IKEA, Interio or Micasa, added his invention to their product lines. Weingartner knows why: "The margins are too low." Micasa's Service Centre told "Tages-Anzeiger": "We take suggestions from customers on board and evaluate them on a supply-anddemand basis. This leaves the furniture and

So, is the willingness to invest in

a furniture maker. "In future, we will also offer a do-it-yourself solar garden shows. Weekend after weekend Weingartner carts his solar furniture around Switzerland. The experience is not encouraging: "People stop, have a look, say 'Wow, what a super idea' and amble off."

renewable energy overestimated or eroded by double standards? Weingartner wouldn't put it that harshly, but says: "It's what people do that

#### counts, not what they say. India, the Dream Market

Florian Stahl teaches marketing at the University of Mannheim in Germany and knows a thing or two about launching innovative prod-

"It takes time to market new ideas

human beings are basically tradition-bound and it is difficult to sell them change. "The important thing here is communication. You have to convince people that the product is the same, but better." Small companies find this difficult, he says, because they lack the resources for broad-based advertising campaigns. An alternative would be guerrilla marketing via social media or trying to sharpen the distribution process - either direct distribution to the end-seller (Stahl: "In this case rather difficult") or via production licences (Stahl: "Probably the best solution"). Weingartner sees some merit in the licensing option since he considers himself more of an innovator than

He has a longer-term vision as well: he wants to travel around India in ten years' time and see lots of furniture connected to power points - "now that would be it!"

For more information Website: http://energiemoebel.ch/

### Environmentalist dreams of fighting pollution with seaweed

Algopack, a minnow of the French biochemistry industry, swaps oil for seaweed to make plastic.

By Caroline de Malet

Given current barrel prices and the pollution caused by oil production worldwide, making plastic with seaweed instead of oil seems like a great idea. Remy Lucas comes from a family of Breton "wrackers" (seaweed gatherers) and has drawn on his experience in the petrochemicals industry to make this idea, first conceived 15 years ago, a reality.

Now, his dream is about to come true. The company Algopack, which he founded five years ago, is now a market leader in this technology for transforming seaweed. The principle is seemingly simple: extract a powder from brown seaweed and add plant additives to produce granules that can then be used by plastics manufacturers to make end products. This material has many uses, from laminates for furniture to caps and lids, plant cereals or sugar cane) and 1,200 pots and even funeral urns. However, it isn't suitable for all applica- ronmentally friendly. Seaweed does tions. Unlike Algoblend, the first product launched by the company, which is made up of 50 percent seaweed and 50 percent plastic,

this latest product ("Algopack")

is made entirely from seaweed, plankton. Once they reach the end tracts, rather than risk not being meaning that it is not transparent but rather dark brown in colour. Although it is possible to bulk-dye the product, it can hardly become clear. As Lucas himself acknowledges, "We'll never get into the water bottle market.'

Protecting the Environment Despite this minor drawback. there are many advantages to using seaweed as a raw material. This natural resource exists in unlimited quantities and although it is seasonal, it can be farmed. Which is precisely what Algopack is doing with aquaculturalists in Saint-Malo bay in Brittany. Seaweed can even be stored for many years. Secondly, it is cheap; it just needs to be harvested from the sea. In addition to this, the industrial waste produced by seaweed (from which the cosmetics industry has already succeeded in extracting certain substances) is even cheaper and does the job just as well. As a result, Algopack sells at 1,500 euros (US\$1,696) per ton, as compared with 2,000 euros for most bioplastics (made from euros for plastic. Finally, it is envinot need any fertilizer or pesticides and can grow in very little water. It stores carbon dioxide (961 kilos per

ton as it grows) and gives out oxy-

gen, which is vital to the growth of resource before signing any con-

of their life, the end products take twelve weeks to biodegrade in soil (as compared with four to ten centuries for standard plastics) and just five hours in the sea. In both cases, they act as fertilizers. It should also be noted that this material does not contain bisphenol A or phthalates.

#### Applications around the World

Lucas' work has already earned him recognition. In 2011, he won the Crisalide Eco-activites and Innova'Bio competitions and last year he took the Total-BFM Business Award for green chemistry. Algopack even offers hope to those living in the West Indies and Guyana, where coastal areas are being swamped by unprecedented volumes of gulfweed. The Seventh Continent Expedition, which promotes the development of alternatives to plastic, has joined forces with Algopack to solve this problem. The good news is that Algopack's tests have shown that its process does work with this species of seaweed. The process has also shown positive results in tests carried out in several different continents, in Japan, China, South Africa, Chile and Canada.

Algopack now plans to license its process to local manufacturers. Lucas nonetheless remains cautious. "We chose to secure the

able to meet demand." As a result, production only got under way in 2013 and the company's turnover remains modest at 120,000 euros in May 2015. It is expected to reach 1 million euros over the course of the next financial year. The company's work has attracted many clients, including Leclerc (trolley tokens), Orange (mobile phone cases), Sagemcom (Liveboxes) and Biocoop (fittings for 300 shops). Although Algopack is currently

still in the pilot phase, the company plans to accelerate its development and is expected to start industrial production in 2016. Its 12-hectare seaweed farm has to be extended to 145 hectares and the production plant is moving to new 1,000-square-meter premises. "In five years' time, we expect to achieve a turnover of around thirty million euros and create some thirty new jobs," Lucas explains. The company is currently running a fundraising campaign as expansion on this scale will require more than 5 million euros Although oil companies around

the world are also showing an inter-These promising results mean that est in this market, this is not the last we will hear about this new method of cleaning up the planet, at a time when nearly 269,000 tons of plastic waste is floating in the earth's





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### Bringing water to the world by transmutation high water stress by 2030, including between 75 million and 250 the new product to ease water where, even in burlap sacks be- of soil substrates and with all kind

Water scarcity continues to increase around the world. According to the United Nations some 700 million people in 43 countries suffer this calamity caused by overexploitation of water resources and the irrigation of agricultural lands to enhance production when rainfall is scarce.

In 2006 the United Nations announced its International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015. The U.N. predicts that 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with "absolute water scarcity" by the year 2025.

The challenge they identified is for the distribution of water resources in a responsible way, because almost half the world's population will be living in areas of Chile, Peru and, of course Mexico;

million people in Africa.

But a few years before the publication of the 2006 Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program and of the report "Coping with Water Scarcity. Challenge of the Twenty-First Century. U.N.-Water," by the FAO in 2007, a Mexican scientist Sergio Jesus Rico Velasco from the Instituto Politicnico Nacional invented "Solid Rain" and founded the company "Silos de Agua" in 2002 to commercialize his product.

Slowly but steadily the news of his invention reached the world, opening a new window of hope for many countries around the world, including Russia, India, Ivory Coast, Colombia, Spain, Portugal,

shortages for agriculture. In 2012 Rico Velasco was nominated for the World Water Prize.

The magic of "solid rain," a compound based on potassium acrylate, is that it can store 300 times, even 500 times its own weight in water without causing any harm to the environment, nor triggering toxic chemical reactions regardless of the type of soil substrate.

#### Portability

The product looks like a white powder sugar but is made of ultraabsorbent potassium polyacrylate which Rico Velasco and other scientists call "water silos.

So as an alternative to reducing water resources, this product stores rainwater and has the

cause the rain water molecules adhere to the potassium polyacrylate, chemical reactions with pesticides which allows the gelatinization of nor fertilizers because "it's just the rain in the agricultural fields.

#### Rejuvenation

How does it work? Solid Rain provide enough water to plants encapsulates and disperses water during its lifetime, ranging from 8 mum, while avoiding water stress to 10 years, it helps to aerate the soil, and permits agriculture in extreme climates and places with drated with each agricultural cycle. poor soil conditions.

four "silos," each one containing the equivalent of one litre of water. The comparative cost is minimal because the "powder" sufficient for one hectare has a price tag of rain.com). around one thousand dollars.

Rico Velasco explained that this ration from San Diego, California,

of plants because it produces no water" and it does not generate pollution. The Solid Rain can regularly

and evaporation. Moreover, the solid rain particles can be rehy-How is it used? Farmers need to The ideal usage proportion is take a spoon and mix 20 grams of Solid Rain with one liter of water,

over a period of ten years maxi-

soil of other plants (www.solid-According to Solid Rain Corpo-

then mix it into the soil. Then plant The miracle of solid rain: The start and result of the process of transmuting water theirs seeds and mix it in with the storage in "powder" form is seen.

> the product is capable of saving soil conditions and from 30 to 50 between 50 to 80 per cent of water, depending on the climate and houses

percent of water usage in green-

The UK's first ever bus to run on human waste launched, which runs between Bristol and Bath, two cities in southwest

### Clean energy goes down the toilet, literally

Seeking sanitation for the world's poorest

By A. TARIEL L'Actu - Mon Quotidien

poo could be a source of clean en-In the United Kingdom, there is

a bus running between the city of than petrol, because it releases very Bath and Bristol Airport that operates on a very special type of biogas. Fuel is made from the excrement of the local population, which is collected after it's been treated at a water purification plant, along with food waste.

How can it be turned into en- Bio Bus, or produces methane gas. This is then off any nasty odors! mixed with another gas called propane. Together, they create a fuel air and above all, it operates be- the designated European Green endless supply!

on which you can run an engine. Amazingly, the waste produced

Who would have thought that by a family of five over one year is enough to run a bus carrying 40 people for 300 kilometers. This new source of energy is far less polluting few greenhouse gases, which are a cause of global warming.

By comparison, the fuel releases 80% less nitrous oxide and 25% less carbon dioxide than a diesel motor.

Passengers need not worry: the 'Poo Bus' as it ergy? As the poo decomposes, it has been nicknamed, doesn't give

cause of people who live in the Capital for 2015. area, no doubt the very people who use it," joked the director of GENeco, the company which built the vehicle, to British newspaper The Telegraph. What's more, the bus doesn't

hide its unusual energy source. Instead, it boasts about it! On the side of the bus there are pictures of people sitting on the loo doing their business, reading a newspaper or listening to music.

This environmentally friendly initiative demonstrates how Bristol is committed to limiting the impact of climate change. For one year, "It improves the quality of the from January onwards, the city is After all, it's cheap and we have an

The Poo Bus underwent trials in November 2014 but since this spring, it has been operating a regular service. Schoolchildren also use the bus and think it's great fun.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Norwegian capital Oslo has started running around 100 buses operating on human waste. Other cities are also starting to think about using excrement and other waste as fuel for public transport, and that's not all: it could even be used in future to heat homes.

This new source of recycled energy no doubt has a bright future.

### Saving to leave poverty behind in Bangladesh

By RAHIDUL MIAH

RANGPUR, Bangladesh, Prothom Alo

Arjina Khatun, now 47, was too poor to go to school. She was married off when she was only 13. After just 13 months of marriage, her husband divorced her because her family was unable to pay dowry. That didn't bring her world to an end. In fact, not only did she turn her own life around, but she changed the lives of many women in Taraganj, a sub-district of the district Rangpur.

Arjina's sheer determination and grit brought an end to child marriage in the area, and put a stop to the oppression of women. Her farsightedness helped women to drive

poverty away from their lives. The scene at Arjina's village in Panchayetpara is a pleasant one. There are cows, calves and goats wandering around the fields and yards. Gone are the dilapidated thatched huts. Most of the houses have sturdy roofs of corrugated tin, glistening in the sun. There are many semi-brick houses too. All the houses have sanitary latrines, pure drinking water facilities and electricity. The ponds are full of fish and the household gardens are

overflowing with vegetables. Everyone gives credit to Arjina for the changed face of their village. Mahbubul Islam, a schoolteacher of the village, says, "It is through Arjina's hard work that today the girls of the village are well aware about health and education. They are treated well and respected in their in-laws' homes."

Arjina is at home, attending a meeting with her association members. When asked about her life, her eyes glisten with unshed tears. She goes back to the past, "I never had the chance to go to school. My father was a day laborer. When my mother died in 1989, I was married off. I will never be able to forget how my husband would torture me. Just because we couldn't pay him 9,000 Bangladeshi taka (BDT) in dowry, he broke my right arm. He kept me starving for two whole days and then divorced me.'

Freed from the prison of her husband's house, Arjina returned to her father's home. Her father died soon after her return and she found herself in a dire situation. She took up working in people's households. She earned a little through this hard physical labor, and scraped and saved till she managed to buy two goats and nine chickens. The hens laid eggs, the goats had kids.



Arjina Khatun is seen collecting rice from the members of her savings group.

A dream grew in her heart.

'Put aside a fistful' One day Arjina gathered other girls in her house, girls who were suffering and deprived. She said, "From now on, put aside a fistful of rice everyday before you cook." They decided they would thus save up rice, fistful by fistful, sell it and do something big.

In 2002 Arjina formed an association of 40 women. It was called the Panchayetpara Working Women's Group. Everyday they saved 40 fistfuls of rice. At the end of the week, they held a lottery and handed over the rice to one of their members. She bought ducks and chickens with the money. In this manner, every week a different woman would be given the 40 fistfuls of rice and in 40 weeks, their village and their households were bustling with ducks and chickens. This brought in cash for

Next Arjina began saving two taka a day. Every week they would save BDT 560. They would hold a lottery and a goat would be bought for the winner of the week. They already had their ducks and chickens. Now they gradually all owned goats too. Poverty began to fade. On February 10, 2006 Prothom

Alo published a feature on Arjina.

the women and their families.

Upon reading about her, the nongovernment organisation (NGO) CARE came forward. They trained the women in household vegetable gardening and indoor mushroom cultivation. Next the NGO Brac come forward and formed a 300-member association, Pallisamaj, with

Arjina as the head. Arjina also

expanded her Working Women's

Group to 170 members. They now

deposit BDT 20 a week and di-

vide it up after every three years. With that they have leased out 21 cows so far. They now have BDT 500,000 in their savings fund.

With the help of these two associations, Arjina forges ahead in her fight against child marriage, dowry, unjust divorce and the oppression of women. So far they have prevented 21 child marriages. The association has helped 37 poor girls get married. They have given pencils, pens, books and other study supplies to 61 poor students. They have recorded the blood group of each member so they can help anyone in the village

with blood if the need ever arises. Arjina herself now owns eight goats, four cows and many ducks and chickens. She has bought a considerable amount of land. She has a tube well and a sanitary latrine. She has a two-room tinroofed semi-brick house. In her yard she has planted mango, jackfruit and papaya trees. Housewife Asma Khatun, a

member of the association, says she was married off when she was iust 15. She would work as a maid in the houses of the area. She would have to bear her husband's misbehaviour. Now that very same husband has a rice business with her funds. They have two children. She has decided not to have any more children and her husband has supported her decision. Anisur Rahman, chairman of the

Taraganj Upazila Parishad, says, "Arjina has made us proud. We uphold her as a shining example in various meetings and forums." Arjina says, "It is women who first have to come forward to help women in distress." She dreams of a day when the women will work shoulder to shoulder with the men of her village, equal in dignity and respect.

One-third of the world's population is without access to proper toilets. To address this problem, a team from Eawag has developed a new kind of latrine.

BY BERTRAND BEAUTE

"Today, 6 billion people worldwide own a mobile phone, but only 4.5 billion have decent toilets." Kristele Malegue, coordinator of the Water Coalition an NGO that campaigns for clean water — sums up the situation in one sentence: one third of the world's population is without access to proper sanitary facilities, and one billion people defecate in the open. "This shortage, which is still taboo in society, is a real scandal. It has serious consequences for people's health, nutrition and education, the economy and the environment," continues Kristele Malegue. Each year, 1.5 million children die from the effects of diarrhoea caused by drinking water contaminated with faecal

matter.' To address this problem, Swiss researchers from Eawag and the Vienna-based design firm EOOS have designed a new kind of latrine, "Blue Diversion," as part of the "Reinvent The Toilet Challenge (RTTC)" set by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Flush toilets, which are commonly used in industrialized countries, seem to be the ideal solution. However, it is difficult to install them in developing countries. In many locations, infrastructures such as sewers and water treatment plants simply don't exist, and there is often not enough water available for flushing. Pit latrines have seen very little progress over the course of history, and do not meet hygiene requirements," points out Christoph Luthi, project manager at Eawag. "We wanted to design a radically dif-

the same time as offering spot-

### 'Elimination of pathogens and

To look at, Blue Diversion resembles a squat toilet made out of blue plastic, with two holes: one for urine and the other for feces. "The purpose of separating these is to facilitate the elimination of pathogens and save water," explains Christoph Luthi. Through a nitrification process, the urine is converted into fertilizer in situ. However, what makes it radically different is the integrated independent water circuit. "We have fitted our toilets with a shower head to clean the pan and also ensure anal hygiene, as practiced in a great number of countries, as well as a sink to wash the hands," continues Christoph Luthi. "Whenever the water flows, a valve automatically shuts off the urine and feces tanks. This enables almost all of the

liquid to be recuperated. Subjected to internal biological treatment, this dirty water is disinfected by a gravity-driven membrane filter. A solar-powered electrolysis system then produces chlorine, preventing undesirable bacteria from forming. "This patented system is capable of treating 1.5 litres per hour, which is perfectly adequate because the appliance contains 60 liters in total. You can even drink the water produced, although we don't recommend it because you'd then need to refill the tank," continues Christoph Luthi. "One to two liters are lost per week, based on normal use.

#### **Prospects for Further Service**

In 2013, the first prototype of Blue Diversion was successfully tested in Uganda, working with Makerere University. "The appliance was very well received by people during the trials in Kampala,' continues Christoph Luthi. "This first trial also allowed us to identify certain defects. We have since reduced the height of the toilet and improved the system's hydraulics." A new prototype is currently being tested in Nairobi, Kenya. Blue Diversion was awarded the 2014 Prize for Innovation by the International Water Association (IWA).

"We are now looking for industrial partners and investors so that ferent type of toilet, without the we can produce the units in greater need for hefty infrastructures, at quantities," continues Christoph Luthi. "Mass production will reduce the



The "Blue Diversion," a toilet model that provides low-tech solutions to hygienic problems, is seen in this picture.

cost. The objective is to achieve a selling price of US\$500 per appliance, for a projected lifetime of ten years." Is this too expensive for the

countries in question? "The lack of toilet facilities mainly affects Sub-Saharan Africa, where just 30% of the population has access to decent toilets, but it doesn't stop there. In India, almost half of the population is forced to defecate in the open, and even in Europe 20 million people are still without quality facilities," points out Kristele Malegue. "One appliance won't address everyone's problems. Different approaches need to be devised to suit the situation.'

Consequently, Blue Diversion could come in useful in remote areas. "The main need is in Africa and India," confirms Christoph Luthi, "but we can also see our toilets

es, which will never be connected to the waste water sanitation network. What's more, some countries are also interested in the water purification system we have developed, without the toilets, because it produces drinking water." Meanwhile, the researchers are currently looking into what can be

being useful elsewhere, particularly

in mountain huts and remote villag-

done with the feces. "At the moment, our system only converts the urine into fertilizer. The actual stools have to be disposed of, which poses a problem due to the pathogens they contain," explains Christoph Luthi. "We are working on a system to burn this solid residue which, I hope, will be operational by the end of 2015."

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# Looking to the heavens to provide power on the ground

The Zephyr project, a photovoltaic balloon designed by students, aims to supply energy to disaster areas.

CAROLINE DE MALET

In the Iliad, Zephyr is a violent, stormy wind, while in the Odyssey and more recent literature, it is depicted as gentle and light — a warm breeze that melts the snow. In this project set up by two ambitious young Parisian graduates, Zephyr takes the form of a flying device that comes to the rescue of those living without electricity in disaster ar-

In emergency situations, the question of energy supply is often of critical importance. At the moment, electricity in refugee camps generally comes from heavy, polluting generators that require expensive fuel oil. The supply chains for such oil can be broken, making procurement unpredictable.

These problems gave the students the idea of designing a photovoltaic balloon inspired by inflatable balloons, which can generate energy anywhere - even in disaster areas where it is not possible to install land-based infrastructure as a result, for example, of a natural catastrophe. The students, graduates of Telecom ParisTech and the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Arts D'coratifs, met while working together from November 2013 to March 2014 on 'energies of the future' at the Laboratoire, a facility set

#### **Energy for 50 People**

The principle is based on a highly mobile, low-cost kit made up of a box housing the technology and a lightweight sail. The landbased housing contains an electrical transformer and is less than a cubic meter in volume, while the sail is 3.8 meters in diameter and is covered with 15 meters squared of lightweight solar panels. "All you need to do is unfurl the sail and allow it to inflate. The balloon collects solar energy and transports it to the ground via a cable, while the batteries store surplus energy and take over the power supply at night," explains Cedric Tomissi, one of the two young designers behind the project. The electrolyser uses nine liters of water plus the solar energy collected, coupled with the batteries inside the housing, to produce the gas needed to inflate Zephyr in half a day. Halfway between a balloon and a kite, this hybrid device has a yield of up to 3 kilowatt hours (kWh), comparable to that of a traditional generator. This is enough to supply lighting and heating to around fifty people living, for example, in

a refugee camp or emergency hospital. The idea has not gone unnoticed. The young entrepreneurs have already won several awards, including the 2014 ArtScience prize, the 2014 James Dyson Award, first prize at the 2014 Student Entrepreneurship Day run by the Universite Paris-Saclay, the 2014 Humanitech Challenge jointly organised by the Red Helmets Foundation and Orange and EDF's "Sharing energy in the city, 2030" challenge. They were also given the opportunity to present their project at EDF's stand at the Saint-Etienne Design Biennale up in Paris to bring together engineers in March. "It's a simple, environmentally

friendly device," explains Jonathan Bouzy a project manager at Soft IQ and member of the Humanitech Challenge panel of judges. "They are applying existing technology in a brand new way. That's what "high tech" is all about."

A technical feasibility study was carried out on the balloon last November in partnership with EDF, Dassault Systemes, the Red Helmets Foundation and the Institute of Research and Development on Photovoltaic Energy (IRDEP). The students worked particularly closely with the IRDEP to improve the balloon's photovoltaic technology. After one of the engineers who set up the project left the team to pursue other professional avenues, Zephyr entered into a partnership with the EI-CESI engineering school, giving final-year Master's degree students the opportunity to work on technical aspects of the project.

#### From Student Project to Start-up

The next stage is to build an initial prototype, which should be completed in January 2017 and will serve as "proof of concept." "We think that we will need 25,000 euros to make it," explains Julie Dautel, a designer who is currently studying at the Sciences-Po Paris research university. Zephyr has already received around ten thousand euros from the various prizes that it has won and a fundraising campaign is planned to run from September 2015 to January 2016. The team hopes to use this investment to take on additional staff, particularly engineers. The two young entrepreneurs want to turn this student project into a start-up. Zephyr is also currently apply ing to join the Sciences-Po Paris incubator.

The duo is aiming to move into an indus-



These photovoltaic balloons are capable of generating energy in disaster areas where it is not possible to install land-based infrastructure.

2018. More investment (one million euros) humanitarian applications. "The balloon Africa and Asia. It can even be used to supwill be required at this later stage. In the can be used for homes in remote areas long term, the aim is to sell an entire range where the roof cannot take the weight of Julie Dautel. For now, it will be some time of balloons adapted to generate energy in traditional solar panels, at campsites and in before Zephyr is ready to take to the air.

trial phase and start selling the balloon in different kinds of situations, including non-nomadic encampments like those found in port communications technology," explains

### The world of words brought to life for the blind

It was a fine morning on June 25, 2013. Ragib Hasan reached his office at the University of Alabama in Birmingham in Alabama and started off the day by checking online news portals. Suddenly, one report caught his attention.

The story portrayed the plight of visually impaired school children in Bangladesh. Even six months into the academic year, they had not received their textbooks due to a lack of Braille printing facilities in the country. To add to their woes, no digital copies of the books were available either.

An assistant professor of Computer and Information Sciences of the university, Hasan was especially touched by what a child said: "... all my friends got books on the first day of school, but other visually impaired children and I didn't get any even after

six months. He immediately came up with the plan of finding volunteers to type the books into digital Unicode form and creating audio books. To test his idea, he recorded a chapter from a book using his iPhone, which took

only five minutes. "I was amazed to see how easy it was to create an audio version of the book. The visually impaired children could listen to the books on mobile phones or cheap mp3 players," says Ragib did his PhD in Computer Science at the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign. Around noon on that very day, he started a Facebook group named BanglaBraille [http:// www.facebook.com/groups/banglabraille] and started inviting people to the group. He requested that everyone start typing up the books or upload image versions of whatever books were available on the website of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

The response was astounding. Volunteers started pouring in droves immediately. "Within five hours, more than 500 volunteers signed up. And within a few days, we reached more than a thousand, then 2,000," he re-

Now, the group has 3069 volunteers - among whom there are engineers, doctors, teachers, students and corporate employees— mostly young people from home and abroad.

Volunteers start a thread on sions of books for colleges and a particular textbook on the universities. Then they would set Facebook page, and then they their eyes on literature classics.



Hasan, a BUET graduate, who Students using BanglaBraille, a free crowd-sourced audio book system, are pictured. Response has been 'astounding.'

divide the pages among themselves. Each volunteer starts recording the book page by page and shares the audio files using Dropbox, a popular file sharing service, with the project coordi-

Eventually, the audio and digitized books are assigned to reviewers, who go through the contents and release the books through their website — http:// www.banglabraille.org.

#### Light of Knowledge

So far, 24 audio and 24 digitised books of Class I to Class IX-X have been released on the site. Anyone can download them free of cost and get the digitised ones printed in Braille.

Ragib notes that a large number of books, which are in the process of being edited, can be made available in phases. Once done with all the books in the school curriculum, BanglaBraille plans to start creating audio ver-

audio books in inexpensive mp3 one Braille book costs around players and then distributing those among visually impaired children for free," he adds.

Intel Corporation in California, is one of the volunteers who joined the Facebook group immediately after Ragib's call and offered to generate audio books and coordinate with other volunteers.

"Working on this project makes me feel hopeful that together, when we care, we can make a change for the better,' she says. Mosharef Hossain Bhuiyan, gen-

eral secretary of the Bangladesh Visually Impaired Peoples' Society, notes that there are only seven primary schools for the 50,000 visually impaired children in Bangladesh. Besides, only 10 visually impaired students in a district are given the opportunity to study with other students, which often deprives many of the specially-abled

from attending school.

"We are also planning to load costly. For example, printing Tk 1,500, he says, adding that BanglaBraille can do a commendable job by making audio Salwa Mostafa, an engineer at materials accessible to those most in need.

Rezaul Karim Siddique, who hosts the Mati O Manush show on the state-run Bangladesh Television, recorded audio books on agricultural education of class VI and VII for BanglaBraille.

"I am just simply amazed. The way the youths are volunteering is a lesson for those who do nothing without funds," he

Ragib Hasan, who has been involved in the development of Bangla Wikipedia since 2006 and is the founder of the first and largest open online education platform in Bangla— shikkhok. com - observes that he was surprised to see that there were virtually no Bangla audio textbooks.

'We intend to fill that void and let the light of knowledge reach Education materials for the the visually impaired population visually impaired are very of our country," he said

### Makoko Floating School rises above the slums of impoverished Nigeria

By Blessing Olisa AND ADEOLA OGUNLADE

Living in the slum does not automatically entitle its residents the opportunities to get a formal education, but with the birth of a floating school, the chances of being formally educated are lim-

The Makoko Floating School has been described by the London Design Museum as a "prototype floating structure, built for the historic water community of Makoko."

Makoko, is a slum neighborhood located in the Makoko-Iwaya community of Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, and has a population of over 100,000 residents. Fishermen from the Egun despite the little income made speaking populace settled in the slum over 100 years ago.

Established in the 18th century primarily as a fishing village the area was not officially counted as part of the 2007 census and the population today is estimated to be much higher.

It is a community that houses thousands of Ijaws, Ilaje's and Egun speaking populace who are predominately fish farmers and who also engage in trading activities. They lack basic amenities, lack clean water, lack power supply, and are alien to anything called development.

Although, Makoko has make shift schools including French schools built by individuals and foreign nationals to cater for the educational needs of the children in the community, they are yet largely insufficient to cater for the increasing number of children in the area.

The near existence of formal educational institutions in the area has been attributed as one of the causes of teenage pregnancy and other forms of vices rampant in the area. In 2012 however, Nigerian

architect, Kunle Adeyemi, with support from Heinrich Boll Foundation and the United Nations created a three-storey wooden floating structure to accommodate 100 elementary school children per time, who will find their way to the school by boats.

### Lighting, Playground

Speaking on the stimulus for its creation, Adeyemi told a me-



http://www.nleworks.com/case/makoko-floating-schoo

community. And my interest in place during their fishing expethe coastal community, where daily by the breadwinners, they

the infrastructures in the community. Each of the floors in the school has a modern toilet and electricity supply wires (powered by a solar system) built into the school to provide lighting for the children who may want to involve in evening educational activities. The ground floor has an open space which serves as a playground for children, and

Makoko residents on weekends. As a pilot project created in 2012, the floating school has taken an innovative approach to address the community's social and physical needs in view of the impact of climate change and a rapidly urbanizing African context. It is aimed at generating a sustainable, ecological, alternative building system and urban water culture for the teeming population of Africa's coastal re-

Built to float and measuring about a hundred square metres (100-square-metres), the school is a triangular form in sections constructed with a parallel series of timber A-frames on a platform supported by 256 recycled blue plastic barrels.

### **Emerging Architecture**

This world class project with beautiful architectural makeup is however, fast becoming a shadow of itself. Since 2012, the structure has not been used and the chairs, tables, roofs and bulb to lighten the classes are dia organization that "The desire" unavailable. A visit to the place

The Makoko Floating School is seen in this undated photo.

The sample floating structure which has gotten international have never stopped developing press attention, won awards including the 2013 AR+D awards for emerging architecture, was shortlisted for the London Design Museum's 2014 Design of the Year Award and has been nominated for the 2015 International Award for Public Art has

been rejected in Nigeria. Two factors have yet continued to impede on the maximiza-

tion of the school. On the one hand, Lagos state government is unwilling to apsometimes, relaxation spot for prove the structure as a school. This is because it has tagged the slum as an illegal settlement. Thus it is almost impossible for the government to give it the support it needs to function

properly. Speaking for the Lagos state government in 2013, Commissioner for Waterfront and Infrastructure Development, Prince Adesegun Oniru said the structure is an illegal structure, and added that "it shouldn't be there, and we are trying to get rid of structures there.

On the other hand, the community is yet to assume full custody of the structure. Adeyemi has advised the community leaders

to take full control of the structure, get and mobilize the children to come and learn, and teachers to rise up to teach.

A source told The Nation that the community is ready to kick start the teaching and learning of formal education, but are hopeful that some good and noble persons can take it up from where Adeyemi ended it.

Meanwhile, community vigito construct the school was born showed that the fishermen have lantes are in charge of the secuout of curiosity after I visited the made the structure a resting rity of the floating structure.