



■ IMPACT JOURNALISM DAY

The magic of “solid rain,” a compound based on potassium acrylate, is that it can store 300 times its own weight in water without causing any harm to the environment.

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SATURDAY

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■ TODAY'S WEATHER

 North 28-35°C	 Central 27-35°C	 South 29-33°C
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■ IMPACT JOURNALISM DAY

These packs are charged all day while the children are at school and are fully charged when the sun goes down providing much need light for doing homework.

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NT\$15

TAIWAN'S LEADING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER SINCE 1952

Vol. LXIII No.293 Total Issues 22,983

‘Time’ features Tsai on cover

Magazine calls Tsai frontrunner for ‘Chinese’ democratic leader

BY YUAN-MING CHIAO
The China Post

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

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” candidate.

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, Taiwan-centric” policy outlook in which she calls for a new model that weans the island’s high-tech economy from its dependence on China.

Aside from noting Tsai’s unlikely rise as the DPP’s standard bearer following a series of electoral defeats, the DPP chairwoman’s personal branding as a calculated thinker was seen as having limited resonance initially until her emotional concession speech in 2012 after the presi-

dential election loss to incumbent Ma Ying-jeou galvanized supporters 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 and earlier by influential U.S. academics with ties to policymakers for the vagueness in her proposed cross-strait policy, the report also acknowledged that Tsai faced challenges in formulating a new economic model that includes the corporate world without going against the more traditional DPP China-skeptic support base.

“Our challenge is to produce something that is sensible to both sides without being considered as a traitor to the friends we used to

be with when we were an opposition party,” Tsai said in the article, 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 labor-intensive 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

its cover.

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”?

The idea behind Impact Journalism Day is to show that the media also fulfill their role by reporting on inspiring solutions to the world’s problems.

The alliance of 45 newspapers, united by Sparknews, presents a different vision of journalism: problems AND solutions can make the news together. This view, along with the conviction that quality, solutions-based news is something readers aspire to

have more of, is part of a growing movement in the press to feature stories of hope and change.

Impact Journalism Day is just the beginning. Each edition has seen a steady increase in the number of newspapers and newsrooms onboard, excited to show their commitment to solutions-based reporting. Some journalists were initially concerned this content might be naive or simplistic, but are now eager to participate and uphold

this philosophy in their day-to-day 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

a difference. Last year’s articles 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,

share the articles you like on the 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

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

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What goes around, comes around

A team comprising American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) officials and staff participates in a dragon boat racing competition in Taipei yesterday 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

ATHENS, AFP

Greece on Friday insisted a last-ditch 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 Yanis 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 withdrawn from Greek banks on Thursday, following another 1.6 billion euros over the two previous days, financial website euro2day 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 upfront 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,” Tsipras 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.

EDITORIAL

Youth need more support to overcome weight obsession

According 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 children eat.

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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Teen behavior a call for reflection



DANIEL J. BAUER

has particularly affected those of us 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 beneficial route in the end? There has also been debate about keeping 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 scenario.

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.

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 shore.

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 creature.

I am not comparing homeless human beings in Ximen with reptiles that live in swamps and Michi-

NATO Chicago summit places political policies in the spotlight



ARTHUR I. CYR

"The military-industrial complex" was the theme of Dwight D. Eisenhower's farewell address as he completed two terms in the White House, sustaining remarkably strong public support throughout that tenure. At the time, the speech was largely ignored by reporters and professors, who generally underestimated 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 useful to business of the largest arms merchant in the world — the United States.

Chicago is heavily involved with

defense industries. Boeing and General Dynamics are the most 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 technology.

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 conflicts.

Gates savaged defense industry inefficiency and profiteering. In direct manner, the former head of the CIA and Texas A&M University

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 of life.

Arthur I. Cyr is Clausen Distinguished Professor at Carthage College in Wisconsin and author of "After the Cold War." He can be reached at acyr@carthage.edu

The Chinese search for money leaves too many ‘monks holding umbrellas’

By DAVID KAN TING
Special to The China Post

Of Mao Zedong's many pithy quotes, one impresses me the most: "I'm a monk holding an umbrella" (我是和尚打伞). 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 (趙辦)." 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 half a century later, the wounds inflicted by Mao have barely been

healed, because Mao's legacy of lawlessness and reign of terror have 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 cruelty 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 February when his tuggish hitman, Chongqing police chief Wang Lijun, fled to an American con-

sulate seeking protection, with damning information of corruption and murder involving Bo and his wife. That started Bo's unraveling.

To add salt to Beijing's embarrassment, 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 property.

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 umbrella away.

gan water. I am saying that there dwells within each of us a person capable of true human compassion, and a person as well who can be cruel and unfeeling beyond description.

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 around us.

What those boys did was despicable, and they should make restitution. The cliché 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

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 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 help us.

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 about us.

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

JPMorgan takes big gamble with change to firm’s risk model

By DAVID HENRY
Reuters

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 executives.

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 to make risky bets. The rest of the bank's divisions apparently kept to more conservative modeling.

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 prior quarter.

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 or more.

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 for the SEC and FBI declined to comment.

"It is logical to expect that the SEC will look at this issue" of the disclosures, as well as why and how the new model

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 firm.

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 models.

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 procedure."

That explanation, "does not pass the smell test," said Mike Mayo, analyst at investment firm CLSA. "It is a red flag for 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 said.

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 managers, 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 investors.

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 identified.

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 bank.

"I have yet to hear an answer that makes a lot of sense," he said. The lack of transparency makes him wonder: "What else is falling through the cracks?"



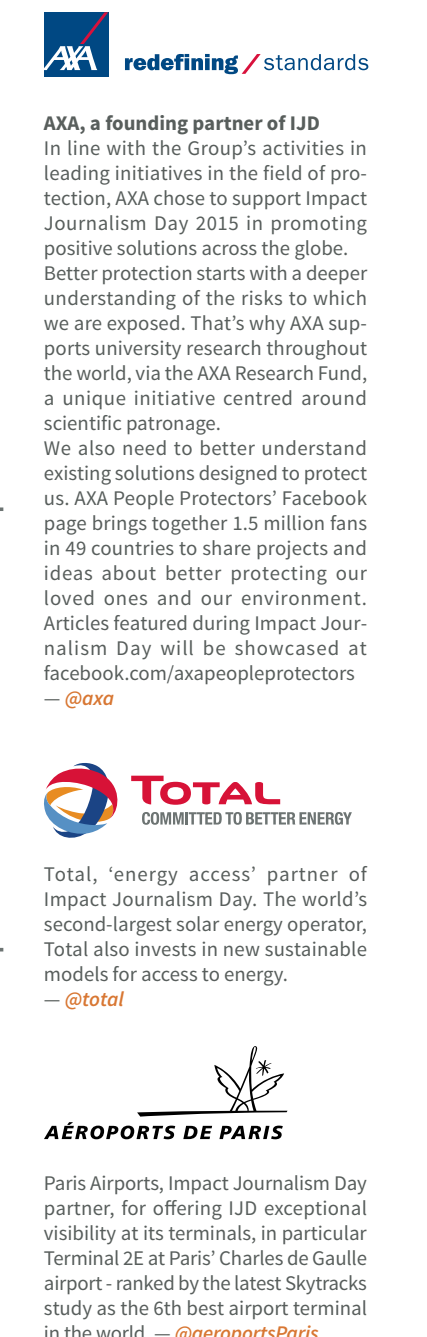
CHI-HAO JAMES LO
The China Post

A group of about ten children of various ethnicities are sitting on a green lawn. They are holding a large white sign that features a black bear logo on the left. To the right of the logo, the text 'TEACH FOR TAIWAN' is written in red and green capital letters. Below this, the Chinese phrase '為台灣而教' (For Teaching Taiwan) is written in black. The children are smiling and some are making peace signs.

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.

For more information: <http://www.teach4taiwan.org/>



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 excellent 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 there.

"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."

‘Everyone seeks his donkey’: Farming autonomy



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

By ABDOULAYE TAO
L'Economiste du Faso

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 zero-interest 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 as the official headquarters of the “Everyone seeks his donkey” association, there is a water fountain. Here people get into line in order

of arrival to fill their tin cans or their barrel. In the ranks, there are two donkeys pulling a cart with tens of cans.

With one trip, Fatimata Ouedraogo'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 community to receive a donkey. He still remembers it: “I got my donkey four years ago and Laure Berthon (in charge of administration and relations with Burkina Faso) was there. I was the very first 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, beneficiary of the program and a painter in his spare time. “The farmers always pay back their allocation, but there can be delays, especially 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 and 22 plows have already been distributed. For the beneficiaries, empowerment is in process.

Aiming to prevent land conflict with village maps

By ERWIN EDHI PRASETYO
Kompas

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 there are the threat of land conflicts between member of communities, between villages, and threats from the outside, the entry of the palm oil companies to Lela. We are concerned about these threats” said Iskandar, a member of the Lela Village Mapping Team in Sebagu Village, Sambas.

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.

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 well as concerns of the threat of land claiming by the palm oil company that wanted to enter the village that 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,

“said Lina Lumbanraja, Coordinator of Economic Development Project 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 turned the coordinates into an image map. “Some were tasked to operate the GPS, the others were in charge to record the GPS data,” he said.

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 border. “Based on GPS data, we drew the map on millimeters block paper and then copied it onto the tracing paper,” said Iskandar.

Lela's region map was drawn simply on a sheet of tracing paper. Villagers drew it by hand, no computerization. Although the finished

the village maps, there was one important hurdle, that is the boundaries have not been approved by the neighboring villages, like Sungai Kumpai, Puringan, Pedada, and Berlimbang in Teluk Keramat sub-districts and Jawai sub-district. “Although there is yet approval from neighbouring villages, but now there's almost no land conflict. They know we have the village map,” he said.

Learning from the Lela village experience, Tri Mandayan communities followed suit in creating their village map. 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 to climb the tree several times to ensure GPS get a strong signal, to ensure the accuracy of the data.” For 18 days we collected the data from the GPS,” he said. Learning from the weakness of Lela village, Tri Mandayan

village formed negotiating team. The task of negotiation team was 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 Keramat Sub-District. “We are hampered 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



Villagers gather to assist the GPS mapping project.

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 Safrudin, villager and also member of Sebagu Village Mapping Team.

Luwrain: an operating system for the blind

By THOMAS GRAS
Le Courier de Russie

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

one to work in an environment originally designed to be operated 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 a 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 people.

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 black-background 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

works, which is not the case for other interfaces that may seem 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 mini-computer, which sells for around 30 euros (US\$33.93).

However, Mikhail does not hide 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 finding this job, the young man



Mikhail Pozhidaev, 32, on the territory of Tomsk special economic zone.

had spent three years contacting various Russian government and private organizations, as well as foreign ones, receiving refusal after refusal. “Nobody wanted to believe I 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.

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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 organization's strategy.

The organization's successful interventions include a youth leadership program that builds leaders around schools through motivational talks and mentoring; another helps people to make



At the computer lab in Langa 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 technological skills to help them get onto the information highway. The prison rehabilitation program, also called the Group for Hope, offers HIV/AIDS education as well as coding tutorials for prisoners.

Managing director McCourt Scott says of their future plans: “We hope to scale our model to other impoverished communities around the Western Cape and then nationally. We plan to do the same in correctional facilities.”

Unsurprisingly the organization's biggest challenge is capacity 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 ex-offenders who are trying to access our free coding training program in Langa.”

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 Sparknews

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 Cateura-which 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-

fill for recyclables.

“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 the like.

The Orquesta became an international phenomenon after a

group of filmmakers took interest 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 low-slung 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 we want is to teach a different way of being, to instill in them different

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 repertoire 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.

“In 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 of the kids didn’t have passports



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

Juanjo Villa

or even birth certificates. “The rehearsals, 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 deaf to the cacophony of hammering, 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.”

Cobone, who’s visited some 15 countries with the Orquesta, is also

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 contained calcium carbide and cast-away wooden beams.



Bamyian Media

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

Big ideas on the small screen help social enterprises succeed in Egypt

■ Reality show teaches Egyptians to start their own businesses

By RACHEL WILLIAMSON Sparknews

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 off.

Anna Elliot, 30, was an American college student volunteering in Afghanistan in the late 2000s when the seeds were sown for her social startup, Bamyian 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 the nation.

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 you have?”

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 Bamyian Media, a social enterprise that partners with local production houses to make reality TV shows designed for impact.

Bamyian 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 entrepreneurial activity following the 2011 revolution.

“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 anymore,” 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 last year.

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 Taqa 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.

Other runners-up are also making entrepreneurial waves. Omneya El-Kady began as a contestant with nothing but a dream. Now, with seed funding from

Bamyian Media, she is designing recycling technologies focusing on agricultural waste and biogas, and is in contact with the Kenyan government to sell her green-waste machines.

Bamyian’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 people.

The year before the show hit TV screens, Bamyian 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 advice.”

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 they are full of ideas, from taking El Mashrou3 to other countries to developing new shows. Next up: The Real Maids of Cairo.

Frenchman describes journey to self-sufficiency

■ In a boat built out of jute and flax, a young Frenchman plans a round-the-world trip in search of low-tech innovation and self sufficiency

By ROSALIE HUGHES Sparknews

One day in June 2013, 30-year-old Corentin de Chatelperron chased 20 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 idea-sharing 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 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 together.”

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 sea.

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 can adapt. From then on, the sea nomads will use the pressure-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 self-sufficient, 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 col-



Gold of Bengal

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, chickens and his personal use.
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.

Another issue is buy-in. How will the organization convince the

world’s poorest that it is in their interest to participate? These are people who generally develop low-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 end of the journey, I believe we’ll have it figured out.”

Bagging the energy of the sun in South Africa

By REABESTWE MASHIGO
City Press (South Africa)

Reabetswe Ngwane and business partner Thato Kgathanye personify the buzzphrase social entrepreneurship. The pair have found an innovative solution to one of society's most pressing problems — affordable energy in economically depressed communities without reliable access to electricity. They have designed schoolbags, through their company Rethaka, that do more than carry books — they help children read them too.

Rethaka recycles plastic bags — easy to come by across the South African landscape — turning them into school bags which have built in solar power packs. These packs are charged all day in the sunlight while the children are at school, and are fully charged when the sun goes down providing much need light for doing homework — or walking home safely.

This clever and simply solution to a persistent problem was borne out of a school assignment. Thato Kgathanye came up with the idea and unsurprisingly the young

woman was named first runner 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, Kgathanye 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 community. This all with the help of her

business partner Ngwane, who 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 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 stitching and delivery of the Repur-

pose Schoolbags," said Ngwane.

The ground-breaking pair's creative juices keep flowing and they have now developed a range of luxury clutch bags using the 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."

Rethaka employee Maphefo

Maithufi is also a consumer of the product she helps to manufacture. 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 bag, and is able to use the solar light at night to study and finish her homework, which also helps

us save money on buying more candles".

In South Africa where the country'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 to conserve energy — after all sunlight is free and clean — the buzzwords of the future of energy globally.

Electricity thanks to a merry-go-round

By SABINE HERVY
AND OLIVIER GASSELIN
L'Actu — Mon Quotidien

Generating electricity through play. That's the simple but inspired idea of an American humanitarian organization: Empower Playgrounds, which specializes in electricity-generating 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. This has the further advantage of 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,



Empower Playgrounds Inc./Crys Kevan Lee

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 organization is also launching another project, setting up a small factory producing 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 mobile phones. The battery lasts a month and costs approximately 1.30 euros (US\$1.47) to recharge. This money pays for maintenance

of the solar energy plant.

This invention looks set to have a bright future. It's estimated that throughout the world, around 600 million people do not have the means of lighting their homes, with Africa the continent worst affected.

Environmentalism 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
Le Figaro

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 pots and even funeral urns. However, it isn't suitable for all applications. Unlike Alglobend, 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, 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 cereals or sugar cane) and 1,200 euros for plastic. Finally, it is environmentally friendly. Seaweed does not 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 oxygen, which is vital to the growth of

plankton. Once they reach the end 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-activities and InnovaBio 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. These promising results mean that Algopack now plans to license its process to local manufacturers.

Lucas nonetheless remains cautious. "We chose to secure the resource before signing any con-

tracts, rather than risk not being 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 in investment.

Although oil companies around the world are also showing an interest 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 oceans.

■ Solar panels on our roofs will soon be a thing of the past, says Markus Weingartner. That's why the part-time inventor builds solar furniture.

By CHRISTIAN ZERCHER
Tages-Anzeiger (Switzerland)
Niederglatt

The table in the garden of a family home in Niederglatt, not far from Zurich, looks like many a garden table — simple design, chromium steel, matt finish. But there's a difference: 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 panels. "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 consumption or to power an e-bike for 70 kilometers every day.

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," Weingartner 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 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 large-scale installations and cost-efficient solar parks."

Weingartner, who also builds solar 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-



Tages-Anzeiger

(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 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-and-demand basis."

This leaves the furniture and 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." So, is the willingness to invest in

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 products.

"It takes time to market new ideas and inventions," he says, because 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 a furniture maker. "In future, we will also offer a do-it-yourself solar table."

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/>

Bringing water to the world by transmutation

By CLAUDIA VILLANUEVA
Excelsior (Mexico)

Water scarcity continues to in-crease around the world. Accord- ing 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 De- cade 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

high water stress by 2030, includ- ing between 75 million and 250 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 Politcnico 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, Chile, Peru and, of course Mexico;

which began to experiment with the new product to ease water shortages for agriculture. In 2012 Rico Velasco was nominated for the World Water Prize.

The magic of “solid rain,” a com- pound based on potassium acry- late, 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 ultra- absorbent potassium polyacrylate which Rico Velasco and other sci- entists call “water silos.”

So as an alternative to reduc- ing water resources, this product stores rainwater and has the

advantage that it can be kept any- where, even in burlap sacks be- cause the rain water molecules ad- here to the potassium polyacrylate, which allows the gelatinization of the rain in the agricultural fields.

Rejuvenation

How does it work? Solid Rain encapsulates and disperses water during its lifetime, ranging from 8 to 10 years, it helps to aerate the soil, and permits agriculture in extreme climates and places with poor soil conditions.

The ideal usage proportion is 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 around one thousand dollars.

Rico Velasco explained that this

technology can be used in all kind of soil substrates and with all kind of plants because it produces no chemical reactions with pesticides nor fertilizers because “it’s just water” and it does not generate pollution.

The Solid Rain can regularly provide enough water to plants over a period of ten years maxi- mum, while avoiding water stress and evaporation. Moreover, the solid rain particles can be rehy- drated with each agricultural cycle.

How is it used? Farmers need to take a spoon and mix 20 grams of Solid Rain with one liter of water, then mix it into the soil. Then plant theirs seeds and mix it in with the soil of other plants (www.solid- rain.com).

According to Solid Rain Corpo- ration from San Diego, California,



The miracle of solid rain: The start and result of the process of transmuting water storage in “powder” form is seen.

the product is capable of saving between 50 to 80 per cent of wa- ter, depending on the climate and soil conditions and from 30 to 50 percent of water usage in green- houses.



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

Clean energy goes down the toilet, literally

By A. TARIEL
L’Actu - Mon Quotidien

Who would have thought that poo could be a source of clean en-ergy?

In the United Kingdom, there is a bus running between the city of Bath and Bristol Airport that op-erates on a very special type of bio- gas. Fuel is made from the excre- ment 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-ergy? As the poo decomposes, it produces methane gas. This is then mixed with another gas called pro- pane. Together, they create a fuel

on which you can run an engine.

Amazingly, the waste produced 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 than petrol, because it releases very 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 Bio Bus, or ‘Poo Bus’ as it has been nicknamed, doesn’t give off any nasty odors!

“It improves the quality of the air and above all, it operates be-

cause of people who live in the 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 pic- tures 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, from January onwards, the city is the designated European Green

Capital for 2015.

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 Nor- wegian capital Oslo has started running around 100 buses operat- ing on human waste. Other cities are also starting to think about us- ing excrement and other waste as fuel for public transport, and that’s not all: it could even be used in fu- ture to heat homes.

This new source of recycled en-ergy no doubt has a bright future. After all, it’s cheap and we have an endless supply!

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 mar-ried off when she was only 13. After just 13 months of marriage, her hus- band divorced her because her fam- ily 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 mar-riage in the area, and put a stop to the oppression of women. Her far- sightedness 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 vil- lage. Mahbubul Islam, a school- teacher of the village, says, “It is through Arjina’s hard work that today the girls of the village are well aware about health and edu- cation. They are treated well and respected in their in-laws’ homes.”

Arjina is at home, attending a meeting with her association mem- bers. 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 mar-ried off. I will never be able to for- get 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 as- sociation 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 differ- ent 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 the women and their families.

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 chick- ens. Now they gradually all owned goats too. Poverty began to fade.

On February 10, 2006 Prothom Alo published a feature on Arjina. Upon reading about her, the non- government organisation (NGO) CARE came forward. They trained the women in household vegetable gardening and indoor mushroom cultivation.

Next the NGO Brac come for- ward 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 as- sociations, Arjina forges ahead in her fight against child marriage, dowry, unjust divorce and the op- pression of women. So far they have prevented 21 child marriag- es. 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 tin- roofed semi-brick house. In her yard she has planted mango, jack- fruit and papaya trees.

Housewife Asma Khatun, a member of the association, says she was married off when she was just 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.

Seeking sanitation for the world’s poorest

■ 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
24 Heures and La Tribunes de Geneve (Switzerland)

“Today, 6 billion people worldwide own a mobile phone, but only 4.5 billion have decent toilets.” Kristele Malegue, coor- dinator 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 with- out 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 E00S have designed a new kind of latrine, “Blue Diversion,” as part of the “Reinvent The Toilet Challenge (RTTC)” set by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foun- dation. “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 sim- ply don’t exist, and there is of- ten 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- ferent type of toilet, without the need for hefty infrastructures, at the same time as offering spot-

less hygiene.”

‘Elimination of pathogens and save water’

To look at, Blue Diversion re- sembles 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 fa- cilitate the elimination of pathogens and save water,” explains Christoph Luthi. Through a nitrification pro- cess, the urine is converted into fer- tilizer in situ. However, what makes it radically different is the integrat- ed independent water circuit. “We have fitted our toilets with a shower head to clean the pan and also en- sure anal hygiene, as practiced in a great number of countries, as well as a sink to wash the hands,” con- tinues Christoph Luthi. “Whenever the water flows, a valve automati- cally shuts off the urine and feces tanks. This enables almost all of the liquid to be recuperated.”

Subjected to internal biologi- cal 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 pat- ented system is capable of treating 1.5 litres per hour, which is per- fectly adequate because the appli- ance 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 Lu- thi. “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 appli- ance was very well received by peo- ple during the trials in Kampala,” continues Christoph Luthi. “This first trial also allowed us to iden- tify certain defects. We have since reduced the height of the toilet and improved the system’s hydraulics.” A new prototype is currently be- ing tested in Nairobi, Kenya. Blue Diversion was awarded the 2014 Prize for Innovation by the Interna- tional Water Association (IWA).

“We are now looking for indus- trial partners and investors so that we can produce the units in greater quantities,” continues Christoph Lu- thi. “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 sell- ing 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 popula- tion is forced to defecate in the open, and even in Europe 20 mil- lion people are still without quality facilities,” points out Kristele Male- gue. “One appliance won’t address everyone’s problems. Different ap- proaches 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 Lu- thi, “but we can also see our toilets

being useful elsewhere, particularly in mountain huts and remote vil- lages, which will never be connected to the waste water sanitation net- work. What’s more, some countries are also interested in the water purification system we have de- veloped, without the toilets, because it produces drinking water.”

Meanwhile, the researchers are currently looking into what can be done with the feces. “At the mo- ment, our system only converts the urine into fertilizer. The ac- tual stools have to be disposed of, which poses a problem due to the pathogens they contain,” explains Christoph Luthi. “We are work- ing on a system to burn this solid residue which, I hope, will be op- erational by the end of 2015.”

