



FOCALPoint

Canada's Spotlight on the Americas

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Promoting Democracy in the Americas

Edited by Thomas Legler (FOCAL fellow), Sharon F. Lean, and Dexter S. Boniface. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.

Governing the Americas: Assessing Multilateral Institutions

Edited by Gordon Mace, Jean-Philippe Thérien, and Paul Haslam (FOCAL fellow). Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress North America, and the Corporate Agenda

Edited by Ricardo Grin-spun and Yasmine Shamsie (FOCAL fellow). McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.

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Canadian Exports to South America are Booming

Stephen Poloz

Canada's exports have been stuck in low gear for some time, and the strong dollar and U.S. slowdown point to more weakness ahead. Yet our exports to South America are booming.

It has only been seven years since much of South America was in the throes of financial crisis. For Argentina, which avoided devaluation back in 1999 only to succumb three years later, the recovery is even more recent.

It is heartening, then, to see these big and diverse economies pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. The region saw average economic growth of 6.1 percent in 2006, and this is forecast to slip only slightly to 5.3 percent in 2007. Government books are in their best shape in years, foreign investors are willingly putting their money into the economies, and the region's currencies have generally been strong, at least until very recently. This is making importing easier, which is very important for economies that need high levels of investment to pave the way for future growth.

Indeed, a common characteristic in the region is a shortfall in infrastructure as economic growth puts a strain on various parts of the system. With fiscal finances now under much better control, many governments are actively engaged in infrastructure investment, whether in energy, transportation or telecommunications.

All of this is positive for Canadian exporters, who have long had a presence in the region. Canada's exports to South America are up 29 percent in the first six months of 2007, compared to the same period last year. This compares with only five percent for Canada's global exports, calculated in the same way, and this overall growth is mostly due to higher prices for oil, metals, minerals and fertilizers. The actual volume of export shipments is expected to rise by only one percent in 2007.

Some of this spectacular growth in sales to South America is also attributable to

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Corporate Social Responsibility

When incentives meet the task: applying the investment model of flow-through shares to Corporate Social Responsibility and indigenous governance.

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Colombia

Paramilitary-like groups continue to threaten civilians in Colombia. One grave concern is the "social cleansing" directed at street children and other young people.

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Haiti

Taking the next step: violence in Haiti is finally on the decline. The challenge now is to address mediocre socio-economic conditions and employment opportunities.

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Bolivia

Indigenous governance in the Americas has made significant strides recently, especially in Bolivia, where new laws protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their land.

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Note from the Editor

As the new editor-in-chief of FOCALPoint, I am very pleased to launch this month's issue with a new layout and a range of topics and languages. This month we have articles on diverse issues such as Canadian exports to South America, indigenous governance in Bolivia, and paramilitary violence in Colombia. As we strive to be a "spotlight" on the Americas, the editorial team at FOCALPoint is constantly working to increase public awareness of key events occurring in the region. We are in a unique position to bring in writers, academics, members of the private sector, policymakers, and politicians from all over the Americas to contribute their views, and it is our goal to present analysis and information not usually found in the Canadian media. With that in mind, we will be launching several thematic editions in the upcoming months, including issues on gender, natural resources Afro-Latino issues, and education. I look forward to the next year of FOCALPoint as an opportunity to increase Canadian awareness of issues in the Americas and to expand the arena in which diverse voices from throughout the region can be heard.

Rachel Schmidt

Write for FOCALPoint

Articles between 700-1000 words in English, French or Spanish are welcome. All submissions are on a volunteer basis and must be exclusive to FOCALPoint. For full submission guidelines, please contact rschmidt@focal.ca or visit www.focal.ca.

FOCALPoint is also launching a "Letters to the Editor" section. Please send your comments and/or questions (in English, French or Spanish) to rschmidt@focal.ca. Note that letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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South American Exports (continued from page 1)

high prices for commodities, but much of it is real. The gains in merchandise exports have been mostly in machinery and equipment, building materials, consumer goods and food products. Canada's exports are up 15 percent in Brazil, 71 percent in Chile, 23 percent in Venezuela, 33 percent in Colombia, one percent in Peru, 74 percent in Ecuador and 53 percent in Argentina — listed in order of export market size.

Although South America represents about five percent of the global economy (Canada constitutes only 1.8 percent), less than one percent of Canada's annual exports are destined there. This is still about \$3.5 billion in sales per year (closer to \$5 billion including services), which is not small. Nonetheless, the figures suggest — and our experience under the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement, now 10 years of age, demonstrates — that there is plenty of room for future growth in Canadian trade in the region.

But what comes next, especially in light of the turmoil that has been rocking global financial markets in recent weeks? The effects of the U.S. sub-prime mortgage turmoil have spilled over into Latin America, leading to widespread declines in equity prices and exchange rates and a significant widening of sovereign bond spreads against U.S. Treasuries. Should this shock begin to have significant economic consequences for South America, including falling commodity prices, it could quickly cast a shadow over Canada's export flows into the region.

Certainly, the experience of the late 1990s would add weight to this concern. At that time, as the Asian financial crisis spread to Russia and then to Latin America, financial turmoil interacted with high debt levels and unsustainable exchange rates to produce the financial equivalent of tectonic shifts, the consequences of which took years to overcome.

This time, however, looks different. South America's fundamentals are much healthier than they were in the mid-1990s, with better monetary policies and better fiscal policies in place. In addition, the strong commodity and bond markets of 2005-2006 have allowed a number of well-performing markets to begin to increase their reserves, buy back their external bonds, and then to rely much more on their domestic capital markets for financing. Some, including Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay, have even floated global bonds denominated in their own domestic currencies.


The result is that the biggest debt-or risk that prevailed 10 to 15 years ago — that the local currency would depreciate, inflating the debt service costs on a U.S. dollar-denominated loan or bond — has been transferred to the creditor, thereby making the system much more resilient to financial shocks.

In addition, rather than seeing the recent financial turbulence as potentially causing slower economic growth, a better interpretation would be to see the turbulence as a symptom of a generalized moderation in global growth that is already

underway and already built into EDC's economic forecast for 2008.

On this analysis, EDC is forecasting that growth in South America will ease to about 4.5 percent in 2008, which is still a healthy pace. This will mean that Canadian companies should continue to see favorable market conditions in this opportunity-rich region. International risks are being recalibrated, to be sure, and risk premia will probably rise further, but that should not prove to be a significant impediment to increased trade flows.

The bottom line? Conditions in

South America are as good as they have been for a long time, which is boosting Canadian trade. That makes this a particularly good time to invest in deepening our trading relationships in the region. 

Stephen S. Poloz is the Senior Vice-President, Corporate Affairs and Chief Economist at Export Development Canada. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Export Development Canada.

Flow-Through Shares and Corporate Incentives: Funding Patience in Consultations

Jean Pierre Chabot

The resource sector in Canada is often held in high regard as an engine for economic growth and a source of government revenues. It directly benefits a range of programs, from upgrades in infrastructure at the level of municipalities to the financing of pension plans.

Likewise, at the international level, the World Bank, along with the network of United Nations and other aid agencies, are making moves to position the resource industry as an avenue for forwarding development objectives. Focusing on the industry's potential as a driving force for economic growth, governance and transparency initiatives will do this. Following this wave, Canada is ideally situated to frame its resource sector around the debate on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The recent roundtables on CSR,

which were held throughout Canada in 2006, resulted in a report that identified the importance of tools and incentives in contributing to CSR frameworks. The report pointed out that constraints on resources and time are contributing factors to the inability of some firms to properly implement CSR initiatives.

The ability of CSR to become widely accepted, as a voluntary and yet beneficial initiative, rests upon the proper alignment of both internal and external incentives, in support of an efficient flow between the interests of shareholders and those of other stakeholders. Balancing the interests of where money is spent and how results are addressed takes time and extensive consultations. CSR could improve greatly if incentives were aligned with the deepening of consultation processes. If this happened, CSR could become a boulevard for attracting growth in-

dustries and an indirect catalyst for development assistance.

In other words, CSR should be developed as an organic fertilizer and not as a chemical pesticide.

CSR Abroad and the ILO Convention 169

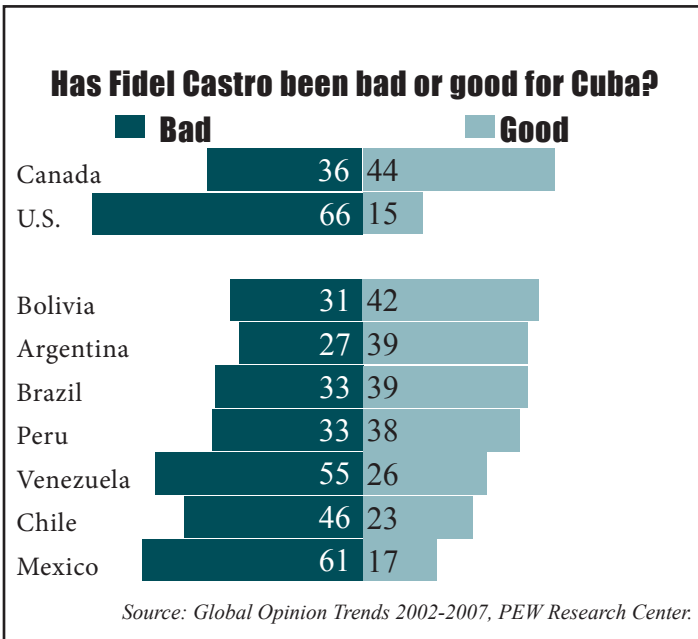
Development aid can and should be applied in part by using private sector methodologies. The most efficient way of creating results in development assistance is not always through the creation of new institutions. Results such as greater productivity or market access, which are crucial for economic growth and could do wonders for a nation, rarely come about by creating something new, but rather by adjusting something old.

For example, when it comes to improving relations between local indigenous communities and mining companies in Latin America, development goals would be well served by creating the conditions whereby companies can afford to take the time to consult and build consensus around a proposed project.

See Flow-Through Shares, page 4

Mixed Views about Castro?

A 47-nation global attitudes survey released by the PEW Research Center in July indicates that more Canadians believe that Castro has been good for Cuba than any other country. Overall, the American public gave the highest criticism of Castro's regime, while in Latin America, Venezuelans and Mexicans were most outspoken against the Cuban leader.



Landmines in Colombia

On July 25, 2007, the independent international NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW), released a report on landmines in Colombia that exposed yet another brutal aspect of the country's ongoing conflict. Colombia has one of the highest annual reported landmine casualty rates in the world, and figures have increased steadily over the last few years.

The report indicates that the biggest users of antipersonnel landmines in Colombia, as well as other indiscriminate weapons such as gas cylinder bombs, are Colombia's two largest guerrilla groups: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN).

In an attempt to justify their continued use, the FARC have asserted that landmines are the "weapon of the poor," as they are manufactured from cheap, readily available materials. Although the majority of landmine casualties are military, the indiscriminate nature of this weapon leaves hundreds of civilians maimed, blind, deaf or dead, many of them children.

The Colombian government has banned the use of antipersonnel landmines under the terms of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, and its laws provide for medical, economic, and other benefits for landmine survivors, yet the HRW report reveals the limitations in implementing them. Several recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of victim assistance are also outlined in the report.

Flow-Through Shares (continued from page 4)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169 outlines that indigenous peoples have the right to be adequately consulted. It seems that finding a way to financially motivate companies to go the extra mile in consulting local communities could do miracles for making the resource sector into a catalyst for achieving a number of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The management group of Rio Tinto, which is a mining multinational with its headquarters in the United Kingdom, has taken a rather unique approach to engaging indigenous and *campesino* (farming) communities in Peru. The approach involves heavy investments in cre-

ating conditions (both social and economic) at the local levels that have long-term benefits for both the communities and the company. The community benefits from real returns on Rio Tinto's presence in the area. The way Rio Tinto approaches environmental issues also builds trust with community members. In return, Rio Tinto gains the social license to operate in the area.

How is it that more companies do not take a similar approach? Are CSR initiatives inherently flawed, or is the context of operating in developing nations too uncertain to guarantee a return on corporate philanthropy?

Flow-Through Shares: the Benefits Surpass the Costs

The issuing of flow-through shares

(FTS) is an example where incentives are being used to encourage an otherwise risky undertaking — that of mineral exploration. Flow-through shares are an investment model whereby the expenses of exploration companies can be transferred to investors as tax write-offs. The FTS model illustrates how tax incentives can be transferred to shareholders and investors of exploration companies as a return on investing in a business model characterized by high costs and immediate losses.


This model could be applied to CSR initiatives as a form of development assistance. In place of providing development dollars to create and support institutions that counter the negative impacts of private sector activities, tax incentives

could be promoted abroad in order to create the conditions needed for the private sector to get it right the first time, more of the time.

Canada already has an FTS model in place that provides an innovative way of lowering the break-even point of risky endeavours and increasing the chances of success. In the business of prospecting, future returns are a derivative of the persistence applied to exploration.

If changes were made to the tax treatment or regulation of mining companies' foreign activities to include expenses incurred in direct consultation with indigenous and *campesino* communities as eligible in the FTS model, then small exploration companies could become a more competitive and ethical force.

When the Incentives Meet the Task
Corporate Social Responsibility should not be left out in the cold to fend for itself. If we all had financial stability, then we might see increases in volunteerism; but unless the guarantees are properly in place, and as long as the risks remain high, CSR may remain in the books more often than not.

The modern state can tax, spend, and regulate – but these are not mutually exclusive activities. Companies understand better than anyone that the profit margin is the deciding factor. Why not issue tax breaks and start spending time on building development from a private sector perspective? 

Jean Pierre Chabot is a Project Coordinator at FOCAL and is currently working on the Indigenous Governance project. He can be contacted at jpchabot@focal.ca.

Disposable Youth: The “Social Cleansing” of Children in Colombia

Rachel Schmidt

In some Colombian neighbourhoods, the widely-publicized demobilization of the country's main paramilitary group, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), has meant very little. In fact, according to reports from the Organization of American States (OAS), Amnesty International, and several Colombian organizations, certain areas have experienced an increase of violence, especially against women and children, due to the reinsertion of former paramilitary combatants.

In Soacha, a large municipality on the southern outskirts of Bogotá, many people live in constant fear due to paramilitary curfews and gang violence. According to the 2005 Colombian census, Soacha has over 350,000 inhabitants and includes the extremely poor neighbourhood of Altos de Cazucá, where 20,000 internally displaced people make up approximately 40 percent of residents. Soacha, and especially Cazucá, also has large numbers of paramilitaries, gangs, and other criminal organizations.

Unlike the guerrillas who are

more concentrated in rural zones, paramilitary factions are generally strongest in urban areas. This has intensified as many rural ex-combatants have come to the cities through demobilization programs.

Children and adolescents in the cities are particularly affected by paramilitary violence, due to both recruitment into armed groups and the violent targeting of gang members, sex workers, drug addicts and homeless children. This killing of so-called “undesirables” has been labelled *limpieza social*, which literally translates as the euphemism “social cleaning” in reference to “cleaning up the streets,” but is usually referred to in English as “social cleansing.”

“They [the paramilitaries] distribute papers on what the curfew is and then go on missions of ‘social cleansing,’” said one young man living in a poor area outside of Bogotá. “But they confuse the thieves, gang members, and drug users with normal kids who have jobs, who study. If they stop a boy or young man and don't know him, they might kill him because they suspect him of being a

“Capital War” in Bolivia

In July 2007, more than one million people marched in La Paz, Bolivia to oppose a proposal to move the capital city from La Paz to Sucre. Five days later, tens of thousands of people gathered in Sucre to rally for the change. The switch would be highly beneficial for Sucre, a city of 250,000 residents that lacks a major airport and other key infrastructure. Proponents of the move believe that because Sucre is near the country's geographic centre, the city is better positioned to promote unity. Yet many Bolivians view the proposal as a scheme of the lowland provinces to take control of the country. Critics are concerned that changing capitals would cost billions of dollars and would only benefit the more affluent population in eastern Bolivia. The Bolivian judiciary is located in Sucre, but the larger legislative and executive branches of government are based in La Paz. The two cities have sustained a rivalry since 1898, when the administrative capital was moved from Sucre to La Paz.

thief, gang member, or in an enemy armed group.”

Several researchers and analysts interviewed for this piece noted that the paramilitaries in Soacha have formed into mafias that extort businesses and control the local population with curfews and even dress codes. Both the OAS and Amnesty International have reported that in some paramilitary-controlled areas, the paramilitaries exert strict forms of social control such as dictating that men cannot have pierced ears and women must have male partners to limit their independence.

While over 31,000 AUC combatants have gone through the government demobilization process, paramilitary actors continue to operate in many areas of Colombia. Some key AUC leaders such as Vicente Castaño have refused to demobilize and continue to control territory and fight against both guerrilla and government troops.

Because criminal networks were not dismantled as part of the demobilization process, some ex-combatants have simply regrouped into new armed factions. In a 2007 report on Colombia, the International Crisis Group notes that new paramilitary-like groups are springing up all over the country. In addition, the Colombian media have recently reported several stories on new paramilitary-like armed groups, including the Black Eagles, a group that is quickly achieving notoriety by evolving into a powerful and extremely violent armed organization.

This ongoing conflict has devastating consequences on the Colombian population as civilians are displaced from their homes and many become

victims of landmines, sexual assault, and other indiscriminate acts of violence. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) now estimates that over three million Colombians have been internally displaced, while hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled across the border into neighbouring Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama.

Displaced children face particular problems in the cities, as they can be seen as a drain on already limited resources. “Young people who have been displaced are stigmatized,” said one girl in a recent Constitutional Court hearing for displaced Colom-

One 16-year-old boy living in Soacha noted that many of his friends had become involved in gangs or paramilitary groups due to the status accorded to armed men. “Rich kids carry cell phones to feel important,” he said. “So poor kids carry knives.”

bian youth. “Everyone always thinks that they support the armed groups. The paramilitaries don’t let them go around in groups, nor do they allow free movement. They say: ‘good children go to bed early, we put the bad ones to bed.’”

In some neighbourhoods that are sick of gang violence and drug problems, this has become an accepted form of vigilante justice. “It’s a system of regulation,” said one young man in Soacha about the *limpieza social*. “It’s accepted. It’s a practice that has been naturalized, justified. Something that is normally prohibited [serial killings] has become accepted as a normal form of regulation.”

Because they are inundated with violence, weapons have also become a quick way for young people to acquire status. One 16-year-old boy living in

Soacha noted that many of his friends had become involved in gangs or paramilitary groups due to the status accorded to armed men. “Rich kids carry cell phones to feel important,” he said. “So poor kids carry knives.” Also, despite stereotypes, this attraction to weapons is not limited to boys. Another young man in Soacha said he was more afraid of girls in gangs than boys, and another girl in the same neighbourhood noted: “Girls want guns to have power over other girls — some girls are even crazier and more violent than the boys.” Girls and young women can also be attracted to the power that paramilitary men represent, due to the perception that women attached to paramilitaries have more money, better homes, and more protection than other females in the same neighbourhood.

Because unemployed, unoccupied adolescents are generally viewed with suspicion in poor, urban areas, groups of young people (and especially groups of males) are at constant risk of being targeted by vigilante groups and paramilitaries. If young men are hanging out on the street, for example, paramilitaries or police might assume they are in a gang and attack or arrest them, even if the boys are not involved in armed violence.

One young man described how he used to sneak home after the paramilitary curfew because he had a night job. At that time, the paramilitaries had distributed flyers saying that anyone found outside after 7 p.m. would be shot. As several of his friends had already been killed by vigilante groups, he lived in constant fear. “You can’t talk about this to anyone, because this is a zone where many people are

involved in the paramilitaries,” said one young man in Soacha. “It is difficult to know who is who, so you can’t talk to anyone or they might assassinate you.”

The girls in Soacha who were interviewed for this piece noted that while boys might be attacked for being gang members, girls who were out past curfew were assumed to be sex workers or, at the very least, highly promiscuous. Because being out at night would make them justifiable targets, many of these girls never left their homes after dusk, which usually occurs around 6 p.m.

One organization in Bogotá (whose name has been omitted from this article for security reasons) has recorded over 450 youth murders in the last two years in just two neighbourhoods (Ciudad Bolívar in Bogotá and Altos de Cazucá in Soacha) without any criminal investigation or prosecution. This organization has recorded that 80-85 percent of these victims were males, and over 90 percent were between 14-24 years old. At least 90 percent of the victims were killed with guns, almost always with a bullet to the head. This information is difficult to verify due to, at the very least, a tendency for law enforcement agencies to report these executions as “gang violence.” There is also a profound lack of accurate recording in morgues and the justice system.


“What do the paramilitaries do?” asked one researcher in Bogotá. “They create a market. They sell security, so when there are bands that rob, vandalize, the paramilitaries offer a solution to this. [The paramilitaries] need boys who steal, who consume drugs, who sell drugs and guns. They need them in order to sell the supposed solution... [People] are assassinated to sustain the idea that the zone is in-

secure. The people are accustomed to this — that people are killed because that person was up to no good.”

Also, those who have data on these murders do not feel that they can report their information to anyone. As one researcher noted: “We have studied this a lot, have documented a lot, but we can’t speak about it, we have never put it in a book, because it is too dangerous... Because we still have to work and live here.”

As a result, the paramilitaries have effectively established a monopoly on both violence and information. Those who have information cannot share it, for fear of being killed. Those who do not have information often do not

want it, for the same reason — they assume that the less they know the safer they will be.

The paramilitary movement is far from over in Colombia, but those most affected by the violence still have very few options to stop it. Many Colombian children continue to grow up learning that guns and violence are the easiest way to solve problems and earn respect. At this point, why should they believe otherwise? 

Rachel Schmidt is the Editor-in-Chief of FOCALPoint and Communications Director at FOCAL. This article is based on fieldwork completed in 2006 for her MA thesis, No Girls Allowed? Recruitment and Gender in Colombian Non-State Armed Groups.

Haiti: Taking the Next Step

Caroline Lavoie

If good news from Haiti is but a recent trend, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s visit to Port-au-Prince on August 1-2, 2007, nonetheless confirmed what Haitians and analysts alike have been saying for some time. The critical situation that followed Aristide’s departure and tropical storm Jeanne in 2004 has abated, and a level of calm now prevails that, according to the Secretary General and several other players, “must be appreciated” (*Le Matin*, 08/02/07).

In fact, during the last 15 months, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), jointly with the Haitian National

Police (HNP), has taken the upper hand against violence and managed to earn the trust of both citizens and politicians. According to the HNP, homicides dropped to 658 in 2006. This equals a rate of 7.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, comparable to that of Costa Rica at 7.2 per 100,000.

According to the HNP, homicides dropped to 658 in 2006. This equals a rate of 7.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, comparable to that of Costa Rica at 7.2 per 100,000.

Edmond Mulet, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative in Haiti and head of MINUSTAH until September, credits this success in part to the establishment of a permanent presence of MINUSTAH in Cité Soleil and to the series of arrests that were made thereafter. According to Mulet, these operations sent vital signals of intolerance towards violence and

enabled the restoration of calm in the Port-au-Prince slum which, due to gang-led violence, had given the entire country a bad name.

The regions outside of Port-au-Prince have also benefited from MINUSTAH's presence. For example, some 800 troops in the department of Artibonite have enabled this region to recover from the intense damage caused by Jeanne and to provide certain basic services such as health care and garbage collection. In addition, on May 25, in a combined effort with 450 policemen from the HNP, these forces arrested Tiwil, the most wanted gang leader in the department, as well as many of his associates in Gonaïves. According to Jean-Jacques Lhour, Commander of the United Nations Civilian Police Force (CIVPOL),

these arrests marked an important turning point in the security context of this region. MINUSTAH can now look towards improving port security and battling drug trafficking.

Ban Ki Moon's visit to Haiti underlined advances made in terms of security, but he also enjoined Haitians and the international community to initiate a turn towards "Phase Two." In requesting that the Secretary General renew MINUSTAH's mandate, Haitian President René Garcia Préval also urged him to "reinvent" MINUSTAH, making it into an instrument to assist in the reform of justice and the improvement of the country's basic infra-

structure.

These reforms are indeed necessary for the international peace and stability effort to take root and eventually become an endogenous process. This is currently impossible with a judicial system that releases prisoners due to its incapacity to hold all necessary trials. Furthermore, political stability is fragile as party discipline remains elusive among the 33 parties represented in parliament. The firing of the Minister of Culture on July 31 following

Education ranks high among the country's priorities. Approximately 500,000 school-aged children do not attend school, and families often spend up to 40 percent of their annual income on school fees. Businesses have difficulty finding skilled labour and continue to import managerial staff from the Dominican Republic or the Philippines.

a dubious censure vote exemplifies this precarious equilibrium. President Préval may well exert a style of governance largely based on consultation, but sparse infrastructure and resources, as well as the country's innumerable priorities, make the slightest negligence on his behalf quite dangerous.

The improvement of port, customs and road infrastructure also takes on particular importance in consolidating gains and creating an auspicious economic climate. Increased distribution of potable water and electricity – outside Port-au-Prince, electricity is only available 10 percent of the time – would

favour investment and job creation in addition to significantly changing the daily lives of Haitians.

However, moving the focus too far away from security could harm current gains. For one, the HNP is not yet capable of handling this weighty task on its own. Despite the ongoing training of new personnel, training academies are lacking, and the recent purge of 630 corrupt officers has temporarily increased the shortage. The Chief of the HNP, Mario Andresol, also notes that intermediate officers and good administrators are wanting within the police force, causing a recurrence of problems in spite of international aid.

Moreover, dire socio-economic conditions paired with insufficient port security, make it clear that MINUSTAH's

departure, or too marked a change in its role, would effectively give free reign to the return of organized crime, drug and child trafficking and illegal migration. It is therefore crucial that any change in orientation by the United Nations' Mission not create a vacuum with regard to security and social peace.

For this to happen, citizens must begin to reap tangible benefits from the international presence. The majority of Haitian players recognize that the times call for social appeasement. Does this entail trying to be everywhere at once? The task is certainly enormous, but the number and seriousness of the players in-

involved, in addition to the harmonious relations between Haitians and their bilateral and multilateral partners, make circumstances conducive to the respect of Haitian leadership and the coordination of efforts.

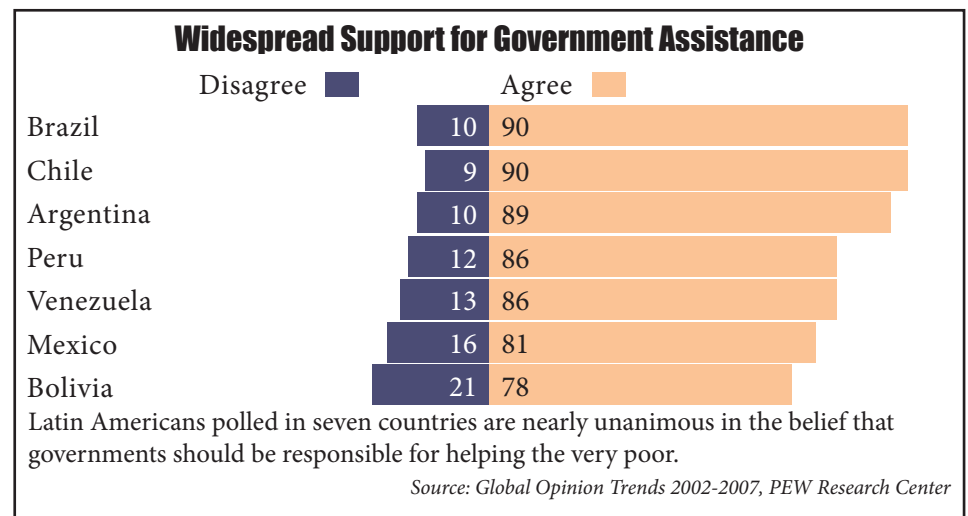
Education ranks high among the country's priorities. Approximately 500,000 school-aged children do not attend school, and families often spend up to 40 percent of their annual income on school fees. Businesses have difficulty finding skilled labour and continue to import managerial staff from the Dominican Republic or the Philippines. In this area, a process has been established between the Haitian business sector and civil society to join forces in order to improve access to and the quality of education. A key element in this process is maintaining the dialogue with the Haitian government in a context where the private sector already provides 80-90 percent of education services.

Although the work continues to be a long-term enterprise in all fields, in the new climate of peace,

the parties are now willing to invest the necessary energy and resources in order to prepare for the next phase and guarantee its success. What remains is to ensure the coordination of this engagement, to preserve recent successes, and to allow all sectors to benefit from continued efforts. In this endeavour, the change of leadership in MINUSTAH must not hinder the current climate of understanding, particularly between Latin American countries. To reprise the words of Edmond Mulet, this constitutes a "special moment" that has the potential to form the

basis of a positive outcome in Haitian history. 🌐

Caroline Lavoie was a coordinator for the Haiti Project at FOCAL until August 2007. The observations contained in this article, besides those citations taken from Le Matin, are based on interviews led by FOCAL and the Inter-American Dialogue during a visit to Haiti between July 29 and August 1, 2007. She can be contacted at caroline.lavoie@sciences-po.org.



Haïti: déjà la suite!

Caroline Lavoie

Si les bonnes nouvelles venant d'Haïti ne sont qu'une habitude récente, la visite du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies Ban Ki Moon à Port-au-Prince les 1^{er} et 2 août derniers a pourtant confirmé ce qu'Haïtiens comme analystes notaient depuis un moment déjà: la situation critique dans laquelle était plongée Haïti depuis le départ d'Aristide et la tempête tropicale Jeanne en 2004 a été prise en

main, et un niveau de calme règne maintenant qui, selon les dires du Secrétaire général et de plusieurs acteurs, est « à apprécier » (*Le Matin*, 2/8/07).

En effet, dans les quinze derniers mois, la Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti (MINUSTAH) de concert avec la Police Nationale d'Haïti (PNH) a pris le dessus sur la violence en plus de gagner la confiance des citoyens et de la classe politique. Selon la PNH, les homicides ont chuté à 658 en 2006. Ceci équivaut à un taux de 7,4 par 100 000 habitants, un taux comparable à celui du Costa Rica à 7,2 par 100 000 habitants. Edmond Mulet,

le Représentant spécial du Secrétaire général de l'ONU et le chef de la MINUSTAH jusqu'en septembre, attribue ce succès en partie à l'implantation de la MINUSTAH dans Cité Soleil suivant une période de va-et-vient et à la série d'arrestations qui y fut effectuée. Selon Mulet, ces manœuvres ont envoyé des signaux importants d'intolérance envers la violence et permis de restaurer le calme dans ce bidonville de Port-au-Prince qui, dû à la violence et la terreur menées par les gangs, faisait mauvaise réputation à Haïti toute entière.

Les régions bénéficient aussi de la présence de la MINUSTAH. Quel-

ques 800 effectifs dans le département de l'Artibonite ont permis à la région de se remettre du désastre causé par Jeanne et d'assurer la provision de soins de santé via une clinique et de certains services de base tels que la collection des déchets. Combinées à 450 policiers de la PNH, ces forces ont permis l'arrestation de Tiwil, le chef de gang le plus recherché de ce département, ainsi que de plusieurs de ses comparses, à Gonaïves le 25 mai dernier. Selon Jean-Jacques Lhour, commandant de la force de police civile des Nations Unies (CIVPOL), ces arrestations marquent un tournant important dans le contexte de sécurité de cette région. La MINUSTAH pourra désormais se tourner vers l'amélioration de la sécurité portuaire et la lutte contre le trafic de drogue.

La visite de Ban Ki Moon en Haïti a donc souligné les acquis en matière de sécurité, mais a aussi enjoint les Haïtiens et la communauté internationale à initier le virage vers «la suite». En demandant au Secrétaire général de renouveler le mandat de la MINUSTAH, le Président d'Haïti René Garcia Préval l'a aussi prié de « réinventer » la MINUSTAH pour en faire un instrument d'aide à la ré-

forme de la justice et à l'amélioration des structures de base.

Ces réformes sont effectivement nécessaires pour que l'effort international pour la paix et la stabilité puisse prendre racine et devenir un jour un processus endogène. Présentement, cela n'est pas possible avec un système judiciaire qui relâche certains prisonniers en raison de son incapacité à assurer la tenue de tous les procès nécessaires. Aussi, la stabilité politique demeure fragile. 33 partis politiques sont représentés au parlement que la discipline n'étouffe pas. Le renvoi du ministre de la Culture le 31 juillet dernier à la suite d'un vote de censure aux prémisses douteuses témoigne bien de cet équilibre précaire. Le Président Préval a beau exercer un style de gouvernance largement basé sur la consultation, le peu d'infrastructure et de ressources ainsi que les innombrables priorités rendent la moindre négligence de sa part dangereuse.

L'amélioration des infrastructures portuaire, douanière et routière revêt aussi une importance particulière dans la consolidation des gains et la création d'un climat économique propice. La distribution plus étendue

de l'eau potable et de l'électricité—en dehors de Port-au-Prince, l'électricité n'est disponible que 10 pour cent du temps—favoriserait l'investissement et la création d'emploi en plus de changer significativement la vie quotidienne des Haïtiens.

Cependant, trop délaissier l'aspect sécurité pourrait nuire aux acquis. D'une part la PNH n'est pour le moment pas en mesure d'assurer à elle seule la lourde tâche. Malgré la formation de nouveaux effectifs en cours, les écoles de formation manquent et la purge récente de 630 officiers corrompus augmente temporairement le manque à combler. Le Chef de la PNH Mario Andresol remarque aussi que les officiers intermédiaires et les bons administrateurs manquent au sein de la force de police, causant la récurrence des problèmes en dépit de l'aide internationale.

De plus, les piètres conditions socio-économiques jumelées à la sécurité portuaire insuffisante rendent évident qu'un départ ou un changement trop important du rôle de la MINUSTAH aurait pour effet de laisser la voie libre au retour du crime organisé, du trafic de drogues et d'enfants, et de la migration illé-

U.S. Assistance for Caribbean Deportees?

The United States government is quietly considering replicating a United Nations “deportee” reintegration project in Haiti to other countries in the Caribbean, according to testimony before the U.S. Congress in July by Charles S. Shapiro, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. State Department. This would signal a major shift in U.S. policy on the deportee issue and specifically on providing a wider array of support for countries receiving deportees. The one-year project funded by a United Nations grant to the International Organization for Migration provides counselling, vocational training, skills development and micro-credit lending services to help Haitian migrants and immigrants who have been deported from the U.S. and other countries to resettle into Haitian society. Since October 2006, the pilot program has served more than half (350 out of a total of 650) of the deportees registered in Haiti during that period. Shapiro has said that the IOM Haiti project is the “sort of thing” the United States is looking at doing in other CARICOM countries. If the IOM Haiti pilot program is used in the Caribbean, this would mark a significant increase in the level of support that the U.S. has provided to deportees in Central America. The U.S. deports close to 200,000 immigrants and migrants each year to their countries of origin, with 95 percent of this number being sent to Western Hemisphere countries. In 2006, more than half were repatriated to Mexico.


gale. Il est donc crucial qu'un changement d'orientation de la Mission des Nations Unies ne laisse pas de vide en matière de sécurité et de paix sociale.

Pour cela, les citoyens doivent commencer à recevoir des gains tangibles de la présence internationale. La majorité des acteurs haïtiens reconnaissent que l'heure est à l'apaisement social. Cela revient-il à tenter d'être partout à la fois? La tâche est en effet énorme, mais le nombre et le sérieux des joueurs impliqués en plus de la bonne entente qui règne entre Haïtiens et leurs partenaires bilatéraux et multilatéraux rendent la conjoncture favorable au respect du leadership haïtien et à la coordination des efforts.

L'éducation se classe parmi les priorités urgentes. En ce moment, environ 500 000 enfants d'âge scolaire ne fréquentent pas l'école et les familles dépensent bien souvent

jusqu'à 40 pour cent de leur revenu annuel en frais scolaires. Les entreprises ont peine à trouver de la main d'œuvre qualifiée et continuent d'importer des cadres de la République dominicaine ou des Philippines. À ce sujet, un processus est en cours entre le secteur privé des affaires et la société civile haïtienne pour agir conjointement dans l'amélioration de l'accès et de la qualité de l'éducation et maintenir le dialogue avec le gouvernement haïtien dans un contexte où le privé pourvoit déjà à 80-90 pour cent de l'éducation.

Donc malgré que le travail demeure de longue haleine dans toutes les sphères, le nouveau climat de paix fait en sorte que les parties sont prêtes à mettre dès maintenant l'énergie et les ressources nécessaires à la création de la suite. Reste à assurer la coordination de cet engagement pour que les récents succès soient préservés et que tous les sec-

teurs bénéficient des efforts à venir. Dans ce processus, le changement de leadership de la MINUSTAH ne doit pas nuire au climat de belle entente qui règne présentement, particulièrement entre les pays latino-américains. Pour reprendre les mots d'Edmond Mulet, ceci constitue un « moment spécial » qui a le potentiel de former la base d'un dénouement heureux dans l'histoire haïtienne. 

Caroline Lavoie fut Agente du projet d'Haïti à la FOCAL jusqu'en août 2007. Les observations contenues dans cet article autres que les citations prises dans Le Matin sont basées sur des entrevues réalisées par FOCAL et l'Inter-American Dialogue lors d'une visite en Haïti du 29 juillet au 1^{er} août derniers. Elle peut être rejointe à l'adresse suivante: caroline.lavoie@sciences-po.org

Striving for Equitable Development: Energy and Indigenous Governance in Bolivia

Omaira Mindiola

Indigenous governance in the Americas has made significant strides in the last two years, particularly in Bolivia. This progress is tied to political decisions made during historical struggles of the rural population and Indigenous Peoples for rights to own land and control the natural resources contained therein.

Hydrocarbons, the one natural resource around which Bolivia's future revolves, were nationalized for the third time on May 1, 2006 by way of Supreme Decree No. 28701, in compliance with the Bolivian people's mandate as expressed in a binding referendum held on July 18, 2004 (Art. 1). This piece of legislation

was preceded by Law No. 3058 of May 17, 2005, under which, by sovereign decree of the Bolivian people, the State reclaimed ownership of all hydrocarbon resources in Boca de Pozo (Art. 5). The affirmative response to referendum question number two articulated the participants' demand for equitable development that retained indigenous identity, based on the optimal exploitation of natural resources, particularly hydrocarbons.

According to the Centre for Applied Studies on Cultural, Social and Economic Rights, Bolivia's Title VII of Law No. 3058 is, to date, the most advanced Latin American decision with regard to indigenous rights and natural resources. This ruling covers the rights of the rural, indigenous and aboriginal populations and lays out the procedural framework for private company operations on indigenous land.

The implementation of this piece of legislation is tightly interwoven with two other Supreme Decrees. One is Decree No. 29033 from February 16, 2007, which regulates the consultation and participation processes for all hydrocarbon operations on land belonging to rural communities and Indigenous Peoples.

Based on the obligations incurred as signatory of the ILO Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, the government of Bolivia mandated under Decree No. 29033 that all private companies are obligated to undertake preliminary consultations with the communities when operating on their land (Art. 3). The consultation process must be carried out under the principles of respect, truthfulness, honesty, timeliness, participation and transparency. Likewise, guarantees, as well as prior and timely notification, must be provided (Art. 4).

The Ministry of Hydrocarbons and Energy, in coordination with the Land Management Department and the Department of Biodiversity, Forestry and the Environment, is responsible for the implementation of this process (Art. 5). For their

part, the Indigenous Peoples and the rural communities are guaranteed representation and respect for their decisions on the implementation of the hydrocarbon operation or project (Art. 6 and 7).

The second important ruling is Supreme Decree No. 29103 from April 23, 2007, which regulates socio-environmental monitoring of hydrocarbon operations on land owned by indigenous peoples and rural communities. This decree also invokes ILO Convention No. 169 (Art. 15) in order to maintain the Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in management and decision-

making processes affecting all existing natural resources in their land.

With the notarization of 44 hydrocarbon contracts in May, the partnership between the Bolivian State and 12 private companies became official, providing guarantees of legal security and compliance with Bolivian laws. This began the consolidation of the hydrocarbon nationalization process.

Most important is the introduction of fairer terms for the distribution of profits as, unlike previous contracts, the agreement provides

The new hydrocarbon policies would be unsustainable without a social pact among Bolivians ensuring the construction of a new and equitable society where diversity is recognized and Indigenous rights are respected.

for an 82 percent share going to Bolivian citizens while the remaining 18 percent is to be split up among private partners (*Actualidad Étnica*, Bolivia, 02/05/2007).

The new hydrocarbon policies would be unsustainable without a social pact among Bolivians ensuring the construction of a new and equitable society where diversity is recognized and Indigenous rights are respected. The social demands for inclusion and participation in the decision-making processes are interwoven with the demand for autonomous management of strategic natural resources. That is why,

under special legislation passed on March 6, 2006, the people created a Constituent Assembly with the objective to completely reform the Fundamental Law of Bolivia (Chap. II; Art. 4). It fell precisely upon Evo Morales Ayma, the first Indigenous President of Bolivia, to respond to that demand, which corresponds with his own initial aspirations as the leader of a political movement.

It should be noted that, according to Carlos Cuasase Curubí, this progress is the result of the mobilization and particularly, the active


participation of the Indigenous Peoples of the highlands and lowlands in the formulation and design of hydrocarbon proposals and legislation (*Actualidad Étnica*, Bolivia 22/05/2007).

The National Dialogue Council (NDC), created by the United Nations (UN) Country Team, stands out in the process of re-

formulating the mechanisms for dialogue within the context of intercultural relations. In that respect, Antonio Molpeceres, UN Resident Coordinator and UN Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, called Bolivia a pioneering nation for establishing a council with a mandate to realize the right of the Indigenous Peoples to play key roles in development processes (UNDP-Bolivia, 12/04/2007).

The NDC, which brings together the country's five largest rural, aboriginal and Indigenous organizations, has assisted the Constituent Assembly in a human rights advi-

sory capacity. It also helped increase Bolivian participation in the Sixth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, where the special theme was “Territories, Lands and Natural Resources.”

Bolivia, paradoxically one of the poorest countries in Latin American and home to the second largest natural gas deposit in the region, has opted for a different approach to the exploitation of energy resources: equitable development. 

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Rebuilding Indigenous Governance in Colombia

On August 9, for the first time in the history of the Americas, the Indigenous Social Parliament was instituted in the same building as the Colombian Congress in the city of Bogotá. The plenary was made up of the Indigenous Organization's leaders and 200 community members from all regions of Colombia, with the presence of the Cauca traditional Indigenous Guard holding their batons. This initiative emerged several years ago as a reaction to the weakening of public policies concerning Indigenous Peoples. The goals achieved through the 1991 Charter of Rights have been undermined as Colombia evolved toward an economic model driven by the exploitation of natural resources. This is compounded by a deep humanitarian and human rights crisis due to the ongoing armed conflict. The Indigenous Peoples saw the need to identify new elements that would strengthen their organization and renew mechanisms in the ethnically plural and multicultural relations within a Social Rule of Law. The Indigenous Parliament will remain permanent and will legislate based its own law and as an alternate body to the Colombian Congress.

La equidad: energía y gobernabilidad indígena en Bolivia

Omaira Mindiola

La gobernabilidad indígena en las Américas ha tenido avances significativos en los dos últimos años, particularmente en Bolivia. Esos avances guardan relación con decisiones políticas que han transitado el camino de la lucha histórica de Pueblos Indígenas y campesinos por los derechos a un territorio y el control de sus recursos naturales.

Los hidrocarburos, único recurso del cual depende el futuro del país, fueron nacionalizados por tercera vez mediante el Decreto Supremo 28701 del 1° de mayo de 2006, obedeciendo el mandato del pueblo boliviano expresado en el Referéndum vinculante del 18 de Julio del 2004 (Art. 1) Esta norma fue precedida por la Ley No. 3058 del 17 de mayo de 2005 según la cual por mandato soberano del pueblo boliviano, el es-

tado recupera la propiedad de todos los hidrocarburos en Boca de Pozo (Art. 5). La respuesta afirmativa a la pregunta número dos del referéndum significó la demanda de los participantes a un desarrollo con equidad e identidad indígena basado en el aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales, especialmente los hidrocarburos.

Según el Centro de Estudios Aplicados a los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales, la experiencia más avanzada en América Latina en materia de derechos indígenas con relación a los recursos naturales es el Título VII de la Ley 3058 de Bolivia, concerniente a los derechos de los pueblos campesinos, indígenas y originarios, en el que se establecen los procedimientos que deben seguir las empresas al operar en territorios indígenas.

Dos decretos supremos están fuertemente ligados a esta ley para su implementación. Uno es el Decreto No. 29033 del 16 de febrero de 2007 que reglamenta el proceso de consulta y participación para actividades hidrocarburíferas dentro del territorio de los Pueblos Indígenas y comunidades campesinas.

Con base en los compromisos adquiridos como signatario del Convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional de Trabajo (OIT) sobre Pueblos Indígenas y Tribales en Países Independientes, el gobierno de Bolivia mediante el decreto No. 29033 hace obligatoria para las empresas la consulta previa con las comunidades cuando operen en territorios indígenas (Art. 3). El proceso de consulta funciona bajo los principios del respeto y garantía, información previa y oportuna, veracidad, integralidad, oportunidad, participación y transparencia (Art. 4). En cuanto a la ejecución de este proceso, la responsabilidad recae en el Ministerio de Hidrocarburos y Energía en coordinación con el Vi-

ce ministerio de Biodiversidad, Recursos Forestales y Medio Ambiente y el Viceministerio de Tierra (Art. 5). Por su parte, los Pueblos Indígenas y las comunidades campesinas tienen garantizados no sólo su representación sino el respeto a sus decisiones sobre la ejecución de la actividad o del proyecto hidrocarbúfero (Art. 6 y 7).

El otro decreto importante es el Decreto Supremo 29103 del 23 de abril de 2007 que reglamenta el monitoreo socio-ambiental en actividades hidrocarbúferas dentro del territorio de los Pueblos Indígenas originarios y comunidades campesinas. Aquí también es invocado el Convenio 169 de la OIT (Art. 15) para sustentar el derecho de los Pueblos Indígenas a participar en la administración y la toma de decisiones sobre los recursos naturales existentes en sus tierras.

La protocolización de 44 contratos petroleros en el mes de mayo puso en vigencia la asociación del estado boliviano con doce empresas firmantes, bajo garantías en ambos sentidos: la seguridad jurídica y el acatamiento de las leyes bolivianas. De esta manera se dio inicio al proceso de consolidación de la ley de nacionalización de los hidrocarburos. Lo más relevante del hecho es el trato de justicia, al determinar la distribución de las ganancias pues el actual acuerdo dispone el 82 porcentaje para los bolivianos y el 18 porcentaje para las empresas, contrario a los contratos anteriores (*Actuali-*

dad Étnica, Bolivia, 02/05/2007).

Las nuevas políticas sobre hidrocarburos no tendrían sostenibilidad sin un pacto social entre bolivianos y bolivianas que garantizara la construcción de un nuevo país equitativo bajo el reconocimiento de la diversidad y el respeto de los derechos de las indígenas. Las demandas de los movimientos sociales sobre inclusión y participación en la toma de decisiones, están ligadas a la demanda de soberanía en la gestión de los recursos naturales estratégicos. Por


Las nuevas políticas sobre hidrocarburos no tendrían sostenibilidad sin un pacto social entre bolivianos y bolivianas que garantizara la construcción de un nuevo país equitativo bajo el reconocimiento de la diversidad y el respeto de los derechos de las indígenas.

eso el pueblo apostó por una Asamblea Constituyente convocada bajo la Ley especial del 6 de marzo 6 de 2006 con el objeto de efectuar una reforma total de la Ley Fundamental del Estado Boliviano (cap.II; Art. 4). Le correspondió precisamente a Evo Morales Ayma, el primer Presidente Indígena de Bolivia, responder a esta demanda que fuera también la suya en su condición de líder de un movimiento político.

Es de anotar que estos avances, según Carlos Cuasase Curubí, son el resultado de las movilizaciones y sobre todo de la participación activa de los Pueblos Indígenas de las tierras bajas y las tierras altas en la elaboración de propuestas y en el diseño de las normas en relación con los

hidrocarburos (*Actualidad Étnica*, Bolivia 22/05/2007).

En el proceso de reconstrucción de mecanismos para el diálogo en el contexto de las relaciones interculturales vale la pena resaltar el Consejo Nacional para el Diálogo (CND), creado por el Equipo de país. Al respecto, Antonio Molpeceres, Coordinador Residente del Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), se refirió a Bolivia como un país pionero en el mundo al haber creado un consejo que tenga por objetivo poner en práctica el derecho de los Pueblos Indígenas a ser incluidos como actores centrales de los procesos de desarrollo (PNUD-Bolivia, 12/04/2007). El CND, integrado por las cinco mayores organizaciones indígenas, originarias y campesinas del país, ha brindado asesoría sobre derechos humanos a la Asamblea Constituyente y apoyo al fortalecimiento de la participación boliviana en la Sexta Sesión del Foro Permanente sobre cuestiones indígenas, cuyo tema central fue "Territorios, Tierras y Recursos Naturales."

Bolivia, paradójicamente uno de los países más pobres de América Latina y a la vez la segunda reserva de gas más grande de la región, ha apostado a un cambio en el aprovechamiento del recurso energético: la equidad. 

Omaira Mindiola es gerente del proyecto FOCAL sobre el gobierno indígena en las Américas. Para contactarla, favor de enviar un correo a: omindiola@focal.ca.

Violent Deaths Taint Guatemalan Election Campaigns

In late August, Clara Luz Lopez was shot dead as she drove home from a campaign event. Lopez was running in the party of Rigoberta Menchu, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and first Mayan woman to run for the Guatemalan presidency. This is just the latest in a steady stream of political violence in which more than 40 politicians, activists and party workers have been killed. On August 13, gunmen shot and killed Werner Velasquez, mayor of Santa Ana Huista near the Mexican border, in an attack that is apparently linked to the upcoming September presidential elections. Velasquez was the 19th member of the National Unity for Hope party (UNE) – the party of presidential favourite Alvaro Colom – to be killed. The UNE is struggling to rid itself of connections to organized crime and gangs. “Drug traffickers are embedded in the UNE,” said Menchu. But Colom says his party is being targeted due to his zero tolerance policies against organized crime. According to BBC correspondents, organized criminals and other armed groups intent on influencing both local and national politics are responsible for many of the latest attacks. To date no one has been arrested for any of the murders.

The Face of Poverty and Natural Disasters: Peru

Racquel Smith

Sometimes the urgency of disaster steers down the walls of the misunderstanding, complexity and humanity involved in more ancient hurts and simply exposes a face. The odds in Latin America are overwhelmingly stacked against its darker skinned peoples. When everybody is stricken by disaster, their faces are too consistently represented among the most vulnerable and exposed victims, from guerilla warfare, to intra and inter-state politics, to land policy, to earthquakes.

Many Canadians already know that there was an earthquake in Peru very recently. It was an enormous earthquake: measuring nearly 8 points on the Richter scale, killing hundreds of people and wiping out 75 percent of the residential, health and education infrastructure in the three cities south of Lima where the tremors and after-shocks were concentrated. What Canadians also need to know is that the faces of poverty and disaster in Latin America are strikingly similar. The face of poverty and disaster in Latin America is, very often, a Black face. This is a statistical reality: 92 percent of all Latin Americans living below the poverty line are the descendants of African slaves.

The stage was already set when the earthquake occurred in Peru on August 15, 2007. In the southern department of Ica, where the effects were con-

centrated, especially in the districts of Pisco, Chinca and Ica, the majority of the population is afro-descendent and is also, not coincidentally, the poorest in Peru.

The term ‘invisibilization’ has often been used to describe the social and economic presence of Afro-Latinos in governance systems in their own countries. Though they constitute 30 percent of the entire population of Latin America, Afro-Latinos are almost completely invisible in government and corporate jobs. They are either marginalized in the isolated countryside, or when they come to the city they overwhelmingly constitute the underworld ranks of maids, butlers and janitors, refugees and paupers, that are “invisible” to Latin America’s middle and elite classes.


This profile of invisibility is changing, and it is Afro Latinos themselves who are driving change. Take the situation in Peru. A team from CEDPUR (Centre for Urban and Rural Development) recently visited the entire zone affected by the earthquake and reported on the extent of the destruction, as well as the disaster relief efforts that were underway. In the midst of the despair, while the team is standing among the ruins of the Sunampe zone, from which they report the most heartbreaking anecdotes of the loss of life and homes, the team offers hope-filled news: “Solidarity and warmth is evident among the families... shared pots and beds in the streets.”

There is a lesson here. FOCAL has consistently argued that there is an

overlooked role for Canadian development and foreign policy in the Americas. Crisis and opportunity are to be found among the Afro-Latino communities of the region. Across the Americas, Afro-Latino civil society organizations are mobilizing as their own agents of change, drawing on the oldest and most consistent resource they have always had: themselves.

But the structural problems at the heart of the perpetuation of the social and economic marginalization of Afro-Latino communities have deep roots. There is a stronger correlation between African descent and the incidence of poverty than for any other racial or ethnic identification.

With its model of multiculturalism and pluralism in governance, Canada is well placed to contribute. Canadian history in implementing racial inclusion programs should allow it to speak with authority and leadership in regional forums and development agencies. Also, the Canadian human rights and employment equity framework, could be of use in informing the development of similar frameworks within the region.

We can do little to prevent natural disasters, but there is much that we can do to prevent the unnatural reoccurrence of the face too often represented among the most vulnerable victims. 

Racquel Smith manages FOCAL's Afro-Latino Program and can be contacted at rsmith@focal.ca for more information.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

September 5-8, 2007

FOCAL will host a panel at the 27th International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which takes place in Montreal, Quebec. The panel will take a critical look at Canadian foreign policy objectives and ask if its traditional approach is appropriate to changing circumstances in Latin America.

Carlo Dade, Executive Director of FOCAL, will chair the panel. Papers to be presented include:

Retooling Canada's Policy of Constructive Engagement with Cuba. Cristina Warren, Program Director, Research Forum on Cuba, FOCAL.

The Canada-Mexico Relationship in North America: Prospects and Challenges. Olga Abizaid Bucio, Senior Analyst, FOCAL.

Week of September 17, 2007 (date TBA)

FOCAL is holding a Brown Bag Seminar with the Trinidadian Ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS), Luis Alberto Rodriguez. Ambassador Rodriguez will brief Canadian stakeholders on the plans for Civil Society participation in the Fifth Summit of the Americas and receive preliminary recommendations towards enhancing the depth, quality and impact of civil society participation in this seminal hemispheric event. Space is limited. Please direct inquiries to Racquel Smith, Project Manager, FOCAL at rsmith@focal.ca.

Mapping the Media Project

After its launch in 2004, FOCAL and its project partners, The Carter Center, El Instituto Prensa y Sociedad (IPYS) and the University of Calgary, completed Phase I of the Mapping the Media in the Americas project in August 2007. The objective of the project is to strengthen understanding about the media environment in the Americas. Phase II will work towards the project's long-term objective of fostering political reform and democratic consolidation in the Americas by promoting transparency and understanding the role of the media in the democratic process. The media maps of twelve countries from the hemisphere are available at www.mediamap.info.

**FOCAL publications, reports, and articles
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