To see clearly is a difficult task. At night, or when there is too much light, when tired, or when too many people are around, where the rush of events is clouding our ability to discern what is essential. As journalists, we should ask ourselves constantly: do we see well?

Take the non-profit industry. The second edition of our Top 100 NGOs ranking is stronger, and we enjoy not only the fantastic outreach from the inaugural list, but the fact that NGOs themselves pushed us to look at their sector in an improved way. This year, we have focused on the three criteria we have used consistently since we began our media journey three years ago: innovation, impact and sustainability. Whether looking for projects with the potential to address critical global issues over the next five years – to create a successful GLOBAL+5 festival – tracing the development of stories on our website, or finding relevant features to share with our readers in more than 30 countries, these three criteria have been omnipresent.

For anyone concerned with the future, innovation, impact and sustainability provide a good compass. As we maintain our unwavering focus on the corporate world, governments, academia, social business, NGOs and simple citizens, we will continue to keep these criteria in mind to better understand global politics. This year, our new leader in the Top 100 NGOs ranking is Bangladeshi development giant BRAC. More than the sum of its – substantial – parts, the organization has transcended its origins in the microfinance revolution of the 1970s to represent a model for how NGOs can continue to evolve and innovate while remaining true to their underlying social mission.

Speaking of wide-open eyes, historians seem to be back in business. If we believe that economists, occupying the forefront of the media scene for a decade now, deserve a say when it comes to our collective future, then why should historians, scientists, geographers, architects, philosophers, writers, poets, doctors and so many others not be granted a similar chance? There is a sense of fatigue with the dominance of the economic perspective in public life. Voices like those of David Armitage, at Harvard, or Mark Mazower at Columbia, dare to challenge mainstream views – the 25-word sound bites framing the world through numbers and fear. Economists are rarely joyful – their basic rhetoric is imbued with the detritus of doomed plans.

Let’s change our perspective and open ourselves to the possibility of identifying new patterns and paths to govern the planet by looking back to the lessons of the past. Plutarch and his twin-portraits of leaders would certainly have liked the idea. In part, the innovation we require to advance is rooted right there. Still with wide-open eyes, read Thomas Davies on the long and turbulent history of NGOs, and Jonathan Katz’s eyewitness account of how the world came to save Haiti and left a disaster.

Bearing in mind that a few great debates began or escalated in the past year, in the fields of health, Internet governance, climate change and energy policy, global politics is heading step by step toward a worldwide call to citizens. How do we make sure that the voice of the people is heard amidst ever more complex disputes? The Global Journal works on a simple premise – in an honest and independent fashion – that in-depth journalism remains a great asset when it comes to understanding the world we live in.

Post-script: to celebrate 2013, our fourth year in publishing, I hope you will enjoy the changes to our design thanks to Dimitri. I’m not sure where he sits at this very moment – whether in Australia, Mexico, the United States or elsewhere – he is a globe trotter and a fantastic global designer. Bénédicte, our French designer, is now putting her hand to our second publication, Global Geneva. Feel free to read it whenever you visit us.

Jean-Christophe Nothias
Editor in Chief
Climate change represents one of the major global challenges of our time. That’s why Bayer wants to act to reduce its “climate footprint”, a symbolic expression of the negative impact of human actions on the environment.

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Jonathan M Katz is a former Associated Press reporter and editor, and was the only full time American news correspondent stationed in Haiti during the 2010 earthquake. He was awarded the 2010 Medill Medal for Courage in Journalism and the 2012 J Anthony Lukas Work In Progress Award for his new book *The Big Truck That Went By*. Other recognition has included a National Headliners Award, and finalist recognition by the Livingston Award and Michael Kelly Award.

Daniel Blaufuks has been working on the relationship between photography and literature since *My Tangier*, a collaboration with the writer Paul Bowles. His Collected Short Stories includes several photographic diptychs in a kind of “snapshot prose,” where visual fragments suggest private stories on their way to becoming public. He works mainly in photography and video, presented through books, installations and films, and his documentary *Under Strange Skies* was screened at the Lincoln Center in New York.

Thomas Davies is a Lecturer in International Politics at City University London, where he runs the Project on the Evolution of International Non-Governmental Organizations (www.ingoevolution.org). He has also authored two books on international civil society: *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament Between the Two World Wars* and *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (to be published by Hurst & Co in April 2013).

Laurent Vinatier has been working as a researcher and consultant on the former Soviet Union for the past decade, authoring several books, notably on the Chechen conflict and Russia’s domestic politics. He also writes as a journalist on various “non-mainstream” issues (www.borderlines.ch), and participates as a freelance specialist in political consulting missions for NGOs, private companies and governments. Based in Switzerland, he is affiliated to the Thomas More Institute, a leading Paris think tank.


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Why did you decide to write a book about the idea of world government, rather than a more straightforward history of the UN?

Coincidentally, one of my first teaching jobs was in an international relations department. Otherwise, I’ve been in history departments. But it means I have read quite widely in the literature, which is mostly post-1945, and mostly quite contemporary. I’ve found it, on the whole, overly theorized and overly obsessed with turning itself into a science. So, the question of how the historian would historicize the international system, and its path into the present, has interested me since then.

Another thing was being interested in the Balkans, and finding that in the 1990s everyone woke up to the importance of the region. One thing that struck me was that in the period of the Yugoslav Wars, organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch produced reports about human rights violations. I remember reading those and thinking it was a very bizarre way to analyze what was going on. They would systematically try to list individual violations. But it was a war, and ethnic cleansing was a strategy about minorities – individuals were targeted because of their membership of minority groups. We had lost the language of minority rights – or collective rights – even though that language had been so important in the 1920s. That got me thinking about the relationship of individual human rights, and about how you might tell the story of the transition from the League of Nations rights regime to its UN successor. It seemed like a story in which something had been lost as well as something gained.

I began thinking about the UN slightly differently. And then there was 2003, and the war in Iraq. The following year I began teaching at Columbia and it was still very much in the air. Everybody was trying to work out, what do we think of the UN? Two things were clear. One, I had vaguely good intentions towards the UN, and thought it had vaguely good intentions towards me, but found it very hard to articulate much more than that. The other was the UN was no longer – if it ever had been – a central actor in any drama. Finally, I wrote a book about the Nazi occupation of Europe, which I wanted to see not as a military or diplomatic episode, but as an episode in ‘world-making’ – where Nazi norms, Nazi values, were going to re-make the world. You could then see the 20th century as a kind of contest between competing world-making systems. The Nazis saw it that way – they were going to sweep away the world of the League – and their opponents saw it that way – they were going to sweep away the Nazis with the values of the UN. The question was: how could you think about doing an international history of how people have wanted to make the world? The UN would be part of that story. At a certain point, it would be quite a big part of that story. Most of the rest of the time, it would not be.

One rarely hears talk of ‘world government’ now – rather, of ‘global governance. What do you see as the difference between ‘global government’ and ‘global governance’?

I think the semantic shift betrays something very, very important, which is that we moved from a world where people had confidence in the idea of government – or at least some did – to a world that lost it. Having confidence in the idea of government, if you were what we might loosely call an internationalist in the 19th century could mean one of two things. It could mean you were in favor of a unitary world government of some kind (the HG Wells version) – and the relationship with the language of minority position. Much more common was what you might call the Mazzinian version (or Wilsonian version), which was that international government must work through and with national governments. Internationalism was not a substitute for nationalism; it was not going to sweep it away. The nation as a basic political community was something to be welcomed, and nations would work together internationally. Nevertheless, whether you followed the Wells or Wilsonian version, each was confident in the capacity of governments to do things.

I think that confidence was lost in the 1970s and 80s. People stopped talking about the virtues of government, and started talking instead about the virtues of governance. Initially, the term ‘governance’ was not used for the global arena at all. There was a lag. It was used first of all for the corporate sector domestically, and then in domestic politics. Public-private partnerships became part of that. The language of stakeholders became part of that. A whole language – a lot of which I loathe because I think it is very euphemistic – became part of our daily vocabulary. Then it was introduced through a kind of ‘New Labour’ vision of the UN – if I can put it that way – that Kofi Annan came in wanting to push, focused on issues like ‘public-private partnerships’ and thought the UN would be the vehicle. It might have in another world – on the whole it was not in this world. But their confidence in public action is something we miss today.

How do you view the rise of powerful non-state actors like the Gates Foundation, especially in comparison to earlier philanthropists like John D Rockefeller who sought to bolster and use public and governmental institutions?

What I have written is essentially a work of synthesis – I would always look around when I had a question to see what other people had written. The literature on NGOs was not of much use, because it struck me that ‘NGO’ was a really inadequate and imprecise label for the global world.

Dreaming The International Dream.

Mark Mazower is an award-winning historian and writer, specializing in modern Greece, 20th century Europe and international history. His most recent book, Governing the World, tells the story of the rise of internationalism following the Napoleonic Wars, and how idealistic dreams of world government and global harmony embodied in nascent institutions like the League of Nations and United Nations (UN), met the reality of nationalist mobilization and power politics in an age of increasing cooperation, but enduring conflict.
I tried to get at this by drawing – a problem that I’m quite passionate about. I used an NGO like Amnesty International, which has a mass membership base, but rather weak ties to any particular government historically, and Human Rights Watch, whose emergence was inconceivable unless you know what the State Department was doing, and – through the Ford Foundation – was doing. Certain NGOs really conform to the US idea of what an NGO is – state policy by other means. It is rife with ethical and real confusion. I think we need a much more nuanced view of what NGOs are as expressions of a kind of civil society, and sometimes that is just not true.

On foundations, I have no doubt that some do great work. But, they have very limited accountability. I think they are the product of the mistrust of government and the public sector I identified as a problem in our time, that old fashioned in these matters. I wish we had a different tax regime so that the wealth of foundations, NGOs, and states and public agencies were able to use it themselves. I think we would have a more transparent and more accountable society as a result. I find it quite troubling to think that a billionaire can have a decisive impact on the public health regime of a country, or on the educational system of a country – that doesn’t seem to me something that we should be proud of. When you look at the Balkans and the Middle East in the late 19th and early 20th century, this was also an era of great philanthropy. There were no social services. There were just charities that depended on the money that was left over from the very wealthy. Well, that was as fine as it went, but I think things improved in the course of the 20th century, and to a certain extent I think things improved in the course of the 20-30 years that historians have started to unpack that story. But once you do, you see that what happened changing in the 1990s often looked rather similar. I do not get it and why intervention is going to usher in a world where there are no powerful states that do what they like, and weak states that feel much more constrained. That is going to remain.

Interestingly, you also criticize a concept that has been seen by many as having the potential to bring new relevance to the UN, that the BRICS have the potential to breathe new life into the UN. But do you envisage this will happen? And how could it impact other emergent forms of global governance?

So firstly, a health warning. One always wants to know about the future, but in a way the question is about it for futures. There seems to be something about thinking about how the world is going to be different in 30 years from now. It is a question about what is going to happen next. After it has been through two hundred years of people pontificating about that topic, I find myself very reluctant to do it. Probably makes me a bit of the 20th century, and to a certain extent I think things improved in the course of that would come from the very wealthy. Charities that depended on the money of an era of great philanthropy. There was an amazing case in the late 19th century, this was also an era of great philanthropy. There was a tax regime so that what NGOs did not do anything else than reinforce the UN, cement its role in the organization, and continue the policy that it has in view of what is going to be done earlier. What the BRICS may bring to the UN and other agencies will be what you identified, a much less suspicions attitude towards the state.

Of course, be careful what you wish for. A less suspicious attitude towards the state may bring with it a whole host of new difficulties. It is all very well to be critical of human rights regimes, but do we want a UN in which the human rights regime is completely defanged, or people want to be told what about human rights altogether? From one point of view, the Chinese version of development aid to African poor were acceptable to many African states than the Western IMF version. But it will turn out to have its own strings attached, so I do not get it and why it is beyond one to ush in a world where there are no powerful states that do what they like, and weak states that feel much more constrained. That is going to remain.

The desire to reform the UN is a kind of last vestige of the dream that so many people once had, of a single powerful organization that would incarnate humanity’s wishes. I think too many people are beyond that dream now for it to really matter.

Why do you think that is?

Well, huge disillusionment exists about how the UN has worked. But how people think about the international is completely connected to how they think about the national. Concepts shift in tandem. People were disillusioned about that achieved, very easily – I don’t think the two are detachable. On the whole, people’s trust in government is very low. People’s trust in government is very low. Actually, people’s trust in organization is very, very low. We are in a kind of quasi-anarchistic age. Not necessarily a left anarchism, but a kind of extreme individualism that is reinforced by a lot of idolatry about the Internet – about forms of mobilization that require no organization. People are not persuaded of the benefits of organization in general. They can see the value of states in their own lives. In countries like France, people just do not
films for goodness sake! the place to be. It featured in Hollywood last moment – perhaps the only moment, where there was enormous strikes me as such an interesting situation in the 1950s and 60s – that The world was in a very different people whether they would like a world organizations, that is much harder. And question the state at all. International happy to dream long-term, maybe until...
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Feature Open Voices

How To Do Good (Better):
The Future Of Philanthropy.

By Martina Castro - Philanthropic Consultant, Lombard Odier & Cie

It used to be easier. You would come home, open the mailbox and find an anonymous looking envelope. Inside, you would find a card with despondent children, or cute tiger cubs, and a pre-filled check. Alternatively, you could always count on your sister’s crochet friend to ask you for money for the local group distributing meals to the homeless. And finally, you would leave a bequest in your will to a couple of charities, usually an animal shelter or some organization you had heard about throughout your life but had never had the chance to really investigate. For many, philanthropy would be just that. Although it would be wrong to suggest this sort of giving is pointless, it does end up being relatively ineffective in achieving transformative impact.

But times are changing in the world of private philanthropy. Over the last few years, there has been much talk of ‘philanthropy 2.0,’ and buzzwords like ‘venture philanthropy,’ ‘strategic philanthropy,’ ‘Silicon Valley philanthropy’ and ‘philanthro-capitalism’ are becoming ever more common. Despite certain nuances, all refer to the same widespread phenomenon: even if you are not planning to give millions, philanthropy has become a considerably more thorough, professional and transparent process, which does not end with having your name carved on a brass plate in a hallowed university courtyard, or on the hand-painted sign of a rural hospital in Ethiopia. We are moving away from responsive, opportunistic charity, and increasingly towards a thought-out, engaged and proactive form of giving, which is aimed at accelerating the pace of social change. Donors tend to give at a younger age, to be personally involved in the causes they support, and often in conjunction with friends and family. They wish to understand, to learn and to see the

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results of their giving. Finally, they are ready to experiment, to try out new concepts and models of which in turn just their money to the table. Because of this shift, there are a number of changes taking place in the philanthropic ecosystem of the world. 

The first trend, which has actually been slowly taking off in the last decade or so, is a growing pressure on those at the receiving end of donor funds to become more professional, accountable, transparent, and ultimately, more efficient. Donors want to know how their money is being spent, and what impact it is having. Of course, there are certain downsides. Beneficiary organizations often complain about devoting too much time – and too many resources – to writing proposals, filing reports and auditing accounts. While it is true that answering the growing demands of donors means an additional investment, in a world of shrinking philanthropic capital, the adapt or die rule applies. This may be a hurtful process, but it is also an inevitable evolution, which is ultimately more positive than negative. Sadly, too many well-meaning reporting remain too low – a fact just as true of larger, more established organizations as for smaller, volunteer-based groups.

As always, there is a balance to be struck: if you are giving $200,000 to an organization, the sophistication of reporting you should expect as a donor is correspondingly more than for a one-off contribution of $200. In either case, however, the donor is entitled to know how the money was used, and what the grant helped to achieve. On the other hand, donors – even enlightened ones – still fail to grasp the importance of funding the operational costs of their beneficiaries. Clearly, this conflicts with demands for professional standards of administration and governance.

Slowly but surely, donors will have to understand that in order for an organization to blossom, grow, professionalize and achieve its full potential, it will have to invest in qualified and talented staff, as well as smart fundraising, marketing and capacity building. On average, organizations dedicate approximately 15 percent of their resources for such operational expenses. While this means a portion of donor funds do not always flow directly to a specific project, it ultimately helps to enhance the overall efficiency of the organization, thus allowing for even greater impact.

The second trend is an expansion of the methods through which donors can aim to foster change. As already emphasized, long gone are the days when writing a check to a charity was the only means to engage with a social issue. Donors today have a palette of options to choose from, and while simple grants do remain the most typical approach, more sophisticated philanthropists are now shying away from such different models of giving. Corporate and strategic philanthropy, as well as ‘impact investing,’ now find that they can leverage even much larger than its nominal value, resulting in an investment that in many cases can have effects much larger than its nominal value, where it could only leverage greater funding, or help launch a risky – but potentially revolutionary – idea. In short, where it could assist in the development of technologies, approaches, and ways of thinking that could significantly change the world for the better.

Donors, as well as investors, are beginning to explore the spectrum of possibilities that exist between these worlds, and are finding innovative ways to build bridges between the corporate and non-profit sectors.

Today, for instance, a foundation that supports medical research through grants can also engage in mission-related investment, by putting to work its capital in companies that are active in the same field. The impact of their investment, therefore, is aligned with that of their grants. Similarly, a donor interested in poverty alleviation in India can invest in a private-equity impact investment fund supporting social entrepreneurs who use market-based solutions to address issues like education, housing or water and sanitation.

The development of impact investment is still in a nascent phase, although early pioneers emerged in the 1970s and 80s in the sphere of microfinance. The sector has picked up markedly since – especially in the United States – championed by the former era entrepreneurs such as Mitch Kapoor and Pierre Omidyar, as well as by established philanthropists such as the Rockefeller Foundation.

Impact investment is estimated to represent $30 billion worth of investment capital worldwide, although perhaps $40 billion is held in microfinance funds.

The sector is growing, however, and new investments have doubled between 2010 and 2011, with an overall market potential forecast to reach $500 billion within the next five to ten years. Boundaries are also blurring in the field. Public-private partnerships that bring together non-profits, businesses and corporates working together are a much-welcomed trend. While cooperation between such different entities cannot be taken for granted, the complementarity of skillsets and resources these actors bring to the table can have tremendous repercussions in terms of impact. A good example is the ‘Medicines for Malaria Venture,’ a not-for-profit public-private partnership launched with modest seed funding of $4 million from the Swiss, United Kingdom, and Dutch governments, the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation. The venture is focused on providing commercial incentives to spur pharmaceutical companies to undertake research and development on neglected diseases, which the corporate sector would otherwise be unable or unwilling to pursue.

Lastly, there is a key feature of the philanthropic landscape that private donors and foundations must keep in mind. One of the largest private grant-making structures in the world today is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which controls total assets of over $30 billion. This is only a drop in the ocean, however, compared to the size of equivalent public spending. Looking

‘Much innovation is being driven not only by American and – to a certain extent – European donors, but also from actors in previously ‘unconventional’ regions like Asia.’

only at the overseas development assistance budgets of the 23 largest economies in a single year (2009), the cumulative global spend was estimated at some $120 billion. One should similarly consider, in turn, all the public money that goes into arts and culture, education, social support, and scientific and medical research.

Does that mean private giving is insignificantly small? Not at all. Indeed, because resources are relatively modest in comparison to public budgets, it can make it even more important that the ‘little money’ available is used wisely. And by wisely, read anything other than conservatively. It is about finding a niche where an individual’s money could have effects much larger than its nominal value, where it could leverage greater funding, or help launch a risky – but potentially revolutionary – idea. In short, where it could assist in the development of technologies, approaches, and ways of thinking that could significantly change the world for the better.

Certain donors – who today define themselves as venture philanthropists – have also realized that money is not always the most valuable asset they can give. In fact, in many cases these individuals can help organizations and projects grow by acting as a spearhead, by facilitating access, and by placing their time and skills, rather than dollars, at the disposal of their beneficiaries. A good example is the Shell Foundation, which in many ways acts like an angel investor towards its partners, helping them grow and improve with the ultimate aim of ensuring they become financially stable, if not self sustainable.

Private donors enjoy the great luxury of not having to respond to shareholders when it comes to using their money. This does not mean they are unaccountable. But it does mean they can take risks and action in fields that governments or corporations cannot, or have no interest in.

Much innovation is being driven not only by American and – to a certain extent – European donors, but also from actors in previously ‘unconventional’ regions like Asia. In fact, in many cases these individuals can take risks and action in fields that governments or corporations cannot, or have no interest in.
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All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.” These words, taken from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’ Communist Manifesto, that prescient analysis of proto globalization, prophesied an end to boundaries that was driven to its extreme a century and a half later by Francis Fukuyama’s vision of markets and free-trade zones ending national and local identities for good. Capitalism, liberal democracy and globalization had won, once and for all. Or so it seemed in 1992.

No more. The dissolving boundaries of the Eurozone Crisis have called into question the promises of unlimited assimilation by capitalism. Around the world, a plague of economic fracturing has split globalized capital. The smoothly integrated globe predicted by Fukuyama has broken apart into Eurozone South and North, the Asian trading enclaves, and the socialist states of Latin America: what was supposed to be solid has dissolved into air.

‘The first historians who argued for transnational spaces were deeply invested in the Enlightenment conception of a mind free from its body.’

A new age of geopolitical exclusion and boundary-making as rampant as the 19th century spread of national governments is upon us. Fractures between Europe’s old economic powerhouses and its new pauper states have compounded Turkey and Iceland’s exclusion from the European Union (EU). Fears about terrorism and the loss of traditional values fan old prejudices into fresh anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States (US), France and the Nordic countries. Unapologetic semi-fascists are gaining political ground in the United States (US), France and the Nordic countries. (EU). Fears about terrorism and the loss of traditional values fan old prejudices into fresh anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States (US), France and the Nordic countries. (EU). Fears about terrorism and the loss of traditional values fan old prejudices into fresh anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States (US), France and the Nordic countries. (EU). Fears about terrorism and the loss of traditional values fan old prejudices into fresh anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States (US), France and the Nordic countries. (EU).

One hopeful story might be told about the fate of another borders of national histories operated along similar lines. Historians of immigration tracked the arrival and assimilation of new peoples into existing states. And imperial historians studied empires as the extensions of national histories, even though they generally maintained a strict separation between the histories of metropolitan states (mostly in Europe) and their colonies (mostly outside Europe). In all these fields, the matter of history concerned stability, not mobility – what was fixed, not what was mixed.

The ‘International Turn’ in Intellectual History.

David Armitage
Chair, Department of History
At Harvard University

In the first of a regular series inviting prominent members of academia to address key questions of global governance, international politics and the evolution of the international system, David Armitage – one of the world’s leading historians of political thought – traces the genesis of the ‘international turn’ in intellectual history. Closely linked to parallel processes of empire and globalization, Armitage reflects upon how crucial developments during the last three centuries have shaped how we envision the ‘international sphere’ today.

That reckoning amounted, for many learned people, to an overturning of cherished commitments. For much of the modern era, in most parts of the world, historians have been committed to nationalism. Like the majority of social scientists, they have assumed that history revolves around ‘nations’ – large groups living in the same location who share a common ancestry, language, history or culture, and who organize themselves politically into states. Accordingly, historians’ main tasks have been to narrate how nation-states emerged, how they developed, and how they interacted with one another.

Even those historians whose work deliberately crossed the borders of national histories operated along similar lines. For example, diplomatic historians used national archives to reconstruct relations among states. Historians of immigration tracked the arrival and assimilation of new peoples into existing states. And imperial historians studied empires as the extensions of national histories, even though they generally maintained a strict separation between the histories of metropolitan states (mostly in Europe) and their colonies (mostly outside Europe). In all these fields, the matter of history concerned stability, not mobility – what was fixed, not what was mixed.

Scholars in many fields have more recently been moving towards studies they describe variously as international, transnational, comparative and global. The scope, subject matter and motivation of their efforts has not been identical – nor is there any consensus on how these non-national approaches to history should be distinguished from each other.

The first historians who argued for transnational spaces were deeply invested in the Enlightenment conception of a mind free from its body. They were historians of ideas. Early forms of the history of ideas were characteristic of the Republic of Letters, a 17th and 18th century intellectual community in Europe and the US that was self-consciously transnational. As one of its citizens, the French scholar and litterateur Bonaventure d’Argonne, wrote in 1699, the Republica Literaria “embraces the whole world and is composed of all nationalities, all social classes, all ages, and both sexes. All languages, ancient as well as modern, are spoken.” Within a global community that extended from China to Peru, “ideas were colorless, ageless, raceless, genderless.” They were placcless and stateless, too.

Just like those global scholars and intellectuals who made up the Republic of Letters, we must think of categories beyond national boundary. Most of the world’s population, for most of recorded history, lived not in nation-states but in empires – those far-flung, stratified polities that projected various kinds of universalism in order to suspend differences...
among populations without striving for uniformity between them. For a relatively brief period, between the early 16th and early 20th centuries, some of these empires were the outgrowths of confidently national cultures, particularly in Europe and Asia. But most were pre-national or supranational in composition. Oceanic spaces connected elements of these empires in the modern period, but maritime arenas such as the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic and the Pacific also segmented sovereignties and became cockpits of inter-imperial rivalry.

‘In light of the long history of empire, the eternal world of states posited by modern ideas about international relations seems fleeting, even marginal.’

In light of the long history of empire, the eternal world of states posited by modern ideas about international relations seems fleeting, even marginal. Indeed, if by some estimates a world of true nation-states, detached from empire, emerged only with the zenith of decolonization, soon to be swept away by the wave of transnationalism that erupted after the end of the Cold War, then the heyday of the state lasted less than a generation, from about 1975–1989. All history, before and after, was either pre-colonial or transcolonal.

By simultaneously uniting and dividing, empires spurred a contest between ideas and facilitated their circulation amongst diasporic peoples and across commercial routes. From such collisions and transmissions emerged universalizing forces that were in competition – empire, religion and political economy, for instance – as well as the expansive ideologies that contested or subsumed them: pan-Islamism, pan-Africanism, nationalism, anti-colonialism, and other forms of ‘colored cosmopolitanism’. Most of these movements were long-term and history was viewed through nation-shaped spectacles. They returned to view only when older experiences of space – more extensive, more fluid and fragmented by territorial boundaries – again framed questions about the past.

The field is rife with spatial metaphors – of ideas as ‘migrantary’ and of books escaping the bounds of nations; of ‘horizons’ of understanding and the public sphere; of ‘localism’ and ‘provincialism’ as adjectives for ideas; and of conceptions of ‘containment’ and critical ‘movement’ in the reading and interpretation of texts. Yet such figures of speech do not necessarily indicate any substantive engagement with questions of space and place. Instead, they are a shorthand indication that ideas lack material locations – that they need to be placed into contexts construed almost entirely as temporal and linguistic, not physical or spatial. Michel Foucault might have been speaking for intellectual historians specifically (rather than all historians more broadly) when he declared, “space was that which was dead, fixed, non-dialectical, immobile. On the other hand, time was rich, fertile, vibrant, dialectical.”

Space can be understood intensively as well as extensively. In this regard, historians of science may have much to teach both international relations scholars and intellectual historians. A ‘spatial turn’ in the history of science put in doubt the universality of truth and insisted upon local knowledge: there could be no view from nowhere when every view sprang from somewhere. Ideas emerged from tightly defined spaces – from picturesque beaches as well as laboratory benches, and from public drinking-houses as well as royal academies.

‘We need to understand how ideas travel, who transports them, what baggage they carry on their journeys, and how they become domesticated and naturalized on arrival.’

When viewed macroscopically in this way, the seamless web of abstract knowledge turned out to be a brittle mosaic of contingent concerns. If one aim of this literature was to debunk the presumed universality of scientific reason, another – late in the 20th century – was to call the foundations of history that focuses on unchanging or very slow-changing phenomena over the gradual march of centuries, rather than years or decades.

Changing conceptions of space expanded the contexts for ideas and, with them, the very possibilities for thought. Changing conceptions of space expanded the contexts for ideas and, with them, the very possibilities for thought.

Peripheries as each alleged periphery earned a central place in accumulating imperial archives, testing hypotheses, and generating ideologies through inter-colonial exchanges.

As a result, extensively elaborated connections linked intensively cultivated locations to create new maps of knowledge and transnational canons through the transmission of ideas and information across continents and oceans. These studies in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the “science of international relations with regard to culture” offer models for intellectual history that are more generally replicable. When conceptions of space expand, webs of significance ramify and networks of exchange proliferate to create novel contexts and unanticipated connections among them. Shifting patterns of sociability and correspondence, of the distribution of books and the spatial organization of knowledge – in rooms and buildings, streets and squares, cities and regions, countries and continents, empires and oceans – forced thinkers to rethink the nature of their audiences, the potential impact of their arguments, and the extent of their spheres of action.

In light of such considerations, the questions posed by intellectual historians have shifted. They once asked what Enlightenment was. To answer that query, intellectual historians attuned to space must now ask where Enlightenment was. This is only fully answerable in a global context only with the conceptions of time that call the four-dimension of history that focuses on unchanging or very slow-changing phenomena over the gradual march of centuries, rather than years or decades.

Changing conceptions of space expanded the contexts for ideas and, with them, the very possibilities for thought. Moving into the later 19th century, the compression of space by technology – above all the steamship, the railway and the telegraph – made new forms of political community imaginable over the expanses of empire and across the world. With due respect to Foucault, space was dynamic, not static. The contexts for thinking expanded to encompass the entire planet.

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While these thinkers explored the changing shapes of empire, another, more ancient variety of international utopianism, was being revived. The first practitioners of the history of ideas – from Thomas Stanley in mid-17th century England, to Victor Cousin in post-Napoleonic France – produced works that were strikingly cosmopolitan in character and content. Intellectual history was born international, and it remained so long after the rise of nationalism within and beyond the

As the ‘Great Map of Mankind’ was unrolled, in Edmund Burke’s resonant phrase, truly global possibilities for thought opened up for the generations of thinkers writing after the mid-18th century.’ As the “Great Map of Mankind” was unrolled, in Edmund Burke’s resonant phrase, truly global possibilities for thought opened up for the generations of thinkers writing after the mid-18th century – among them Denis Diderot, Anne Robert-Jacques Turgot, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, Jeremy Bentham and Burke himself. This had consequences for the interactions of universalism and cosmopolitanism, as well as for their conceptions of culture and difference.

Moving into the later 19th century, the compression of space by technology – above all the steamship, the railway and the telegraph – made new forms of political community imaginable over the expanses of empire and across the world. With due respect to Foucault, space was dynamic, not static. The contexts for thinking expanded to encompass the entire globe. Accordingly, modern intellectual historians have to track ideas on ever-larger scales: continental, inter-regional, transoceanic, and ultimately, planetary. As Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt were among the first to note in the mid-20th century, outer space may truly be the final frontier for intellectual history.
That blithe optimism about the power of ideas to unify peoples did not last. During the course of the 20th century, intellectual historians and international historians drew further apart. The separation between the domestic and the international sharpened. With the triumph of behaviouralist social science in the US, ideas and ethics moved from the center to the margins of the study of politics and international relations. In the era that followed, a war erupted between historians—who were newly convinced of bodiless transnational Enlightenment—and international relations scholars, which was seemingly invented to protect nationalism’s respectable face. Disciplinary boundaries hardened and were more fiercely defended.

The term ‘international thought’ was originally an invention of British publicists and litterateurs sympathetic to the League of Nations and nascent international institutions in the inter-war period. ‘The term ‘international thought’ was originally an invention of British publicists and litterateurs sympathetic to the League of Nations and nascent international institutions in the inter-war period.’

The skepticism of the late 20th century produced a climate of pessimism, where historians of ideas regarded international governance and the spread of ideas as reckless utopian visions of a bygone age, while international scholars increasingly ignored history altogether. Idealistic international lawyers, wielding naïve constructs of international studies, conspired with imperial enterprises from the Belgian Congo to the Bay of Pigs. Buoying their advice were artificial, semi-historical concepts promising “modernization” and “political stability” as timeless truths, easily manufactured by following distilled rules of international engagement.

This kind of thinking amounted to poor policy as well as poor history. No date was more foundational for the field of international relations than 1648 and the Peace of Westphalia. The demolition of the ‘myth of 1648’ as the origins of a world order of mutually recognizing, non-interfering sovereign states was a relatively straightforward process. It relied on a reading of the treaties of Munster and Westphalia, the recognition that empires, federations and other kinds of layered or divided sovereignty were more characteristic of political authority than any alleged ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty, and attention to the world beyond northern Europe, to see how little respect was paid to the putative sovereignty of many of the world’s peoples under the sway of empire.

Four for every intellectual action there is a reaction. Nationalist history has been broken down, and many conceptions linked to international studies have been utterly debunked. As so often, intimations of obsolescence have proven to be spurs to innovation. International relations scholars are becoming more interested in culture, ideology and institutions – “champions of the international turn as well as vigorous proponents of intellectual and cultural history.” At the same time, intellectual historians are beginning to treat norms and interactions between peoples, states and other corporate bodies historically, placing their new studies under the rubric of the history of international thought. The stories created by this fusion are helping us think about the possibilities for internationalism in a new light.

Proponents of the new international history have urged their colleagues to ‘internationalize international history’ – and challenge nationalist histories – by studying non-state actors in the international realm: corporations, non-governmental organizations, transnational social movements, and bodies such as the World Health Organization or the United Nations. If we were to tell a story of the 20th century that emphasized these types of institutions, we would end up with a very different 20th century.

We might, for example, begin to imagine a world in which the road to the EU’s mandate to include Greece was paved by the international precedents of the Institut de Droit International, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the League of Nations. We would also start to tell a new history of human rights – a field now in its second wave, as it has moved from its phase of telling just-so stories into a more critical period alert to context and discontinuity. Such a story would leave us with a very different picture of the world we live in, as well as its opportunities for change.

As international thought reckoned with the shape of empires and nations after the close of the World Wars, historians of ideas like Arthur O Lovejoy were often methodologically cosmopolitan and politically internationalist in outlook, prophesying a moment when the exchange of ideas would meld the peoples of the world into one. Historically-minded students of international relations such as Arendt, Raymond Aron, Herbert Butterfield, Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, Schmitt, Kenneth Waltz and Martin Wight dealt openly in ideas rather than abstract models or positivist methods.
NGOs: A Long And Turbulent History.

By Thomas Davies

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Like economic globalization, transnational civil society is often seen as a recent phenomenon. From the worldwide protests of the Occupy Movement, to environmental advocacy campaigns ahead of RIO+20, and multi-faceted development programs implemented on a global scale, it is tempting to assume we live in an entirely new era of NGO activity. Yet in contrast to conventional wisdom, international NGOs have a long and turbulent history, which has often placed these actors at the center of key transformations shaping international society over the last two centuries.

The diversity and reach of the more than 20,000 international NGOs operating today is difficult to overestimate. It encompasses the human rights activism of Amnesty International in 150 countries, the development work of the 120,000 staff of BRAC touching the lives of 126 million, and the participation of approximately one billion people in the member organizations of the International Co-operative Alliance. The breadth of activities stretches from the settlement by the Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce of more disputes than the International Court of Justice, to the alternative globalization envisaged by the World Social Forums and pan-Islamic activism of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Yet, international NGOs have far deeper roots than is commonly assumed. The term itself — “non-governmental organizations” — entered common usage via the United Nations (UN) Charter at the end of World War II. But even before the onset of the modern era, religious orders, missionary groups, merchant hanses and scientific societies engaged in activities crossing continents. Many of these bodies — including Roman Catholic monastic orders and Sufi tariqahs — survive to the present day. It was in the context of the Enlightenment idealism, revolutionary upheavals and East-West contacts of the late 18th century, however, that the sphere of international NGOs was to be truly transformed.
The peace movement has the distinction of being responsible for the earliest international organization actually to describe itself as international. The International Association created in Scotland in 1834 claimed to consist of "those who desire to find just grounds for mutual esteem and respect, -- who cherish peace, -- and will act upon the grand principle of collecting and disseminating such information as tends to meliorate the individual and social condition of their fellow creatures." In the same year, Italian republican Giuseppe Mazzini established Young Europe for the promotion of nationalism, and communist revolutionaries united in their first international organization - the League of the Just - based in Paris.

In the context of the proliferating associations of the 1830s, a young Frenchman introducing himself as "the Count of Liancourts," Caliste-Auguste Godde, decided to set up an "International Shipwreck Society" in 1835, modeled on the earlier Humane Societies and established "with a view to

recognizing the Confederacy in the 1860s, playing a part in the abolition of slavery in the US. Similarly, the organization's international Anti Slavery Convention held in London in 1840 was to spark a wave of private international congresses leading to the establishment of NGOs in many fields in subsequent decades. The barring of women from the event also spurred two of the excluded delegates - Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott - to convene a women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, a key moment in the development of the international movement for women's suffrage.

Few individuals were to play a more critical role in the development of international NGOs, however, than Swiss philanthropist Henri Dunant. In 1859, he spearheaded the creation of the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, notable for its pioneering structure as an international federation of national NGOs. More famously, after witnessing the carnage of the Battle of Solferino in 1859, Dunant went on in 1863 to found the Red Cross movement for the provision of neutral assistance to the wounded in conflict.

In the period from the 1870s to World War I, there was a massive expansion in the number and variety of international NGOs parallel to the second industrial revolution. Among the more than 400 bodies established at this time were organizations as diverse as the Universal Scientific Alliance, the World League for Protection of Animals, the International Council of Women, the International Federation of Trade Unions, the International Cooperative Alliance, the International Olympic Committee, Rotary International and the International Socialist Bureau.

The achievements of international NGOs in the decades preceding the war included successful campaigns for new treaties, such as by the International Literary and Artistic Association in respect of international copyright, and by the International Abolitionist Federation in relation to sex trafficking. In addition, many of their groups were crucial in the dissemination of suffrage activism around the world. New Zealand, for instance, was the first country to grant women the right to vote in 1893. There, the suffrage movement was stimulated by the American traveling envoy of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Mary Leavitt.

The late 19th century was an era in which the pan-nationalist ideas that were having considerable influence on international politics in the 20th century began to be promoted by a variety of international organizations, including the International Labor and Hygiene in 1905, and International Vegetarians, which, remarkably, has survived to the present day. Of all the international NGOs to be established before the war, none was more ambitious than the Union of International Associations founded in 1910, which described its goals as no less than "the representation of all international associations in a federated body." Its leaders laid ambitious plans for an "international palace" based in Brussels, "worthy of the importance of the organizations that created it." Although its objective of uniting all international NGOs into a single global federation was to be cut short by mass conflict in Europe, the union succeeded in building its "international palace" (now a car exhibition space), and survives to the present day as the principal data repository on international civil society organizations, publishing the annual Yearbook of International Organizations.

With hindsight, the years immediately preceding the onset of World War I represented a period where internationalist idealism reached a denouement. Mass campaigns were launched around The Hague peace conferences of 1899 and 1907, with a global petition circulated by women's organizations in 1891 and consisting of one million signatures. This sentiment was also reflected in the proliferation of associations dedicated to the promotion of international languages such as Esperanto, whose inventor, Lejzer Ludwik Zamenhof, referred to himself as Dr. Hopeful. By 1911, numerous international NGOs had been created for Esperantists of different backgrounds, ranging from police employees to teachers, bankers, postal workers, and even an International Union of Esperantist Vegetarians, which, remarkably, has managed to survive to the present day.

Although most NGOs found it impossible to hold international conferences during the war, an important exception was to be found in the convening of an international congress of more than 1,000 women at The Hague, who later went on to form the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Peace activists also played a key role in promoting the idea of a League of Nations as an international security institution, the League worked in conjunction with NGOs on a huge array of international issues, including refugee relief, sex trafficking, children's rights, and economic reconstruction. This collaboration was to provide an important precedent for the contemporary role of NGOs within the UN system.

Strikingly, twice as many international NGOs were founded in the 1920s as in the entire 19th century. Although few issues at the time could unite new groups as diverse as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Labour and Socialist International, one that came close was the promotion of international disarmament in the hope of avoiding another bloody world war. Large coalitions of women's, peace, Christian, ex-servicemen's, labor, students' and other international
NGOs were formed around this goal, with some estimates of their combined membership as high as 50 percent of the entire global population. The world’s largest international petition was circulated in support of disarmament by women’s NGOs in the early 1930s. The campaign was to achieve little, however, and was even considered by Winston Churchill to have contributed to the unpreparedness of Western Europe in the face of the Fascist challenge later in the decade.

World War II had a similar impact upon the development of international NGOs, its destructive consequences spurring the establishment of many of today’s best-known relief NGOs, such as Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services and CARE International. NGOs were also influential in shaping aspects of the post-war settlement, especially the insertion of human rights references in the UN Charter, which took place after consultants to the US delegation to the San Francisco conference in 1945 announced “it would come as a grievous shock if the constitutional framework of the Organization would fail to make adequate provision for the ultimate achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Three years later, the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights took place with the assistance of NGOs.

Although the number of international NGOs was to increase in the post-war era, their activities were constrained by the hardening Cold War environment. A key feature of this period, for example, was the growth of transnational networks, especially the insertion of human rights references in the UN Charter, which took place after consultants to the US delegation to the San Francisco conference in 1945 announced “it would come as a grievous shock if the constitutional framework of the Organization would fail to make adequate provision for the ultimate achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Three years later, the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights took place with the assistance of NGOs.

The establishment of numerous ‘front organizations’ became a key feature of this period, such as the pro-communist World Federation of Democratic Youth formed in 1945, which found itself in competition with the pro-Western World Assembly of Youth created three years later.

With the waves of decolonization in Asia and Africa from the 1950s, international NGOs became increasingly divided along North-South as well as East-West lines. This was reflected in the creation of regionally oriented organizations such as the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization in 1958. It could also be seen in the transformed self-awareness of European based groups, which had previously considered their role in global terms. European broadcasters, for instance, replaced the ‘International Broadcasting Union’ with the ‘European Broadcasting Union.’

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The World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. Groups like the International Feminist Network and the International Women’s Tribune Center were marked by more horizontal, networked forms of organization, compared with the hierarchical structures of their predecessors.

The emergence of new development NGOs in the 1970s and 80s – including Africa’s CAFOD in 1971, BRAC in 1972 and Islamic Relief Worldwide in 1984 – also reflected the growing diversity of the non-government sector in the final two decades of the Cold War. In the 1980s, for instance, the Consumers Association of Penang played a vital role in the development of multiple South based networks, such as the Pesticide Action Network in 1982 and the Third World Network in 1984. Other groups formed in this period, such as the International Baby Food Action Network established in 1979 in the context of the Nestlé boycott, pointed to the growing importance of transnational corporations rather than governments as the objects of attention for campaigning NGOs.

Nevertheless, government-focused organizations remained influential during this period – in fact, they arguably contributed to some degree towards the ending of the Cold War. While the campaigns of anti-nuclear groups such as International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War were, in part, the negotiating environment of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987, the work of organizations such as Helsinki Watch (now Human Rights Watch) to expose the human rights abuses of Soviet bloc governments was credited by Vaclav Havel as significant in the 1989 revolutions toppling communist rule in central and eastern Europe.

As superpower tensions eased, international NGOs multiplied at an exceptional rate, numbering approximately 18,000 by the turn of the millennium. Aside from changing geopolitics, the undermining of government capabilities in the face of accelerating economic globalization appeared to open up considerable opportunities for civil society actors during the 1990s. The UN’s Rio Earth Summit and Vienna World Conference on Human Rights were the focus of significant NGO lobbying early in the decade, while in subsequent years the apparent influence of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines on deliberations leading to the Ottawa Landmines Convention in 1997 prompted claims that NGOs had become a new “superpower.” The growing economic power of the sector in the post-Cold War era was plainly evident in the increased scale of non-governmental development assistance, which expanded five-fold after 1990.

Indeed, some of the largest international NGOs now operate with greater aid budgets than many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2008, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries. In 2009, for instance, it was reported that the funds at World Vision’s budget exceeded the total overseas aid budgets of many developed countries.
Special Feature: The Top 100 NGOs 2013 Edition.
On the pages that follow, we are pleased to present the second edition of The Global Journal’s Top 100 NGOs ranking. In introducing the inaugural list, we began by asking: just what is a non-government organization? On this, our definition remains the same – an operational- or advocacy-focused non-profit organization active at the local, national or international level.

This time around, however, in a climate of financial crisis, reduced aid budgets and economy-wide fiscal austerity, it is probably more appropriate to ask a more fundamental question: in the broader global scheme of things, why do NGOs matter?

To come up with an answer, we need look no further than our top-ranked NGO for this year, the Bangladeshi giant BRAC. While undoubtedly a deserved winner, the sheer size and influence of the organization gives one pause for thought. This is an entity that reaches 138 million people directly through its programs, that provides health care to 92 million people, that employs a growing staff of 122,000, and that has lent $5 billion in micro-loans to over six million borrowers. Yet, for all its benevolence and clear social value, BRAC is ultimately accountable only to its donors – and in that regard, due to an astute foray into social business ventures, will only find this a less and less onerous burden to bear.

Turning to the sector as a whole, the numbers continue to speak for themselves. A Johns Hopkins University study from a decade ago revealed that the global non-profit sector was estimated to be worth $1.3 trillion in the five largest economies alone – equivalent to the total GDP of the United Kingdom (or the combined GDP of the 50 low-income countries at the time). One can only imagine it has expanded even further in the period since. Some may bristle at any mention of an ‘NGO industry,’ but what cannot be disputed is the critical role that NGOs play in the context of numerous national economies around the world. Profit margins may be non-existent, but the influence of the financial flows involved is undeniable.

And, of course, this does not even account for the fact that the sector is in the midst of a fundamental transition – a transition catalyzed, arguably, by the earlier microfinance revolution of the 1970s. BRAC was part of the vanguard then, and remains at the forefront of new developments today. As the lines between NGO, social enterprise and social business blur, the questions of what an NGO should be, which interests it should serve and how it should be regulated by the state, will become more and more relevant.

But back to this year’s ranking. As you will see, there have been changes afoot. We have continued to refine our evaluation methodology, which this time around focused on what we believe are the three key criteria relevant to the activities of any NGO – impact, innovation and sustainability. For some organizations, these changes have resulted in a climb up the ranking. For others, a no doubt unwelcome slide. In either case though, we return to the same point as last year: despite our best efforts to ensure the ranking is based on concrete information fed through a rigorous, objective process, there is no science in the measuring.

We invite you to read the feature that follows for what it is – a fascinating global snapshot of an often-overlooked sector. Like last year, we hope this list will inform, stimulate debate, inspire and shine a light on one hundred organizations worthy of your time.
After landing at a more than respectable fourth place in our inaugural Top 100 NGOs ranking, BRAC (formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) – the largest non-government development organization on the planet – has claimed this year’s top spot. A member of the era-defining 1970s wave of Bangladeshi microcredit and microfinance pioneers alongside the Grameen Bank and ASA, BRAC has since gone on to outpace its old counterparts and assume an unparalleled position in the crowded field of international development.

From the perspective of our ranking criteria – impact, innovation and sustainability – BRAC ticks every box. While still involved in the microfinance space – to the tune of approximately $5 billion – the organization has carefully, but steadily, diversified into a wide suite of activities, from agriculture and food security to education, legal aid, climate change risk reduction, livelihoods support and maternal and child health. Rather than spreading BRAC’s resources too thin, this strategy has instead remained faithful to founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed’s vision of a holistic, sustainable approach to poverty reduction. Indeed, BRAC is in a unique position to use its microfinance base as a social platform to deliver innovative scaled up services aligned to a principled, rights-based philosophy.

As we noted last year, BRAC is in many ways a microcosm of the entire international development sector in one organization, albeit gaining in independence from donor influence each year as it covers almost 80 percent of its $572 million operating budget through a burgeoning portfolio of catalytic social enterprises – a clear trend positioning the organization in an enviable position of financial and programmatic sustainability. Yet rather than taking this as a cue to rest on its laurels, BRAC has at the same time used its considerable resources and in-house human capital to build an expansive and dedicated monitoring and evaluation apparatus, with positive flow on effects for the entire sector.

Ultimately, BRAC has evolved into a giant of an NGO in a way that some could see as problematic – a non-public entity that touches the lives of more than 110 million people. Reassuringly, however, while size is not often an indication of quality, BRAC represents a welcome outlier and a continuing force for good at the global level.
In 11 short years, Wikimedia Foundation’s flagship initiative – ubiquitous online encyclopaedia Wikipedia – has revolutionized the way knowledge is collected and shared. By now, most are familiar with the Wikipedia model, which is based around open access for all Internet users, a commitment to multilingualism, and constant edits and updates carried out by an army of approximately 100,000 eager volunteers. Most striking, however, in an age of multi-billion dollar Facebook IPOs, is the organization’s bedrock belief in the notion that information should never represent a profit-driven commodity.

In practical terms, Wikimedia Foundation – which topped our inaugural ranking – exists as perhaps the most influential non-government actor in the field of education today. Operating with a shoestring staff of 142, the organization is responsible for managing the platform facilitating the largest collection of shared knowledge in human history – currently 23 million articles and counting. To date, Wikipedia is available in 285 languages, and is visited by more than 470 million people per month. Central to Wikimedia Foundation’s future strategy is the continued expansion of Wikipedia in the languages of the developing world, where access to information is seen to represent not only a personal asset, but also an essential dimension in building an engaged citizenry at the societal level.

Ultimately, the Wikimedia Foundation represents a path-breaking example of what an NGO can achieve in the Internet era. Working with relatively meagre resources and committed to a funding model based on mass private donations as opposed to large institutional grants, the organization continues, through an innovative application of new technologies, to have a deep and abiding impact on the lives of millions around the world.

In 2011, New York-based Acumen Fund celebrated a decade long experiment in 21st century charitable giving. Conceived with seed capital from the Rockefeller Foundation, Cisco Systems Foundation and three individual philanthropists, the organization was – at last count – responsible for a diverse portfolio of over $81 million worth of approved investments in 72 countries worldwide. Firmly committed to a belief that social enterprises, emerging leaders and breakthrough ideas hold the key to successfully tackling the challenge of global poverty, Acumen Fund focuses on transformative loan or equity-based investments, recycling returns to feed a growing pool of ‘patient’ capital.

Partnering in projects estimated to have benefited over 86 million people to date, the key to Acumen Fund’s pioneering philosophy is its application of venture capital principles in the pursuit of social value, albeit with a higher tolerance for risk and longer time horizons than its for profit brethren. The result is an innovative – and successful – market-based challenge to traditional modes of grant-driven development and philanthropy.

To complement its angel investor role, the organization has also continued to expand its Global Fellows Program, building a networked “corps of leaders with financial skills, operational know-how, and moral imagination.”

The greatest testament to Acumen Fund’s influence is the trail of imitators that have sprung up in its wake – more than 200 impact investment organizations now operate worldwide, focused on driving social change by supporting developing world entrepreneurship. With its sustainability assured, and its ‘patient’ approach demonstrating deepening impact as portfolio enterprises reach maturity, Acumen Fund looks poised to continue to redefine the possibilities of international development as it moves into its second decade.
Danish Refugee Council

Formed after the devastation of World War II and the European refugee crises triggered by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council has been a constant, trusted presence in the humanitarian sphere for over 50 years. Serving a dual role, the organization’s activities revolve around the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons from immediate persecution in acute emergency situations, as well as the promotion of lasting solutions for conflict-affected populations (including via targeted international advocacy).

Currently operating in over 35 countries in service of more than 1.5 million people, the Danish Refugee Council has developed an enviable reputation for itself as a leading actor in insecure environments, including through the respected conflict zone work of the Danish Demining Group, the organization’s dedicated humanitarian mine action unit. At the same time, consistent with the trend toward increasing diversification of activities amongst major humanitarian groups, the Danish Refugee Council also works across a number of ‘non traditional’ recovery-focused sectors, including: housing and small scale infrastructure, income generation, food security, displacement-related law and information, social rehabilitation and NGO networking and capacity development.

As an umbrella body comprising 30 members, the Danish Refugee Council’s network and impact is expansive. Perhaps more importantly, the organization’s strong commitment to partnership and collective action is symbolized in collaborative innovations like the Joint IDP Profiling Service, which has become a one-stop shop for data-driven humanitarian planning throughout the sector. Ultimately though, one need look no further for evidence of the Danish Refugee Council’s reputation amongst those that count than the pattern of significant increases in institutional donor funding it has enjoyed in recent years.

Partners In Health

Often linked in the public mind with the critical voice of high-profile co-founder Paul Farmer, Partners In Health has, since its beginnings as a community-based health project in the mountainous Central Plateau of Haiti, come to be recognized as perhaps the pre-eminent public health NGO globally. The organization is guided by the same passion that drove those young adults responsible for its conception – namely an overwhelming sense of solidarity, rather than charity, when dealing with the world’s poorest and most underserved populations. In practice, this vision is manifest in Partners in Health’s holistic model of patient care, which emphasizes the need to alleviate the economic and social burdens of poverty that exacerbate diseases like HIV/AIDS and multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.

The game-changing Partners in Health approach encompasses five key elements focused on addressing intractable and neglected conditions: universal access to primary health care, ensuring health and education services are free to the poor, hiring and training community health workers, improving access to food, shelter, clean water, sanitation, education and economic opportunities and partnering with local and national governments to guarantee the system-wide scale-up and adoption of new approaches to treating infectious disease. All fuelled by a simple credo: “whatever it takes.”

The results, in collaboration with longstanding partners Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, are impressive in scope. At the beginning of 2012, Partners in Health was providing direct medical care to 2.4 million people in 12 countries, the bulk through local community health workers. Meanwhile, the dream of transformational change embodied in the post-earthquake Stand With Haiti plan was realized with the opening of a state of the art teaching hospital in Mirebalais, with long-term implications for the capacity of Haiti’s public health system and future medical personnel.
Judging by the direction of contemporary debate, it can appear at times that the environment and sustainability have fallen off the edge of the map as salient issues of public policy. All the more impressive then to see how since 1989 Boston-based NGO Ceres has managed to lead a parallel normative shift in the corporate world when it comes to climate change, clean energy, water scarcity and supply chain sustainability.

Through an innovative and effective approach based on leveraging the undeniable power of business and capital markets, the organization has succeeded in influencing corporate governance practices to value the competitive advantage promised by sustainable strategies.

Key to Ceres’ deep impact is the group’s unique position at the nexus of the business, investment and advocacy communities. The Ceres Coalition, which comprises more than 130 institutions, public interest groups and investors, the Company Network, which connects over 80 leading corporations, and the Investor Network on Climate Risk (INCR), which includes in excess of 100 investors collectively managing more than $11 trillion in cumulative assets, together allow Ceres to engage in a robust dialogue with powerful decision-makers in order to mobilize meaningful corporate commitments.

Just some of Ceres’ achievements to date include the wide uptake of its Global Reporting Initiative – a de-facto international standard used by more than 4,000 companies for triple bottom line reporting – successful advocacy campaigns requiring companies and insurers to provide climate risk disclosure in financial filings and the use of the Company Network as an incubator for new best practices in corporate sustainability.

Ultimately, Ceres stands alone in the non-profit world as an environmental NGO able to work collaboratively in partnership with the private sector to spur significant and lasting reforms.

In the world of emergency relief and international development, there are a handful of organizations that have transcended their inter-war or post-war roots and built a global reputation for effectiveness despite a broadening mandate. Without doubt, CARE International fits within this category. Originally formed in 1945 as a symbol of American empathy for the exhausted populations of war-torn Europe (hence, ‘care packages’), the organization has grown into a diverse confederation of 12 national members working in 84 countries to the benefit of 122 million people. Still a first responder in the event of natural disasters or conflict, CARE International has also shifted its mission to embody a holistic approach to fighting global poverty and enhancing human dignity, with a special focus on female empowerment.

In part, CARE International is able to deliver large-scale impact based purely on its size and reach. To see this as the full story, however, would be to discount the true scope of the organization’s activities. With a long-term presence in many of the world’s most vulnerable countries, CARE International is well-placed to implement a comprehensive approach, involving pre-emergency resilience and preparedness projects, immediate relief operations and longer-term recovery and community rehabilitation. The organization has also been a sectoral leader in its commitment to international standards of accountability and institutional learning.

Looking to the future, CARE International is likely to become an increasingly vocal presence in high-level international debates around strategies to address enduring challenges like maternal health, hunger, gender equality and climate change mitigation and adaptation. This change-focused advocacy represents an important complement to the on-the-ground work of the organization, particularly in a global environment where financial crisis has exacerbated flagging interest in the Millennium Development Goals.
Médecins Sans Frontières
FIERCELY INDEPENDENT EMERGENCY CARE
HD LOCATION: SWITZERLAND

Launched for the now inescapable ‘without borders’ movement, Médecins Sans Frontières has developed, over the course of its 41-year history, an enviable – or infamous, depending on one’s viewpoint – reputation for combining unparalleled emergency care with an outspoken commitment to principled activism in the face of perceived rights violations, dereliction of duty by the international community or threats to the neutrality of humanitarian space due to the merging of civil-military missions.

Founded in 1971 by 13 doctors – including former French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner – the organization is presently active in 68 countries, with operations encompassing close to 32,000 staff. A key factor in the ability of Médecins Sans Frontières to “bear witness” and take sometimes controversial ethical stands against governments and other actors is its funding model, which unlike most major humanitarian NGOs is predominantly based around private donations rather than institutional grants (the former representing 89 percent of total income in 2011). This independence, which often extends to a tendency to avoid collaboration in the context of its strategic interventions, has at times led to criticism of a pervasive ‘lone crusader’ attitude.

Nonetheless, never in question is the impact of the organization’s operations, which range from addressing the ravages of armed conflict, to emergency action to stem the spread of epidemics in situations of state incapacity. Médecins Sans Frontières has also been innovative in its approach to dealing with operational challenges, establishing the ‘Access Campaign’ to reduce prices for medicines, diagnostics and vaccines and stimulate the development of improved treatments, setting up affiliated organization, Epicentre, to conduct epidemiological research and assessments, and partnering in the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative.

While the tragic school shooting in Connecticut has added further fuel to the gun control debate in the United States and beyond, it has also diverted attention from an even greater tragedy – the enduring cost of ‘everyday’ interpersonal violence globally. Aligned with fellow peacebuilding NGOs in spirit, if not in practice, groundbreaking Chicago-based organization Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire) is focused on addressing this challenge through an innovative model developed by its founder, epidemiologist Gary Slutkin.

Key to Cure Violence’s success – and scalability – is the notion that the trajectory of both violence and infectious diseases share similar patterns of contagion. By this logic, it becomes possible to apply a common public health strategy: stopping transmission at the source and altering norms and behavior so fewer people become ‘infected’ in the first place. In practical terms, Cure Violence achieves this goal by identifying those most at risk and treating this core group via a staff of highly-trained ‘violence interrupters’ – former perpetrators employed to disrupt conflicts before they erupt and educate the community about the consequences of violent behavior.

By reframing the fundamental problem – and applying traditional mediation strategies with an evidence-based method – Cure Violence has achieved proven results, with 16-34 percent reductions in shootings and killings directly attributed to its programs, and 41-73 percent overall. Already implemented in over a dozen American cities, the model has also been exported successfully to deal with election violence in Kenya, community violence in South Africa and inter-tribal violence in Iraq.

Drawing upon cutting edge research in social psychology and neuroscience to refine ‘interruption’ techniques, Cure Violence’s ultimate aim is no less ambitious than the end of violence as a learned behavior.
Sometimes you see too much in this business, resulting in horror fatigue,” says Mercy Corps co-founder Dan O’Neill. “But you use the nightmare for fuel.” The organization he first established as the Save the Refugees Fund in response to the atrocities of Pol Pot’s Cambodian killing fields has certainly matched that ethos, growing into one of the pre-eminent international development NGOs in the world today.

Based in Portland but active in over 41 countries, Mercy Corps’ pioneering commitment to using relief and recovery programs to strengthen civil society for the long-term has seen the diversification of its high-impact, cost-effective activities across a range of program areas and locations.

What sets the organization apart is its leadership in using social innovation as an engine for sustainable development – and unlike other actors focusing on entrepreneurial strategies in ‘stable’ operating environments, Mercy Corps works in this way with affected communities as a means to accelerate the process of post-disaster or post-collapse recovery. From helping restore local economies in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake via a mobile banking solution, to fighting malnutrition in Indonesian slums through a micro-franchise system of vendor-managed food carts, the NGO consistently looks to foster indigenous entrepreneurship, re-building social capital and stimulating markets.

Convinced of the value of taking ‘responsible risks’ – backed by rigorous monitoring and evaluation – Mercy Corps focuses especially on engaging partner communities to identify solutions proven to work in specific contexts and bring these to scale. As such, the organization’s greatest impact is arguably linked to its ability to strengthen the resilience of communities with a view to future shocks, beyond the millions of lives touched through immediate relief efforts.
The Top 100 NGOs: A Global Picture.
In the popular imagination, the link between rats and human well-being is a negative one, shaped by fears of disease. In the hands of APOPO, however, the equation has been reversed. Based in Morogoro, the humanitarian organization has spent the last 15 years honing its unique approach to training rats as mine detectors, and exported this ‘technology,’ despite initial skepticism, to four countries in Africa and South East Asia. Cheaper, quicker and lighter than conventional de-mining methods, APOPO’s African Giant Pouched Rats – endemic to sub-Saharan Africa – have helped return more than 6 million square meters of suspected minefields to local populations in Mozambique alone.

The organization has also continued to innovate, diversifying into the field of public health by training the same ‘HeroRATs’ to detect tuberculosis in human sputum samples – a faster, more accurate diagnostic method capable of screening thousands of patients every month.

While the global ‘credit crunch’ has shifted the playing field in recent years, there was a time when it seemed the world was awash in easy capital. As William Foote realized during travels in Mexico, however, small and medium-sized rural businesses in the developing world were often caught in a quandary – considered too small and risky for mainstream banks, and too large for the burgeoning microfinance movement. Returning to Boston, Foote went on to launch Root Capital in 1999 as a non-profit social investment fund targeting grassroots businesses in the “missing middle.”

By the beginning of 2012, the organization had disbursed over $460 million in loans to sustainable enterprises in Africa and Latin America, reaching 2.6 million people in poor, environmentally vulnerable rural communities. Beyond managing two innovative investment portfolios, Root Capital has also multiplied its impact by delivering targeted financial advisory services and catalyzing a wider market in rural financing.

Imagine living through the devastation and debilitating burden of conflict or natural disaster. Now imagine the same scenario through the eyes of a person with disabilities. Founded on the Thai-Cambodian border in 1982 as a response to landmine injuries suffered by refugees fleeing the Khmer Rouge, Handicap International provides crucial assistance to acutely vulnerable people in dire situations of poverty, exclusion, war and disaster, taking action and raising awareness to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

Comprising a network of eight national associations active in over 60 countries, the organization has been rightly lauded for its deep impact on the lives of a previously underserved constituency – from relief to demining, rehabilitation to social inclusion and anti discrimination – as well as its tireless and transformative advocacy work, including as a co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Founded in 1933 at the request of none other than Albert Einstein, the New York-based International Rescue Committee offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or disaster. Evolving into one of the world’s leading humanitarian agencies providing emergency relief, rehabilitation, protection, resettlement services and advocacy, the organization works in over 40 countries worldwide, as well as managing the Surge Protection Project in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Though highly respected for its rapid and reliable response to crisis situations, the International Rescue Committee is also committed to laying the groundwork for lasting peace and economic development. For instance, the organization has been working with Japanese fishermen in the wake of the 2011 tsunami, as well as helping undercapitalized local farmers in Zimbabwe access global markets through the ‘Tabasco’ initiative in partnership with the McIlhenny Company.
In the recent documentary Solar Mamas, a 32-year-old, tent-dwelling Jordanian mother with only five years of primary education travels to India for six months of hands-on training, culminating in a return to her desert community armed with the skills to fabricate, install and maintain solar power technology – a journey that would seem scarcely believable, save for the fact it has been replicated by others time and time again. Founded by Bunker Roy in 1972 to provide basic services and solutions to problems in rural communities in his native India, Barefoot College has since nurtured a form of grassroots social entrepreneurship that has won plaudits for its success in helping participants forge their own path out of poverty.

Open only to individuals without a formal education, the organization’s innovative – and powerful – model employs peer-to-peer learning, grounded in practical knowledge, to demystify and decentralize sophisticated technology, in the process training an army of ‘barefoot professionals’: teachers, doctors, midwives, mechanics and architects in the millions.

When wading through a sea of non-profit annual reports and press material, it can appear ‘social entrepreneurship’ is the term on everybody’s lips. How easy it is to forget, then, that back in 1981 when a 20 year-old Bill Drayton launched Ashoka as an organization dedicated to supporting the dreams of social innovators worldwide, he was walking a solitary path. Thirty years later, and Ashoka has evolved into an association of over 3,000 fellows in more than 70 countries.

Fundamental to the Ashoka model is a tripartite approach identifying and investing in leading social entrepreneurs, engaging communities of entrepreneurs to develop patterns of effective collaboration, and working to deliver necessary infrastructure, such as access to social financing, bridges to business and academia, and the frameworks for effective cross sector partnerships. While the organization’s global reach is incalculable, evaluation has show that over 80 percent of alumni are driving systemic change at a national level within ten years, while 96 percent of their ideas have been replicated by independent groups.

After having served as a strategic consultant to Fortune 500 companies, Andrew Youn decided to spend the summer before his second year of MBA studies as an intern in Kenya learning about the root causes of rural poverty and chronic hunger. The experience proved to be transformative. A year later, in 2006, he founded One Acre Fund as a means to improve livelihoods amongst subsistence farmers using market-based methods as an alternative to traditional food aid. From this innovative idea, the organization has expanded to serve over 130,000 farming families in Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi.

At the core of the One Acre Fund program is a ‘market bundle’ of services – including seed and fertilizer, financing, education and market facilitation – that enables farmers to double their income per planted acre in one year. Committed to data-driven program development and donor accountability, the organization has also pioneered a rigorous system of internal and external performance monitoring used to ensure increased scale is not pursued at the cost of quality of impact and sustainability.
Beyond local communities, the key challenge in the sphere of public health has long been to address systemic barriers to (sustainable) progress. In 2002, President Bill Clinton launched the ‘Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative’ under the auspices of his Clinton Foundation to not only bring care and treatment to people living with the disease, but also strengthen health infrastructures in resource-poor countries. Ten years later, the renamed Clinton Health Access Initiative has carved a considerable niche for itself as a willing partner to governments committed to improving in-country health systems, and as an active player in the movement to develop the market for medicines and the efficiency of health resource allocation at the global level.

Preferring to focus on organizational and managerial factors – rather than scientific or medical – the organization pursues catalytic, ‘game-changing’ opportunities for action. Its headline achievement to date was a successful negotiation with companies to secure lower prices for essential HIV/AIDS retroviral drugs, resulting in more than $1 billion in cost savings shared by over 4 million people.

Moved by the plight of the orphans he attended to during the Spanish Civil War, Dan West realized these individuals needed “a cow, not a cup” – the difference between temporary aid and a long-term investment in overcoming poverty and hunger. Returning to the United States, he founded Heifer International on this principle. The organization provides families with a ‘living loan’ – a donation of livestock, accompanied with training in animal husbandry, care and sustainable grazing methods. The receiving family must “pass on the gift” by transferring their knowledge and donating one or more of their animal’s offspring to another family. This practice ensures project sustainability, develops community and enhances self-esteem by allowing project partners to become donors.

A highly-participatory model, Heifer International works with communities to decide what types of animals and production systems they want, and who should receive animals. Since its inception, the organization has helped 15.5 million families in more than 125 countries move toward greater self-reliance, with third-party evaluations confirming a substantive impact on household incomes, assets and family nutrition.
A
fter the watershed events of 2011, human rights did not quite achieve the same global exposure as in the year just gone. If anything, however, this only served to further highlight the crucial role played by the New York–based Human Rights Watch. With Cold War roots stretching back to 1978, the organization has a long track record of ‘muscular’ advocacy to achieve sustained, positive behavioral change by governments, law-makers, judicial systems, corporations and rebel groups. Unafraid of courting controversy, unlike mass membership movements Human Rights Watch focuses on targeted advocacy, insider access and deft utilization of media headlines to raise pressure on those in positions of influence.

According to Rare, conservation ultimately comes down to people – their behavior toward nature, their belief about its value and their ability to protect it without sacrificing basic community livelihoods. Based on this principle, the organization has developed an innovative model in which it partners with local conservationists around the world to implement behavior-changing social marketing campaigns aimed at protecting biodiversity while providing new avenues for sustainable development. Since 1988, Rare has trained more than 200 local conservation leaders from across the globe in its signature method – the ‘Pride’ campaign – with subsequent campaigns reaching nearly 10 million people living in 57 of the world’s biodiversity hotspots.

In July 2012, the Akshaya Patra Foundation quietly reached a significant milestone – its one billionth midday meal served to schoolchildren in India. Despite these intensive efforts, malnutrition remains a real challenge, with an estimated 42 percent of children suffering from lack of food. Founded in 2000 in Bangalore – feeding 1,500 children in five schools – through constant innovations in preparation and distribution the organization has continued to drive down program costs and now reaches 1.3 million kids on a daily basis, including in otherwise neglected remote rural areas. Beyond the immediate impact on child health, the work of Akshaya Patra Foundation has also been fundamental in boosting school enrolment and attendance.

As Joe Madiath is fond of reminding people, “shit” is not a glamorous issue. At the same time, the organization he founded in 1979 has had a marked impact in delivering and scaling a holistic village development model that uses entry point concerns over clean water and sanitation as a tool to unite and empower communities. Requiring 100 percent ‘buy-in’ as a precondition for commencing new projects, Gram Vikas’ participatory and sustainable ‘MANTRA’ approach has achieved impressive results – eliminating 85 percent of water-borne diseases in participating villages, and boosting school attendance from ten to 90 percent. From its origins in remote rural India, the model has been replicated in Tanzania and Gambia.

At the vanguard of the ‘impact’ outsourcing movement, Digital Divide Data successfully straddles the boundary between business and NGO while providing a proven model for future innovation. Founded by Jeremy Hockenstein in Phnom Penh in 2001, the organization provides disadvantaged youth in Cambodia, Laos and Kenya with the education and training necessary to ensure participation in today’s global economy. The organization partners with communities and local governments to promote literacy and gender equality in education by establishing libraries, constructing classrooms, publishing local-language children’s books, training educators and supporting girls’ education. To date, over six million children have benefited from Room to Read’s innovative approach.

Every day, over 139 million children are denied the right to go to primary school, a figure that increases significantly during adolescence. Founded in 1999 by former Microsoft senior executive John Wood, Room to Read operates in ten countries in Africa and Asia based on the conviction that investing in childhood literacy represents the best vehicle to facilitate learning and ensure participation in today’s global society. The organization partners with local and national governments to promote literacy and gender equality in education by establishing libraries, constructing classrooms, publishing local-language children’s books, training educators and supporting girls’ education. To date, over six million children have benefited from Room to Read’s innovative approach.

DEMANDING JUSTICE ON A GLOBAL SCALE

CONSERVATION THROUGH SOCIAL MARKETING

A MIDDAY MEAL FOR MILLIONS

THE UNTAPPED POWER OF SANITATION

AN INCUBATOR OF HUMAN CAPITAL

LITERACY AS THE VEHICLE OF PROGRESS

Human Rights Watch

Rare

Akshaya Patra Foundation

Gram Vikas

Digital Divide Data

Room To Read
Amnesty International needs no introduction. Established by lawyer Peter Benenson in 1961, the organization has amassed more than three million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries. The popular touchstone of the global human rights movement, Amnesty International engages with governments, armed political groups, companies and other non-state actors, seeking to disclose human rights abuses and mobilize public pressure to address both individual cases and normative change. Though less innovative in its methods as they have become organizationally entrenched over time, Amnesty International remains an important independent voice in the international arena, speaking fearlessly to power and pursuing a new focus on overlooked economic, social and cultural rights.

Seeming rarity in today’s crowded public health field, AMREF is an African-led NGO focused on developing indigenous solutions to African health challenges. Founded in 1956 as part of a plan to provide mobile medical assistance to remote regions in the east of the continent, the organization has evolved into a multifaceted institutional actor working on a diverse range of health issues with over 100 poor and marginalized rural and urban slum communities – from HIV/AIDS and malaria, to water and sanitation, surgical outreach and practitioner training. Committed strongly to building the capacity of local health systems, AMREF has emerged as a pioneer in community-based health care, as well as a regional leader in maternal and child health.

Now the largest educational NGO in India, Pratham was founded in 1994 to address teaching gaps in the slums of Mumbai. From those humble beginnings, the organization has expanded in scope and geographical coverage, teaching English and computer literacy, establishing libraries, publishing books and offering comprehensive learning support. Since its inception in 2007, Pratham’s flagship program, ‘Read India’ – which aims to catalyze existing resources at the village level to train teachers and harness domestic volunteers – is active in 38,000 villages, reaching over two million children in 2011 alone. Similarly, the organization’s ‘Annual Status of Education Report’ has become a crucial influence on evidence-based state policy planning.

One of the leading voices in the ‘appropriate technology’ movement, psychiatrist turned social entrepreneur Paul Polak founded iDE in 1982 as an organization devoted to the manufacture, marketing and distribution of affordable, scalable micro-irrigation and other low-cost water recovery systems throughout the developing world. Envisioning the rural poor as potential entrepreneurs and customers rather than charity recipients, iDE relies on local manufacturing, retailing, and maintenance resources to make affordable technologies available to farmers. The organization’s emblematic success has been the ‘treadle pump’ – a more efficient and user-friendly technology than traditional manual pumps. More than 1.5 million have been sold in Bangladesh alone, creating $1.4 billion in net additional income per year.

As in many other impoverished regions, the majority of the health population of sub-Saharan Africa lives in rural areas where the best roads are little more than dirt tracks. Without reliable transport, the millions invested in health materials and training will be wasted. Identifying this crucial gap, husband-and-wife team Barry and Andrea Coleman established Riders For Health in 1996. The organization manages over 1,400 motorcycles, ambulances and other four-wheel vehicles used in the delivery of health care in eight countries across Africa, including operationally challenging locations like Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. More than a humanitarian relief actor, MERLIN stays on to assist recovery in the long-term, building the capacity of local health care workers and embedding best practices to increase the resilience of at-risk communities in the face of future shocks.

What is your interest in NGOs?
I have worked with civil society for the last 15 years. In the past I collaborated with the Avina Foundation in Latin America in the field of social entrepreneurship, and supported the Schwab Foundation while at the World Economic Forum. Today, I am the co-founder of a leading boutique philanthropy consultancy. We advise a range of clients in fulfilling their philanthropic aspirations. I am also Vice President of Sustainable Finance Geneva and a board member of several foundations. Many paths lead me to NGOs as you can see.

What do you see as the biggest trend in the sector over the last 1-2 years?
There are more long-term underlying trends that remain key, such as accountability and related issues of transparency. However, another interesting trend is the fact that social innovations in transition countries – or so-called ‘poor’ countries – have begun to be replicated in developed economies. Let me give two examples. One of your Top 100 NGOs of last year, Friends International, has been asked to test a model – developed originally in South East Asia – in the United States. Their approach to working with disadvantaged youth is often considered as standard-setting.

What are the key challenges for NGOs linked to the financial crisis?
NGOs have grown more professional due to numerous factors, though the influence of limited financial resources is certainly one key element. This has been caused by the diminished performance of foundations, and the financial constraints imposed on public funding. At the same time, the financial crisis has also brought new ideas and talent into the sector. In a certain way, the crisis has provided an opportunity to rethink our status quo.

What is the most innovative NGO you have worked with?
I often feel we fool ourselves by equating social innovation with technical innovation. At the last European Venture Philanthropy Association meeting in Dublin, a speaker suggested “social innovation is not what is new, but what works better.” I like this quote because it helps us to move beyond the paradigm that only new is better. I think, however, that Arc en-Ciel in Lebanon is a very innovative model in its context – it is very interesting to see how an organization can create great value in a tense environment. Arc en-Ciel began as a civil war with wheel chairs, but today pursue six development streams, including medical waste management and eco-agriculture. Its founders have seen a weak state as an opportunity to create social value.

What do you think is the NGO model of the future?
NGOs, like businesses, are all about diversity – from small and medium size enterprises to global corporations. Their respective challenges are hardly the same, and neither are their models. Future models will depend on numerous factors, driven by an NGO’s mission. For instance, an advocacy NGO will need to further strengthen its independence, an NGO focused on service delivery will need to continue to innovate with regard to generating revenues. But both small and large NGOs will need to be more accountable in terms of impact, and the quality of their delivery. The time when NGOs had a blank check to “do the right thing” is gone.

Have you observed any challenges for NGOs linked to the financial crisis?
When asked why he created a microfinance institution focused on women, the founder of Fonkoze, Father Joseph Philippe, was clear: “women are the backbone of the Haitian economy and the doorway into the family unit.” The largest organization of its kind in Haiti, serving more than 56,000 women borrowers – most of whom live and work in the countryside – and over 250,000 savers, Fonkoze is committed to offering its clients a range of services that not only recognize the different points at which individuals can start their climb out of poverty, but also acknowledges that progress is not always linear. Much more than a bank, the organization also delivers critical programs in education, health, insurance and client protection.

Helen Keller International

When Helen Keller was born, her family said it was a miracle – for the long-term. Every day, nearly 6,000 people die from water-related illnesses, the vast majority children lacking access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities. Recognizing that part of the problem is the prevalence of good-hearted but unsustainable interventions, Water For People has developed an innovative model based on close collaboration with local communities and full coverage across entire districts and regions, rather than ad hoc projects at the household and village level. Local groups must be willing to not only contribute in-kind labor and funding to the entire project, but also participate in planning, implementation, operations, maintenance and repair. Across ten countries, Water For People is transforming the lives of over 300,000 people – for the long-term.
I nspiring disadvantaged children to know their rights, practice saving and launch enterprises, Aflatoun began in 1991 in Mumbai as an action research project affiliated with the Tata School of Social Studies. By leveraging a large network of implementing partners – ranging from local community groups to large international NGOs – Aflatoun has since provided social and financial skills to over 1.3 million children and youth in more than 90 countries via an innovative, activity-based program. The organization has also worked effectively in an advocacy context, with an Aflatoun module being included in UNICEF’s Child Friendly Schools curriculum, and its annual ‘Children & Change’ publication serving as an authoritative source of data and research for the broader child finance movement.

L aunched in 2004, FrontlineSMS is the brainchild of Ken Banks. During his work at Kruger National Park, Banks noticed that instead of the Internet, outlying communities used mobile phones for all communication needs. Following six weeks of “recoding on the kitchen table,” the FrontlineSMS interface was born. With a diverse range of functions – including FrontlineSMS:Credit, which allows users to send and receive mobile payments, as well as FrontlineSMS:Radio, enabling two-way dialogue between broadcasting companies and listeners in marginalized communities – FrontlineSMS is able to constantly evolve to match the development of mobile technology. Validating the organization’s commitment to a free, open-source platform, users downloaded the software 20,000 times in 2011 alone.

F ounded in 1976 on the basis of a vision to make family planning available to women and men around the world, Marie Stopes International is active in 42 countries, delivering reproductive health care and maternal health services to some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people. Though the organization operates over 600 service centers, the bulk of its work is carried out in remote, inaccessible and underserved communities – FrontlineSMS is able to reach more than 120 countries and reaching 125 million people. In pursuit of its simple mission – saving children’s lives and protecting their rights – Save the Children International engages in diverse and effective programming, from emergency relief (co-leading the education cluster under the auspices of the United Nations) to nutrition, education, protection, poverty alleviation and spirited global advocacy. A highly respected and visible organization, Save the Children International has only recently completed a sustained period of internal transition and consolidation.

O ne of the original international NGOs, Save the Children International was founded in 1919 to assist ‘children of the enemy’ following World War I. Comprising an alliance of 30 national organizations, it is now a global movement active in 120 countries and reaching 125 million people. In pursuit of its simple mission – saving children’s lives and protecting their rights – Save the Children International engages in diverse and effective programming, from emergency relief (co-leading the education cluster under the auspices of the United Nations) to nutrition, education, protection, poverty alleviation and spirited global advocacy. A highly respected and visible organization, Save the Children International has only recently completed a sustained period of internal transition and consolidation.

C elebrating 75 years of working for children’s rights, PLAN International was established when John Langdon-Davies and Eric Muggeridge sought to provide food, accommodation and education to children whose lives had been disrupted by the Spanish Civil War. Today, the organization has reached more than 56 million children in 50 developing countries, with the majority of its operating income derived from its pioneering child sponsorship scheme. Framed by the principle of child-centered community development – a model that emphasizes inclusion, gender equality and youth empowerment – PLAN International has most recently launched the “Because I am a Girl” campaign to tackle cultural barriers like child marriage and gender-based violence that prevent females from completing a quality education.
O n 20 December – the same day the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for a global ban on female genital mutilation – 40 communities in Guinea-Bissau, where Tostan delivers a number of educational projects, declared they would abandon harmful practices like female genital cutting and promote human rights. Although ending cutting was never one of Tostan’s original goals, the Dakar-based organization has been a major driver of change in many African villages. Rather than blaming or criticizing, Tostan – Wolof for ‘breakthrough’ – promotes community dialogue on a wide range of topics through its 30-month ‘Community Empowerment Program,’ based on the conviction that genuine democracy and development must always be rooted in and emerge from existing cultural practices and local knowledge.

In Australia, ophthalmologist Fred Hollows was lauded for his commitment to restoring sight to thousands living with avoidable blindness in remote indigenous communities and abroad. Established just before his death in 1993, the Fred Hollows Foundation is expanding this activity. Rather than ‘fly-in, fly-out’ surgery, the organization works to build local skills and in the past five years has trained over 38,000 eye surgeons and clinical support staff. By building intraocular lens factories in Eritrea and Nepal to lower the global price of lenses (required in cataract operations) it has contributed to the production of over five million lenses, reducing the cost of surgery to as little as $25 and helping to restore the sight of more than 50 out of 100. There is a serious plague that must be cured. For the past 38 years, Transparency International has strived to place, and keep, corruption high on the political and business agenda. By measuring and reporting on this deleterious activity, the international movement – which includes more than 100 independent national chapters and partners around the world – has both raised awareness of its devastating effects, as well as worked with governments, business leaders, local communities and other civil society organizations to fight for its eradication.

C orruption can happen anywhere, silently exacerbating poverty, inequality and social instability. According to the latest Corruption Perceptions Index, not one country is free from corruption, with the majority scoring below 50 out of 100. There is a serious plague that must to be cured. For the past 38 years, Transparency International has strived to place, and keep, corruption high on the political and business agenda. By measuring and reporting on this deleterious activity, the international movement – which includes more than 100 independent national chapters and partners around the world – has both raised awareness of its devastating effects, as well as worked with governments, business leaders, local communities and other civil society organizations to fight for its eradication.

W orking as a pediatrician in a public hospital in Rio de Janeiro in 1991, Vera Cordeiro was shocked by the number of children successfully treated for an infectious disease who then returned after being re-infected at home. Creating Saúde Criança to provide low-income children and families with effective long-term health care, the organization offers a holistic response to address both diseases and the socioeconomic factors that serve to aggravate their symptoms. Saúde Criança has developed an innovative two-year ‘Family Action Plan’ that targets specific areas of family wellness necessary to achieve sustainable good health, such as education, housing and income.

D rawing upon her educational experiences in the region, Vicky Colbert returned to Colombia in the mid-1970s to introduce Escuela Nueva – ‘new school’ – a unique pedagogical model aimed at addressing the dysfunctional approach of the conventional school system, especially in rural and low-income areas. The organization’s cost-effective and scalable strategy includes a focus on active learning centered on student participation, a revamped role for teachers as facilitators of cooperative learning, more interactive materials allowing for self-instruction, and a curriculum that combines life skills with academic subjects. Ultimately adopted formally at the national level in Colombia, the innovative Escuela Nueva model has since been replicated in 16 countries, reaching over five million children.
Founded in 2005, Operation ASHA has the ambitious goal of achieving a tuberculosis-free India. Motivated by the inability of her patients to receive proper care, Shelly Batra partnered with Sandeep Ahuja to develop a cost-effective treatment now delivered by 240 clinics. Having recently expanded to Cambodia, Operation ASHA continues to grow at an impressive rate. The organization dedicates significant energy to finding efficient medication delivery methods. The most successful strategy has been the ‘DOTS’ (Directly Observed Therapy Short Course) program, which increases accessibility for poor patients. More innovative is Operation ASHA’s rigorous patient tracking model, eCompliance. A partnership with Microsoft, the software represents a key breakthrough replicable by other organizations dealing with antibiotic resistant diseases.

Founded in 2002, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is driven by a simple goal: to end malnutrition. In the decade since, GAIN has partnered with governments and international agencies in 30 countries, sponsoring projects involving more than 600 companies and civil society organizations. Using population-based programs to deliver basic foods fortified with vitamins and minerals, GAIN relies on a simple strategy to reach the maximum amount of people possible. The organization’s market-based approach also includes fostering local initiative: In Cote D’Ivoire, for instance, GAIN actively sponsors Protein Kisèe-La, an organization that provides affordable and fortified cereal products for infants and nursing mothers. Ultimately, GAIN’s scope is its strongest point, reaching over 610 million people.

**Top NGOs By Criteria.**

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<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
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<th>Sustainability</th>
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<td>8. WATER FOR PEOPLE</td>
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**Mobilizing Communities To Eliminate TB**

**Building Capacity in Unstable Environments**

**Public-Private Partnerships for Nutrition**

**HQ Location: India**

**HQ Location: United States**

**HQ Location: Switzerland**

© International Medical Corps © GAIN/Oliver Wilkins © Kieran Oudshoorn
It’s 18:49, the project is due today and a few ideas have come up. How can he get feedback to make the right decisions? With his company’s social network.
The impetus for the founding of WITNESS as a pioneering advocacy organization in 1992, Peter Gabriel's vision of video as a tool for the advancement of human rights has now become a reality. WITNESS’ role is more relevant than ever – from partnering with Central African NGOs to combat the use of rape as a tool of war, to empowering poor families being forcibly evicted from their homes ahead of the World Cup in Brazil.

Committed to supporting victims in order to transform their personal stories of abuse into effective tools for justice, the organization works with grassroots groups to bring the power of video into their existing campaigns, trains activists and shapes the safe and ethical use of video online and offline.

The organization draws upon a diverse ‘toolbox’ aimed at deep societal change – from media production to mediation and facilitation, training, community organizing, sports, theater and music. Presently active in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Search For Common Ground is also committed to improving methods for measuring effectiveness in the peacebuilding sector, establishing a specialized Institutional Learning and Research Division to develop new research methodologies.

One of the original peacebuilding NGOs of the contemporary era, Search For Common Ground works to transform the way the world deals with conflict – away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. Rather than focus on key individuals to achieve short-term gains, the organization draws upon a diverse ‘toolbox’ aimed at deep societal change – from media production to mediation and facilitation, training, community organizing, sports, theater and music. Presently active in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, Search For Common Ground is also committed to improving methods for measuring effectiveness in the peacebuilding sector, establishing a specialized Institutional Learning and Research Division to develop new research methodologies.

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Emerging from an intercultural Christian community just outside of Georgia, Habitat For Humanity was founded on the premise of “partnership housing” - building sustainable structures alongside volunteers, with beneficiaries offered affordable loan terms and expected to contribute reciprocally with labor. Since expanding internationally in 1973, the organization has experienced impressive levels of growth. By 2012, Habitat For Humanity had successfully built 600,000 houses globally. In lower income countries, the organization partners with microfinance institutions to provide additional flexibility through incremental financing and group saving. Yet, Habitat For Humanity does more than simply build houses - initiatives in Honduras, for instance, have included home and health education, as well as domestic financial management.

KickStart International began with the basic premise that “a poor person’s top need is a way to make more money.” In response, its founders developed a cheap and sustainable irrigation pump - the ‘MoneyMaker’ - to support African farmers in a move from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. Reflecting the massive effect of a simple idea, the organization estimates that it has sold over 200,000 pumps in Kenya, Tanzania and Mali, lifting almost 700,000 people out of poverty. Beyond this innovative low-cost technology, KickStart International is also demonstrating a strong commitment to refining and improving its model. The organization is partnering with the International Food Policy Research Institute on a three-year study to measure the impact of the pump on family health, nutrition, income, education and farming.

Headquartered in Apeldoorn, but active throughout the world, ZOA (formerly ‘ZOA Refugee Care’) began as a student initiative in 1973 offering assistance to Southeast Asian refugees. The organization now operates in 15 countries providing relief to people affected by conflict or natural disasters, and working with affected communities to recover their livelihoods and boost future resilience. ZOA’s three specific fields of expertise encompass livelihoods and food security, basic education, and water, sanitation and hygiene. Where possible the organization encourages collaborative work with NGO partners, and acts as the lead agency of the Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation focusing on addressing fragility in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Uganda, Sudan and South Sudan.

Founded in 1994 in Phnom Penh as a local outreach project for street children, Friends International has rapidly expanded its operational scope to encompass the entire Southeast Asian region, as well as Honduras, Mexico and Egypt. Working with marginalized children, their families and communities in urban areas, the organization is dedicated to ensuring this target population becomes productive and functional citizens. ‘Friends Programs’ are focused on protection, reintegration, prevention and capacity-building, while the ‘ChildSafe Network’ is a joint advocacy and service initiative educating travelers and reaching out directly to at-risk youth. As a means to offer practical training opportunities to disconnected youth, as well as increase overall sustainability, Friends-International also runs a number of social businesses.
Most Promising New NGOs.

In the process of producing this year’s ranking, four young NGOs stood out for their out-of-the-box thinking and willingness to dream big despite modest beginnings. While it is still too early to gauge the true impact these organizations will ultimately have, each impressed us with their innovation and long-term view. Though markedly different in the thematic space they occupy, Code For America, Child & Youth Finance International, Skateistan and the Akilah Institute For Women are all NGOs with a bright future.

Established in response to charity appeals from missionaries working in war-torn Biafra in 1968, Belfast-based Concern has gone on to work in over 50 countries, responding to major emergencies as well as implementing long-term development programs. Today the organization is present in 25 of the world’s poorest nations, with a major operational focus on health and nutrition, education, HIV/AIDS and community livelihoods. Over time, Concern has invested in early warning systems for slow onset crises, allowing it to act fast before situations deteriorate and help communities build their resilience. In this vein, the organization has played a leading role in the ‘Scaling-Up Nutrition’ (SUN) initiative, which promotes improved nutrition during the first 1,000 days of a child’s life.

Founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1995 by ‘digital inclusion’ pioneer Rodrigo Baggio, the Center For Digital Inclusion aims to use technology as a powerful medium to fight poverty, stimulate entrepreneurship and develop a new generation of change-makers. The organization’s innovative model revolves around a decentralized network of ‘CDI Community Centers’ established with local partners in the most impoverished communities in the region. Three principle objectives guide the activities undertaken at these sites: self management, sustainability and a commitment to implementing the Center For Digital Inclusion’s unique pedagogy, which encourages students to use technology as the main tool in completing a ‘social advocacy project’ in their local community. To date, the model has impacted almost 1.5 million lives across 12 countries.

Like a number of NGOs on this list, the American Refugee Committee emerged from the chaos that enveloped Southeast Asia in the 1970s. Moved by the plight of the millions affected by the conflict, Chicago businessman Neal Ball founded the organization to provide medical services to individuals stranded in refugee camps on the Thai border. The American Refugee Committee now works with refugee communities in seven countries providing shelter, clean water and sanitation, health care, skills training, microcredit education and protection. Still focused on refining its programs despite a 30-year history, the organization recently developed the innovative ‘I AM A STAR’ program, which leverages the influence of the Somali diaspora to help shape its response to the world’s most enduring humanitarian crisis.
Dedicated to restoring civic trust in fractured state institutions, the International Center for Transitional Justice helps heal and rebuild societies devastated by past atrocities. The organization believes sustainable peace can only be achieved via a three-tiered approach: reformation of key institutions, engagement with civil society organizations and careful analysis of recent developments in transitional justice. Yet despite this holistic approach, it is the International Center for Transitional Justice’s commitment to civil society organizations that remains the most innovative aspect of its work. Active partnerships with grassroots groups have resulted in an array of solutions, including the creation of an Apartheid Museum in South Africa, and the development of a legal framework for transitional justice’s contribution to peacemaking, however, is the initiative ‘Constitution-making for Facto authorities accountable. Currently focusing its efforts on banning the use of anti-personnel mines, prohibiting the recruitment of child soldiers, and ending sexual violence in armed conflict, Geneva Call has already secured the formal commitments of 42 groups to date. Founded in 2000 with a view to addressing the lack of international attention being paid to the growing influence of non-state actors in situations of violent conflict, Geneva Call focuses on engaging armed groups in a constructive dialogue aimed at persuading members to respect specific humanitarian norms. The organization is perhaps most famous for its innovative use of specially formulated ‘Deeds of Commitment’ as a means to hold guerrilla groups, liberation movements and other de facto authorities accountable. Currently focusing its efforts on banning the use of anti-personnel mines, prohibiting the recruitment of child soldiers, and ending sexual violence in armed conflict, Geneva Call has already secured the formal commitments of 42 groups to date.

Evolved from its roots as a United Nations pilot project, Interpeace is focused on building sustainable peace in conflict-ridden regions. The organization’s peacebuilding principles focus on the local – insisting that peace must first be locally-owned, participatory and long-term. Operating in 16 countries, Interpeace partners with grassroots civil society organizations to develop tailored strategies, leading to a variety of activities, including youth programs to combat gang violence in Latin America, platforms for dialogue to encourage reconciliation in Liberia and changes to agricultural policies in Mozambique addressing societal grievances. Perhaps its most innovative contribution to peacemaking, however, is the initiative ‘Constitution-making for Peace,’ featuring a handbook guiding national actors involved in the process of creating a constitution.

More than half of sub-Saharan African countries have not reached gender parity in primary education, while at a secondary level, gender gaps exist in most of the region’s countries. It is in this context that the Forum for African Women Educationalists was founded in 1992 to promote female education in the region. Working in 32 countries, the organization is focused on achieving gender equity and equality via targeted programs encouraging partnerships between schools, communities, civil society and governments. Amongst a suite of projects, the Gender-Responsive Pedagogy was initiated in 2009 and has led to an improvement in girls’ retention and performance, greater participation and improved gender relations within schools. Over 6,600 teachers have been trained to date.

In 1987, the Amazon was disappearing at a rate of 14,305 acres per day. While other NGOs organized protests and boycotts, Rainforest Alliance realized the better strategy was to provide incentives for forestry, farm and tourism enterprises to manage their land in a sustainable way. Since then, it has worked to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods via a transformation of land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior – expanding its original mission to address the social impacts on those who depend on resource-based jobs. Thanks to a partnership with the Sustainable Agriculture Network – which manages the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ standard – the organization has introduced a sustainable agriculture model in 31 countries directly affecting over five million people.

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Code For America is doing just that. Launched at the beginning of 2011, the organization functions on a simple premise – by matching technology fellows with government institutions, not only would new efficiencies be identified, but the public sector would also be placed on the same innovation curve as the rest of society. Two years later, this “peace corps for geeks” has led to a range of innovations, from an ‘adopt a fire hydrant’ app allowing Boston residents to keep these facilities functional during snow season, to a recently-launched ‘civic accelerator’ for government-related start-ups.
Nine percent of young people worldwide lack access to basic financial services. Yet, financial inclusion and access is critical in developing financial literacy and building positive financial behavior over time. Established by the founder of Aflatoun, Child & Youth Finance International is pursuing an ambitious “spin the wheel” model by bringing together a global movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth. Simply by aligning the movement of international stakeholders – from financial regulators, to banks, child rights groups and academia – dedicated to increasing the financial empowerment and security of children and youth.

Concerned with the increasing incidence of drug abuse and street crime amongst Indonesia’s youth, together with increasing high school dropout rates, Veronica Colondam established YCAB Foundation in 1999 to address issues of youth development. An abbreviation of an Indonesian expression translating to “loving the nation’s children,” the organization’s program consists of three connected activities: the primary prevention of risky behavior, including drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, through education and the adoption of a positive lifestyle; digital inclusion, English literacy and vocational centers; and seed capital for youth entrepreneurship, including micro loans and a job center for graduates. From reaching out to 2,000 youth per year in 1999, YCAB Foundation now benefits over 400,000 and has expanded its model internationally.

Literacy rates in rural India are amongst the world’s highest, and the lack of effective educational infrastructure makes it difficult to address such a persistent challenge. Hundreds of millions of people are either illiterate, or “neo-literates” – possessing only rudimentary skills despite several years of primary school. Realizing the situation demanded out-of-the-box thinking, Brij Kothari devised a very simple, yet cost effective (and scalable) solution using ‘Same Language Subtitling’ (SLS) – the practice of subtitling television programs, music videos and other audiovisual content drawn from popular culture in the same language as the audio track. This ‘karaoke’ approach to literacy provides crucial regular reading practice to over 200 million neo-literates, and has prompted another 270 million to begin reading.

Founded in 1958 by educationist, social reformer and spiritual leader Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah, Dhaka Ahsania Mission has since established itself as one of the largest NGOs in Bangladesh, implementing a range of diverse programs in the areas of health, education, agriculture, technology, human rights and climate change – the practice of subtitling television programs, music videos and other audiovisual content drawn from popular culture in the same language as the audio track. This ‘karaoke’ approach to literacy provides crucial regular reading practice to over 200 million neo-literates, and has prompted another 270 million to begin reading. Dhaka Ahsania Mission has since discarded its ideological ties, instead focused on advocacy, policy work and technical assistance. Throughout a 60-year history, the International Commission of Jurists has remained at the forefront of human rights standards, including a key role in the creation of the International Criminal Court. From ensuring women’s access to justice in Botswana to highlighting violations of due process in Sri Lanka, it also works assiduously at the grassroots to build local capacity in the justice sector.

Empowering At-Risk Youth

Training Refugees to Rebuild Their Lives

Achieving Financial Inclusion for the Young

Multi-Dimensional Poverty Alleviation

The Pop Culture Literacy Program

A Seminal Actor in Human Rights

Child & Youth Finance

Asylum Access

YCAB Foundation

PlanetRead

Dhaka Ahsania Mission

ICJ

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© YCAB Foundation

© PlanetRead

© YCAB Foundation
World Vision International is one of the largest relief, development and advocacy organizations in the world today. Established in 1950 to care for orphans in Asia, it has grown to embrace broader issues of community development and policy change, working at the community level to help individuals overcome poverty and injustice. Strongly informed by its Christian values, World Vision International has attracted criticism at times for its child sponsorship model, its ‘gifts-in-kind’ approach and perceived conflicts stemming from its religious orientation. Ultimately, however, the organization’s sheer scale and scope to experiment – for instance with a new LMMS accountability technology during the recent crisis in the Sahel – reflects a level of impact still beyond the realm of most counterparts.

November Foundation’s no-shave November, as well as its contingent of sponsored ‘Mo Bros,’ have become a well-known cultural phenomenon in recent years – Facebook is littered with budding facial hair growth. More than a gimmick, however, or mere fundraising campaign – though $124 million raised in 2011 alone is testament to the movement’s reach – the Movember Foundation’s mission goes some way to addressing the societal gap regarding men’s health by raising awareness of issues like prostate and testicular cancer, and depression. Similarly, the organization’s global action plan involves both an annual collaborative research project, as well as ‘PromoVois,’ a prostate cancer knowledge exchange program. Both initiatives seek to encourage partnerships between men’s health experts to inspire solutions to common diseases.

Established by Jacques Attali in 1998, PlaNet Finance has developed into a group of affiliated organizations delivering a diverse set of services. Based in Paris, its international network includes activities in over 80 countries, focused on improving access to financial services for those trapped in poverty and excluded from the conventional banking system (including in the banlieues of France). More than just a conventional microcredit lender, the organization supports microfinance efforts by federating financial intermediaries and providing them with operational services. It also works with banks and financial institutions, international agencies and governments to facilitate the creation of a more efficient and equitable sector. One part of this effort was the launch of Planet Rating – the first microfinance rating agency.

E n ding Imp unity fo r Internationa l Cr imes

P rotecting Ess ential Lega l R i ghts

F ree The Children

T erre Des Hommes

M ovember Foundation

PlaNet Finance

W orld Vision International

T R I A L
85  SKATEBOARDING AS EMPOWERMENT

Skateistan

86  REDUCING CONFLICT RISK

International Alert

87  COMBATING ORGANIZED CRIME THROUGH CULTURE

Libera

88  A 'NEW FAMILY' FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Krousar Thmey

89  HEADLINE-GRABBING ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Greenpeace

90  ENDING ECOLOGICAL ‘OVERSHOOT’

Global Footprint Network

91  LIGHTING UP THE AMAZON

Luz Portátil Brasil

92  INSPIRING A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM

INJAZ Al-Arab

© Skateistan
© Carol Allen Studio for International Alert
© Alex Hofford/Greenpeace
© Libera © Luz Portátil Brasil
© Krousar Thmey © Krousar Thmey
# The Top 100 NGOs: A Complete List

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How The World Came To Save Haiti And Left A Disaster.

By Jonathan M. Katz • Includes an extract reproduced with permission from Palgrave Macmillan

A boy in the Cité Soleil settlement carries a bucket of water from a broken pipe after a struggle with fellow residents © IN PHOTOGRAPH KRAESI
Long before January 2010, when the sky above Port-au-Prince swarmed with foreign aircraft and aid caravans proliferated in the rubble dust, Haiti had been known for one of the world’s thickest concentrations of aid groups. The country’s ever-worsening poverty and proximity to the United States (US) and Europe’s island holdings, combined with an absence of major conflict, had for decades made it a place where aid workers felt needed and free to work. A persistent lack of local governance meanwhile meant that managers could experiment as they pleased. Many of the most successful projects, by their own criteria, had long since become essential providers of public services, further supplanting and weakening the state.

This weakening of sovereignty was a bitter pill for the second-oldest independent republic in the Western Hemisphere. Snide references to the Caribbean nation being governed as a de facto ‘Republic of NGOs’ date back to at least the 1990s. Moreover, experienced aid workers themselves knew that the cycle of dependency and despondency undermined their own goals. A persistent lack of coordination among NGOs ranging from offices of the world’s pre-eminent international actors to one-man shows seemingly improvised on the spot made an effective aid regime impossible. When in mid-2009, less than a year before the earthquake, former US President Bill Clinton was appointed the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy for Haiti, one of his primary missions was to improve NGO coordination, eliminate redundancies, and see to it that...
When the earthquake struck, longtime Haiti hands and clear-eyed aid leaders thus faced a paradox. They knew that outmoded, uncoordinated assistance had not only failed to help in the past, but also helped create the fragility exposed by the disaster. On the other hand, there was now an unspeakably dire emergency, to be followed by long-term, resource-exhausting reconstruction. To add final fuel to the fire, even more NGOs—many with no experience in Haiti whatsoever—were rushing into the disaster zone, lured both by a genuine desire to help and a bonanza of donations pouring in from shocked observers around the world. In the US alone, private donations reached $1.4 billion by year’s end—equating to approximately $6 per American adult. Ultimately, more than $3 billion would be donated to international NGOs after the quake, part of a gargantuan pledged total of $16.3 billion in all. Coordination would be more crucial, yet harder to achieve, than ever.

The approach chosen after the catastrophe was to coordinate aid actors through a system of humanitarian ‘clusters’, in which efforts would be organized by subject area, such as housing or sanitation. Representatives from aid groups of all sizes and provenances—from Médecins Sans Frontières to the newest aid-group leader of all, the movie star Sean Penn—gathered for regular meetings to share data, discuss results, and agree on new strategies. The system’s top-level coordinators were in turn to liaise with deployed military and other government agencies in hopes of achieving a consistent response. Variations on this basic strategy had been employed after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and elsewhere, including at a smaller scale in Haiti after a series of deadly tropical storms in 2008.

As I trace in my new book, The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster, the system failed. A critical moment came at the beginning of February 2010, toward the end of the first month after the quake. At that point, most people in the quake zone had moved out of the acute crisis stage.
There were no longer bodies to be found in the rubble. Medical teams still working had moved on to treating car-crash victims and malaria. To most people in the streets – where nearly every quake survivor, including me, was sleeping – it was time to try and restart businesses, and cobble together some form of adequate if temporary housing. In humanitarian workers’ parlance, Haitians were moving from “relief” to “recovery.”

At this crucial juncture, the underpinnings of the reconstruction that was to follow were being laid. The places where Haitians were settling would be their homes for months at least. The way in which post-quake land use quickly evolved would become the new normal for years. But the overall effort has not fulfilled its lofty promise. Poverty is as dire as ever. Hunger is worsening. At the three-year mark, post-quake homelessness remains a crisis, and new housing options are not addressing the critical need for future resilience and disaster preparedness. Cholera, a disease never before confirmed in Haiti, has claimed 5,500 lives since being introduced by foreigners – with all evidence pointing to a contingent of UN peacekeepers stationed beside a rural tributary.

The good news is that Haiti’s story isn’t over. The earthquake proved that a mere increase in attention and even a surge of new funds is not enough. But if there are real changes in attitude and action – if responders can find ways to not only truly work with Haitians themselves, but follow the public’s lead – the cycle can be broken. The real project of allowing Haiti to stand up on its own can succeed, and the NGOs can finally go home.
A Dictatorship’s Success Stories.

By Laurent Vinatier - Photography courtesy of Alexander Vaskovich

A mirror of disinterest - passers-by ignore a poll-related performance the day before parliamentary elections in the Belarusian capital, Minsk.
The village was still part of the Soviet Union when Yuri Chizh – today one of Belarus’ richest businessmen, with close links to President Aleksandr Lukashenko – preferred to run around in the neighboring forest rather than attend school. To get up to childhood mischief, he had to carefully avoid his family’s bright yellow home, which stood only a few meters between the school and the kolkhoz. At that time, it seems, the two intersecting streets of Sabali in Biarozovsky district, 250 kilometres south of Minsk, were full of life. Forty years later, while the petrified Soviet Brezhnev era has disappeared into history, the village has plunged into a kind of hibernation. The school has been dismantled, and families with children have fled to the cities. Most of the wooden houses lie empty – indeed, only 70 pensioners remain. The kolkhoz holds on unconvincingly, with two or three old tractors languishing in a yard. The endless wet and flat countryside, dotted with familiar birch trees, has become noticeably sadder. The yellow house is slightly less colorful.

Chizh had to leave for Minsk relatively early, in order to commence studies in electronics at the Belarusian Polytechnical Institute. From then on, everything moved quickly. He had a chance to exercise his entrepreneurial skills during perestroika, and now heads a business empire based on the Triple holding, which reprocesses...
and exports oil products bought from Russia at discounted prices. Chizh has also diversified into civil engineering, construction, manufacturing, restaurants, food production and a network of hypermarkets – the Prostore chain. He has been especially prominent in media headlines in recent times for building the first luxury Kempinski hotel in central Minsk, just behind the Circus and near the unchanged Soviet-era Gorky Park. Although associated with the Slovenian Riko Group in the context of that project, Chizh has failed, however, to escape the EU’s sanction list.

Blacklisted since March, Chizh is undoubtedly paying for his close links with Lukashenko, and, by implication, for his impressive success. Yet in compensation for the European punishment, his boss has just granted Chizh a 99-year concession over his native Sabali village. Essentially, this means that every single square inch of the land where he grew up ultimately belongs to him. After years of fruitful wanderings in the capital, the oligarch has returned home. He has brought with him an immense sponsorship project focused on building a large complex boasting a hotel, restaurant, ethnomouseum and a host of other infrastructure. In theory, Sabali will benefit as a revitalized rural center. At the very least, the faded paintwork of the wooden houses will be refreshed.

Belarus is not devoid of successful private companies. Chizh’s Triple ranks among the leaders, but many others follow close behind. Alexander Moshensky’s Santa Impex for food – particularly seafood – processing, Pavel Topazinus’ Tabak Invest, Alexander Shakutin’s Amkodor for road-building machinery, or Anatoly Ternavsky’s Union-M group – with activities ranging from petrochemical exports to banking, restaurants and construction – have no reason to be ashamed. Among these business leaders, only Ternavsky has been the subject of EU sanctions. Notably, the other three have significant business boss: Lukashenko. Ironically, in the few remaining post-Soviet dictatorships, the Marxist economic model has been reversed. Political superstructures today prevail over the base.

The new bourgeois class of Belarus, owners of the means of production, have been reduced to acting as presidential ‘wallet persons,’ or kosheleti as they are nicknamed in Russian. They cannot even pretend to stand alone as independent partners or shareholders in the national wealth. Lukashenko usually considers these individuals as simple business managers tasked with implementing his instructions. Their dependence is as prodigious as their efforts to maintain the President’s confidence. Ternavsky, for instance, has been obliged to employ Lukashenko’s daughter-in-law, Anna. He also sponsors the Presidential Sport’s Club, headed by Dmitri Lukashenko, Alexander’s son and Anna’s husband. Meanwhile, Chizh seems to prefer playing ice hockey on the team as the President. He cannot refuse to sponsor the cultural resuscitation of Belarus’ birch-dotted countryside in the south, and when, for mysterious reasons, several of his top managers were arrested, he remained silent. The new Christian cross presented recently to Sabali by a Polish historical society, commemorating the Polish-Belarusian insurrection against Tsarist Russia in 1863 – and which will hardly be a tourist attraction in the middle of the kolhooz – has a poignant political meaning.

In Belarus, Lukashenko decides almost all matters. The 58-year old former state farm manager assumed power in 1994, and recently described himself in a widely publicized interview as “the last and only dictator in Europe.” Though most infamous internationally as a result of accusations of torture and other human rights abuses – often focused on opposition figures – his political choices also determine business strategies. Chizh may have willingly agreed to allocate some money to his childhood village so long as he could also run his business according to his own interests and economic rationale. Now on the EU sanctions list, he has fallen as collateral damage in the President’s acrimonious relations with Europe, entrapped within Belarusian diplomatic strategies.

For Chizh, as for most of his colleagues, there are obvious advantages in developing overseas trade relationships and increasing their presence in European markets. Yet, they are increasingly prevented from doing so. Chizh is officially stigmatized, along with other not-yet-blacklisted businessmen, and seen as guilty by association. Coping with the growing gap between attractive trading opportunities in Europe and necessary political loyalty to the boss in Minsk has proven especially delicate. No leading business figures can speak out against their President – at least not yet – since they are kept divided by astute pressures from the political and security services. Consequently, some have already opted to resettle in Russia, where inflation is under tighter control and local authorities can guarantee more sustainable economic and political conditions. But those Belarusian firms in Russia also operate within a larger market, faced with – usually – stronger competitors. As a result, they are vulnerable to becoming easy targets for

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acquisition by more powerful rivals. Ultimately, Belarusian business needs Europe.

The EU’s reaction to the deteriorating political situation following dubious presidential elections in 2010 has been direct and demonstrative. To date, more than 200 people – mainly security and judicial officials – have been banned from traveling to Europe, and have seen their bank accounts blocked. Last March, 12 more individuals and 29 companies were added to the list, and their foreign assets frozen. Some EU member states, however, appear reluctant to enforce these restrictions wholeheartedly.

The vanguard of Lithuania, Latvia and Slovenia, for instance, intervened to reduce the scope of the second round of sanctions. The two Baltic ports profit so heavily from acting as the transit point for goods imported by Belarus that it would have been commercially self-destructive to participate actively in stemming the flow. Moshanski’s food products and a handful of Chizh’s assets related to his Prostore supermarket chain, amongst others, have thus been shielded from the European list. More discreetly, the governments of the Netherlands, Germany and Austria have also done little behind the scenes to oppose the determined Baltic negotiating stance. The Dutch are one of the main European importers of reprocessed Belarusian oil products, while the latter two countries have deep business ties in Minsk and beyond, involving some significant national actors such as banks and chemical and machinery companies. The EU cannot completely shut the door on Belarus.

The sanctions policy has had limited impact, however, at least so far as the business sector is concerned. It seems that banning (for differing reasons) Peftiev, Chizh and Ternavsky, and freezing their assets, is merely the minimum action the EU felt obliged to undertake in the current circumstances. Peftiev, believed to be Belarus’ richest business figure, was already within the orbit of American investigators for his troubled relations with non-recommended states. Chizh and Ternavsky, leading very similar holding companies, mainly work and prosper within Belarusian boundaries. Sergei Satsuk, Director of Ezhednevnik Zhurnal, and probably the most reputable business observer in Minsk, confirms that “Chizh’s interests in Europe represent only 3 percent of his whole empire.” It is likely that Ternavsky has even fewer business

‘As long as Russia agrees to subsidize its small neighbor, Lukashenko and his entourage will be able to resist any European pressure or public demonstrations of discontent.’
interests outside Belarus. As a result, the EU sanctions have hardly harmed them.

The EU could, however, have a significant impact on other European-Belarus businesses. Mosheisky, Shakutin and Topuzidz all have EU-based holdings, as do many other individuals who prefer to invest in Belarus from a safe external vantage point – a practice that is spreading within the domestic community as it helps to substantially lower dependence on Lukashenko. Consequently, through an ironic political twist, reinforcing sanctions on Belarusian businesses mainly hurts those – such as the promising young Aleksei Zhukov heading the Alyuteh Company – who are trying to escape the reaches of the President’s control. The resultant impact when it comes to foreign investor confidence means that developing interests in the EU has become increasingly difficult for such enterprises. Potential local partners in external markets have no guarantee that, sooner or later, these good willed and more or less independent figures will not be hit adversely by further European restrictions.

At the same time, alternative policies are difficult to identify. Betting on strengthening the political opposition and democratic breakthroughs is not a realistic option from a European perspective. Liberal and opposition movements are deeply divided between several leaders, none of whom stand out as obvious challengers to Lukashenko. Too ideological and radicalized, most also act, in part, from outside the country – predominantly, from Poland. This split geographical base is likely to lead to a kind of muted competition between externally based groups – especially media actors – and domestic activists. Because the latter take most of the risks in a climate of strong repression, they typically also claim the most legitimacy. Meanwhile, the external groups, with greater control over communications, try to exert some influence by favoring one faction over another. Moreover, when the wives or sisters of former presidential candidates speak as if they were representing a particular group, further confusion is added to an already blurred picture.

So far, none of these movements has been able to propose a clear, effective and realistic strategy. Arguably, it is because it would be futile to call for regime change in the current Belarusian context. As long as Russia agrees to subsidize its small neighbor, Lukashenko and his entourage will be able to resist any European pressure or public demonstrations of discontent. Minsk currently receives several billion dollars from Moscow each year to buy social peace, as well as to provide minimal economic stability. The President is therefore under no pressure to sit at a negotiating table to convey their message – whether via the media, or in an open and free political or parliamentary context – the opposition cannot be held totally responsible for its failure to appear the relevant, credible and legitimate.

Without the means to organize and communicate, any opposition movement would find it difficult to unify potential members and exercise a political role. The groups aligned against Lukashenko cannot count on their forces, assess their audience or set achievable targets, so instead are condemned to agitate in almost empty spaces. Recent parliamentary electoral campaigns in Belarus illustrate this point. The major opposition groups – dismissed as ‘nobodies’ by Lukashenko – boycotted last September’s elections to protest the detention of political prisoners and alleged opportunities for electoral fraud. Focused on the boycott issue, those opposition parties that did participate said nothing about economic issues, and hardly mentioned the traumatic currency crisis of 2011, much less propose any solutions. Unless Russia performs a U-turn, provoking a serious financial crash in Belarus, Lukashenko has ensured his political position for the next three years, while the opposition remains frozen. Well-informed independent experts in Minsk confirm that, “There is nothing more to do now than to wait for the next presidential election in 2015.”

In Sabali, meanwhile, people tend to think that even if there were no more elections, life would not change. With a pension of around $200 dollars per month, the elderly can meet all their basic needs and live quite well. Well, that is, if one discounts traveling beyond the village or eating out at nearby restaurants. Ivan, who supervises Sabali’s first small ethno-museum set up by his son in an old house nearby, was in no hurry to vote. When the ballot box arrived he inserted his ballot paper in front of the two political or parliamentary context – without the means to organize and communicate, any opposition movement would find it difficult to unify potential members and exercise a political role. The groups aligned against Lukashenko cannot count their forces, assess their audience or set achievable targets, so instead are condemned to agitate in almost empty spaces.

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with what he and others would suggest are barely legitimate opposition leaders. Wishful thinking and lobbying for strengthened actions based on promoting European values can lead nowhere, at least in the immediate future. Even more so as the EU has never previously shown an inclination to enforce such a moral policy elsewhere. Although the new European Dialogue for Modernization, launched last April, includes a number of very pragmatic goals, it has not, to date, proven to be well managed or coordinated. Perhaps inevitably, it has also failed to deliver any firm results.

Oddly, the demands of the Belarusian opposition do not match economic and political reality. This apparent incongruity constitutes one of Lukashenko’s major achievements. Clearly, deprived of any public platform to communicate its message, the EU sanctions have hardly harmed them. The EU could, however, have a significant impact on other European-Belarus businesses. Mosheisky, Shakutin and Topuzidz all have EU-based holdings, as do many other individuals who prefer to invest in Belarus from a safe external vantage point – a practice that is spreading within the domestic community as it helps to substantially lower dependence on Lukashenko. Consequently, through an ironic political twist, reinforcing sanctions on Belarusian businesses mainly hurts those – such as the promising young Aleksei Zhukov heading the Alyuteh Company – who are trying to escape the reaches of the President’s control. The resultant impact when it comes to foreign investor confidence means that developing interests in the EU has become increasingly difficult for such enterprises. Potential local partners in external markets have no guarantee that, sooner or later, these good willed and more or less independent figures will not be hit adversely by further European restrictions.

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So far, none of these movements has been able to propose a clear, effective and realistic strategy. Arguably, it is because it would be futile to call for regime change in the current Belarusian context. As long as Russia agrees to subsidize its small neighbor, Lukashenko and his entourage will be able to resist any European pressure or public demonstrations of discontent. Minsk currently receives several billion dollars from Moscow each year to buy social peace, as well as to provide minimal economic stability. The President is therefore under no pressure to sit at a negotiating table to convey their message – whether via the media, or in an open and free political or parliamentary context – the opposition cannot be held totally responsible for its failure to appear the relevant, credible and legitimate.

Without the means to organize and communicate, any opposition movement would find it difficult to unify potential members and exercise a political role. The groups aligned against Lukashenko cannot count on their forces, assess their audience or set achievable targets, so instead are condemned to agitate in almost empty spaces. Recent parliamentary electoral campaigns in Belarus illustrate this point. The major opposition groups – dismissed as ‘nobodies’ by Lukashenko – boycotted last September’s elections to protest the detention of political prisoners and alleged opportunities for electoral fraud. Focused on the boycott issue, those opposition parties that did participate said nothing about economic issues, and hardly mentioned the traumatic currency crisis of 2011, much less propose any solutions. Unless Russia performs a U-turn, provoking a serious financial crash in Belarus, Lukashenko has ensured his political position for the next three years, while the opposition remains frozen. Well-informed independent experts in Minsk confirm that, “There is nothing more to do now than to wait for the next presidential election in 2015.”
A country increasingly defined outside its own borders by a single issue – the will they, won’t they to and fro of the nuclear question – Iran and its people are too often reduced, despite a rich history, to ominous caricature. Another Iran existed, however, in the mind of Portuguese photographer Daniel Blaufuks, whose childhood fascination with ancient and ‘exotic’ Persia came face to face with the unvarnished reality of everyday life on a journey marked by scenic beauty and the visual fragments where culture and memory meet.
PHOTO ESSAY

PICTURES FROM IRAN

DANIEL BLAIFUKS

MACK

MARCH 2013
They offer protection, lead to war, limit freedom or enable it; they have always been there and will continue to exist: borders. Hardly anything else is as socially ambivalent, as timeless and as relevant. The Ostkreuz Agency was founded when what was probably the most important border in the history of Germany – the Berlin Wall – disappeared. Two decades later, its photographers set out on a search for today's frontiers. Their pictures portray groups of indigenous peoples battling for their land in Canada, homosexuals in Palestine seeking exile in the enemy country of Israel, and the discovery of state identity in South Sudan. The focus is always on people: how do boundaries influence their everyday lives?

On Borders covers many borders dissecting the planet, but there are some that seem less recognized: European borders. Many European Union (EU) citizens have experienced a changing and expanding border as EU territory is extended. Most who enter the EU illegally still elect to take the route from Turkey to Greece, which leads across the Evros River or along a country road. But the days when countries tried to halt these migrants with barbed wire, police and guard dogs are over. Ever since the advent of the Frontex Agency, a kind of common EU border patrol, technology is being upgraded along the edges of Europe.

Using infrared cameras, motion detectors and electric fences – alarmingly resembling human traps – more and more immigrants are being turned away. But still more are taking their chances. In 2011, according to Frontex's report, the number of individuals arrested rose by 35 percent from 104,000 in 2010 to 141,000 in 2011. In the future, the organization plans to use robots and drones. Walking in Athens today, one can see an increasing number of illegal immigrants wandering the streets, looking for any opportunity to eat and make a living.

On Borders is made by exceptional journalists using their cameras to inspire us to observe and reflect. We need more books like this.

- JCN
The third tallest building in Venezuela stands proudly in the heart of Caracas’ former central business district, Libertador. Originally conceived as a landmark commercial development, construction was abandoned in the wake of a national banking crisis in 1994, and the postmodern skyscraper – now known as ‘Torre David’ – became a magnet for squatters. A building in a constant state of resident-generated flux, at last count it served as home to more than 750 families living in a self-organized “vertical slum.”

In *Torre David*, Zurich-based interdisciplinary design firm, UrbanThink Tank, in collaboration with noted architectural photographer Iwan Baan, have produced a vividly illustrated paean to a fascinating – and ongoing – informal urban experiment. The book’s austere opening images presage an improvised community built amidst soaring concrete and industrial residue – perched precariously above a sea of urban sprawl beating back the vegetation cascading down from surrounding valleys.

Progress further into the book, however, and one is drawn instead to what is not immediately evident from a perspective framed by external structures and architectural cross sections – the remarkable social life at the heart of an evolving occupancy. In claiming Torre David as their own, its residents have transformed the building’s sense of possibility. Despite an absence of elevators, electrical infrastructure, running water and windows, shops, services and sporting facilities have emerged alongside work-in-progress living spaces through an organic process of bottom-up urbanism.

Most evocative are a series of *in situ* family portraits, capturing the myriad ways in which those seeking refuge from the chaotic forces shaping the city beyond have sought to transform their corner of a skeletal commercial ruin into a space fit to host the richness of everyday life. In the proud faces of those living amidst even the most rudimentary conditions, one finds a common sense of humanity.

- AK
“On 28 May 1999, a Sudanese asylum seeker named Aamir Aged died during a deportation flight from Frankfurt to Cairo, after police forced his helmeted head between his knees to restrain him.” “In March 2005, a Russian couple and their son jumped to their deaths from a Glasgow housing estate because they faced deportation.”

These two examples, outlined in Matthew Carr’s straightforward prose, demonstrate the contradictory nature of the 1995 Schengen Agreement—an agreement that has opened the gates for millions of Europeans, while simultaneously slamming them in the face of the rest of the world. Indeed, Carr’s expose is littered with accounts of unemployment. Yet despite these omissions, Carr’s work provides invaluable information on the true goings-on within the European refugee system. His interviews with intergovernmental, international and national organizations provide a comprehensive account of the attitudes of officialdom—while his one-on-one conversations with migrants themselves give the story a much-needed human face.

Unsurprisingly, Lesch’s outlook for Syria is as dire as his disappointment: a failed state with extremist elements situated on Middle East fault lines. Ultimately, the book offers an insightful look into a nation caught in a tragically inevitable downwards-spiral. “When a domestic threat appears, there is a push-button response of quick and ruthless repression,” Lesch writes. “The real story… would have if Bashar had not pressed that button.”

David W Lesch, a historian specializing in the Middle East, is among the handful of Westerners to have gained exclusive, private access to one of the world’s most elusive and despised leaders: Bashar al-Assad. An informative and personal account, Syria tracks the early rise of the young ophthalmologist—one nicknamed “The Cat.” The author, before a delayed decline, culminating in one of the bloodiest repressions in recent history. An easy read, the book showcases the sympathy brought about by the author’s former proximity to Assad, though he remains clear and carefully nuanced when charting the internal transformation and foreign power-play that accompanied the decline of the regime. Lesch is particularly successful in his description of the violent turn that has commanded international attention over the last year and a half, documenting the behind-the-scenes activities of a man who did not so much change the system as he himself changed by it.

Doing Psychoanalysis in Tehran is not about human rights violations, democracy or freedom of speech. Gohar Homayounpour challenges Western preconceptions of a stigmatized society by weaving a graceful narrative between biographical segments and the stories of ordinary people. Although psychoanalysis was a European discourse, it has been adapted into the Middle Eastern context. For instance, the author’s patients present an alternative, leaving readers dumbfounded that two concepts have been repeatedly used as ‘evidence’ for racial divides, despite, of course, their demonstrable fallacy. Race, like witchcraft, is a delusion.

When Homayounpour lands in Tehran after a 20-year absence, she is startled initially by feelings of disillusionment, pain and ambivalence. To heal this malaise, the author looks to her master Kundira for inspiration in an attempt to shed light on the darkness of human souls. Her patients themselves become narrators, telling stories that serve to disguise unspoken realities. From the first session with Mrs N—a famous painter—we understand that psychoanalysis is a dynamic game between the analyst and patient, each coming face to face with a stranger that is not the Other, but within themselves.

Tackling the Obama-era idea of the post-racial society head on, sociologist Karen E Fields and historian Barbara J Fields argue in their new book, Racraft, that race does not produce racism, but rather, the other way around. Indeed, they drive their point home more deeply by linking race—and its emphasis on physical difference—with witchcraft, drawing a disturbing parallel. These two concepts have been repeatedly used as ‘evidence’ for racial divides, despite the fact that a witchcraft is a delusion.

In other words, the American practice of race categorization enforces racial division within society. With examples ranging from the profound to the absurd—including, for instance, an imaginary interview with W E B DuBois and Emile Durkheim, as well as personal porch chats with the authors’ grandmother—the Fields delve into “ractraft’s” profound effect on American political, social and economic life.

The authors’ account illustrates that race categorization does not simply affect all subtypes of the population, but instead engenders inequality throughout society. Their analysis of the anachronism South, for example, highlights the fact the plantation system not only enslaved Africans, but also enforced an unequal caste system amongst the white population. Such anachronism prompts the reader to realize that America—true to tackle the problem of racism—must contemplate an entirely new language to describe race.

As international attention on natural disasters increases, John Hannigan examines the latest trend in international politics to resolve “borderless” issues. Conceived as a textbook reviewing contemporary debates, Disasters Without Borders presents a comprehensive account of the failures of diplomacy in the realm of natural disasters, and how the field through an intense politico-sociological lens, from the emergence of Disaster Risk Reduction in the 1980s, to the recent integration of climate change debates into humanitarian relief strategies.

The book concludes with the “SCQF Configuration” (Securitization, Catastrophe Scenario Building and Modeling, Privatization, and Quantification) embodying the current state of disaster institutions. Overall, Disasters Without Borders is an enjoyable, easily accessible read, but lacks new insight into tackling the dismal failures of environmental cooperation.
Early in Fit, Robert Geddes—dean emeritus at the Princeton School of Architecture and distinguished urbanist—notes that “what we build is a result of the general public” when ethical issues arise in practice and research. While bioethicists present the scarcity of medical services as natural, Koch argues that scarcity is the predictable result of “economic choices and political decisions made with fund usage of the dire consequences.” Scarcity disappears when the US Congress votes to fund dialysis as a national entitlement, or when local health boards argue for urban sanitation and preventive measures against epidemics.

As political actors and social participants, bioethicists shape health policy. Their assumptions define life, health and normalcy; the care or non-care of persons depends on their perspective on the human condition. Through various case studies, Koch explains that bioethicists can—and do—regularly deny care for those with limiting cognitive, physical or sensory attributes, advocating the right to die as an individual choice rather than the right to live with dignity despite difference.

Koch’s critique is an appeal for a transformed medical ethics that is humanist, responsible, and defensible. A fundamental question to be revisited is whether we understand society as an economic enterprise in which patients are consumers, or as a “social covenant in which all are able to participate, irrespective of their physical abilities.”

- AS

What impact can 140-character messages have in our everyday lives and on influential social movements? These are the questions Dhiraj Murthy, a sociology professor, seeks to address in his engaging new book Twitter. Although one of the most used social media globally, Murthy’s study is the first that deals critically with the effects of Twitter on the real world, and how it has shaped our contemporary communication style.

To this end, Murthy places Twitter in historical perspective, drawing links with earlier technologies like the telegraph and radio. He then proceeds through a series of case studies encompassing a variety of sectors—from global health, to corporate automation and, of course, political activism.

What Murthy demonstrates successfully is that Twitter is only a young communications device, it has the potential to be very potent. At the same time, he presents this argument in a balanced way, exposing the myth that Twitter is all-powerful. Instead, Murthy emphasizes that it remains a tool, albeit one that can be used for great purposes by its (human) users. Similarly, his reflections on our “update culture” and ambient news are remarkable. The 200,000 million tweets sent each day have been deserving of serious scholarly attention. Murthy addresses this gap in a pioneering book.

- JM

In the late 19th century, however, the focus shifted from patient care and communal response to the individual autonomy and economic efficiency. Practitioners were elevated to authoritative positions as medical judges, including the power to decide whether to give, withhold, withdraw or continue care. The new goal of medicine through fundamental research became “the definition of the acceptable person within a population whose composition could be controlled to the advantage of the state and its economies.”

Borrowing from Confucius, Koch warns us against “thieves of virtue”—bioethicists who promote as universal a perception of medical ethics whose end is moral action. They teach, write, advise hospitals and review boards, and generally serve as “surrogates of the general public” when ethical issues arise in practice and research. While bioethicists present the scarcity of medical services as natural, Koch argues that scarcity is the predictable result of “economic choices and political decisions made with fund usage of the dire consequences.” Scarcity disappears when the US Congress votes to fund dialysis as a national entitlement, or when local health boards argue for urban sanitation and preventive measures against epidemics.

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- AS
Five Questions

What exactly is the Ethical Fashion Show?

Ethical fashion is a way of creating stylish fashion while caring about the environment and traditional craftsmanship. Ethical fashion is a mix of different choices, and involves various production techniques – it focuses on the protection of human rights, fair working conditions, environmental responsibility, and the preservation of unique skills and cultural legacies passed down from generation to generation.

How did you first come up with the idea?

I love fashion. I had been working as a model a long time ago, when I met Oumou Sy from Senegal and Bibi Russel from Bangladesh. Both are socially conscious and eco-friendly designers, as well as two strong figures in the domain that would later be called ethical fashion. Both explained to me how individuals working in the fashion industry could care about people, the environment and preserving traditional skills. This made me think about how we could improve the current state of the fashion world and spread these ‘ethics’ more widely. From this was born the idea of launching a show dedicated solely to designers and brands involved in fashion in an ethical way.

What are the criteria to be an ethical designer according to the Ethical Fashion Show?

Actually, it is quite tricky to dictate which brand or designer is ethical and which is not! We try to understand the designers and brands applying for the show in their social and economic context. A participating designer living in Asia does not work and think in the same way, nor is subject to the same conditions, as his or her colleague based in Scandinavia or elsewhere. We are more into flexible criteria. We do ask applicants to fill in a questionnaire in which they can describe the materials they use, the production process, how eco-friendly they are, their social and cultural input. This information allows us to make a decision about whether or not they will be selected for the show.

What is the market for ethical design and fashion products?

The market, quite similarly to the traditional fashion market, is expanding – mainly in relation to middle to high-end and very high-end designs, with some niche products also, such as jewelry or luxury accessories.

What do you see as the biggest impact of the Ethical Fashion Show on haute couture and mainstream fashion and design since the first event took place?

The situation and thinking are moving forward. I believe the Ethical Fashion Show gave an impulse and visibility to committed designers and brands internationally. We have succeeded in raising awareness about how you can be fashionable and socially conscious, while supporting and buying the products of highly innovative and creative designers. Lately, one can see that from High Street to top-end fashion, all brands are introducing either an ethical or ‘green’ element to their philosophies, and are developing either a capsule or regular green/ethical collection. The Ethical Fashion Show pioneered this trend and remains an important platform. Whether freshly-graduated students, buyers, designers, major players, weavers or institutions, the whole fashion industry comes to the show to know what is going on in this still evolving field. The bottom-line: the Ethical Fashion Show is inspirational!

Since 2004, former French model Isabelle Quéhé has been working to showcase the talents of ethical fashion designers and labels worldwide. President of the Universal Love Association and founder of the Ethical Fashion Show, she celebrated in September the eighth edition of the showcase event, which took place at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris (alongside a spin-off in Berlin). More than just a spectacle, the Ethical Fashion Show has also developed into a diverse trade fair providing sales opportunities to brands focused on fostering local development via the textile industry.

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In the 18th century, Pierre Jaquet Droz was the first watchmaker to import timepieces into China, where the Emperor Qīng collected these masterpieces deep inside the Forbidden City. Which is why Beijing is part of the eternal legend that is Jaquet Droz. The Eclipse, ref. J012633202 - MAJESTIC x BEIJING Collection

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