



## A HEMISPHERE FOR SALE

### MEXICO: THE NAFTA PROMISE

by Delmy and Michael Garcia-Hoyt

The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) created the expectation that Mexico was moving into the direction of developed nations by landing a trade agreement with the world's largest economy.

It is clear, however, that NAFTA has not helped the Mexican economy catch up with its northern neighbours, nor has it brought the development it promised to Mexico. Certainly not all of Mexico's economic and social problems can be blamed on NAFTA, but most Mexicans are worse off than they were nine years ago.

Since 1982, Mexico has implemented a series of strict economic reforms, mandated by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) with pressure from the United States, in order to pay off a paralysing foreign debt that has devastated its economy.



Through the NAFTA, the governments of the United States and Canada locked their trade relations in place with Mexico. The promise was for increased wealth for everybody. The result - the Mexican economy has become more dependent on its trade partners while being forced to compete with far more developed economies of the North continue to sell NAFTA and the neoliberal model of economics as the only path to development. Let's take a look at some of the goods.

**"The prices for what we grow are so low. If we don't get a good price, it's harder to afford oil or sugar...it costs more to grow them than I can buy Canadian corn or American tomatoes. A Mexican farmer can no longer live on what he can get for his crops. We can't make a living under NAFTA"**

– Malaquias Flores, corn farmer

Malaquias is not alone. The situation among many peasants is even more desperate. This year alone, 3,000 peasant families here in the small state of Morelos lost the opportunity to farm their land and sell their produce. Since NAFTA, the cost of living, clothing and other basic necessities has nearly quadrupled. In the town where Malaquias lives, only women, children and the elderly are evident. The men have become migrant workers, travelling legally to Ontario and Alberta each summer to grow the produce they can't afford to grow at home.

**"We knew (NAFTA) would hurt us, instead of helping like they said it would. We knew we'd have to sell our products in a competitive market without technology or financial support from the government. We knew prices for our products would go down... We agree there should be trade agreements, but food products don't belong in those."**

– Jaime Amador Chairez, bean farmer

Through NAFTA and its preceding neoliberal reforms, the Mexican government has drastically cut federal spending on the rural sector, aiming to draw more workers to urban jobs in the industrial sector.

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Change for Children Association (CFCA) is an Edmonton-based non-profit, non-governmental organization with a 27-year history of working for sustainable, grassroots community development in Latin America and the Philippines.

Our development projects, their cost and priority, are determined by our Southern partners according to the current needs of their communities.

In Canada, our education program engages the public in a process of awareness raising, analysis and action on issues of global justice.

While CFCA highly values its partnerships with communities of various religious and political persuasions, we are a non-sectarian, non-partisan society.

## BUILDING Bridges

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**“ordinary people  
can do  
extraordinary  
things”**

— Hank Zyp, CFCA Founder

**“These policies drive us out of our jobs into the informal sector. We are going to be a nation of tortilla vendors.”**

— Daniel Lopez, *Authentic Workers Front*

According to official records, unemployment has dropped 2.5 percent since NAFTA, but this number is misleading. The Mexican government defines any person who has worked at least one hour in the past week as employed. In a country without welfare or unemployment benefits, laid-off workers quickly take refuge in the informal sector – doing odd jobs, or selling tortillas or pirated cassette tapes in the cities. Nongovernmental agencies estimate that more than 25 percent of Mexicans are underemployed, meaning that they don’t earn sufficient wages to meet their basic needs. More than two thirds of Mexico’s workers work in the informal sector, where wages are unreliable and benefits like health insurance and vacation pay do not exist.

The Fourth Meeting of the Border Environment held last month in Tijuana stated: “The boom in the maquila industry, facilitated by NAFTA, brought thousands of factories to the border region, with little or no environmental planning. Rapid urban population growth along the borders has resulted in unplanned development, greater demand for land and energy, increased traffic congestion, increased waste generation, overburdened or unavailable waste treatments and disposal facilities. Border residents also suffer from many environmental health problems, including water-borne diseases and respiratory problems.”

These problems may be only a harbinger of the future. The NAFTA is being used as the model for an even larger trade agreement, one that will incorporate all of the Americas, except Cuba. As with NAFTA, the



7-year old Raquel sells cigarettes in the street to help support her family

most alarming aspect of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is the key issues left out of the debate. Crucial elements such as human rights, environmental and labour standards, and immigration policies are noticeably missing from negotiations, just as they were from NAFTA. Observing the damage NAFTA has done in these areas, civil society groups are demanding that the FTAA address them.

Little information about the FTAA has appeared in the regular news media, and there has been no broad consultation with civil society in countries affected. Without participation from all sectors of society and a transparent negotiation process, the FTAA – much like NAFTA - will surely follow the greed before need mentality and overlook the interests of those affected most by it.

One needs look no further than Mexico to see what is up for sale.

*Delmy and Michael have spent the past year in Mexico working with the Cuernavaca Center For Intercultural Dialogue on Development (CCIDD), an intercultural, ecumenical retreat centre working to provide opportunities for groups in the US and Canada to work for social transformation.*

# Alphabet Soup in the Americas

by Ricardo Acuña

This fall represents a critical moment for proponents of free trade and neo-liberal globalization around the world. September 10 through 14 will see a ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Cancun, Mexico, and November 20 and 21st will see the trade ministers of the Americas come together for meetings on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Miami, Florida.

So what does this alphabet soup of acronyms mean? The short answer is that, in the drive to liberalize trade and eliminate all barriers to the movement of goods and services, these agreements may actually result in the commodification and extension of trade rules to virtually all aspects of life – from water, to health care, to the very genetic structure of the living organisms around us. Although that last statement may sound inflammatory and alarmist, it isn't. A brief history and explanation of what is at stake in each of these agreements may help to reinforce that.

**The WTO** was formed in 1995 as a permanent body to enforce the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and other international agreements. Since 1995 there have been four WTO Ministerial meetings. At the third ministerial in 1999 in Seattle, the members of the WTO were unable to come to an agreement on a work plan for negotiations. In 2001 at Doha, however, they did reach agreement on a very ambitious work plan which opens up a series of existing agreements and so-called "new issues" for negotiations. These negotiations are to be approved or rejected as a "single undertaking" by a deadline of January 1, 2005. By treating them as a "single undertaking," countries do not have the option of approving some of the agreements



and rejecting others. It is an all or nothing scenario. As such, a fruitful Cancun ministerial is critical if the deadline is to be met, and pressure on dissenting countries of the South to sign on will be immense.

**The FTAA**, on the other hand, is already in the process of being created. It will be a hemispheric-wide free trade zone covering all countries of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean, minus Cuba. The countries of the Americas agreed to this undertaking at the first Summit of the Americas convened by President Bill Clinton in Miami in 1994. It was the fulfillment of a longstanding US dream of linking the economies of the

hemisphere from "Anchorage to Tierra del Fuego." In addition to the Miami Summit in 1994, there have been Summits of the Americas in Santiago, Chile in 1998 and in Quebec City in 2001. The draft texts of the FTAA released to the public after the Quebec Summit show it to be not only a geographic expansion of NAFTA, but also an expansion in terms of scope – extending trade rules to a whole series of previously untouched goods and services, and further limiting governments' abilities to play any significant role in the setting of domestic economic or development policy. Like the WTO, the current FTAA timeline requires an agreement for the leaders of the Americas to sign by the end of 2004, with each country ratifying in 2005.

Although the WTO and the FTAA are similar in the issues they are dealing with, and in their ultimate objectives, in almost every instance the FTAA is more comprehensive and goes further than the WTO. This has led many to describe the FTAA as "the WTO on steroids." Following is a summary of some of the more contentious issues at each of the ministerials, and a brief explanation of their implications.

*...continued on page 4*

## A QUICK GUIDE TO TRADE RELATED ACRONYMS

<b>FTAA</b>	Free Trade Area of the Americas
<b>GATT</b>	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
<b>GATS</b>	General Agreement on Trade in Services
<b>GMOs</b>	Genetically Modified Organisms
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>MAI</b>	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
<b>NAFTA</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement
<b>TRIP</b>	Trade Related Intellectual Property
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

## SERVICES

In the WTO, trade in services is governed by the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services). Negotiations on the GATS are going on behind closed doors, with every WTO member submitting lists of which services they are prepared to offer up for inclusion in the GATS, and each in turn submitting lists to other countries outlining which services they would like to see offered up. The FTAA's rules on services are based on the GATS, but go further. The stated objective of negotiations is "universal coverage of all service sectors." No public services can be exempted if provided commercially or in competition with private providers. The combination of these agreements will have severe implications on a government's ability to limit private for-profit involvement in what are currently public services. Included in this are things like health care, education, telecommunications, transportation, postal services, water, energy and social assistance.

## AGRICULTURE

In both agreements, agriculture is seen exclusively in terms of trade and economics. Questions of food security, fighting hunger, land reform, and self-sufficiency are not considered in either agreement. In both the WTO and FTAA negotiations, Third World countries are fighting to be able to retain control over what are termed "security crops" – this control would enable them to protect their producers and population from wildly fluctuating international commodity prices, and from shortages caused by natural disasters. These types of national food security programs may be considered "barriers to trade" and would not be allowed under the proposed agreements. Countries of the South are also seeking an end to high export subsidies in Europe and the US, which result in imported staples coming into their countries cheaper than what local producers can sell for. Because the North is unlikely to give in to either of these demands from the South, the issue of agriculture is one

# WHAT'S AT STAKE?

**CANADA** Government could be compelled to open domestic postal service up to competition

**MEXICO** WTO's elimination of 'Quantitative Restrictions' would enable foreign producers to flood the country with underpriced staple foods

**MEXICO** Five new major dams to be built in Chiapas for the sole purpose of exporting energy to the southern United States

**CENTRAL AMERICA** Highways and dry canals built under Plan Puebla Panama 'development' plan will permanently damage sensitive ecosystems and force small producers off of productive land

**CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA** Eco-labels and Fair Trade Marks could be deemed a 'barrier to trade' by the WTO and controlled, limited or banned

**MEXICO, CHILE** North American logging corporations would have unfettered access to the lush forests of southern Mexico and southern Chile and governments could not demand environmentally sound logging practices

of the issues that has the potential of dooming negotiations at both the WTO and the FTAA to failure.

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT - GMOs

Biotechnology is another contentious issue in both agreements. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreement (SPS) of the WTO and the FTAA's agriculture rules both seek to limit the ability of governments to ban genetically engineered crops and foods in their countries. Rules prohibiting the import of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or requiring that they be labeled as genetically modified would be considered a barrier to trade, and thus not allowed under either agreement.

Although the UN has guaranteed countries the right of taking measures to protect the natural environment, bio-diversity, and public health, to date the WTO seems to have taken precedence over those UN agreements. Likewise, precedents under NAFTA have shown that companies who sue governments as a result of these types of restrictions have won.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The WTO agreement dealing with intellectual property is the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPs). The FTAA is also dedicating significant attention to rules for intellectual property which closely mirror TRIPs. The biggest area of contention on this issue is the



**ENTIRE HEMISPHERE** Countries could be forced to privatize crown corporations in oil and energy sectors, and eliminate any limits on exploration and extraction of natural resources by foreign corporations

**ENTIRE HEMISPHERE** Farmers forced to buy new seeds every year – harvesting of seeds prohibited under intellectual property rules

**COSTA RICA** Foreign companies will be able to patent "new species" of medicinal plants and wildlife

**BRAZIL, MEXICO, COSTA RICA** local governments would lose the right to regulate the tourism industry and set limits on development

**BRAZIL** non-recognition of land reform, modernization requirements of agriculture rules, will force small producers out of farming

**ENTIRE HEMISPHERE** Governments forced to allow private sector access to for-profit provision of health care, education, water and other services

need of poor countries of the South to deal with HIV/AIDS and other public health emergencies by distributing cheap or free drugs. Although TRIPs currently allow for member countries to make and use generic drugs for public health purposes, countries with little or no manufacturing capacity are seeking the ability to import generic drugs from other countries. This issue was to be settled by the end of 2002, but the power and influence of US pharmaceutical companies vis a vis the US government have made progress on this issue a near impossibility. The FTAA would make it illegal for countries to distribute drugs for free, or to access generic drugs from other countries. A further issue in this category is that these same cor-

porations are seeking to extend (by way of the US government) their patent protection from 20 to 25 years. This will result in ever-increasing prescription drug prices world-wide.

### INVESTMENT

In 1998 a massive mobilization by global civil society succeeded in exposing and bringing an end to negotiations for a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). On the agenda for Cancun is a revival of this agreement. Essentially what an MAI seeks is the elimination of a government's ability to set any limits or conditions whatsoever on foreign direct investment. It is feared by many countries in the South that the ultimate goal here is to adopt

"investor-state" rights (similar to NAFTA) at the WTO. This would allow corporations to sue governments who attempt to set limits or controls on investment. The proposed FTAA investment rules go beyond what currently exists in NAFTA, and what a new MAI proposes. Corporations would be given the right to challenge any and all forms of government regulation, performance requirements, or environmental and public health safe-guards.

### GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

Many governments around the world currently promote and support domestic businesses by favouring local suppliers in government contracts and by setting domestic content requirements. The proposed WTO rules on government procurement would ban those practices, enabling foreign corporations to bid for government contracts at par with local suppliers, and making domestic content laws null and void. The FTAA would go one step further by prohibiting governments from discriminating against any country in the FTAA, meaning that a government would no longer be able to embargo products from a participating country with an oppressive regime that violates human rights for example.

### COMPETITION

Both the WTO and the FTAA are seeking to adopt new "competition rules" which would mean the end of governments protecting domestic monopolies for things like utilities, energy, water and a host of others. These new rules would eliminate government's ability to exercise any control over natural resources. The FTAA speaks directly to government owned monopolies (such as Canada Post) which would be allowed to exist, provided that they promote competition at national and regional levels. Here too, corporations and investors would be allowed to sue governments for administering monopolies or state enterprises.

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## A CRITICAL TIME

Because of the looming deadlines on both of these agreements, and because of the substantial disagreements which are still present, the meetings this fall will be a critical determinant of what happens with these agreements. The distance in bargaining positions between the North and South on questions of agricultural subsidies, intellectual property, and investment could spell the collapse of negotiations in Cancun and Miami. By the same token, however, the countries of the North are exerting tremendous pressure on dissenting voices to fall into line on these agreements, or face significant repercussions in terms of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans. In the case of Central America, they are faced with the prospect of losing a large sum of money promised by the Inter-American Development Bank for the capital development scheme known as the Plan Puebla Panama. In the case of Brazil, perhaps the most vocal opponent to the FTAA currently, Lula's government is facing the prospect of huge trade sanctions, penalties, tariffs and barriers if they refuse to fall into line.



Canadian union delegates meet with their counterparts in Mexico to discuss labour issues

## What do you want the world to look like on January 1, 2005?

The vulnerability of the WTO and FTAA negotiations also presents a significant opportunity for popular opposition to the agreements. In Seattle, the WTO negotiations were shaky to start with. The mass popular mobilization that brought the trade talks into the global spotlight played an important role in ensuring that the talks would end in failure. That opportunity exists again, only this time the failure of the talks would cer-

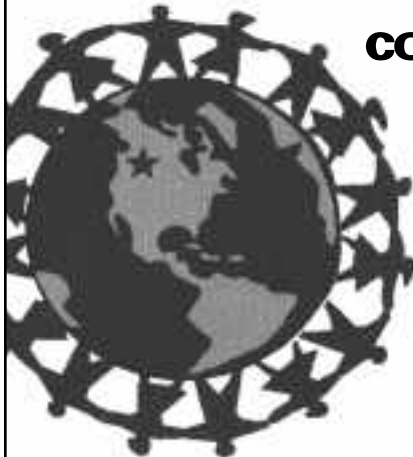
tainly result in neither the WTO nor the FTAA being able to meet their deadline of December 31, 2004, and would deal a serious blow to the cause of the corporate driven global economic agenda.

People often ask what the point of protest is, given that it so rarely makes a difference. This is a case where the potential exists for popular mobilization to make a significant difference. What our world looks like on January 1, 2005 depends in large measure on what happens in Cancun and Miami this fall, and many across the world are not prepared to leave that determination in the hands of a few of the world's elite. Keep this in mind as you watch the news and read the coverage of the summits and accompanying protests. Determine what you want the world to look like on January 1, 2005, and determine what part you are prepared to play to make it happen. The time is now.

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# Alternatives for the Americas

## The Hemispheric Social Alliance presents an alternate future

The Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) is a coalition of labor unions and networks of peasant, indigenous, women's and other citizens groups from across the Americas committed to advancing an alternative to corporate globalization, one that supports human rights, democracy, and environmental sustainability. The HSA has been engaged in a multi-year process to develop a detailed set of recommendations for an alternative to the FTAA entitled *Alternatives for the Americas*. This document is used as the basis for dialogue and continues to evolve as more input is gathered from across the Americas.

While one alternative to the FTAA is certainly the eradication of multi-lateral trade agreements, it is necessary that we also consider working within the framework provided by our governments – governments that seem intent on pursuing and expanding the free market system in a global context. The HSA's *Alternatives for the Americas* provides a space for the interests of society to be put on the agenda; a mechanism that can be used to highlight the issues inherent in a liberalized global economy.

The table presented here is excerpted from *Competing Visions for the Hemisphere: The Official FTAA Draft Versus Alternatives for the Americas* (January 2002). The document contrasts two competing visions for the future of the hemisphere: the left column describes elements of the proposed draft of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the right presents alternatives identified by the HSA. The data noted here is merely a sampling of the information provided in the original document and its sources, available on the HSA website ([www.asc-hsa.org](http://www.asc-hsa.org)).



### LABOUR

#### FTAA:

The only relevant provision in the draft text, in the investment chapter, urges countries to "strive to ensure" that domestic labour standards are not relaxed in order to attract investment.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

Countries would be required to commit to respecting basic internationally recognized worker rights. The International Labour Organization (ILO) would monitor compliance.



### AGRICULTURE

#### FTAA:

Provides no assurances that legitimate programs to promote national food security would be protected from being challenged as barriers to trade.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

Governments would have the right to "food sovereignty," defined as the right to protect the majority of their producers, especially if not doing so would lead to social dislocation.



### INVESTMENT

#### FTAA:

As in NAFTA, the FTAA draft would give foreign investors special rights to sue governments through unaccountable arbitration panels that meet in secret.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

Disputes would be handled by courts in the host country where citizens affected by decisions can participate.



### SERVICES

#### FTAA:

On social services, such as education and health care, it would rely on the GATS exemption, the conditions of which are extremely hard to meet.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

Would require that countries guarantee the right to access to affordable basic services and prohibit liberalization that would restrict this access.



### HUMAN RIGHTS

#### FTAA:

There is nothing in the official FTAA draft on human rights

#### ALTERNATIVES:

Would include a democracy clause that guarantees that each FTAA country must have functioning democratic institutions and judicial systems and ensure broadly defined human rights.

# Trading (In)Action

by Frank Bessai

When we look at the history of economic "development," what we see is a continuum of social patterns that reflect very little in the way of behavioral change or social advancement for the human population. At the community level there have of course been important social developments: there are some countries that can boast high standards of living, that can protect of the rights of their citizens, and that offer the potential for a quality of life that is dignified and fulfilling. In Canada, we are surrounded by the benefits of development, inspiring the search for more, and the achievement of conquest.

Conquest has always been motivated by the possibility of economic gain for the conquering power. But empires have always been built upon the backs of countless individuals who suffered, even perished, at the hands of their conquerors. No war has been fought that did not in some way benefit the economy of the stronger nation. Indeed, the modern global economy continues to be a result of the victories of these wars. The battles of today are fought not only with weaponry, but with the power of great economic force – leaving in their wake societies in which extreme poverty has ruined the greater social structure and made the quest for a dignified life a hopeless endeavour.

In spite of important social advancements like the concept of human rights, and perhaps an understanding of the importance of human dignity, the principles that drive the modern global economy are the same principles that have driven all economies in the the world since the invention of money. In the Americas, nations are severely divided between the wealthier and the poorer, and



*Frozen Assets* by Diego Rivera

there are economic agreements in place and being planned that will further solidify this arrangement.

It is critical that we insist that these agreements - the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its next phase, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) - reach beyond merely facilitating the free flow of money. Surely they must also include measures to protect the dignity and quality of life of those implicated in them, regardless of our geographic or economic placement in the hemisphere.

It is of the utmost importance that people come to understand and be involved in the solutions to the problems that confront our world. The collective power of people standing together for a common purpose is the only thing that has ever effected positive and important change in our society. And if we are going to stand together, we must search together, and question together, and unearth the complexities of these problems

together.

On September 10, a ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization will take place in Cancun, Mexico. In private rooms and exclusive conversations representatives of global economic power will continue their search for conquest in the name of economic "development." But in January 2004, representatives of a different kind of global power will gather in India at the World Social Forum. There, people will attempt to continue a different kind of dialogue – one that fundamentally counters the mandate of the global economy. The gathering in India will be a gathering of the people, a diverse range of individuals and organizations who have no sanctioned economic power, but understand implicitly their collective social power. Together they will continue to search, and to question, and to unearth the complexities of the struggle for human dignity today.

## This dialogue is our dialogue

There is hope in this dialogue, despite the history of conquest and oppression that still plagues our world today. This dialogue is a celebration – a celebration of people, of life and of change. This dialogue is our dialogue, this celebration is our celebration, and all it asks of us is that we participate.

*Frank is a long-time volunteer and youth facilitator for Change for Children, and most recently worked as our interim Projects Coordinator. Frank spent several years working with street youth in Nicaragua.*



# Great Expectations in Brazil

by Laura Roberts

Last year the Brazilian electorate voted in Luis Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula) as their new president. Lula is well known in Brazil, having been a presidential candidate in the previous three elections and a radical labour leader over the past three decades. He was one of the initial founders of the Workers' Party (PT), in the working class suburbs of São Paulo in 1979. Lula's victory in the presidential election is an important political event in Brazil, because in many ways he represents the average Brazilian

Lula grew up in poverty-stricken northeast Brazil, and, due to the lack of employment in this region, his family moved to the industrial suburbs of São Paulo to search for work. Lula began to work in the industrial factories at a very young age and was a metalworker for most of his life. Much of his life has also been spent working to improve the rights of Brazil's working classes. He led the country's first political demonstrations against the military dictatorship in the late 1970s and early 1980s - a highly courageous act, as political participation during this era was strictly prohibited.

It is because of this background that many Brazilians were able to identify with Lula and his policies; moreover, it is this history of action and struggle for change that has prompted millions of Brazilians to place very high expectations in his ability to create a more just and equitable society for Brazil.

It is this context and change in Brazilian politics that has brought me to Brazil. Earlier this year I received a scholarship from the University of Alberta to do a self-directed research project on this change in government. I also formed an Alberta Public Interest Research Group (APIRG) working group to develop a report on



Brazil's president, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva • Photo by René Cabrales (from Latinamerica Press)

recent social change in Brazil, and to provide observations on continuing political developments in Brazil. My intention with this project is to investigate how a social democratic government like the one represented by Lula can improve social development - there was very little emphasis on social programming under Brazil's previous government.

My research to date has focused primarily on direct dialogue with Brazilians, often accompanied by a questionnaire I developed. The questionnaire asks Brazilians to indicate whether or not they voted in the last election, and, if so, which presidential candidate they supported. They are also asked to identify what they see as the biggest problems currently facing Brazil - to which most respondents have indicated "unemployment." Finally, respondents are asked to rate the degree to which they believe that Lula can effect positive change.

The responses I have received thus far have been very interesting. Many people express considerable hope in Lula, and are expecting a lot to be done under his term. I do feel, however, that many Brazilians are also expecting radical change to happen overnight. I have met and talked to many people who voted for Lula, but have already - after only 6 months in office - lost hope in his ability to

change Brazil for the better.

As well as accumulating information through direct dialogue and the questionnaire, I have been spending many hours in Brazil's National Congress in the capital city, Brasilia. I have had the opportunity there to speak with party officials and bureaucrats, and I am working to arrange interviews with members of congress. I have already filmed interviews with elected PT party members at various levels. I have also spent time in the PT's national archives room, reviewing documents, programs, and old newspaper articles. The many different people I have met through this process have been incredibly helpful and supportive of my project.

I hope to travel across the country over the next two months to continue my discussions with Brazilians about the change Lula represents for Brazil. I also intend to travel to the Northeast, where I look forward to meeting Change for Children's partner NGOs. I will film the projects there and plan to present this footage in Edmonton sometime in the fall.

*Laura is a former Change for Children youth tour participant, committed volunteer, and current Board Member. If you have questions about Laura's work in Brazil, you may email her at [llr@ualberta.ca](mailto:llr@ualberta.ca).*

# Strengthening Communities

by Lorraine Swift

Change for Children projects work to strengthen communities in the face of these looming trade agreements in several ways. Some of our projects seek to provide basic human needs so as to allow community members to increase their participation in the community and by extension in the democratic process and in movements for change. This participation occurs when community members - in many cases women - are liberated from constantly struggling to meet the daily needs of their families. As such, when our projects provide for basic human needs such as primary health care, food, water and basic family income, the self determination of the community and culture is a long term result.

In some cases our projects foster cultural education because they facilitate communication within and between communities about cultural traditions and history. In this way the project encourages the involvement of community members in their cultural survival as well as provides an

essential artistic component to childhood education.

Sometimes our projects target specific populations threatened by corporate development plans such as the FTAA. In these cases our projects are designed to educate community members about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and about the small-scale economic alternatives not proposed within the free trade agreements. These projects encourage community members to get directly involved in planning their own future.

This fall we have a number of upcoming initiatives that attempt to partially satisfy the immediate needs of small populations, while at the same time serve to educate and empower them to get directly involved in the process of planning their own future. Change for Children's upcoming projects provide primary health care, promote cultural survival, provide basic human needs to impoverished communities, provide vocational training and income generation opportunities for women and promote education and human rights advocacy.

## UPCOMING PROJECTS:

### NICARAGUA:

#### **Phase II of the Community Health for Indigenous Communities, UN Biosphere Reserve – BOSAWAS**

This project is currently providing much-needed medicine and vitamins to indigenous communities in the UN Biosphere Reserve called BOSAWAS in northern Nicaragua. It also provides training for health promoters (primarily women) in the delivery of health promotion programs and acute care in the community. The health promoters receive a small profit from the sale of the medicines to community members to ensure the sustainability of the project. Natural medicine and illness prevention are emphasized in this project.

#### **Community Water and Capacity Building Project in Somotillo**

This project will provide the funding to build 40 meter deep wells and holding tanks in 20 communities surrounding Somotillo. This will allow year-round access to water for every community member as well as provide for extensive irrigation capabilities. The wells and water system will become the property of the community "leagues" and be managed by them in the long term. This project will also involve a partnership between two of our project partners in Nicaragua, El Bloque and Centro Humboldt, so that El Bloque may build its capacity to manage projects, budgets and learn the extensive reporting procedures required for a project of this size.



Children in a poor neighbourhood in Brazil

An indigenous traditional healer,  
BOSAWAS, Nicaragua



### **Cultural Promotion for Children and Youth – Esteli and Managua**

This project combines a phase II of our on-going "Muralism" workshops for children and youth Project in Esteli with the music and theatre projects we currently support in Managua.

## **EL SALVADOR:**

### **Agriculture for Cultural Promotion in Usulután**

In conjunction with the Edmonton – Salvadoran Community we are developing an agricultural project that will benefit small farmers working in cooperatives in Usulután, El Salvador. The revenue generated from the sale of the agricultural produce, will serve to finance a community centre promoting cultural programs for youth, designed to entice youth away from involvement in gangs.

## **GUATEMALA:**

### **Phase II of the Improvement of Textile Production Project – Comitancillo**

This project supports five women's groups in expanding their productive capacity in traditional Guatemalan textiles and in the marketing of these products. Phase I of the project provided funds for the purchase of machinery, the construction of the production center and the training of the women and phase II seeks to expand training, production and marketing.

## **MEXICO:**

### **Systematic Capacity Building / Income Generation Projects for Women in Morelos**

This project will continue to work with the women's groups who so successfully started their own businesses during the life of our previous project in the region. The continuation would serve to document the experiences of the women entrepreneurs and turn them into trainers and mentors for another phase of the project. Comunidad, our partner NGO in this project, promotes activism and advocacy on the part of the women to control their own future and participate in the direction of their communities, states and country.

### **The Centre for Human Rights, Tehuantepec, Oaxaca**

Change for Children is working with the Centre for Human Rights which is located in the municipality of Tehuantepec in the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. The population in the area is largely indigenous and as such, the Centre for Human Rights is involved in the struggle to protect the rights of the local indigenous peoples who are faced with severe discrimination, and impoverishment. The area is also populated by Mexican peasant farmers who have always been at the bottom of the eco-

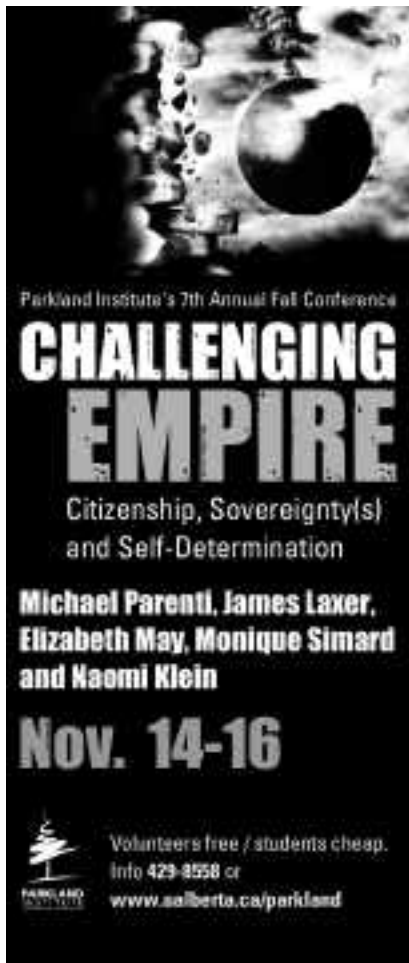
nomic ladder, scratching out a living on modest plots of land. Currently the whole area is scheduled to be the recipient of a huge infusion of economic infrastructure known as the Plan Puebla Panama, which will include the creation of highways, factory zones and hydro-electric dams.

The Centre For Human Rights has taken on the enormous task of educating the people about their rights, and the importance of becoming aware of the implications of the Plan Puebla Panama and its brother agreement, the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Change for Children will help to maintain the staff at the Centre, which is a highly motivated team of young educators who do an extraordinary job of maintaining a vital community education program with extremely limited resources.

## **BRAZIL:**

### **Street Children Outreach and Vocational Training at FUNDANOR, Maceio**

In conjunction with the Alfonse Gerwing Foundation and Rainbow of Hope for Children, we are currently gathering funds to support the FUNDANOR orphanage in its vocational training programming for orphans and street kids.



# Upcoming Events

## Gourmet Dinner and Silent Auction

*A Fundraiser for CFCA*  
 Sunday, September 28  
 L'Azia Restaurant  
 Edmonton City Centre West  
 6:00 - 10:00 pm  
 Tickets \$50.00 (advance only, includes a \$25 tax receipt)

## Alberta Social Forum

*A participatory festival to develop strategies for action towards social transformation*  
 October 17 - 19  
 University of Alberta, Edmonton  
[www.albertasocialforum.ca](http://www.albertasocialforum.ca)

## Global Visions Festival

*A Celebration of Documentary Cinema, Global Awareness and Community Engagement*  
 November 5 - 9  
 Edmonton Arts District  
 For info/tickets: 780.414.1052  
[www.globalvisionsfestival.com](http://www.globalvisionsfestival.com)

## Parkland Institute Conference Challenging Empire: Citizenship, Sovereignty(s) and Self-Determination

November 14 - 16  
 University of Alberta, Edmonton  
*Featuring Dr. Michael Parenti, James Laxer, Elizabeth May, Monique Simard from Alternatives, Myrna Kostash, Naomi Klein, and many others*  
 For more info: 780.492.8558  
[www.ualberta.ca/parkland](http://www.ualberta.ca/parkland)

## Just Christmas

*An alternative marketplace for quality global arts, crafts and other goods obtained through fair compensation to the producers*  
 November 21, 6:00 - 9:30 pm  
 November 22, 9:30 am - 5:00 pm  
 Prince of Wales Armouries  
 10440 - 108A Avenue, Edmonton  
 For info call 780.474.6058

### Please support CFCA's Important Work with a CHARITABLE DONATION

Please find enclosed a tax-creditable donation to be used in the following areas:

- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Undesignated - to be used as needed by Change for Children Association
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Your general project account (supporting a variety of projects as required)
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Your projects in the country of \_\_\_\_\_
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Your \_\_\_\_\_ project
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ Your Development Education Program here in Canada
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ To build your Endowment Fund
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Amount Enclosed**

*Please make cheques payable to Change for Children Association*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### PRE-AUTHORIZED PAYMENT PLAN OPTION

I/We authorize Change for Children Association to begin Automatic monthly withdrawals from my/our bank account as specified on the enclosed cheque marked "VOID." This authority is to remain in effect until further notification from myself/ourselves or Change for Children.

Please make a withdrawal in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month on the \_\_\_\_\_th day of each month.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature(s) of Account Holder  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date Signed