

# rising TIDE



A Quarterly Newsletter from International Development Enterprises Canada


April 2007

## Welcome to the Rising Tide

A rising tide lifts all boats. So goes the argument that a growing national economy will buoy up everyone's fortune. Those of us who have lived and/or worked in places of intense poverty know that sometimes people living in poverty find it difficult to access the riches of economic growth and market opportunity. IDE's mission is to make sure that the rising tide lifts not only the luxury liners but also the small, leaky fishing boats and the open rafts - the billions of people living in the backwaters of the global economy. The title of this new quarterly IDE newsletter is inspired by our belief that those living at the "bottom of the pyramid" are customers and entrepreneurs - people with the drive, the ideas and the ability to survive and thrive in the global economy. We strive to make markets work for the poor.

The title of our new newsletter is also significant for its focus on water. Water has long been IDE's primary focus. We be-

lieve that for millions of rural households that rely on agriculture for their livelihood, access to and control of water is critical for survival and success. Over the past 26 years, IDE has designed and refined extremely low-cost water technologies that promote prosperity and health. Most importantly, these products are affordable for families living on a dollar a day. From foot-powered treadle pumps to drip irrigation kits to water purifiers, IDE has relentlessly pursued affordable products that can dramatically improve lives and livelihoods.

Finally, a rising tide also symbolizes a sea change - a shift in reality that heralds a new beginning and new opportunity. IDE's founder Paul Polak speaks about four revolutions that are necessary to end poverty: revolutions in agriculture, water, design and markets. This newsletter will document these revolutions and what we as Canadians can do to meaningfully fight the pandemic of global poverty. 

### Feature

## A Better Way to Pump Water



### IDE pumps up sales in Myanmar

by Stuart Taylor

Myanmar (or Burma) is a forgotten country. Isolated by its own reclusive military regime and by externally imposed sanctions, the country remains invisible to all but some regional business travelers and a few adventure-seeking tourists. Those who do come find decaying infrastructure and decrepit vehicles, but also a vibrant population of energetic and creative people with a rich history and a stubborn will: not just to survive but to succeed.

We are walking along a footpath to visit some farmers about two hours' drive from the capital Yangon. I am with several IDE staff led by Debbie Aung Din Taylor - Burmese-born co-director of the

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IDE Myanmar program. To the right, a golden *stupa* rises above the paddy fields looking for all the world like a gilded garlic bulb pushing one pointed shoot toward the sky. Two saffron-robed monks walk slowly up the temple stairs, cradling their alms bowls. Thousands of these temples dot the landscape, many simple and plain, others ostentatiously plated with gold and adorned with diamonds. Each shrine and temple must be kept well supplied with fresh flowers - a high value crop that is in perennial demand. *Continued on Page 2*



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## IDE Appoints New CEO

IDE Canada is a member of the international IDE network, soon to be headed by Ms. Copisarow

DENVER—IDE has announced the appointment of Rosalind Copisarow to lead the organization as CEO. A micro-finance practitioner and consultant with 15 years' experience in blue chip investment banks and 12 years in the not-for-profit sector, Copisarow was selected following an extensive search process that began in November 2006.

Most recently, Ms. Copisarow has served as Executive Vice President of the Washington D.C.-based organization ACCION, which has pioneered a commercial approach to microfinance. She has held executive positions with several major financial institutions, including Citibank/Citicorp, Midland Bank, and JP Morgan. Copisarow first became involved in poverty alleviation in 1994 while serving as JP Morgan's Vice President and Country Officer, overseeing its operations in Poland. After reading about Grameen Bank's remarkable success in helping people escape chronic poverty through micro-lending, she left JP Morgan to found Fundusz Mikro, a micro-lending institution that helped the unemployed start small businesses in Poland. The company disbursed over 35,000 loans, valued at \$35 million, achieving a consistent 98% repayment rate.

Fundusz Mikro became fully self-financing by 1999, the first such institution to do so at this scale in any transitional economy, and in 2000, Copisarow left to co-found Street(UK), a

micro-lending institution in her native England. Ms. Copisarow is a graduate of Oxford University and holds an M.B.A. from the Wharton School of Finance and an M.A. in Latin American Studies and Spanish from the University of Pennsylvania. In 2000, she was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit by the Polish government for services to the Polish economy and poverty alleviation.


Copisarow will become the second CEO in the 26-year history of IDE. She follows Paul Polak, who founded the organization to help small farm families in developing countries escape poverty by helping them access affordable, yield-enhancing technologies and markets for their products. Polak will continue to be involved with the organization in the newly created role of Founder.

"She is as comfortable in the village as in the Boardroom"

- IDE Chair Paul Myers

In announcing Copisarow's appointment, IDE Board Chair Paul Myers said, "We're very pleased to have Rosalind as a part of

our organization. She is as comfortable in the village as in the boardroom, and brings a passion and a commitment to the vision and mission of IDE that is very exciting."

Copisarow sees IDE's entrepreneurial approach as the best way to create permanent solutions to poverty in developing countries. "I am looking forward to broadening my horizons to support the creation and strengthening of rural micro-enterprises, adopting a holistic approach to the selection of appropriate interventions, and finding cutting edge, new, creative ways to stimulate rural entrepreneurship." 

### A Better Way to Pump Water (from page 1)

As we walk, several of the staff and local farmers pause to spit shots of deep red juice into the bush along the path. They are chewing betel leaf - a habit enjoyed by many in this region of South Asia. We pass neat rows of betel plants trellised under bamboo shelters, supplying this high-value market.

His own teeth stained with betel juice, IDE senior manager U Hla Tun explains how improved access to water has boosted farmers' production of high-income crops. He describes traditional irrigation: "Mostly they use a *monded* - just like a lever and an open well." The *monded* is as ubiquitous as the *stupas* here. Across the paddy fields we see numerous bamboo cantilevers dangling buckets over shallow wells. The long bamboo arm of the *monded* is counter-weighted to help farmers lift full buckets of water from their wells. Several farmers are busy lifting water with quick jerky hand-over-hand motions as we speak. Each bucket is poured into pairs of watering cans, carried with a yoke over the shoulders. With the introduction of the treadle pump, U Hla Tun continues, "IDE helped to get the water very close to the respective plots."

Using the timer on my video camera, we do an impromptu time-motion study. Filling two 20-litre watering cans with the



Photo—J. Taylor

Bamboo *mondeds*—traditional levers for lifting water from wells—dot the fields in rural Myanmar.

*monded* takes a skilled farmer about 35 seconds. A farmer using the treadle pump fills his cans in about five seconds. The difference may sound fairly minimal, but multiplied over hundreds of trips per day this represents a significant saving in time and effort.

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**A Better Way to Pump Water - IDE pumps up sales in Myanmar** (from page 2)



Photo—J. Taylor

A woman waters her crop using traditional sprinkler cans

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The same goes for hand pump users. One woman points to her right shoulder and winces as she describes the effort. Now, she is enjoying the convenience of foot pumping. “We used to start work at four a.m.” she says laughing, “Now we don’t have to start until eight. We’re getting more sleep!”

Continuously filling a basin with his hand pump, U Aung Pwint had trouble keeping up with one person using a pair of watering cans. Now, with a treadle pump, he easily keeps two water carriers in constant motion. He has tripled his betel crop and doubled the total area in flowers and vegetables.

Just a short walk from U Aung Pwint’s house, we stop at the home of an older mother who offers us an array of traditional dishes, including *lapet* – pickled tea leaves mixed with fried peanut and sesame, and *shwe kyi* – a delicious coconut and sesame paste. She is all smiles as she describes how life has changed since they purchased their treadle pump last year.

“We have 4,000 more betel leaf this year. Last year we had only 1,000 betel leaf. This year we have flowers too.” Her grown children laugh with her as she lists the benefits of this simple piece of technology. “I have eleven mouths to feed,” she continues, “Now we can buy as much fish as we want.”

The amazing thing is that each family we meet has bought their own pump. IDE marketing staff visit villages, do demonstrations and point farmers to local dealers that sell the pump. Demand has more than doubled each year over the first three years of operation, with projected sales of 12,300 in 2006/07.

One evening, I visit a *pwe* – a wildly popular temple festival similar to an agricultural fair, attracting hundreds of thousands of people. It has all the ingredients of any big fair – hawkers

selling remedies for every ailment, cultural shows, all manner of snack stalls, groups of boys trying to impress laughing girls and even a ferris wheel. IDE attracts potential customers with demo treadle pumps, a video of farmer testimonials, literature, and a team of staff handing out leaflets and answering questions. At the IDE booth, young kids are fighting for a turn on one of the pumps. I ask if adults are able to get a turn. One promoter explains that they often don’t need to. “If they see their kids up there, they say ‘If they can do it, I can do it.’”

Innovation is a vital element of IDE’s approach. Last year, IDE Myanmar teamed up with Stanford Design School to offer a graduate course called Design for Extreme Affordability. The relationship with Stanford has strengthened IDE’s design team and has yielded some innovative designs, including a portable tripod frame pump, which at less than \$20 is now IDE’s best-selling treadle pump.

However, most farmers are ahead of the curve, finding their own ways of adapting the technology to suit their needs. U Myint Aye – a farmer we met in the village – had cut open a sprinkler can to catch the water spilling from the treadle pump’s outlet and send it into a pipe that he was using to water his flowers.

IDE Myanmar is now in the process of developing a \$25 pressure pump that will push water for use with a hose and with low-pressure sprinklers, which IDE is also starting to test.

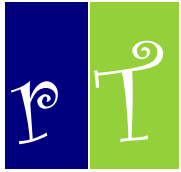


Photo—J. Taylor

A rural demonstration of the treadle pump attracts a crowd

Debbie Taylor explains that IDE is creating opportunity within the constraints of a failing economy. “We won’t solve all of the problems,” she says, “but we are addressing specific limitations. We are raising the technological ceiling.”

Back in the village the old mother smiles as she describes how her own prospects have expanded. “We’ve always had a hard time breathing,” she says, using a Burmese saying that means it is hard to make ends meet, “but now it’s easy to breathe.” In a country like Myanmar, creating some breathing space for poor farmers may be one of the best contributions we could hope to make.



Travelogue

# Reflections from Southern Africa

by Mary Redekopp

At first glance, the landscapes of Zimbabwe and Zambia are not for the faint of heart. During the dry season, the sun sadistically beats down on vast stretches of pale veldt and parched, terracotta-hued semi-desert. I was grateful for my prairie-trained eye, which picked out the beauty of a stranded thorn tree thrown into relief against a stunning sunset or the folds and crevices of barren mountains defending their existence against the brutality of erosion. The sights are magnificent, intense, compelling, and a true reflection of the people who live there. In Zimbabwe, especially, where a hideously corrupt government strives to silence its populace and where daily slaughter by disease should leave families

mute with grief and need, villagers were vibrant with sound. Loud, melodic greetings, songs of praise and thanks, playful dramatics in their timeless, evocative language and joyous ululating surrounded our visiting group at one memorable outpost. Their expression of gratitude to IDE for the abundance of their water-rich vegetable gardens was very humbling, and their unrestrained display of affection and generosity buoyed our spirits, begging the question, "Who is helping whom?"

Mary Redekopp traveled with an IDE Canada tour to Zambia and Zimbabwe in October 2006



Women from Makoni village outside Rusape, Zimbabwe greet the tour group with singing and dancing.



A rural Zimbabwean village waits for rain under the gathering clouds of an October sky.

Photos—M. Redekopp

## About IDE Canada

IDE Canada is a Canadian non-profit dedicated increasing the income of families living on less than a dollar a day. Since its beginning in 1981, IDE has helped to increase production and income in Africa and Asia by designing and marketing extremely low-cost products such as pedal pumps, irrigation kits, and water purifiers. IDE also develops markets that provide better opportunity for poor people. By 2020, IDE aims to lift 30 million farm families out of poverty. IDE Canada is a member of IDE's international network, which currently has offices in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, India, UK, and USA.



## Make an Investment!

A \$250 investment in IDE generates at least \$300 in sustained, additional annual income for one family. Your tax-deductible contribution of \$250 can bring one family out of poverty for good.

We offer excellent social return on gifts of any size.

**Join the rising tide of IDE friends and supporters!**

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