

POCKETBOOK *Eco-Trends*

COMMERCE *Injaz*

PEOPLE & SOCIETY *Censorship*

THE VERVE *Fashion Against Aids*

CREATIVE CONSCIOUS *Cultural Bridges*

IMPRESSIONS *City of Gold*

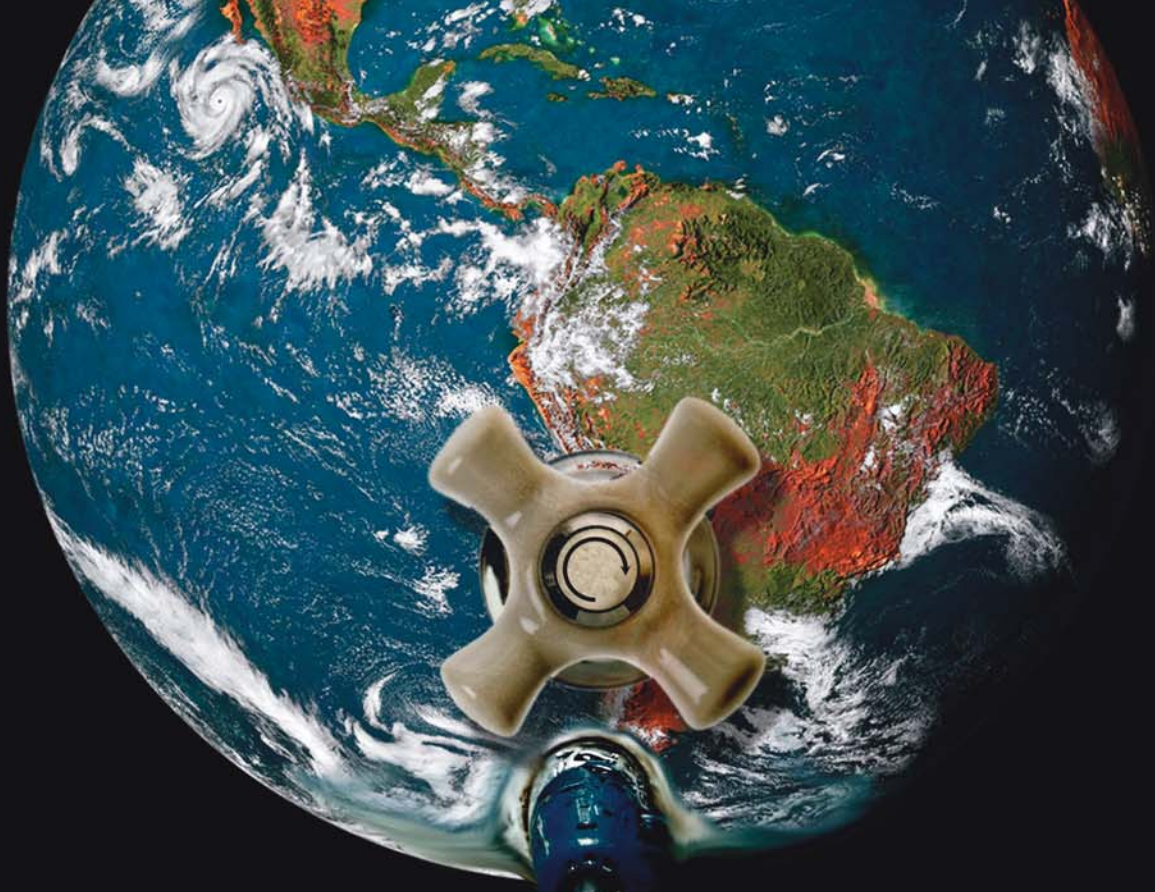
THINK FORWARD *Eco-Sanitation*



MORE IS MORE

will greater wealth give rise to social responsibility?



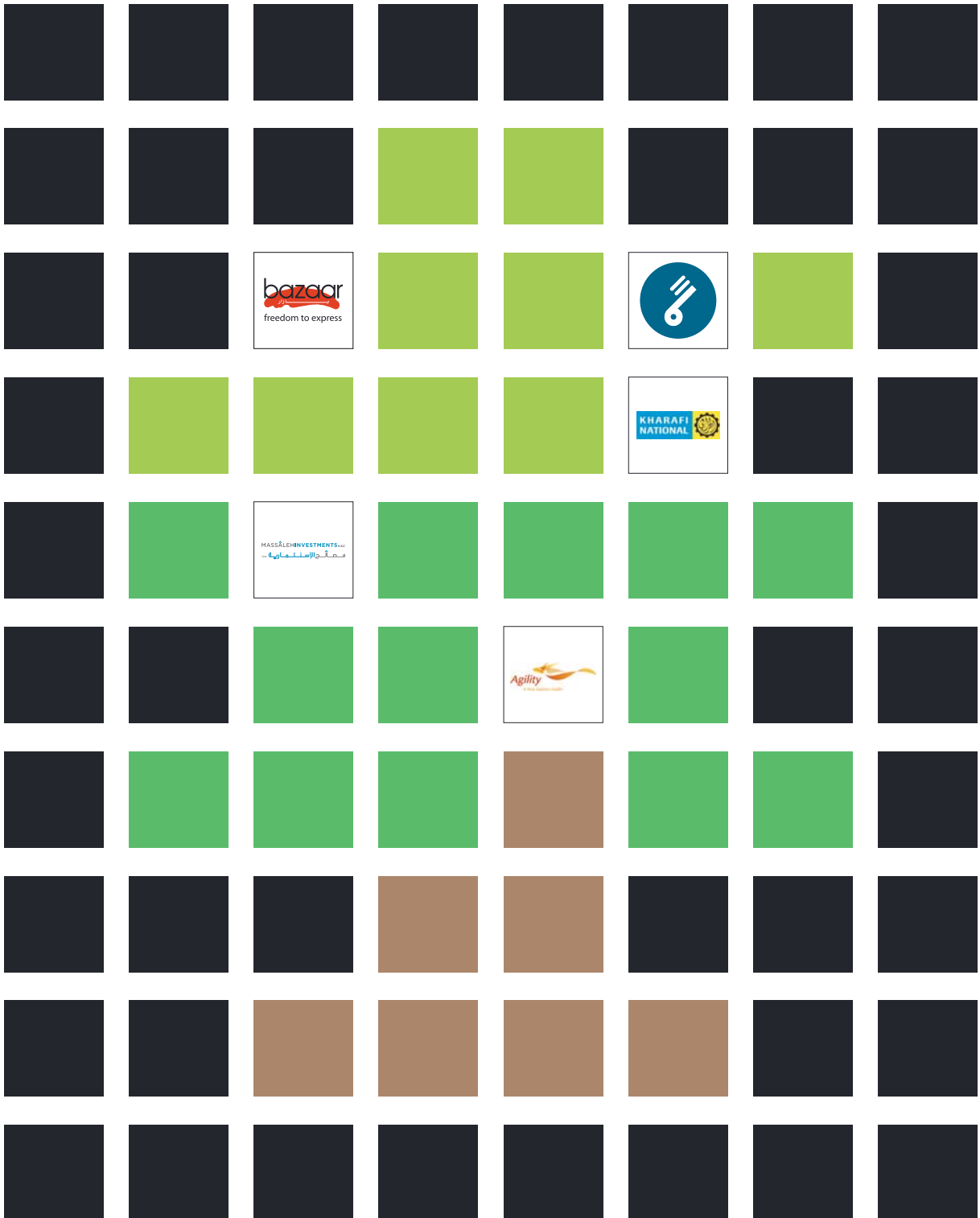


raising awareness



TREE OF HOPE

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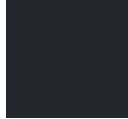


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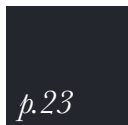
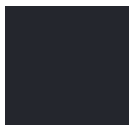
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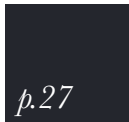
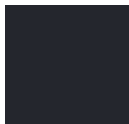
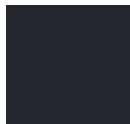
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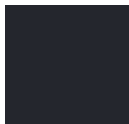
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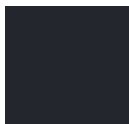
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Zahed Sultan as a young boy.

Dear Reader,

The Rich Are Getting Richer. It's a growing trend, but hardly a surprising one. Economies in the Middle East are booming and oil prices are peaking. There is an overabundance of wealth and only the chosen few are benefiting.

With every new dollar gained, we are spending on everything from the latest digital devices to promising investments. Which makes me wonder... how have our leaders allocated this unforeseen excess of wealth? They never planned to attain it – so what conceivable outlet would there be to invest it?

We can think of one: Education.

In this issue, we shed some light on education as a medium for progress. We discuss the important role it

plays in development, both for individuals and societies. Education is becoming a larger, more dynamic concern in the region – from talks of segregation in Kuwait to leading universities opening their doors in Qatar and the U.A.E. Experiencing this firsthand, it made sense for us to explore this topic further to find out how we got to where we are today.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank those companies, big and small, individuals, as well as our own family of contributors for their continuous support of our budding initiative.

We look forward to receiving your feedback at env@envearth.com on our use of creativity as well as our rhetoric to raise awareness.

Enjoy your read.
Zahed Sultan

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Hippo Water Roller

Designers: Pettie Petzer and Johan Jonker (1991)
Manufacturer: Invubu Projects, South Africa, www.hipporoller.org
Materials: Polyethylene (UV Stabilized), Mild Steel
Dimensions: Drum – 50 x 50 x 65 cm (6kg), Handle – 2 x 70 x 100 cm (2kg)
In Use In: South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe



What Critical Thinking?

Amani Kanaan

“Education Is What Remains After One Has Forgotten Everything He Learnt In School.”

Albert Einstein

Teaching is not simply an instruction in the existing curriculum, but rather a diversified tutoring process in current affairs, multicultural issues and vital life predicaments.

Education, with all its influences on consecutive generations, poses a substantial challenge for reformists. It is difficult to formulate an ideal educational strategy since it is relative to different communities and societies. Meaningful learning and critical thinking, however, are two indispensable elements of the education experience. Both of these principles are intertwining and mutually reinforcing. To my mind, critical thinking involves a lot of effort from all those involved in the learning process. This is especially true for teachers upon whom the responsibility falls to introduce material to their students that will encourage them to question and analyze.

Unfortunately in the case of the region, our educational system has been steadily deteriorating. Likewise, our learning institutions have not been places where youthful minds are nurtured and encouraged to think ‘outside the box’. The result of this is the creation of students with serious deficiencies in critical thinking.

History, I believe, has a lot to do with our dysfunctional curriculums. Most Arab countries were colonized or placed under mandates by various Western powers during the early to mid-twentieth century. This led to struggles for liberation and a division in society concerning education. After colonial independence, one section of society called for a more pro-Western type of educational reform, while the opposing side of society rejected this as being imperialistic. However, despite the ardent attempts by both sides to push forward their reform agendas, the regimes that came to power after independence proved to be dictatorial and rejected any kind of change that would threaten

their survival.

The picture is not much different today. With the constant upheavals in the Arab world, frustrations have mounted and disillusionment with the West and its allies in the region have intensified. All this has led to a radical backlash and rejection of anything ‘Western’. The repercussions of this reaction can be felt in every facet of our lives including- and most importantly- on our education system.

Today’s learning institutions have a moral responsibility in preserving young minds. Students need to be nurtured and guided so that they can go through the wide variety of information that is available to them today with an analytical mind. They do not need to passively accept anything and everything that is taught to them. They have to apply critical thinking skills to their academic studies that will in turn give them the know-how to deal with problems they will encounter in their future endeavors. *en.v*



Doing Good : The Agility Way



105,476

lives affected positively

55 community projects

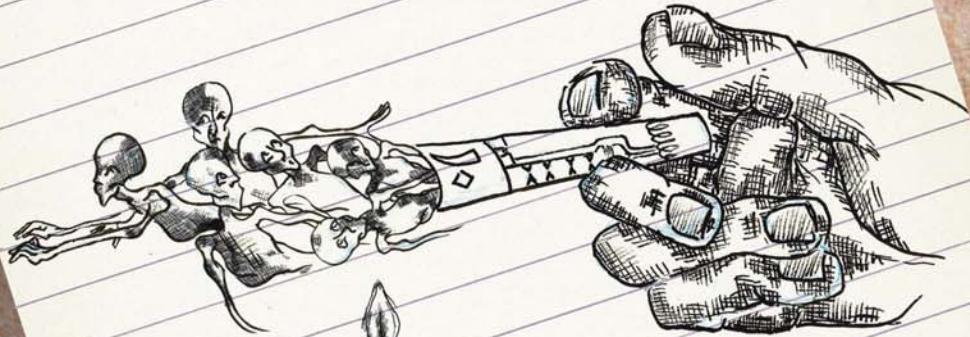
in 30 countries worldwide

with 2,000 employees volunteering

In 2007



POCKETBOOK



CAUTION:
FLAMMABLE RESOURCES



DEMOGRAPHICS

Characteristics and statistics of human population



LITERACY RATE

Number of literate adults expressed as a percentage of the total adult population, aged 15 years and above



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Designed mainly to prepare pupils for direct entry into a particular occupation or trade



AUTONOMOUS

Self governing / politically independent



GENDER PARITY

Ratio of females to male value of a given indicator



TERTIARY EDUCATION

Education begun after high school - higher education

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Full enrolment of all children in the primary age group



CURRICULA

Group of related courses in a specific kind of field














COGNITIVE SKILL

Concerned with the acquisition of knowledge



PEDAGOGY

The science or profession of teaching

	1		ON AVERAGE 65 OF EVERY 1000 CHILDREN WILL NOT REACH AGE 5 (1/10TH OF THE TOTAL CHILD POPULATION DIES BEFORE THEIR 5TH BIRTHDAY.)		
		2			
3				THOSE WHO DO SURVIVE WILL BE HALF AS LIKELY TO GET AN EDUCATION IF THEIR MOTHERS ARE NOT EDUCATED.	
	BECAUSE WOMEN MAKE UP 2/3RDS OF TOTAL ILLITERATE ADULTS IN THIS REGION.		4		THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ILLITERATE ADULTS WILL BE AS HIGH AS 55 MILLION BY 2015.
5		IN THE SAME YEAR, 12 OUT OF 20 COUNTRIES WILL LIKELY ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL YOUTH LITERACY.		6	
	7		BUT THIS IS RESTRICTED TO URBAN AREAS, AS ABOUT 70% OF THE CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN THE REGION LIVE IN RURAL AREAS.		THANKFULLY, STEADY REDUCTION IN GENDER PARITY MEANS THERE ARE NOW 8 FEMALE STUDENTS FOR EVERY 10 MALE STUDENTS.
8			9		
		COUNTRIES LIKE ALGERIA, MOROCCO AND TUNISIA FACE ILLITERACY RATES AMONG ADOLESCENTS THAT IS TWICE THE LEVEL FOR THEIR URBAN COUNTERPARTS.		BECAUSE THE NATIONAL INCOME SPENT ON EDUCATION IS BELOW 4% IN SOME ARAB COUNTRIES.	
		10			ASTOUNDINGLY THE TOTAL SPENDING ON E-LEARNING IN THE UAE WILL INCREASE FROM \$14 BILLION TO \$56 BILLION BY 2008.



Alcohol is a nation's largest youth drug problem, killing 6.5 times as many young people as all illicit drugs combined.



POWER-GEN MIDDLE EAST

4 - 6 April 2008
Manama, Bahrain
www.pgme08.events.pennnet.com

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION (I-TCE2008)

7 - 9 April 2008
Kuwait City, Kuwait
www.i-tce.org

UAE EDUCATIONAL IT CHALLENGE

12 - 13 April 2008
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
www.uaechallenge.com

MIDDLE EAST NETWORK OPERATORS GROUP (MENOG) 3

13 - 17 April 2008
Kuwait City, Kuwait
www.menog.net

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERACTIVE MOBILE AND COMPUTER AIDED LEARNING, IMCL

16 - 18 April 2008
Amman, Jordan
www.imcl-conference.org

AFRICA NETWORK OPERATORS GROUP (AFNOG)

24 April - 6 June 2008
Rabat, Morocco
www.afnog.org/afnog2008

BITE EXPO

13 - 15 May 2008
Manama, Bahrain
www.bahraineducation.org.z

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

15 - 19 Jun 2008
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
www.iirme.com

MIDDLE EAST OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

22 - 26 June 2008
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
www.iirme.com

MIDDLE EAST NETWORK OPERATORS GROUP (MENOG) 4

27 - 29 June 2008
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
www.menog.net



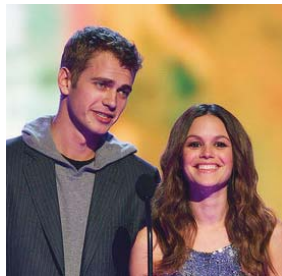
Baby Boom

enearth.com



Poor Paris

Paris Hilton, famous for being famous and heir to the Hilton family fortune, has now been demoted to regular citizen status following a decision by her grandfather, Barron Hilton, to contribute 97% of his entire net worth to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation at the time of his passing. The foundation, founded by his father, aims to “relieve the suffering, the distressed and the destitute.” He will also contribute \$1.2 billion of the proceeds from the sale of the Hilton Hotels Corporation and Harrah’s Entertainment. Barron Hilton’s net worth is currently estimated to be \$2.3 Billion. Poor, poor Paris.



Dem’jeans

Rachel Bilson and Hayden Christensen want you to take your clothes off. You read correctly. Bilson and Christensen are fronting a new campaign for Aeropostale to provide clothing for teen homeless shelters. The “Teens for Jeans” campaign asks you to look in your closet for that pile of old jeans you never wear anymore but hastily hold on to in case you might need them later. All you have to do is drop them off at any Aeropostale store and they will arrange to have them donated to a local teen shelter. It’s that simple. As a thank you for your donation, the store will also give you 20% off a new pair of jeans. How’s that for charity?



Nose For Sale

Kevin Kline, the actor famous for his roles in ‘A Fish Called Wanda,’ ‘French Kiss,’ and ‘In & Out,’ is selling his nose for charity. After his recent Broadway performances in ‘Cyrano de Bergerac,’ he offered audiences a chance to buy the fake noses he wore in the play. The obscure tactic proved fun for the audience as people began offering up to \$1,500 for the prosthetic noses signed by both Kevin Kline and co-star Jennifer Garner. All proceeds are to benefit the charity Broadway Cares / Equity Fights Aids, to raise money for AIDS-related causes in the United States.



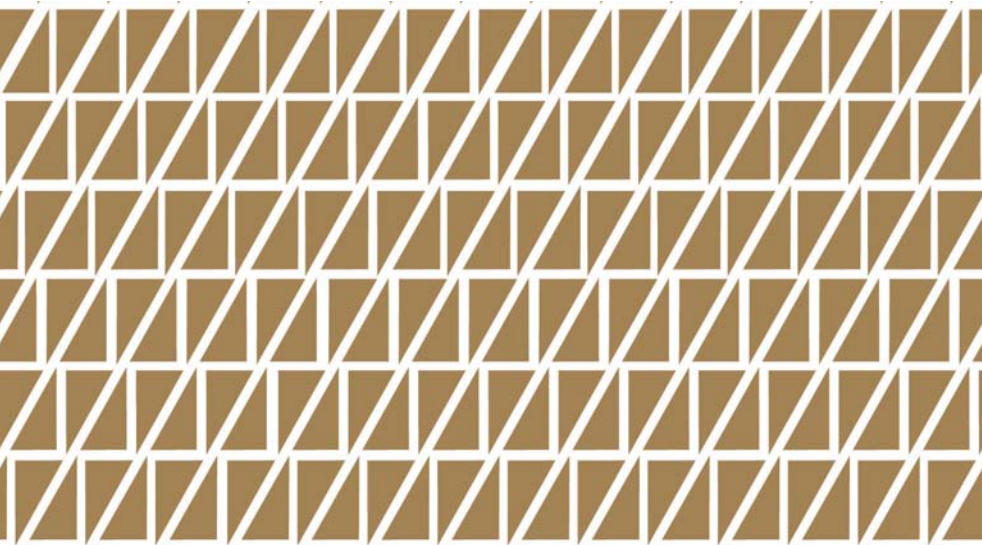
Ecowood

The fashion industry isn’t the only high profile industry to jump into the green pool. Hollywood has taken notice and will soon take advantage of the eco-friendly trend by releasing a slew of environmental themed movies over the next year. These aren’t environmental awareness films, but films that use awareness to their advantage. Imagine a paranoid thriller coming out about a family on the run from the earth’s plants, after the plants get angry over what humans are doing to the earth. The plants come up with a plan to get rid of the humans by unleashing airborne neurotoxins that cause people to commit suicide. Sound silly? That is the premise of M. Night Shyamalan’s next blockbuster The Happening, to be released in June 2008.



خطوات عام 2010 استقطبت انتعاج حياة الفرد من المدخنين بنسبة
والتي قد تصل إلى 50% أكثر من مجال فيروس HIV
والتي قد تصل إلى 50% أكثر من مجال فيروس HIV

**BY 2015, TOBACCO DEATHS WILL CLAIM MORE LIVES,
50% HIGHER THAN THE COMBINED VICTIMS OF AIDS AND HIV**



In 2006, INJAZ's first, second and third place Kuwait awards went to all-girl high schools.

Injaz

Sara Al Ramadhan

Though it may have started with a lemonade-stand, today's business-oriented high school students are getting slightly more creative, \$110,000 worth more creative.

Founded in Massachusetts in 1919 as the Junior Achievement program, this academic initiative recently branched out to the region, beginning with Jordan in 1999 as INJAZ. With the support of local and professional employees in the private sector, the program focuses on inspiring and mentoring the next generation of entrepreneurs. What begins at a participating high school as an after-school brain-storming session, over the course of a scholastic semester, turns into a fully student-run product or service company over the course of a scholastic semester.

INJAZ recruits volunteers they feel can provide sufficient business experience to a given group of students. Volunteers are assigned to participating schools, with one mentor per every 25 students who sign up. The company gets associated once a concept is devised, the CEO is chosen, and the departments are formalized. A capital of

about \$270 is equally invested by the 25 student-shareholders (about \$3.60 per share, 3 shares per person). At semesters end, companies are liquidated and sheets are balanced. 20% of profit is donated to a charity of the company's choice. Dividends are equally distributed amongst the shareholders and a prestigious ceremony is held to assess participating schools' performances.

Still in its infancy, the three-year old program has been adopted by public and private high schools around the region. Some have become so successful that they've reaped generous profits in record time. Mishref Girls High School's tourism company, in Kuwait, exceeded expectations, with a staggering profit of \$110,000. Kuwait Tourists (the company started by girls from the high school) charged \$25 a ticket to friends and family for company-organized trips. Their first trip alone generated returns of \$5,500 – allowing them to break-even. The remaining sales generated further profits for the girls, inspiring them to expand the company and launch other small ventures.

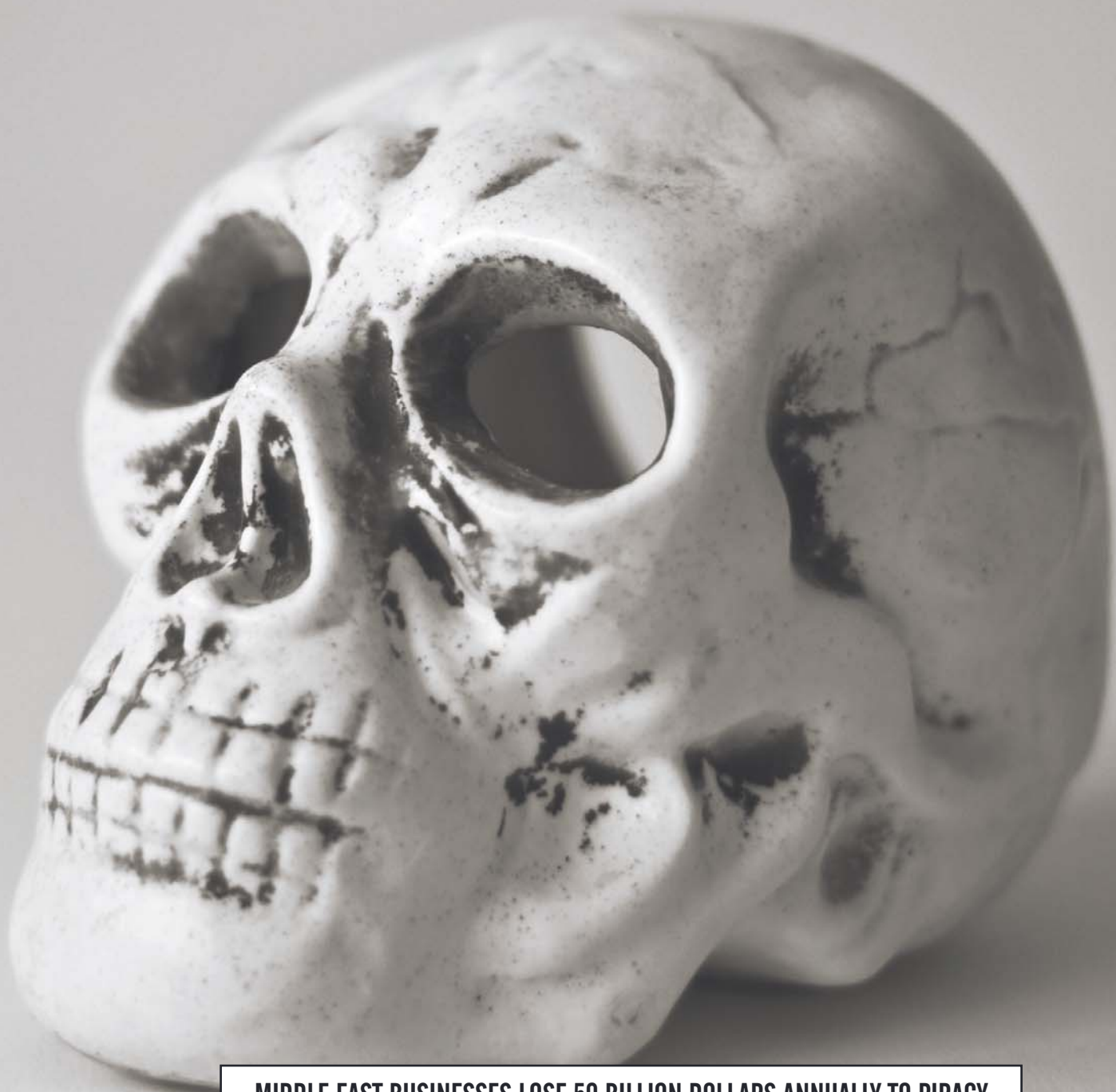
Kuwait administrator Rana Kamshad

is confident there is more to the INJAZ experience than purely monetary gain. "It's about the cause. The impact. The event. This is what I really care about," she said. "Some kids come and beforehand, don't even know what they want to do with their life. Then they participate and take away what they learn and how they change. This is what I care about – how they change."

Kamshad has been captivated by the fact that more than 60% of all Kuwaiti participants have been girls.

"The impact on the girls and their self-esteem is huge," says Kamshad. She mentions feeling that initially most girls had no aspirations beyond raising a family. "Afterwards they thought of starting their own business. This is what moved me."

INJAZ's success lies in the aftermath of the program. "We don't want the next generation of businesses to only focus on making money," says Kamshad. "We are trying to help create responsible and entrepreneurial citizens." *en.v*



MIDDLE EAST BUSINESSES LOSE 50 BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY TO PIRACY

Axis of Evil

en.v



From Left: Maz Jobrani, Ahmed Ahmed, Aron Kader

The lights go down as President Bush's voice fills the room. "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world," he says, as pulsating techno music plays. Egyptian-American comedian Ahmed Ahmed bounces onto stage to greet the crowd. Welcome to the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour, an act dedicated to attacking Middle Eastern stereotypes.

In 2000, Ahmed, Maz Jobrani (Iranian-American) and Aron Kader (Palestinian-American) banded together to show the world that the Middle East does have a sense of humor. With jokes revolving around their family ("My mom would always say "Please go to the store, get me some milk... inshallah!" quips Ahmed), their culture ("I tell my American friends that I'm Iranian. They go 'Oh! You're Arab!'" laughs Jobrani) and even touching on politics ("My favorite headline: Palestinians attack bullets with body," says Kader), the Axis of Evil were an instant hit. In late 2007, the comedy tour made their way to the Middle East, with stops in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, bringing humor home.

The trio sat with *en.v* to talk about their act, their travels, and how King Abdullah of Jordan conveniently got them out of an airport jam.

What drew you guys together?

Aron Kader: The Comedy Store in Los Angeles put us together in 2000. We were all doing our own thing around Southern California. A woman named Mitzi Shore liked to present voices that were unheard. She liked theme shows. She said, to all of us, "You guys are all Middle Eastern. Do a show."

Maz Jobrani: We started performing together under the name 'Arabian Nights.' In 2005, Ahmed and I decided to change the name and make it a little more irreverent. We called it Axis of Evil to put comedy behind it.

How do your acts complement one another?

AK: We take different angles on the same things and have different things to say about a topic. We can attack one issue from three different perspectives. We also compliment each other's energy.

MJ: The energy works well. Ahmed [Ahmed] is the host – and he's a good host, a good people person and a charismatic guy who runs with that. Aron [Kader] has this hard-hitting political thing that he does and he's got all the variety. Then there's me. I'm very high energy, so it fits well at the end.

Were you nervous that playing on arab stereotypes would be offensive to audiences in this region?

MJ: Our program was picked up by Comedy Central [the leading comedy channel in the United States.] It was the first time there were three Middle Easterners together on an American TV show, ever. We were telling jokes, laughing and making fun of our own backgrounds, American backgrounds, and how the West sees us.

AK: We are humanizing the Middle Eastern people in a way that people don't expect. To them, we are mysterious. MJ: Underneath our show there's a message. Once in awhile, we'll get an email from someone who doesn't get it. If we make fun of the Middle East there's probably truth to it – but what's underneath our acts is a positive message.

AK: We are not going to go up there and feed that stereotype; we are going to go against that stereotype.

What role does humor really play in generating awareness?

MJ: It has a major role. I was on a panel with [fellow comedian] D.L. Hugely and he put it very well. He said that comedy

is medicine but fed to you with orange juice. To sweeten it up, so it tastes good. We are giving people their medicine and doing it in a sweet way.

What is the biggest misconception about arabs that your show tries to address?

Ahmed Ahmed: That we all live in tents, that we all ride camels, that we own AK47s, that we are sleazy, that we all have bad tempers. A lot of things misunderstood in the West are strictly because of what you see on TV. It's the news, propaganda. Even journalists that have been to the region, they will still go back and have to spin a story, for their producers and the powers that be. There is almost a dormant outlook on Arabs in the Middle East. If you go to the West and you see Arabs, most of them are doctors, lawyers, PhDs, and Nobel Prize winners. There's science, math, culture, language, and linguistics. They all came from the Middle East.

I say this on every show: "The rest of the world will laugh with us if we can laugh at ourselves first." Arabs will make fun of black people, white people, Americans, and Asians. But the second it's turned around on them, they can't take the joke.

Have you encountered any awkward moments while touring?

MJ: We had one at Jordan airport. We received a first letter of congratulations from His Majesty, King Abdullah and then a second letter saying that His Majesty might come to the show and wants to invite us to the palace. So we were like, great! We get to meet the king!

AA: I always get stopped because my name is Ahmed Ahmed. It matches somebody on the [United States FBI] most wanted list. I get stopped in Jordan. They escort me to a room and the guy asks why I have three different IDs (driver's licenses and passport) that have three different looks. I explain that I'm an actor, I do comedy, and I just shaved my head because we're doing this documentary. And he asks me, what else are you doing here? So I say,

"we're doing a comedy show." And he asks me again, what else are you doing here? I go, "We're supposed to meet His Majesty King Abdullah tomorrow in his palace." And the guy goes, oh, okay, okay! Go ahead! I named dropped – it was like magic.

MJ: From now on whenever we mention the story about King Abdullah, we make him out to be our friend.

What is the most infuriating comment you've heard after a performance?

AK: "Why didn't you do that joke?" Or "Why you didn't do some new jokes?" Or, it'll happen before a show, someone asks if we're going to do new jokes. It's like you've never even seen us perform live and you are going to ask us if we are going to do new jokes?

AA: The most aggravating one I got was in Dubai is when a girl came up to me and said "Ahmed I loved your show and I think you are so funny. But the one joke you do, about making fun of Arabs? Don't say that – it's haram. Okay?"

MJ: I'm very mellow, very peaceful, very Gandhi but there were a couple of times in the States when I lost my cool because somebody has said some racist comment. I was talking about the bombing in Lebanon [in 2006] and did a bit about John Bolton [U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations] and how he didn't call for a ceasefire – and how it would have brought peace. And there was a guy in the crowd – this is in New York City – who started booing. I was like, "you are booing peace." And he told me to educate myself. And I told him to educate himself, and the next thing I knew, I was getting into a fight with the guy.

Where was your favorite performance in the region thus far?

AA: They all have special moments. I can't say that Dubai was the best or Egypt was the best or wherever. Jordan rocked, Egypt rocked. I liked them all. It's been open arms.

MJ: Performing for the King [Abdullah]...

I have never been that excited. AA: Each country, each show had some sort of dynamic to it.

What advice do you have for aspiring comedians in the Middle-East?

AA: We actually had casting sessions in Dubai and Egypt. We found a couple of gems – both named George and both from Egypt. What we recognized is that people want to do it – we just had to initiate it. Showtime Arabia has expressed that it's an underdeveloped art form here. There's acting, music and people who do theatrical monologues but nobody actually does stand up comedy. In those casting sessions we felt a real interest, thirst and hunger. It's a budding art form.

AA: The thing I have come to realize as I become older, while doing comedy, is that you can't please everybody. You are not going to get everybody. I have seen doctors and lawyers being criticized for their work. There's always going to be a critic out there.

If you have thick enough skin, you don't really have to pay attention to those people, because it's a small minority. I mean, we went to Egypt and 3000 people showed up in one night. We had to turn people away. The majority of the people were so happy and proud. It was amazing that they were waiting for some sort of laughter that they have never heard. We have to thank America also, for giving us the opportunity in Hollywood. We wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for American media.

The irony of it all.

AA: If you can make it in Hollywood you can make it anywhere. We got some wild success in the media, and that spawned off us bringing our show to the Middle East and presenting it to Showtime. Showtime embraced it and showed it to the region and now it's been like this snowball thing.

AK: Create something. Put it out there. There is an audience for it. People need to trust their artistic intention.

MJ: It's like Nike says: "Just do it!" *en.v*

Education: Right Or Privilege?

Siham Nuseibeh

Poverty is a problem not commonly associated with Kuwait; perhaps due to the lack of obvious indicators that are commonly associated with the idea of poverty or deprivation. There is not an abundance of beggars in the streets pleading for money, as is the case with other countries in the region; nor does there seem to be any mention of such a problem in national or international statistics. For example: Kuwait's outstanding performance when comparing the international poverty line, which is set at \$1.08 per person per day, to the per capita expenditure of the poorest Kuwaiti of \$11.8 per person per day— this is ten times higher than the international poverty standard.

It is not surprising, therefore, that most people in Kuwait give a resounding 'no' when approached with questions about the presence of poverty in the country. It is equally perplexing that, in Kuwait, the lack of education or lack of access to education is a kind of poverty that exists on a very real level. This statement may baffle many since education is one of the free social services provided in this country. In fact: Over 12% of government expenditure goes towards education; this has positively translated into a 93.3% literacy rate for adults and 99.7% youth literacy rate.

However, free education is a perk that is solely given to Kuwaiti citizens. Non-citizens may enroll in private schools if their parents can afford the exorbitant tuition fees or they can attend Arabic

schools that cost a fraction of what private schools cost. Yet, despite the latter, more affordable option, there still remains a large portion of families who cannot meet even those expenses. This sector of society is dominated by two groups: Legal residents who are simply too poor to meet the relatively paltry tuition costs of Arabic schools; and those who are 'alien residents' in Kuwait and, therefore, cannot register their children to attend school. The latter group includes, for the most part, the Bidoun (around 120,000 in Kuwait) and other stateless peoples.

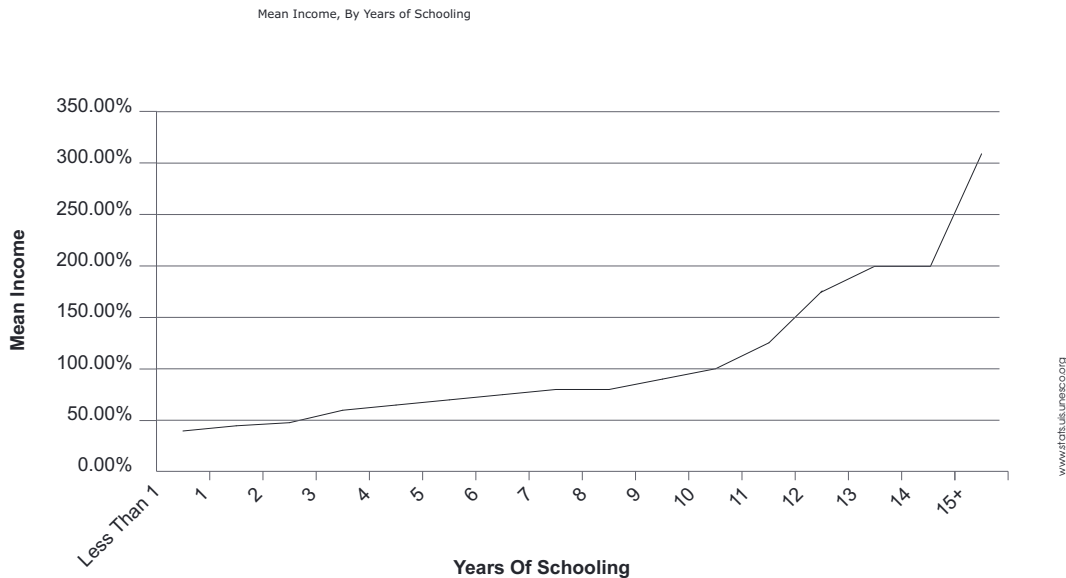
National statistics do not include non-Kuwaitis or non-residents, so educational and literacy statistics are almost impossible to find concerning this sector of society. However, there are a large number who cannot afford to go to school or cannot register for school. Though there are charitable societies that pay for those unable to pay school fees, even these organizations cannot pay for all those who have dropped out due to overdue tuition payments. One Palestinian woman (who wished to remain anonymous) has attempted to alleviate this problem by going to various schools, gathering names of children

who are unable to afford an education and collecting donations on their behalf so that they may return to school.

"It is astonishing the number of children who are out of school because their parents could not pay their children's school fees. For each school I went to — and I had been to at least 10 — the headmaster gave me a list of 50+ students who are out of school," she said. "We are not talking about an extraordinary amount of money in comparison with other private schools; what we are talking about here are fees as low as 300 or 400 KD." Other children are out of school because their parents could only pay half their fees, so many at the primary level are left to sit at home for lack of 100 KD. To put this figure into perspective: Kuwait's budgetary surplus for 2006 – 2007 was \$18.6 billion, while the 2007 – 2008 estimates puts the surplus at somewhere around \$24.9 billion due to increasing oil prices.

This kind of poverty has been given only superficial examination and at this kind of poverty has been given only superficial examination and attention at the popular level because poverty





in the traditional sense has been most commonly linked with income deprivation. What few in society realize is that the idea of poverty has evolved globally — especially in the international development scene — into a multi-layered concept encompassing a massive range of deprivations. Poverty is no longer simply seen through the prism of poverty lines and expenditure ratios, but rather is defined through various approaches and measurements.

The most relevant approach for the purposes of this article is the concept of social exclusion. This concept is used to describe a larger process of deprivation and marginalization that occurs in a society by processes of economic restructuring or by political targeting of a specific group or population within that society rendering them unable to participate fully in the economic and political opportunities

of that community. Stated simply, this approach highlights the deprivations that some sections of society suffer due to either the direct or indirect actions of an agent. Social exclusion, therefore, can be thought of as a way to look at poverty through multiple layers, which will allow us to see it not as an abstract, one-dimensional theory but as a real problem pervasive in our society today. It allows us to look at groups in our society who are at a real threat of falling into poverty due to the lack of a social safety net that would otherwise guarantee them education.

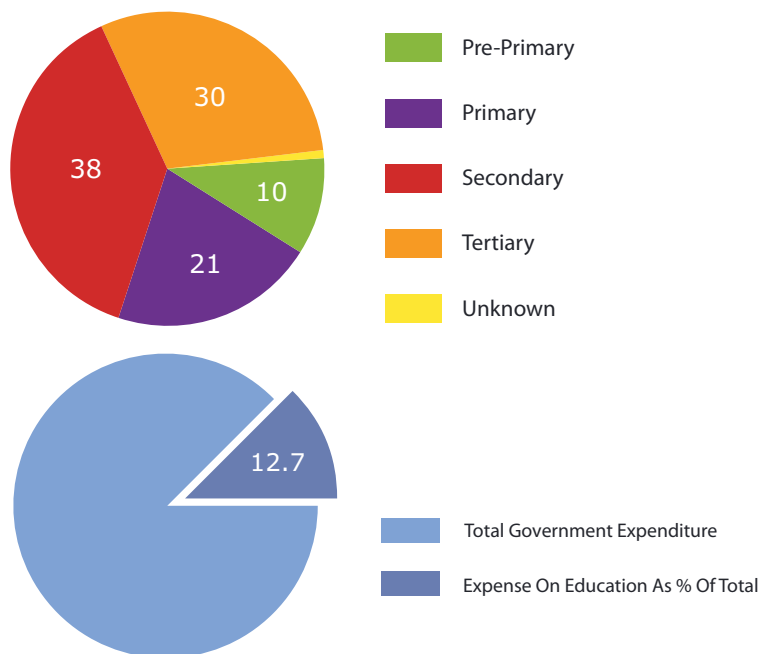
Viewed through the lens of social exclusion, the lack of education is a kind of poverty that can adversely affect the development of a nation. The link between education and development is an obvious one— education is an empowering experience and creates an individual capable of participating in the

development process of the country.

“Dropping out of school because of poverty virtually guarantees perpetuation of the poverty cycle since the income-earning potential of the child is reduced.”

The value of education was recognized in Jordan last summer when the government, in response to the rising humanitarian situation, took the decision to allow Iraqi refugee children to attend public schools for free without the required residency permits. Fifty Thousand Iraqi children flooded Jordanian public schools this past academic year due to this decision. This means that 50,000 children now have a chance to fight falling into the ‘poverty trap’ and to increase their income-earning potential in the future. Giving these children free education does not guarantee them an escape from poverty, but it does give them the tools they will need to combat

Public Expenditure On Education And Distribution Per Level



poverty and exclusion. What education will give these children is the ability to improve their overall productivity and participation in society.

Jordan, however, has a rather different problem than Kuwait with regards to education. As opposed to Kuwait, Jordan is dealing with a very specific humanitarian crisis that gathered strength quickly and with much global media attention. Kuwait has a much smaller problem in comparison, one that is not recognized or talked about at the popular level. It may be true that we speak about the problem of the Bidoun and read about them and other 'illegal aliens' in the local newspapers, but the implications of their lack of participation and emancipation is not sufficiently discussed nor addressed.

The two groups that this article has

made mention of — those who cannot afford education and those who cannot go to school — suffer different problems and will therefore need different solutions; it is an issue that we must start tackling now. Each group will need a very different approach especially when it comes to dealing with non-residents. However, aside from the political issues involved, education must be seen as an indispensable part of the development process for all people living within this nation — not just its citizens.

What is needed is a reorientation in our way of thinking about poverty, development and education. The benefits of education include human and social development, which undeniably lead to economic and political development. In this way education is not just a means, but an end in and of itself. It is not a

reward to be handed out to those more deserving or to those who can meet its expense. This kind of poverty is an actual problem that exists in our society today and that has thus far remained in the fringes, un-discussed. Education must be seen as an investment in the future, as it is nations and, therefore, the people of these nations who will benefit in the long run.

When we deny a child an education, we are robbing him of his future and a basic human right — a right as basic and as essential as any other right that we value as human beings.

This reorientation begins as soon as we begin to view education as a right rather than a privilege afforded to some and not others. *en.v*

Censorship In Kuwait: The Plight of the Black Mark

Abdulaziz Al Humaidhi

a.



a-b. 'BLACK OUT' men at work.

b.



Tucked away for years behind a series of fake store frontages, a small army of men go about their daily routine of protecting our eyes and minds from the ever increasing onslaught of foreign ideas, legs and breasts. Armed with a never-ending supply of thick black felt tip markers, the group of twelve men of varying nationalities and beliefs all come together during the work hours of 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day to, as one of the employees put it, "put down the Zionist and American plots to destroy our traditions and beliefs." These men are both full time and part-time employees of a local magazine and newspaper agent/distributor, assigned the task of blacking out and censoring things like images, words, flags, ideas, and any other printed material deemed inappropriate by Kuwait's vigilant censorship and monitoring bureau within the Ministry of Information.

I had previously assumed that all censorship acts were physically undertaken by an actual ministerial body or team but was now surprised to find out that this matter was in fact outsourced. "Its annoying, and really time consuming...especially when we get those thick seasonal women's fashion magazines," one manager complains to me as he begins to explain the arduous process behind the all too familiar blots of black ink spattered throughout locally sold magazines. He starts by discussing the costs they as a small family owned busi-

ness have to shoulder; first, around one thousand 'pre-issue' copies of every periodical have to be ordered to Kuwait before the actual issue is shipped out by its overseas publisher. The publisher will only ship a minimum of 1000 copies for ministerial preview sessions and naturally, the local distributor has to pay the costs of ordering and shipping as well as port fees. The Ministry of Information then reviews the issue and furnishes the distributor with a form containing page numbers and actions to be completed on said pages. These actions would range from simple cleavage or thigh concealing black strokes to a complete disposal of the page if the offenses on it were deemed too numerous or distasteful. The local distributor then assigns a group of 'black out' men an issue through which they thumb, laboriously scanning each assigned page for traces of whatever it is the ministry team consider offensive to the collective population of Kuwait. "Not only does this take us a great deal of time and effort" the manager elaborates "it also means our prices become inflated due to labor, overheads and the fact that we pay for the magazines, periodicals and newspapers shipping costs by weight" This dilemma is all too clear once he points out the large cardboard boxes filled with discarded pages sitting alongside every 'censorship officer' in the room. "We end up charging the customer for pages he or she will never see!" In today's wired world, most people will opt to simply get their subscriptions through the Internet or from abroad for a lesser price.

The 'censorship' room measures a mere six meters by four with a long table in the middle and brightly painted pink shelving lining the walls. The lingering fumes of thousands of used thick black felt tip pens hang in the air.

These employees spend hours on a daily basis exposed to these vapors—the many subtle smiles plastered across the majority of their faces as they scribbled away can only be attributed to either a certain sense of pride and work ethic or the more plausible result of ink intoxication.

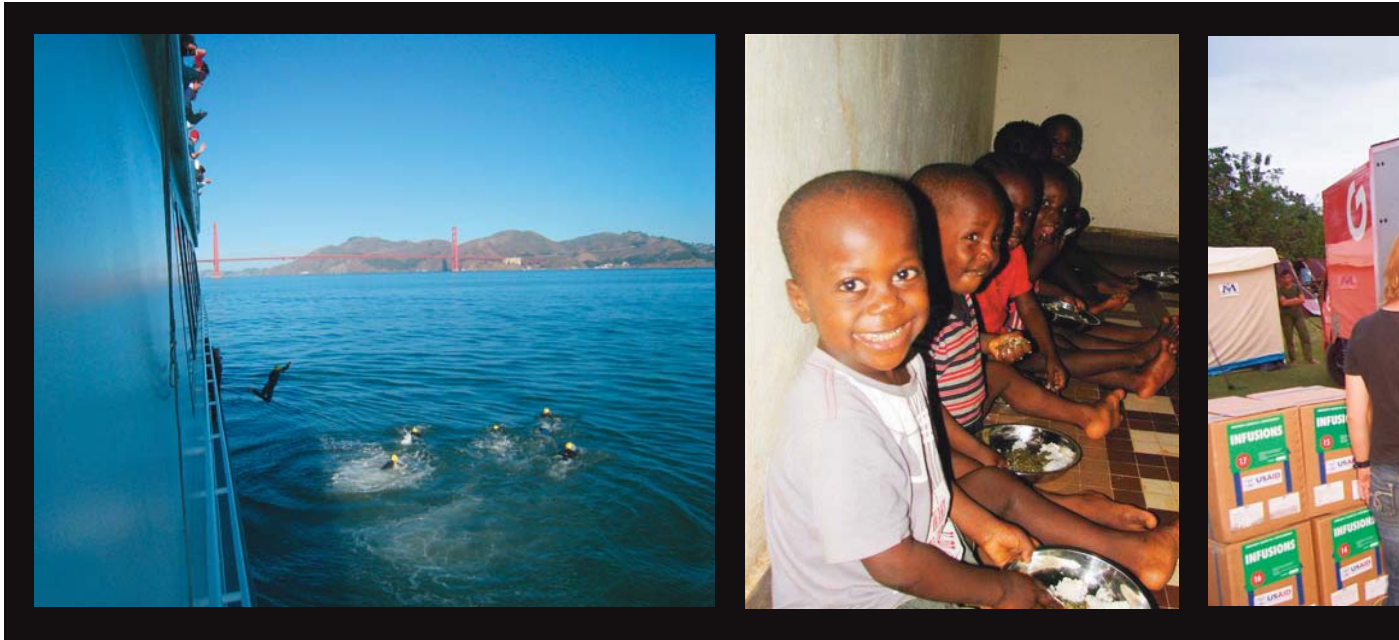
Towards the end of my visit I began taking photographs of the process and began a conversation with some of my subjects to try and distract them from the camera. One gentleman, who had been employed by the distributor for a number of years, had been doing this job for so long he was able to tackle each magazine ambidextrously, able to 'double pump' the assignment with pens in both hands and finishing each job twice as fast. At some point I asked the man if he was married. "Married?" He hesitated. "Yes I suppose you can say so." I asked him what the pause was for and his subsequent answer perhaps best summarized our present day social and cultural attitude towards most things new when he explains that after years of seeing all these 'naked' women in these magazines "a man could not go home and look at his wife the same way anymore." *en.v*

Global Responsibility

Sandra Al Saleh

It is no secret that corporations today wield great power and are a huge part of our lives, for better or worse. In 2000, the institute for policy studies released a report showing that, of the 100 largest economies of the world, 51 were corporations. With such great stories of power and influence, every action taken by a major company ripples across the world and affects even those who seem unconnected. This reach can either be disastrous or positive, depending on how seriously a company takes into account its responsibility towards the community.





Anti 'social responsibility' free market capitalists often quote Milton Friedman, who in 1970 blessed them with the notion that the only social responsibility a company has is to turn a profit. This idea is still eschewed in the boardrooms of those who do not want the corporation to be fettered by anything that might interfere with the maximization of monetary benefit, specifically to those who have monetary investment in the company—the shareholders. It is often immaterial where employees, vendors, resource providers etc. factor in this calculation, let alone the community and the environment. Theories like these are relics of a time when knee-jerk terrors of socialism would give birth to ideas that strip any social and rights-based instincts from business, leaving only a beating dollar

for a heart. Many people and corporations know this theory walks too narrow and unsustainable a path.

This is of course the fear of anti-corporate activists. Runaway greed will trample everything in its way, and then what will be left? They see the current shining badges of 'CSR' and 'greening' as hypocritical ways to divert the spotlight from the insidious consequences of corporate power. In some cases this is indeed true; no effort is without its aberrations and without its terrible judgments. Yet at the same time, when pulling back the curtains on some corporations, one does not see a monolithic selfish impulse only for profits; but a collection of individuals, trying to do their best within the system they work in, and continuously trying to

adjust and improve it. This is where the hope exists: In the places where, if it's broke, you do indeed attempt to fix it.

*“Companies Have Been Enthroned
And An Era Of Corruption In High
Places Will Follow”
Abraham Lincoln*

There is, as we continue to discover, a more enlightened form of business practice. Shareholders retain their right to reasonable profits, yet the other stakeholders in the equation are no longer invisible. Suddenly many more players, often left in the shadows to increase the bottom line, come into the picture: From the communities which provide raw materials to the workers



Glimpses of Agility's CSR program at work around the world.

whose labor provides the products and the services to the environment that is stripped of its resources. There are also the communities where the company resides and the people to which it extends its reach. So what happens when the corporation disregards these stakeholders? The bottom line is that bad behavior is bad for business, even if it can line your pockets for a period of time.

“Consumers are seething about insensitive corporate behavior”
Businessweek, September 11, 2000
Aaron Bernstein

In a world where companies have, in many forms, put profit over all other considerations, it is understandable that the issue of social responsibility resonates so strongly with the public.

As a consequence, it has woken companies up to both the inherent value and the many benefits of responsible action. This is not limited to the corporation's ability to follow laws or set ethical standards. That type of behavior should be a given, though there are many examples to the contrary.

Though the notion of philanthropy has always been alive in the business world, there is a shift away from simple check writing. In the past, companies have contributed to charities and made numerous donations to causes they support. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a different, more evolved animal altogether, and like all evolving concepts, it will continue to develop and has much room to improve.

Agility, one of the world's principal lo-

gistics companies, is leading the region when it comes to CSR. The development of the company's CSR strategy has been an evolution in and of itself. It started off with the common corporate practice of writing big checks to worthy causes, but the focus was haphazard at best. The company decided to focus and align their values, skills and strengths with corporate citizenship. A dedicated CSR staff took a closer look at the possible areas in which they, as a logistics operator, could contribute most effectively.

“Global Presence Brings Social Responsibilities.”
Agility Chairman and Managing Director, Tarek Sultan



A view from Mt. Everest: one Agility employee hiked up to the Mt. Everest Base Camp as a way to raise money for an orphanage and maternity hospital in Nepal.

“I am really proud of the fact that at Agility, we take social responsibility both seriously and personally.”

Mariam Al-Foudery, CSR Vice President

The first strategy was born: The Humanitarian and Emergency Logistics Program (H.E.L.P.). In times of major crisis and emergencies, where natural disasters or war have cut off transport and roads, a logistics operation is the most prepared. They have the vehicles, the local staff and/or partners and the storage facilities. From moving medical supplies for the crisis in Lebanon to moving food for 43,000 people after flooding in Indonesia, Agility has been able to use their logistics knowledge to transport aid and supplies for agencies to places no one can reach.

Employees were excited and enthusiastic about these projects and wanted to get involved on a simpler level. Through a serious effort to try and bring together their resources, the interests of their employees and their corporate ideals, Agility set out to find an issue that resonated with the company as a whole.

It came as no surprise that youth and education was the number one issue. While the company could have taken the easy route, by simply donating large sums to schools or to training programs, they chose to infuse the whole of the company with an educational spirit. To Agility, CSR is not a department but an internal movement.

They chose to take advantage of being so large [550 offices in over 100 countries with 29,000 employees that comprise over 130 nationalities], not by imposing a single decision from the top, but by focusing on the parts that make up the whole. The strategic priorities are offered up to their employees all over the world to lead as social entrepreneurs.

Any employee, from any of their offices around the world may submit a serious, well thought-out proposal for a social/educational effort that the company can help fund or support and where employees can participate as a team. The seriousness with which CSR projects are tackled is evident by the way the staff treat said projects as though they were everyday corporate business ventures. Each project has team leaders, a well thought out plan and is expected to meet standards that any business proposal would – except that it is a social effort and not a money making one. At Agility, the plan submitted by an employee predetermines that the project actually helps and works. The actual impact of the company’s action is taken seriously.

Through this setup, Agility employees have in this past year been involved in regional youth anti-drug programs to giving children access to educational opportunities as far as Thailand. They have been able to effectively tap into local communities through their vast network of employees around the world. Al-Foudery explains, “We have a better sense of what the needs are on the ground because our people are interacting with the community themselves and coming up with ideas.”

Though the \$4.4 million contributed to non-profits in 2006 alone may sound like a drop in the bucket for a company that makes \$4.5 billion in annual revenues, it is through programs like theirs that value can be added to communities in need. Their commitment to continuously develop and refine their CSR program is also hopeful. Agility has made certain that their commitment stays strong because they have woven the CSR strategy into their overall business strategy – which means that the good they do is also good for business. No company is perfect, nor does any company have all the answers, but in speaking with those in charge of CSR at Agility, it is clear that they are enjoying the process of evolving. *en.v*

Note: Contributing Editor, Deena Al Shatti, is a staff member for Agility’s Corporate Social Responsibility department.

Our Education

Sara Al Ramadhan

It is sometimes difficult to grasp where the middle east falls between the clear-cut line of western and eastern markets. As numbers show, we might just be perfectly economically plotted where we geographically fall: in the middle. Yet, as we continue to open our markets, privatize our companies and raise our global standards it seems inevitable that, sooner or later, change will come about.

Indicators such as gross domestic product and real and nominal growth rates have usually served as reliable compasses. In our case, it seems that one important factor has been underestimated...



Where Are We Now?

Ten years ago, there were barely enough schools built in places like Egypt and Jordan. Literacy rates were far below average - a major concern of the United Nations. Today, three in four Arab children go to school - a huge leap from where we once were.

On average, we are progressing well compared to most developing countries. The majority of our children can read, write and communicate in two or more languages. The problems we face mostly pertain to specific countries, rather than one general problem.

For example, in places like Iraq, low school enrollment rates have essentially been a result of the war and instability. Palestine faces the same problem as well. Solutions to ensure the next generation is educated have numerously been addressed by worldwide organizations but the brutal fact is that little can be done amidst war.

The problems with the GCC countries, on the other hand, are completely different. Though we meet the basic enrollment rate in primary education, our tertiary levels are far from ideal.

The average numbers of students who continue to university are only about 19% - Saudi Arabia having the highest and Oman the least. More Palestinian

children continue to university than any one GCC country.

Surprisingly, the majority of those who do attend university are women. In Kuwait nearly a quarter more women than men attend university. In Saudi Arabia 75% of college attendees are women. Though we have managed to break through the barrier of female education - an issue Africa still faces - we still do not have enough university graduates. The recent trend of foreign institutions frequently popping up throughout the region reflects part of the government's solution to these problems. In turn, more local youth are attending universities and have greater options than our parents ever had.

While it is comforting to know these issues are at least being addressed, it seems that this great leap forward may not be so easily mimicked in the following decade.

Where Might We Be Tomorrow?

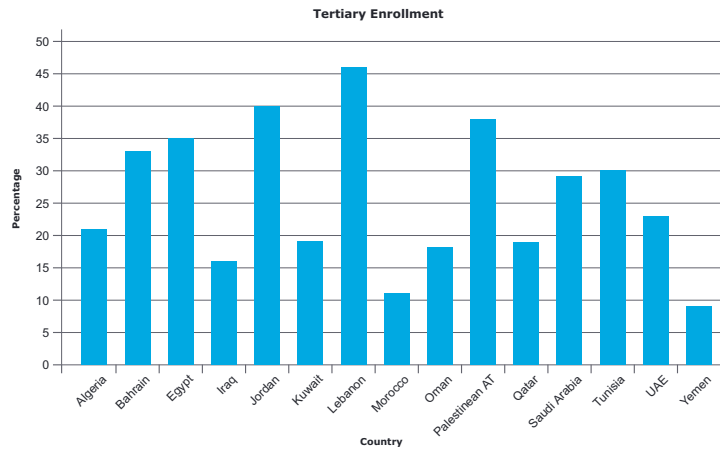
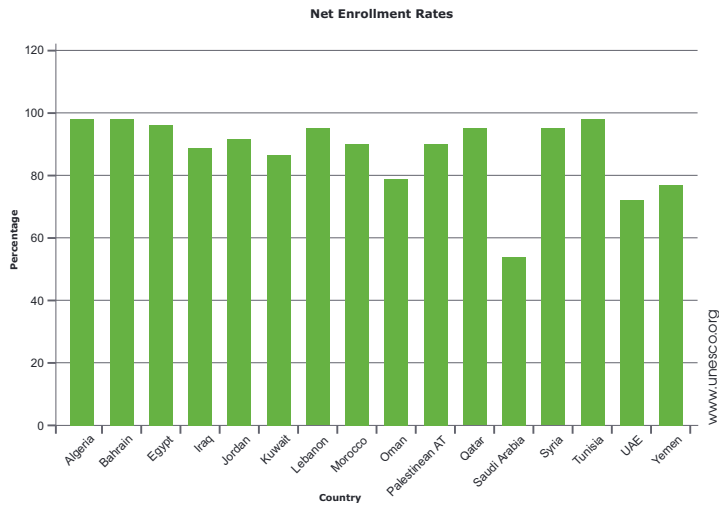
So far, it has been good - our economies are opening up to the outside world, and an influx of private investors and money has been flooding our markets in massive amounts. Already, foreign direct investment has risen to \$20 billion in the span of only four years.

As reported by The Global Expert Base,

an online knowledge source headquartered in Dubai, over a trillion dollars has been invested in infrastructures. The amount is expected to increase to \$3 trillion by the end of the decade. With such mind-boggling numbers being thrown around in the past couple of years, our reputation in the business world doesn't seem too shabby. Furthermore, the chance to finally globally integrate our economies has reaped us great rewards in oil gas prices, booming tourism in places like Dubai, and the ability to champion world-record-breaking projects, such as the Burj Dubai Project. Yet, there is the inevitable Catch-22.

Already, unemployment rates are high. Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia face unemployment rates of over 15% amongst 20-24 year old men. Furthermore, the GCC has encountered one of the fastest growing population rates, as two-thirds of the population is under the age of 25. While this might normally seem promising - a booming and high-growth economy combined with a huge future generation to inherit and carry the baton forward - the task of job creation and quality education has been the question at hand.

Most GCC states offer nationals work in government businesses, which could potentially solve unemployment problems. Yet, The Global Expert notes



that “the number of jobs in it [governmental bodies] has not kept pace with the growth of the workforce, nor wages with inflation.” It is possible that the current privatization of companies and new open markets could boom and decorate the entire Gulf region with new businesses and, in turn, new jobs. Yet, in the past 10 years only 55,000 jobs have been created. According to the Expert, we need at least five times that in the next seven years.

Again, the numbers are mind-boggling.

What is further frightening is not even the projections. Today’s numbers show that almost half of the GCC labor force is made up of foreigners – many of whom work in the private-sector as well (80%). As quoted by the Global Expert, “with businesses searching the world for the cheapest sources of labor rather than investing in building the

skills of the national workforce (...) it harms the prospects of young nationals, who are usually the last choice of private employers.”

Such economic issues may expose little appearance as to where the role of education lies. It does highlight that with an opening economy, competition hungrily awaits on the horizon. Overnight, the standards of our business and economic world seemed to have risen and, in turn the growing demands; the standards of our education need to as well.

What Can We Do?

The solutions to such huge economic issues are not easy. One answer, says Global Expert, could be to tighten immigration policies. As mentioned before, foreigners account for at least 40% of the labor force – with tighter restrictions, countries may then be forced

to invest further in their educational programs to make sure nationals meet global standards and are able to sustain successful private companies.

Another alternative could be to hire more teachers to teach the larger and younger generation. The shortage of teachers in the region is expected to reach about 26%. Arab states have come only second to Sub-Saharan Africa in filling the natural growth of teacher positions. Saudi Arabia holds the greatest threat: In the next seven years, they need more than a quarter of a million new teachers. In total, the MENA region needs to hire more than half a million teachers to ensure that all children are even able to continue attending school. An initial investment in ensuring that we have teachers to help our schools and sustain our positive growth trends in literacy and completion rates is, definitely, a beginning. The crux of

a.



a. A Group Of Arab And Kurdish Friends In Front Of The New Construction School They Will Be Attending In The Fall, In Their Village Near Dohuk, Kurdistan, Northern Iraq.

b. A Group Of Arab And Kurdish Friends In Front Of The New-construction School.

b.



the issue, though, seems to lie with the quality of education. While hiring more teachers and making it harder for foreigners to take local jobs could fix part of the problem, it doesn't address the fact that the trouble could be with us. As mentioned by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development spokesperson, Robert Wallace, it was highlighted that the skills gap between private and public sector employees is significant.

"A system that has so far been reliant on role-learning has produced a 'brain-drained' society, which lacks skill of analysis, curiosity and creativity," Wallace said.

Already, some initiatives have been taken to increase the quality of education in the region:

Saudi Arabia has taken an aggressive step forward with its recent project, a \$2.7 billion public university, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). Aside from offering a focus on innovative scientific education, it is the first public university in the country to offer education to both men and women. In addition to such projects, Saudi Arabia has also developed a 25-year plan, which includes the recruitment of qualified teachers with a combined goal of having 30% of the population enrolled in private schools. Qatar has been making major investments in private universities as well – Virginia Commonwealth (an art and design school), Weill Cornell Medical College and Texas A&M University (engineering) are but some of the few. Its efforts to build a strong knowledge base have been aggressive and one to follow

by surrounding countries.

The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has also been an educational initiative where all joint-stock companies in the country are required to contribute 1-2% of their annual profits to the organization. In turn, KFAS funds research and education projects with an already whopping 632 projects under their belt in the past 30 odd years.

Such positive, aggressive plans, hopefully, will contribute to the solution of unemployment and foreign-labor issues.

It is hard to craft a potential outcome out of a potential theory – but, if the numbers add up as planned, and little change is made, we could continue facing what has only just begun. *en.v*

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Deena Al Shatti

Bill Gates is a rich man. Thanks to the Microsoft Corporation, he is ranked #1 on Forbes Magazine's list of richest Americans as well as their list of the world's billionaires. With a net worth of \$50.6 billion, Bill Gates has money – and lots of it.

Along with wife Melinda, Gates decided to take some of that money and use it to give back - globally and locally. In 1997, the pair launched the Gates Library Foundation, as a way to bring computer access to low-income societies around the United States. In 2000, they consolidated, merging the Gates Library with the newly created Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Initially funded by Gates with over \$100 million, the foundation was a way for their philanthropic efforts to streamline and focus on their four main initiatives: Global Health, Education, Libraries and the Pacific Northwest (where the Gates reside and Microsoft is headquartered).

The foundation does not actively fund-raise, though they accept contributions. Perhaps most significant was Warren Buffet's donation of roughly \$37 billion (in Berkshire Hathaway class B shares), spread over multiple years. Buffet donated the money in 2006 with three provisions: 1) That Bill and Melinda remain active in the foundation; 2) that the foundation continues to qualify as a charity; and, most importantly, 3) that the foundation match the amount of money used by the donation each year (e.g. if the foundation spends \$5 million from the Buffet donation, they must spend an additional \$5 million from the foundation budget).

In addition to Buffet's requirements, the foundation has a set of 15 guiding principles. The principles, available in full on their website, are "fundamental to the way [they] operate." First on the list is the fact that this foundation is family founded and run. The values continue and cite that they are merely



funders that rely on others to take action. Though simple, this is the defining value. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation does not take action on their own, they recognize that they are not the experts. They provide the funding so that others can make a difference.

The foundation has had a strong impact thus far. In the United States, they have funded college scholarships with the United Negro Foundation and supported curriculums in local Chicago schools. Globally, they have focused on health and development, helping various HIV/AIDS researchers, as well as the GAVI Alliance (a global alliance for vaccines and immunization; organizations in this alliance include the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as local governments). They have done work in India establishing a national HIV prevention initiative and have contributed to vaccine programs. Beyond health, the foundation has a Global Development Program, working with "motivated partners to create opportunities for people to lift themselves out of poverty and hunger." They don't act alone, aligning themselves with other charities (such as Rockefeller and

Hewitt) and companies (such as Proctor and Gamble) on various projects. In doing so, they help "affect lasting change."

However, The foundation is not without its criticisms. Conservatives have disapproved of their support for organizations like Planned Parenthood [A global pro-choice health clinic]. A Los Angeles Times article criticized the foundation for investing in large companies that go against their charitable goals, specifically drug companies that withhold medicine from the developing world. They have taken these criticisms in stride, announcing a review of their investments.

Today, it is the world's largest foundation, with assets of \$38.7 billion. Starting in July 2008, it has been announced that Bill will be spending more time with the foundation, and less time with Microsoft. The foundation insists on impact, both in their charitable giving and in the way they operate. This impact, says Fortune Magazine, comes from its founders: the strong combination of "Melinda's holistic vision and Bill's brainpower." *en.v*

Educational Solutions to Environmental Problems

Mike Jolley

Education and awareness have become an essential part of environmentalism, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. While new technologies and policy reforms are important means to changing the ways we interact with the environment, these innovations are ineffective unless policy makers and the public think of the environment as a priority. Surprisingly (to some), concern for the environment is not new to the region. Historically, Middle Eastern scholars authored some of the earliest known writings on environmental issues along with medical works and other early scientific scholarship. Many of these scholars, such as the philosopher Al-Kindi, wrote on problems like air and water pollution as early as the 8th century. But in spite of this long history of awareness, the Middle East has also suffered its fair share of environmental problems. With construction booms beginning in the 1990s in nations like Saudi Arabia and Dubai, energy consumption has become a serious issue, as has the destruction of plant and animal habitats. Environmental groups have also recently begun to focus on the lack of response to climate change by many Middle Eastern governments. Other environmental problems like water consumption and quality have been a source of conflict for decades.

Despite their seriousness, there is a



O-14 Office

growing awareness of the environmental challenges facing the Middle East. A number of innovations have ensued following this growing awareness and desire for change. The most highly publicized of these have been technological advances intended to solve different problems caused by the clash between modern life and nature. These new technologies have been especially beneficial to the corporate sector due to their tendency to cut costs. The popularity can be seen in the rapid proliferation and success of environmental consulting firms and in investment in “green” buildings, such as Dubai’s massive O-14 office building.

Another common way to address environmental concerns is through state protection and restoration of natural areas that are at risk of being damaged or destroyed. This is often paired with protective laws created with the assistance of non-governmental organizations that are intended to deter those

who would continue damaging these delicate ecosystems. Finally, education and the building of public awareness are also used to address concerns. This technique is being used more and more in conjunction with other eco-solutions. Building awareness for the dire consequences of disregarding environmental problems, as well as different potential solutions, is necessary for more practical methods to be effective. Rather than merely attempting to repair environmental damage, this approach is distinct. It takes a preventive approach. Through these educative efforts, concern for and appreciation of the environment becomes not only a goal in itself but also a way to bring together different stakeholders and methods of addressing environmental concerns.

Travel, Learn and Be Green

One important and successful way in which education has been used for environmental change is through eco-tourism. Eco-tourism joins environmental

*Snorkeling*

conservation and sustainability with the tourism industry. Wildlife enthusiasts travel from all over the world to observe unique ecosystems and species of plants and animals during guided or carefully monitored excursions. Many eco-tourism programs also include a restoration and sustainability component. In addition to observing the wildlife indigenous to a particular area, some eco-tourists may also be allowed to voluntarily participate in its restoration. This form of environmental education also helps provide revenue and jobs while still maintaining a focus on sustainability and respect for local cultures.

The combination of recreation and education makes eco-tourism a unique opportunity for adults. Families can safely enjoy recreational activities such as scuba diving or hiking while observing wildlife in protected areas. Money spent on access and guide services contributes to the local economy as well as helping to defray the costs of maintaining protected areas. Such programs have shown enormous success in other parts of the world like the Florida wetlands in the United States and the Meilixueshan mountain range in China.

In the Middle East, eco-tourism has been built in Saudi Arabia. “Public Awareness” is one of the stated goals of the Saudi National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, which is gaining international popularity for its many different eco-tourism opportunities. Saudi Arabia is biologically diverse, from its upland areas inhabited by hundreds of species of birds to the coral reefs of the Red Sea. This diversity, along with the Kingdom’s extensive efforts to protect wildlife and promote tourism, makes it a fascinating place for visitors interested in biodiversity. Lebanon’s Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, protected by national law and maintained by the Al-Shouf Cedar Society, is another example of successful eco-tourism in the Middle East hosting 21,000 visitors per year. As part of its mission of increasing environmental awareness, the Society provides free field trips of the Reserve guided by people living in local villages and is especially oriented towards schools and children. This focus on the awareness and contributions of youth to environmental issues leads to another educational tool: Youth organizations.

Getting The Next Generation Involved

The environmental education of students in classrooms and schools, though important, is hardly a novel idea. But these youth organizations, existing for the purpose of learning and teaching about environmental problems and potential solutions, are new. There are a number of advantages to the creation of these youth associations, both for the environment and for the youth themselves. Not only do participants gain valuable leadership, communication and organizational skills, they can also benefit from the process of attending conferences, writing proposals, and drafting reports.

In addition to this, environmental youth organizations often engage in more hands-on work as well. One of the more recent moves in environmental education is to get the youth outdoors and more directly involved in restoration and conservation work. This push to get youth to make connections to the natural environment is often paired with public forums such as those mentioned above or with classroom and Internet-based learning. This combination of hands-on and advocacy work allows youths to make a connection to the wildlife they are protecting.

One of the most notable youth organi-



Flamingoes

zations working towards change is the Youth Environmental Parliament (YEP) in Lebanon. YEP aims to change the way in which we interact with the environment. On June 6th, 2007 the group participated in a celebration of World Environment Day in Beirut. According to the press release by Environment & Development magazine: "Hundreds of students and teachers from all over the country participated, along with representatives from the Ministries of Environment & Education, civil society associations, and media." The event included the display of a number of photos, paintings, posters, and other works of art devoted to issues such as the effect of war on the environment and the consequences of unchecked climate change in the Middle East. YEP students presented reports on a number of important environmental issues and showed a documentary on climate change filmed and edited by the students themselves. Many of the award-winning works of art went on to be displayed in 50 different schools in the region from September to December of 2007.

E-learning Equals Eco-Learning

This use of media and the creative

abilities of youths to further the environmental cause relate to another education method: the Internet. As with youth-led organizations, many of the Internet-based environmental education tools encourage youths to participate in a hands-on and independent way. There are a number of Internet-based games and research projects that allow youths to do their own field research, many of which integrate classroom-based learning and teacher or parent participation. These projects include access to and use of real-time data and hardware like web-cams. As valuable learning tools, such projects allow students to use the knowledge they have gained in the classroom in practical, concrete settings that could potentially contribute to scientific research.

One such project, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE), has students "taking scientifically valid measurements in the fields of atmosphere, hydrology, soils, and land cover/phenology." This data is then reported and published using a number of Internet-based formats such as maps and graphs. While GLOBE is an international project, its membership includes an impressive 298 schools in the Middle East region. GLOBE also

But history shows us that without the awareness and support of concerned citizens these innovations will not be used effectively.

allows students and schools in different parts of the world to communicate with each other, encouraging cross-cultural learning and communication. Not unlike environmental youth organizations, Internet-based learning tools like GLOBE give students the opportunity to develop valuable communication, research, and organizational skills in addition to learning about the environment. Many of the recently developed educational tools intended to increase environmental awareness and encourage the general public to get involved are being used effectively in the Middle East region. While the environmental future of the Middle East and the rest of the world seems uncertain, there can be little doubt that education and awareness will play an important role. The development of "green" and other technologies that encourage sustainability and conservation is obviously important.

Development of environmental education and awareness through creative learning tools like the aforementioned must continue to be a priority for scientists, policy-makers, and educators in order to achieve the goals of sustainability and a shared appreciation of our natural environment.en.v

DRUGS CONSUME 500,000 PEOPLE ACROSS THE REGION.



المخدرات تستهلك...ه شخص في جميع أنحاء المنطقة

THE VERVE

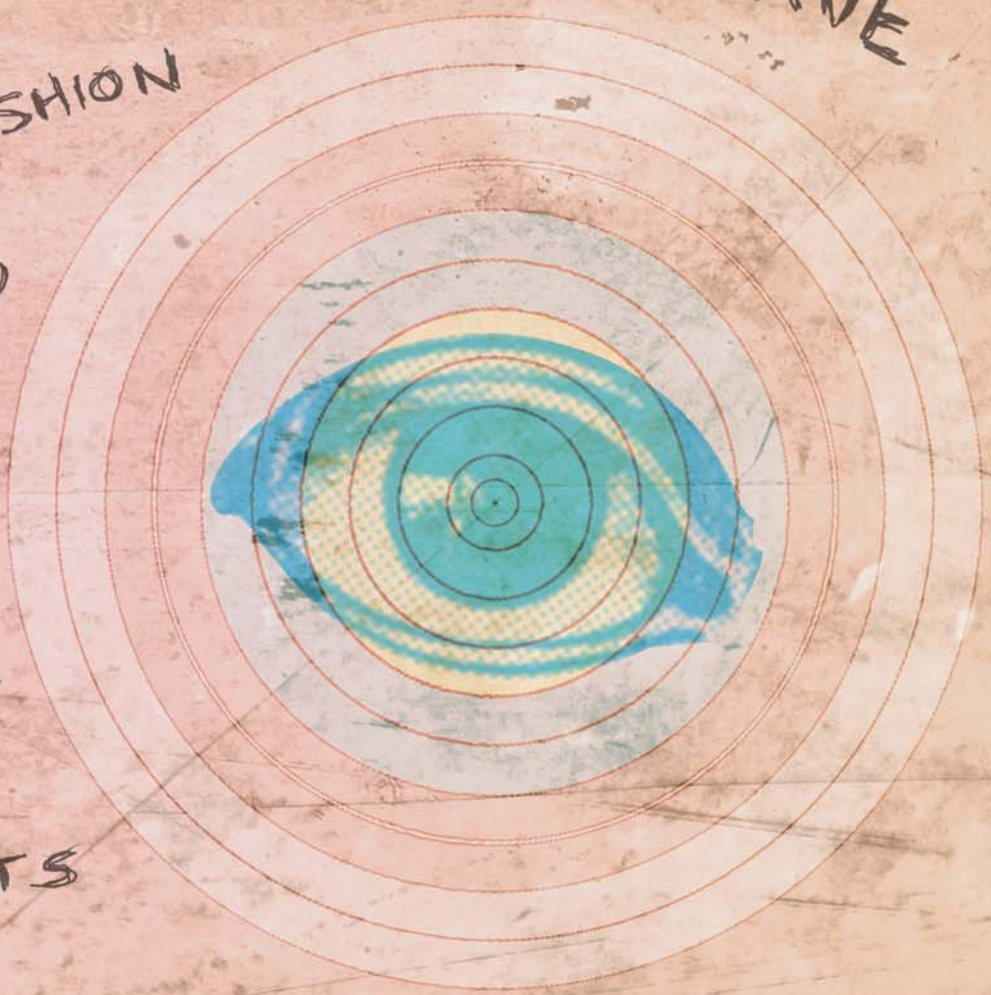
FASHION

FOOD

SHOPPING

TRAVEL

SPORTS

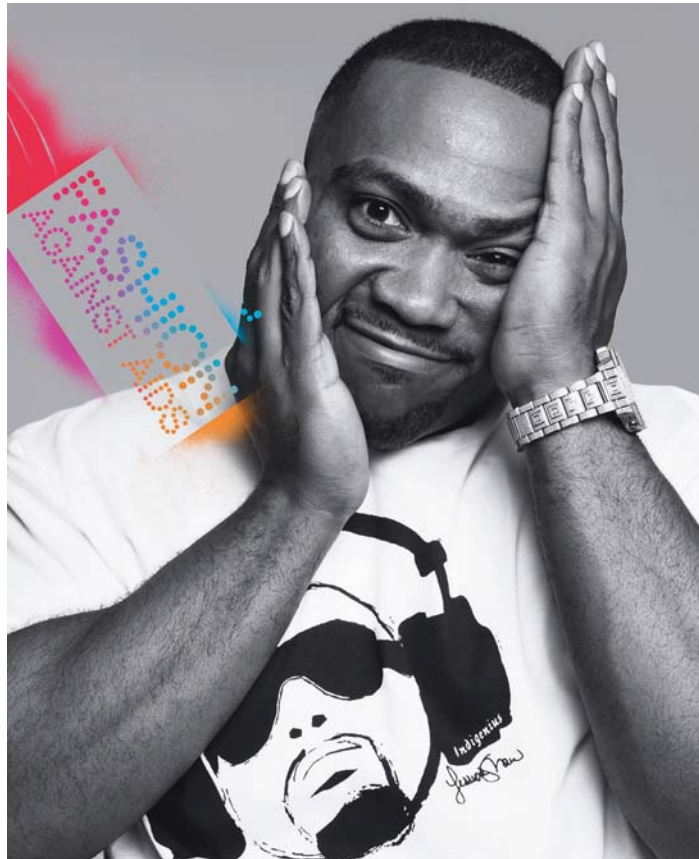


Fashion Against Aids *Nouf Al Sultan*

In the 80s, the 'War on Drugs' in the U.S. was a huge social issue. The 'Just Say No' drug campaign, fronted by Nancy Reagan, was everywhere. Celebrities caught on and they began to aggressively support the campaign. In the 90s, AIDS became the focus and the issue escalated when Magic Johnson announced in 1991 that he had contracted HIV. Suddenly, everyone began to take notice because it finally removed the 'homosexual' stigma from the virus. Celebrities started campaigns on AIDS awareness, most notably U2 frontman Bono. Now, Fashion Against Aids brings designers and celebrities into the awareness mix.

H&M and Designers Against AIDS (DAA) have joined forces to bring awareness about HIV and AIDS. Together with Rihanna, Timbaland, Good Charlotte, and a host of other famous designers, musicians, and artists, fashion is being used as a tool in the battle against AIDS. In February, H&M launched the 'Fashion Against AIDS' collection of T-shirts, tank tops and hooded sweaters that is aimed at young guys and girls. Twenty Five % of the collection's profits will go to HIV/AIDS-prevention projects around the world.

Fifty % of the people newly infected with HIV are aged between 15 and 24. "There's an urgent need to do something in this target group. By combining fashion with music in this way we hope to get these young people to 'stop and think', as [designer] Katharine Hamnett



Timbaland

puts it on one of the garments in the collection," says Ninette Murk, the founder of DAA. All the garments feature a print personally created by one of the celebrity artists and each tried to incorporate their own message into the print. The artists taking part in the campaign are Rihanna, Chicks on Speed, Good Charlotte, Henrik Vibskov, Jade Jagger, Justice, Katharine Hamnett, My Chemical Romance, Rufus Wainwright, Scissor Sisters, The Cardigans, Tiga, Timbaland and Ziggy Marley. All of them participated in the campaign free of charge because they wanted to set an example and help make a difference. "Supporting the Fashion Against AIDS campaign was a great way to encourage my fans to join me in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I love that H&M is providing a fashionable and easy way for young people all over the world to get involved

in this worthy cause," says Rihanna. The purpose of the campaign is summed up by Henrik Vibskov's print: "Be aware - it is still happening." The idea is to draw attention to HIV/AIDS by making the new generation, which missed the AIDS education campaigns of the 90's, aware. Twelve million people within the 15 - 24 age bracket are now infected with the virus. "Every 15 seconds, someone in the 15-24 age group contracts HIV/AIDS. Shopping has never been more important. Every garment sold makes a difference", says Kate Roberts, the founder of YouthAIDS.

Prices for the collection range from £7.99 to £19.99. All garments are made from 100 % certified organic cotton and carry a special hang tag that reads: "This might be the most important piece of clothing you've ever had your hands on." *en.v*

The junk food industry itself is a \$8.3 billion a year industry in the GCC, with a whopping 90% of that consolidated in Saudi Arabia alone.

*Too Much
of a Good Thing*
Sarah Schmidhofer



Statistics: What's The Problem?

As time goes on, it appears that the world is actually getting rounder. Not in geophysical terms, of course, but in terms of its inhabitants. Apparently, we are all growing too fat.

Not only has the GCC exceeded the world's growth rate in terms of expanding wallets, but in terms of expanding waistlines as well. While GCC countries are enjoying a GDP growth of several percentage points higher than the rest of the world as 2007 rolls to a close, they are also boasting an obesity rate of around 60% to top the world's 6%.

Are these elevated statistics related? Perhaps. As the GCC grows wealthier, lifestyles change accordingly. More money means a more sedentary lifestyle – people are able to hire others to do

manual labor jobs. Citizens, on the other hand, are taking on jobs with an increasing reliance on technology, settling the majority of residents in front of a computer screen instead of outside.

Increased employment rates in industrializing areas mean that people have less time to spend preparing food, opting instead for quicker options to be found on the go. Two out of every three Emiratis in the UAE consume fast food at least once per week. One can stop at any of the 300+ fast food restaurants in Dubai alone - all beginning to tailor their menus to the Arab population specifically (McArabia, anyone?).

The junk food industry itself is a \$8.3 billion a year industry in the GCC, with a whopping 90% of that consolidated in Saudi Arabia alone.

Much of this food is processed or packaged, containing high amounts of preservatives, salt, cholesterol, fats and refined sugars - the type of diet that can rapidly lead to obesity when coupled with lack of exercise.

Why Obesity = Bad

Obesity in itself may not be reason for panic. As we all know, bigger is sometimes better. The problem is the host of health complications to which obesity invariably leads. A high body mass index progressively increases the rise in diseases leading to heart attacks, strokes, death, blindness, kidney failure, amputations and hypertension in developing. Obesity is further associated with musculoskeletal disorders (osteoarthritis from supporting too much weight), certain types of cancer, and mental illnesses such as depression.

Stay Sharp

enearth.com



Muslims consider the body to be a gift from Allah and carry the responsibility of caring for that gift.

Dubai is a good example of this connection, with many of the adult population qualifying as obese and of which a full one fifth of are affected by diabetes. In fact, four out of five countries with the highest adult diabetes prevalence are Gulf states [the UAE (19.5%), Saudi Arabia (16.7%), Bahrain (15.2%), and Kuwait (14.4%)] showing higher than average obesity rates and elevated diabetes rates compared to the rest of the world.

The problem extends far beyond the expanding waistbands of the fat guys. In these cases, society is called upon to treat (and pay for) those with obesity-related illnesses. The GCC expects the need for hospital beds to fully double in the next couple of decades, and expects a corresponding five-fold increase in hospital costs. They have already begun racing to implement a \$10 billion dollar hospital-building program in anticipation of this surge of in-patients.

Who Suffers Most?

Curiously, though sedentary lifestyles and poor diets resulting from industrialization are cited as the most influential causes of obesity in the GCC; more women are obese than men. Though researcher Dr. Abdul Rahman Mosaiqer blames a rapid pregnancy cycle in which many women do not have a long enough interval between pregnancies, others point fingers at the lack of emphasis on female exercise. Indeed in Saudi Arabia, where most schools do not offer PE class to females, a full two out of three women are overweight (compared to less than one out of every four men).

It is true that for Saudi woman, exercise

options are stringently limited. Women can try dieting, or eating healthier foods, but you would be hard pressed to find them in a gym or jogging along the street. Though working out is technically legal for females, many women find the societal stigmas attached unbearable. Women report being harassed off of Riyadh's walking paths, despite donning the required walking cloaks, and are not allowed to enter the gyms or pools of local hotels.

Certain opponents of female gym classes make religious arguments, claiming that the disrobing of the girls and the concentration on their physical movements will cause them to lose their characteristic modesty. Others are opposed to the idea of women exercising in view of men (on the walking paths, for example), providing the men with immoral temptations.

Some see these arguments as a misinterpretation of the religion. Muslims consider the body to be a gift from Allah and carry the responsibility of caring for that gift.

Physical health is considered to be an important attribute of Islamic belief, provided of course, that women stay within the guidelines (such as dressing modestly and exercising separately from men). It therefore seems that, in addition to encouraging women to have healthier habits themselves, society must also encourage men to provide an environment in which this is possible.

So What's A Nation To Do?

Fortunately, as bellies are catching up to them, so too are the conceptions of women and exercise in a modernizing

society. In January, the University College of Jubayl marked the first time in Saudi history that a physical education class was offered for women. Hopefully other universities will follow suit, realizing that physical health affects everyone, individually and as a society.

Governments are already trying to increase public awareness, publishing tips and nutrition advice almost daily in newspapers clearly hip to the fact that citizens need to start trimming down. The idea is to target high-risk people before they become obese and help them formulate a prevention strategy. Focusing on personal demand and awareness is important in getting people to modify their own behaviors... choosing what to pack in a school lunchbox, for example, or being mindful that car obsession is not a good reason to drive short distances when walking both nurtures the body and the environment. People need good sources of information that help them take care of themselves practically.

Schools must be involved in this process as well - teaching courses on nutrition and physical health, providing healthy choices for lunches and encouraging exercise. Children currently learn eating and lifestyle habits from their parents, who as we see, do not yet have it quite right. The schools can then serve an enormously important role, intervening in the fat cycle passed from parent to child, and preventing obesity before it starts.

It may be wise for governments to act on the supply side as well, providing financial incentives for companies to use healthier ingredients in their products and helping schools provide better lunch choices to students. *en.v*

Spring Cleaning

en.v



1. Sick of your room, your clothes, and your mood? Spring is in the air and you want to start shopping for your new spring wardrobe and brighten up your furniture? Well, hang on to your wallets for a minute and think about doing a little spring cleaning before you add more ‘stuff’ to your house and closet. According to a recent article posted on Martha Stewart’s official website, people burn 55 minutes a day looking for things and 80 % of what we own we never use. So, instead of focusing on what to buy, try to focus on cleaning out your clutter first.

www.marthastewart.com

2. Clean out your entire closet and put aside the pieces that you no longer need. Remember the old adage “If you haven’t worn it for a year, you will probably never wear it again”. Pack up the clothes you want to get rid of and donate them to a local shelter. When you think about how hard it is to part with something, remember that it is going to someone who really needs and appreciates it rather than the back of your closet.

3. So, you have some old evening gowns that you can’t possibly give away because you don’t think they would be useful to anyone? Think again. ‘Operation Fairy Dust’ is an organization that accepts formal dresses as donations and provides high school girls in need with formal prom dresses. Attending a prom is expensive and though most girls hope to attend, many are unable to handle the costs involved. Give a girl her dream prom, by donating an old gown.

www.operationfairydust.org

4. Have an old chair or lamp that you’re sick of and want to throw out? Hold on to it because there are many eco-friendly ways to get rid of furniture and clutter without adding to our landfills. Have spring-cleaning days with your friends where you exchange your goods for theirs. If you’re still left with unwanted items, you can always donate furniture to local schools or charity. Or, if you want to be even more creative, try a site like Freecycle. It’s a great place to give away what you don’t need and receive what you do need.

www.freecycle.org

5. The MacBook Air just came out – and you want it. But what do you do with your old computer? Though old computers aren’t usually worth much after a few years, you can get rid of it while helping out a great cause. World Computer Exchange (WCE) sends donated computers to over 60 developing countries and puts them in the hands of children in need. It provides computers to help connect more youth to the Internet and supports services in education, environment, and economic development.

www.worldcomputerexchange.org

6. Finding it hard to part with your old baby clothes? After a few years, though, the closet starts overflowing and you have to make some space. How do you get rid of your baby’s first onesie, his first t-shirt, or his first baby hat? You don’t have to. Wild Zipper is a site that takes old sentimental clothes and preserves your happy memories by transforming them into a beautiful quilt. Now you can keep them with you forever.

www.wildzipper.com



**KUWAIT IS THE 8TH FATTEST COUNTRY
IN THE WORLD AT 74% OF THE
POPULATION BEING OVERWEIGHT.**

*Interactive Ways
to Raise Money and
Awareness for a Good Cause*
en.v

Team Sports

Play in a sports tournament, and charge an entry fee. Donate all proceeds to charity.

Help out a team that can't afford equipment. Create tournaments for less fortunate teams.

Ball for All (www.ballforall.org)

The Great Football Giveaway (www.thegreatfootballgiveaway.com.uk)

Walkathons

Find a cause you support, and collect donations per kilometer walked. Donate all the funds to charity.

Move beyond simply walking. Organize a team triathlon or a swim-a-thon or arrange a bicycle or motorbike ride.

Walk the World (www.fighthunger.org)

Swim Across America (www.swimacross-america.org)

Culture Shock in a Good Way

Hussah Al Tamimi

a.



b.



The GCC is known for its luxurious lifestyle. The image of traveling comes with lavish hotels and business-class seats. Local jet-setters enjoy Europe in the summers, or Beirut and Dubai for long weekends. When they venture out to more exotic locations like Thailand or India, it will most certainly be an exclusive first-class foray into the 'ethnic' wonders of the East. In contrast, the next generation of adventure-seeking travelers have begun to add a splash of philanthropy and alternative travel to their vacations. Alternative travel is becoming the new rage as an increasing number of youth begin to move away from five-star hotels and into lower-end youth hostels.

In September 2006, I decided to jump on the bandwagon and do some alternative traveling of my own. I traveled to India intent on truly experiencing the essence of the country, not as a pampered tourist, but as a real part of the culture. I volunteered at an orphanage, Udayan Care, a non-profit organization that has 6 homes for orphaned children.

I worked at a girl's orphanage (which has 40 girls between the ages of 3-20), waking up with them daily at 6:30 am to make sure the girls would get ready for school. For those students who did not go to school, the other volunteer and I would teach the girls basic English. During the weekends I had time to visit places I always dreamed of and experienced a new culture. I saw the Benares and the Taj Mahal, the grand Mughal Buildings in Agra and Jaipur; I watched Hindu rituals on the Ganges.

The girls under my charge were on my mind the whole time, even when I was in a different city or in my room reading a book. It gave me joy to see them when I came back from short getaways. Feeling like a mother, they became my children. Staying in the orphanage allowed me to absorb Indian culture firsthand – not the westernized Hollywood version. The beauty of such travel is that you feel like a local. The food is spicy and flavorful, not modified for foreign taste. Cold showers and eastern style toilets are the norm, especially if

going on camping or backpacking trips. Local transportation is usually overwhelming and cramped, but efficient at the same time. It was definitely an experience.

Next time you want to learn a little more about another culture, think about getting on a plane and teaching English in a rural village in China or India. Sip local fish stew on the crowded streets of Beijing, or shop for colorful saris in the narrow alleys of Old Delhi. Stay in an orphanage or hostel and be humbled by an underprivileged Ugandan, Peruvian, or Indian. Once you get home, you will be thankful for the house you live in and the education you attained. *en.v*

Here are two websites that will help you plan alternative trips:

www.responsibletravel.com
www.globalcrossroad.com

For more information on the NGO I volunteered at visit:

www.udayancare.org



THE AVERAGE AGE OF DEATH BY ACCIDENT IS BETWEEN 21 AND 30 YEARS.

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CREATIVE CONSCIOUS



FILM
BOOKS
DESIGN
ART
MUSIC

a.



Seeing the World Through Film

Masoud Amralla Al Ali

a. USA : *A Thousand Years Of Prayer*

b. USA: *When The Road Bends - Tales Of A Gypsy Caravan*

c. Australia: *Unfinished Sky*



b.



In just four years, Dubai's International Film Festival (DIFF) has achieved worldwide acclaim as a prestigious film festival. The annual event has been evolving at a fast pace, receiving the same stature as Cannes and Venice. *en.v* sat with Masoud Amralla Al Ali, the Artistic Director of DIFF, to get his feedback on the event's development.

The 2007 Dubai International Film Festival took place from December 9th - 16th. Last year, the festival premiered 20 films (it displayed 141 in total), in comparison to six films in the previous year. DIFF is slowly gaining producer confidence to host world premieres in Dubai. With such expansions, media attention is greater, leading to a larger number of attendees.

According to Masoud, the "quality of movies the festival chooses depends on

what's out in the market." Acclaimed foreign films, such as the *Kite Runner*, were premiered at this year's festival. The quality of Arab films has also been improving. Arab directors are becoming more experimental in the way they portray a story.

"There are a lot of great achievements by Arab filmmakers," says Masoud.

"The problem is the politics of the movie industry in the Arab world."

Distribution is a challenge for Arab cinema; and therefore filmmakers have a hard time reaching large audiences.

DIFF has created a positive exchange of ideas. "Each movie [teaches] something new. Movies are a mirror to a particular culture and society," Masoud points out. Press conferences also provide further insight, with commentary from produc-

ers, directors and actors, each explaining what the film meant to them.

The festival has succeeded in creating cultural dialogue between foreigners and locals residing in the region. "A foreigner might be living in the Emirates for 20 years and know nothing about Emariti family dynamics," says Masoud. "After watching an Emariti movie, they can have a clearer understanding." Hopefully, these dialogues will help the stereotypical views of the MENA region disappear.

DIFF is more than just a small festival in the Middle East. Today, the festival's stature has brought films from all over the world to diverse audiences. If art challenges boundaries, then DIFF's presence is leaving a lasting impression.

en.v

Big Pharma
Exposing the Global Healthcare Agenda
Jacky Law



Behind The Doctor's PrescriptionIt's simple: go to the doctor, get diagnosed, pick up the prescription, and follow your physician's orders. Sounds easy, right? Jacky Law thinks otherwise and contends that there is more to medication than simply following doctor's orders. In her book, *Big Pharma: Exposing the Global Healthcare Agenda*, Law presents an insider's look into the world of medicine. She examines how pharmaceutical companies in the United States and Western Europe dominate the global consumer market economically and socially. Law, a journalist who has been reporting on healthcare for the past 25 years, argues that

pharmaceutical companies ignore their most valuable asset, the patient. "This book is not to celebrate medicine's achievements but to consider how the medicine business works and how it can deliver a better deal for the public who pay for it."

Law expresses her concern that business has come to control every aspect of medicine. Endorsements from leading consultants and political figures have given pharmaceutical companies' products a competitive edge. As a result, crucial medicines aren't undergoing adequate testing. Budgets are being allocated to endorsements rather than scientific research, claims Law.

The book is a wake up call to a global medical dilemma - though a solution is within reach. After all, where would a pharmaceutical company be without the consumer? *en.v*

Book Details:
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(February 6, 2006)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0786717831

Music as Peace? Masoud Amralla Al Ali



Where wars, peace treaties, and UN resolutions could not solve the problem, can music step in to find a solution?

It can, if Daniel Barenboim has anything to do with it.

Barenboim, the General Music Director of the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin and Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, directs an orchestra and workshop of Israeli and Arab musicians called the West-Eastern Divan. Barenboim founded the Israeli-Arab orchestra and music workshop with the late Palestinian writer and literary scientist Edward Said in the late 1990s, whom he met by chance in the lobby of a London hotel in the early 90s. What followed was the West-Eastern Divan Workshop, which took two years to organize and comprised talent from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia and Israel. These two men, one a Palestinian academic and the other an Israeli of Argentinean-Jewish origin, discovered their shared dream and idea of what Israeli-Palestinian cooperation could look like. In addition to the orchestra, the West-

Eastern Divan summer workshop is conducted to encourage young talent through scholarships and annual music workshops that last several weeks in Andalusia. These workshops also give those involved an opportunity to discuss the differing viewpoints of the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the conclusion of the workshop, the musicians go on tour with their orchestra. They are given the opportunity to demonstrate how two seemingly opposing cultures can come together and make beautiful music.

This initiative is part of Barenboim's wider and tireless efforts to advocate cultural dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East through the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which was founded by Barenboim in 2004. The foundation funds music projects in the Middle East and, in particular, the occupied Palestinian territory. These projects seek to spread the same goals that Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan orchestra advocate- namely to encourage dialogue and teach respect and understanding.

In addition, the foundation established the first musical kindergarten in the West Bank town of Ramallah. The kindergarten, named after Edward Said, is mostly made up of children from refugee camps who take lessons in music, art and theater. Also, through cooperation with other organizations like the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, the foundation also sends professional musicians from Berlin to the occupied territory to teach music to children and the youth in refugee camps.

In 2002 Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim were awarded the Premios Príncipe de Asturias for understanding among nations. Barenboim was also recently awarded the Paul Hindemith Award for Art and Humanity.

Although Barenboim's friend and partner Edward Said passed away in 2003, his ultimate message of humanity and justice lives on and can be heard through the hope-filled notes of their music. *en.v*

20 x 30

en.v



Philanthropy And Art Fused together for a special fund-raising exhibition called Art 20X30 at Dar al-Funoon that took place in Kuwait on February 17-19 to raise awareness and support for the charitable hospice Bayt Abdallah. Art 20X30 was an extraordinary initiative that gathered donated works from Kuwaiti and international artists that was sold at the three-day exhibition.

Bayt Abdallah is a children's hospice that provides specialized care and expert pain and symptom management for children with terminal illnesses. The hospice was commissioned by the Kuwait Association for the Care of Chil-

dren in Hospital (KACCH) to address the individual needs of these children and their families within an environment that is child-friendly and supported by a highly skilled pediatric staff. The hospice, which is surrounded by landscaped gardens and terraces, was designed by a young Kuwaiti architect Alia Al-Ghunaim. One of its kind in the Middle East, the care center obtained its name from a four-year old boy who returned to Kuwait from London after treatment failed to cure his life-threatening condition. Abdallah's mother had promised him that he would never have to stay in another hospital and, with the support of KAACH, was able to care for him at home. This heartrend-

ing encounter gave KAACH the inspiration and impetus to create a haven for other terminally ill children in Kuwait to play and socialize with other children in a peaceful and friendly environment.

The Dar al-Funoon fund-raising event was a grand success and garnered more than KD \$63,000 for the charity- an amount considerably higher than was originally expected to be collected.

Born out of one tragedy, a small seed of hope has been steadily budding towards full fruition through the aid and care of other's altruistic endeavors. *en.v*

مجلة ذوق: أناقة عالمية بعيون محلية

الآن في الأسواق



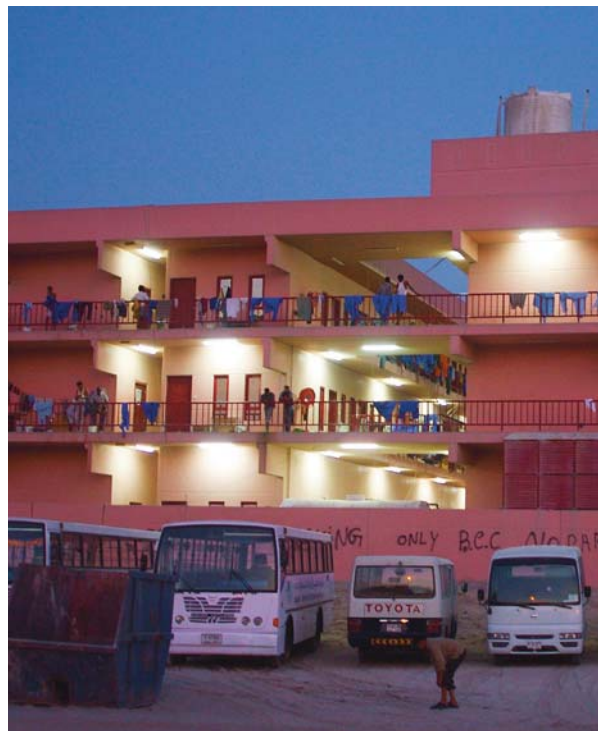


One of the many construction projects in Dubai.

Sonapur - City of Gold

Sonapur (City of Gold translated from Hindi) is a vast area beyond ghousais and bordering Sharjah which houses around 200,000 construction workers. The residents are mainly from the sub-continent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and more recently nepal. The area is bustling with large transport buses who drive the residents to and from the camps to construction sites all over the city. Sonapur is dotted with a few supermarkets, indian tea stall cafes, barber shops, the odd mobile phone shop and photo developing stores.

Photography: Mohamed Somji
<http://photoblog.mohamedsomji.com>





Pg. 52. From top, counter clockwise: long queues of construction workers wait to get on the buses to return to the camps after a 10-12 hour workday.

Tools of the Trade: workers' overalls and boots are a familiar sight. Most of Sonapur's residents are employed in the construction industry which has experienced a massive boom in Dubai and other Emirates in recent years.

One of the hundreds of buildings that houses construction workers in Sonapur.

Pg. 53. Sonapur residents reflect after a hard day of work.





Pg 54 A typical labor camp; this one is relatively new and houses 1,200 workers with an average of six persons per room. The camps are at their busiest in the evening as workers return from their day shifts and evening shift workers prepare to leave for the sites.



Pg 55 Top left; Workers pool their efforts to make the evening meal. Typically, the room occupants divide cooking responsibilities among them and share the costs equally.

Top right; A sonapur resident tends to his personal needs. It is rare to get such quiet time as common facilities are always busy with hundreds of workers, especially during peak hours.

Middle left; Irfan, a two year resident of sonapur prays at one of the make-shift mosques on his campsite.

Middle right: a wide variety of asian meals are cooked at the camps with vegetables being very popular due to their inexpensive nature and ease and speed of cooking

Bottom: Sonapur residents have their portraits taken so they can send them to their families back home. Sometimes they take group pictures so they can save money and then cut out their respective faces from the photo to send home.





Pg. 56 A worker shows off an injury sustained to his finger while at work. Health & safety concerns are very high amongst the workers – several high profile accidents resulting in injuries and deaths have highlighted the need to regulate better health and safety standards at the sites.

Pg. 57 Umapathy, from Madras, india abandoned his job to seek out higher wages only to find himself conned and deserted.

IMPRESSIONS

Zia is a carpenter from Pakistan. When Mohamed Sonji met him, he didn't know the name of his four month old daughter because it was his way of coping with the separation from his family.





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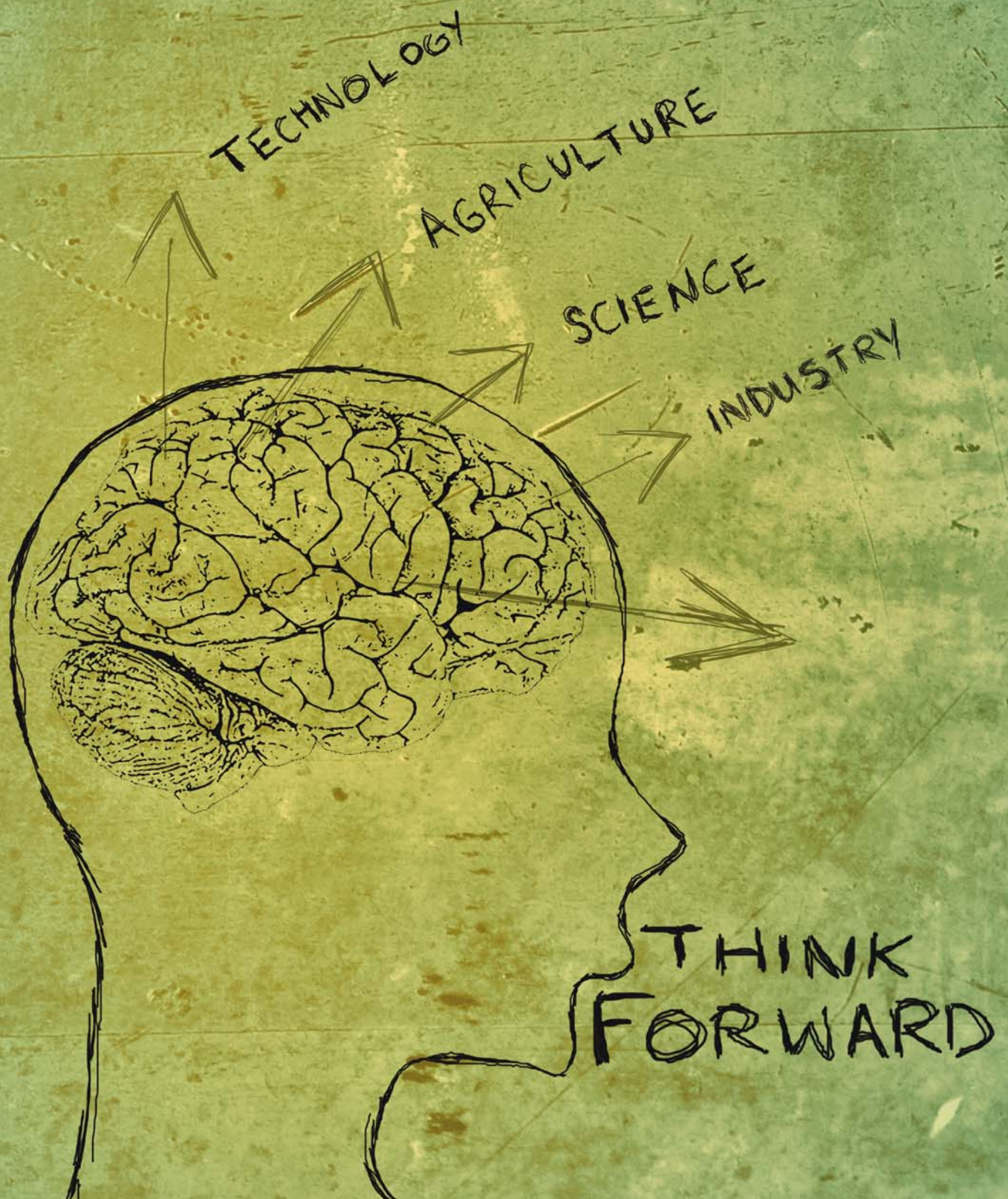
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THINK FORWARD



Eco-Sanitation Helps Urban Agriculture In The Gaza Strip

en.v



Abu Rhader's farm near the villages of Az-Zubeidat and Marj Na'ja.

Would you eat fruit that was grown in human waste to save your environment and help your socioeconomic status? Husam Al-Najar, a PhD in Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, came up with a theory that will help revolutionize farming in the Gaza Strip without adversely affecting its ecosystem. The area currently suffers from illegal exploitation of 50 million cubic meters of hygienic water. Dr. Al-Najar suggests that planners should promote urban agriculture through eco-sanitation to save usable water. According to Najar, rapid population growth and meager resources (fresh water) are placing a strain on the environment that will eventually lead to food scarcity. This is a significant problem in Gaza because the majority of their food sources come from urban agriculture. The practice of this kind of farming has caused a water crisis, creating a very real dilemma for

farmers.

While urban agriculture in Gaza is helping the socio-economic status of Palestinian farmers, urban environmental sanitation planning is in dire need. Currently, treated wastewater is being dumped into the sea without any reuse. If eco-sanitation is introduced, urban waste can be reintroduced to benefit farmers. However, thinking that your fruits and vegetables were grown in human manure can be quite unsettling. Al-Najar surveyed 12 large farm owners, and 10 agreed to his new idea, though with much trepidation as to how to market their produce. With this new approach, farmers will begin to use the treated fertilizer. Though there may be concern for the buyer's reaction, there is an understanding that Al-Najar's idea will improve their situation and, ultimately, Gaza's environment. *en.v*



Industrial Ecology

Meaning

Industrial Ecology is the combined study of technology, society, and ecology that sees industrial systems as an essential part of the ecosystem.

Robert Frosch and Nicholas E Gallopoulos first introduced industrial ecology in a 1989 article titled "Strategies for Manufacturing." The premise of this theory was that the waste of one species benefits another and that industrial systems should adapt this philosophy with their waste management.

Application

Take, for example, a bio-battery produced by Sony. According to their press release, "the battery uses energy from sugar. This works because electricity is created by carbohydrates and uses the enzymes as its catalyst." Their inspiration was power generating living organisms. Because sugar naturally occurs through these plants, it can be found all over the world. To date, the battery has only been able to power an mp3 player. But, in several years, it may be possible for such eco-friendly batteries to power large home electronics, such as a T.V or washing machines.

Mother Nature Knows Best

Sarah Schmidhofer



Biomimicry in design.

Termite Mounds

If, when presented with a request for air conditioning in a building, the engineer refused and suggested that you go build yourself a termite mound instead; chances are this guy would not get much work around here, where temperatures can reach over 50°C.

But this was not the case in Zimbabwe, where researchers were presented with this idea a few years back. Instead of sending the plans straight to the trash with a good laugh, engineers there (in an area where temperatures regularly range from 3°C and 42°C) noted that the internal temperature of a local termite mound never varies more than 1°C regardless of the outside temperature. They were on to something.

By mimicking the ventilation system of the termites, the Zimbabweans were able to create the country's largest building complex without heating or air conditioning. This building maintains a proper temperature, using less than 10% of the energy of conventional

buildings of the same size. The owners saved \$3.5 million dollars in construction - as a result, the tenants have lower rents and enjoy living in an eco-friendly and efficient building without the polluting effects of air conditioning.

What in the @#%&?&

The practice of imitating nature's solutions to problems in solving human problems is called Biomimetics - literally, "mimicking life." It is beginning to gain speed in lots of our human industries, and for good reason. Many believe that in copying the ways nature solves problems, we will be able to start making our human systems cyclic and sustainable as well. As all processes in nature are interlinked, they are never wasteful: cycles use the waste of one procedure as input for another. If these cyclical systems could replace the wasteful, environmentally damaging, unsustainable systems we currently use, the world would be well on its way to resolving many major environmental problems facing us today.

BioMimicry = Better

Aside from operating in conservative cycles, nature also excels in creating from the bottom up. Barbaric though it sounds, humans have mostly relied on the opposite approach - beating, treating, heating and excreting from existing structures until the concoction fits. We have never been very good at coaxing our designs to grow from the earth, but do have a flair for repurposing found objects. The issue comes with the requisite high temperatures and pressures used to enact these manipulations: Enormous energy inputs are required and toxic chemicals are often released. Furthermore, use and repurposing of existing materials depletes the supply (think about the oil and fuel crises around the world), requiring that new solutions eventually be found. Most of these manufacturing processes are also largely wasteful, cutting the desired product out of the starting material and discarding the rest.

With advances in nanotechnology and the help of nature as a mentor and a



guide, scientists are steadily learning ways to build new materials from the bottom up, rather than cutting them down from the top. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example, batteries are being 'grown' in the same way that abalone seashells grow. Similarly, carbon nanotubes are being used to make a number of electronics that actually assemble themselves, much in the same way an organism grows.

Though it may sound crazy to take advice from bugs when we have a problem to solve, using a "research and development lab" that has been conducting on-site trials for millions of years, fossilizing failures and perpetuating the rest, sounds pretty legitimate. The solutions to problems found in nature have withstood the tests of time, and anything we may come across living today has only survived because it has developed sustainable ways to meet the challenges of survival.

To solve a problem, it makes perfect sense to look to organisms whose very survival depends on solving that problem successfully.

What Else?

A nature inspired product you may already be familiar with is the ever-useful Velcro®. Its hook and eye mechanism was stumbled upon (literally) when Swiss engineer George de Mestral and his dog came in from a hike, covered in

burrs which attached by a similar hook/loop fashion. Since its discovery, Velcro has been put to wide use in everything from shoes to clothing to toys, earning its reputation as a safe, strong, flexible fastener.

Some children of the biomimetic industry that probably have not been seen in stores yet include an aerodynamic and energy efficient car inspired by the tropical boxfish, a gravity-defying fabric that prevents objects from sliding down near-vertical surfaces by mimicking a gecko, and a search and rescue-robot in imitation of a ghost crab.

Researchers are currently working on a way for dry lands, such as the MENA region, to obtain water without using costly and inefficient water pumps - the Namibian beetle is providing clues to that effect. Another nature-inspired technology involves mimicking limestone in the removal of CO2 from the atmosphere. This would also be very useful in the MENA region, as it could help industrial clean up in areas where many fossil fuels are burned.

Inspiration does not have to come from deep within the tropical rainforests or jungles, either. Many ingenious new products have been modeled after a simple leaf, something you could find outside your own house. For example, the self-cleaning mechanism of the Lotus flower leaf has been put to use in various paints and easy-to-clean coatings. These coatings make use of the

microstructure seen on the lotus leaf that causes water to ball up and pearl dirt away from its surface. Similarly, a solar-energy-harvesting cell designed to utilize the endless radiation from the sun was modeled after the leaf's ability to use sun energy for food production. Scientists are hot on the trail of other energy conservation inventions as well, taking clues from tuna and sea kelp to harness energy from the ever-moving ocean.

Biomimicry in Design

The idea of mimicking biology has appeared in the design arena as well, as the aesthetic of resembling nature is becoming popular. Iraqi born -architect, Zaha Hadid's plan for a new Performing Arts Center in Abu Dhabi is a magnificent example of how nature can provide design inspiration.

Conclude

To come back to the A/C-less building, we should realize that for at least 50 million years, termites have been quietly building these self-regulating environments that respond to external change, meeting waste, energy and other needs all on-site. We shouldn't be overly amazed that the termites could accomplish this with their non-brains, as their construction is a result of millions of years of trial and research. What is truly amazing is that it took us this long to realize that we can use the same principles to solve our problems... all we had to do was look outside. *en.v*

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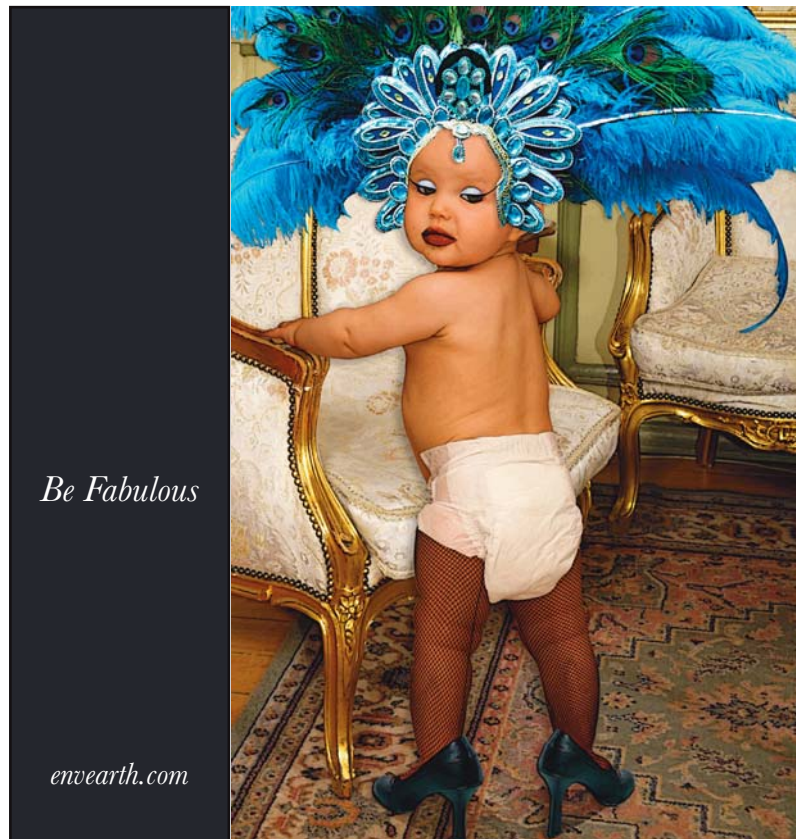
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