

Acting for Justice

For additional information on the Uzbekistan cotton issue, please refer to:
<http://www.ejfoundation.org/page142.html> (further information)
<http://www.iwpr.net/galleries/centasia/grabka/01.html> (photos)
<http://www.ejfoundation.org/page85.html> (videos)

In the Next Issue of Starting Points..... E-Waste

In our next issue, we'll be discussing some aspects of environmental sustainability, specifically the pollution created by the disposal of electronics and related items (known as e-waste). E-waste is dangerous to the environment because of the complexity of electronic components. Toxic chemicals, various types of plastic and elements such as lead and mercury are released into the ground, water supply and air. Much of this discarded equipment is disposed of improperly, even when we think it's going to be recycled, and ends up being shipped overseas where it is often broken down by hand, or burned to separate valuable metals.

What does it mean to be "green"? Who pays the price? And what can we do as consumers to solve this problem?

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**If you have built
castles in the air,
your work need not
be lost; that is where they
should be.
Now build foundations
under them.
- Henry David Thoreau**

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CREA is an independent 501(c)3
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*"Believing that the earth is home to all,
CREA facilitates analysis of
human, social and economic policies
from the perspective of their effects on
human lives, beginning with the
lives of those who are poor."*

CREA Mission Statement

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STARTING POINTS

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What's Missing in the Election Campaigns?

With our economy in a mess, people fearful about jobs, about heating or even losing their homes, with the basic food costs skyrocketing, with on-going deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is baffling that most media campaign coverage is about personality, age, cartoons, drawings and smears rather than the core issues.

We should be confronting the media with the questions: Cui Bono? "Who Benefits?" from this non-reporting of the issues? Why aren't you giving us the accurate information on issues that the media is supposed to provide in a democracy?

As we focus on the election, we might include the following questions about issues in our exchanges with others, with the candidates, and with the media. Many other issues exist; these are basic.

Issue 1: Restoration of Democratic Process in the US

The Constitution describes the roles and responsibilities of each part of the US government. Yet our president has acted in continual defiance of the Constitution and Congress. Who benefits from this? How can we fix it?

Issue 2: The US Economy - Beyond the stock market, we ordinary citizens face a \$9.6 trillion dollar national debt, irresponsible lending by banks, lack of control on hedge funds and other financial derivatives, financial speculation on fuel and food prices, etc. Who benefits? How can citizens get some control?

Issue 3: Expansion of Comprehensive Public Transportation - How can we go about learning from and imitating the fuel efficient, low emissions, reliable public transportation systems of some major US cities and European countries?

Issue 4: Improving the US Education System - The US has fallen behind other countries. Our lives and our economy will improve only to the extent that our education system really educates rather than teaching to tests and handing out diplomas and degrees that have no substance. How can we face the facts about what is wrong with our education system and fix it?

Citizens have power. Let's use it.

RAISE Training of Trainers (ToT) in San Salvador Brings Groundbreaking Program to Central America

The week of July 13th was an exciting time for the group that gathered in San Salvador for a week of work on the training materials for the RAISE program. Representatives from CREA and our partner organizations in Central America gathered in San Salvador for a Training of Trainers (ToT) during which the training materials were reviewed, strengthened and made socially and culturally applicable for use in Latin America. Recognizing that it is not merely a question of translating the materials into Spanish, the entire group, long committed to labor rights, human rights and sustainability, worked long hours to apply the cultural specificity needed for such work.

RAISE, a collaborative effort founded by CREA and Verité, is the first standardized certification program designed to bring a recognized certification standard to the work of the social auditor. CREA, Verité and our partner organizations in other countries have been working on a comprehensive program of knowledge and skills training for brands, social auditing organizations and others interested in supply chain standards.



Participants (starting from the front left and going around the table to the right): Omar Salazar (ASEPROLA in Costa Rica), Sonia Rubio (GMIES in El Salvador) Consuelo Cruz (CIPAF in the Dominican Republic) Alberto Legal (PASE in Nicaragua), Aida Montalvo (CREA in El Salvador), Francisco Chicas and Astrid Valencia (GMIES in El Salvador), Ruth Rosenbaum (CREA). Missing from photo: Carolina Quinteros (GMIES)

CREA CHRONICLES

CREA is pleased to announce that Dave Bolan has been promoted to Associate Director for Communications. In addition to his responsibility



for our website, graphic design and publications, Dave assumes the role of Editor of Starting Points, beginning with this issue.

In the languages of the people of the many countries where CREA's work is done, in English, Swahili, Spanish, Chinese and French, with our hearts we say Thank you, Asante, Gracias, 谢谢, and Merci to Sister Kathryn Wrinn, the Founding Editor of Starting Points and CREA co-founder, for all her years of growing Starting Points into the newsletter it is.

While passing on the mantle of Editorship to Dave, Kathryn remains at the heart of CREA, the work we do and why we do it.



WHAT MADE THE WTO DOHA NEGOTIATIONS COLLAPSE

The Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) Negotiations began in 2001 with optimism: a multi-year series of negotiations designated to assist developing countries to develop and enter into the global economic trading system.

What happened?

1. The developing countries insisted that what they needed most was for the industrialized countries to lower their subsidies, particularly for agriculture and cotton. Those subsidies undermine the poor countries' agriculture and cotton industries by flooding their markets with under priced commodities.
2. The Western industrialized countries would not agree to lower their subsidies unless the developing countries opened up their markets for imported non-agricultural commodities.
3. The developing countries refused to open up their non-agricultural sectors. Doing so would undermine their own industries due to the advanced technological stage of the industrialized countries. It was not the purpose of the Doha Round.

The new economic power of India, China and Brazil provided the necessary clout to strengthen the stand of the developing countries, and the negotiations failed to reach a settlement. WTO representatives left exhausted and dispirited, questioning whether the Round will continue, and figuring future agreements will be made bilaterally rather than through the WTO.

What does it mean? Globally this failure is a serious set-back to the WTO and efforts to bring about a global system of regulated trade. It appears that poorer countries still face the highly subsidized commodities of the industrialized nations. However, with the growing development of regional markets, a way for them to develop may yet be found.

The shift in the global balance of economic power is clear. The Western industrialized nations can no longer get their way.

CREA NEEDS YOUR HELP

Colleagues and friends frequently ask what they can do to help our work. Here are two easy things you can do, especially in the coming months. THANK YOU ahead of time for your help.

1. SET UP LOCATIONS FOR FAIR TRADE-PEACE TRADE SALES -

If you could let us know of possible locations for these sales at churches, synagogues, schools, etc., we would be grateful.

Locations in the Northeast are best because of travel time involved.

2. DONATE FREQUENT FLYER MILES. CREA's projects require us

to stretch funding dollars as much as possible. Donated frequent flyer miles would really help out, especially on American and Continental airlines.

These two airlines go to many of the places where we have projects or are trying to get projects going.

COMING YOUR WAY...

After Labor Day, CREA's first Fair Trade-Peace Trade catalog will be sent out. When thinking of gifts for family, friends, co-workers, clients, etc, please take the time to consider our Fair Trade products.

HUMAN RIGHTS, COTTON AND THE PRODUCTS YOU BUY

CREA has joined with a spectrum of organizations in the corporate social responsibility movement and with human rights advocates to demand that the government of Uzbekistan stop using forced child labor in its cotton harvest. Every year that government reportedly mobilizes hundred of thousands of children – many from ten to fifteen years old – for the harvesting of cotton by hand. This continues despite Uzbekistan's ratification of several International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions that obligate ratifying governments to implement steps to reduce and eliminate the worst forms of child labor within their countries.

Investors and human rights advocates are urging the government of Uzbekistan to fully implement these ILO conventions, to invite the ILO to conduct an assessment mission of the current situation, and to allow independent monitoring of cotton-picking practices from international NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) and media outlets during the fall 2008 harvest.

Earlier this year, investors started engaging global corporations to track the source of cotton in their supply chains and sent letters to more than 100 corporations in North America, Europe and Asia that produce or retail cotton-based products. Levi Strauss & Co., Limited Brands, Marks & Spencer, Target, Tesco and C&A have already taken measures to exclude Uzbek cotton from their merchandise because of the use of child labor during the cotton harvest.

In addition, representatives of four major textile, apparel and retail trade associations have met with the Uzbek Ambassador the United States to express similar concerns. Combined, these trade associations represent almost 100% of all purchases of cotton products in the United States.

See the situation in Uzbekistan for yourself: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/7068096.stm>

CREA LAUNCHES NEW SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Amid all the writing and discussions about sustainability, the core questions of what is being sustained and who is being sustained are often overlooked. To get at the heart of these questions, CREA recently launched a two-part sustainability project that builds on our recently completed Sustainable Living Wage/Income study in Guatemala.

What is a sustainable community income?

- What is required for the communities to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable?
- What is the balance between the "income" and the "outgo" of a community? What stays in a community as a result of all the work, the commerce, the communications and travel between the community and those who come and go?

How can a community examine its own sustainability?

- How useful for a community are the metrics or indicators that have been developed for sustainability reporting by corporations, such as those developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or other reporting systems' indicators?
- What other mechanisms or metrics are needed?

We will focus on two communities in Guatemala, the Santa Anita and Nueva Alianza cooperatives. We will examine what is required for the cooperatives to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and how the community can measure this. Thus the CREA project goes beyond the world of the corporation as the definer of what is happening in terms of sustainability and moves community to the center of the discussion. A preliminary report will be made to the GRI Stakeholder Council in October 2008.

