



USC Founder, Dr. Lotta Hirschmanova, made it her task to share her travel notes with USC donors and friends. USC continues to publish stories from the field - to keep donors informed about the progress of our ongoing work. We hope these Jottings bring you closer to the people you have chosen to support.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

For decades, USC Canada has promoted an approach to development that champions diversity and the sharing of knowledge. Our programs foster partnerships between a diverse group of social actors – elders and youth, women and men, farmers and scientists – each contributing to just and sustainable social change. This approach has helped us keep sight of history – the time-tested knowledge and collective experience that anchors our work. It also fosters innovation that is at the heart of resilience and the promise of a hopeful future.

This edition of Jottings highlights stories that celebrate how diverse

sets of people sharing knowledge, respecting each other's views, and nurturing diversity, minimizes risks and expands options. The needs and conditions they work hard to change are considerable – deteriorating environments, malnutrition and hunger, domestic violence, civil conflict, limited educational opportunities, and restrictions in rights Canadians take for granted. Yet, they succeed and, while their successes are modest, they are lasting. These are stories of people who refuse to accept defeat.

This *Jottings* also brings readers up to date on USC's interaction with Canadians whose commitment to a

just world helps us reach out to Southern neighbours. Our 60th anniversary gave us a chance to expand our reach through events that attracted a younger audience. We're eager to bring a younger generation into our fold, to whom USC's devoted volunteers – who helped found and sustain the organization – can hand the baton.

I hope you enjoy this snapshot of our work. Your thoughts and critical perspectives are important to us. You too have a role in creating the knowledge that anchors our programs, helping ensure they are well grounded in the dignity approach we promote. ♡

*By Susan Walsh, Executive Director, USC Canada*

## NOT WAITING FOR A MIRACLE:

### AN EVENING WITH BRUCE COCKBURN AND DAVID SUZUKI



Photo Courtesy of Jason Chiu

*Bruce Cockburn performs for USC Canada's 60th anniversary*

and environmentalist David Suzuki performed in Ottawa to a sold out crowd of about 1,000. Cockburn sang both old and new songs, including some instrumental selections from his latest CD, *Speechless*. His performance drew a standing ovation leading to an encore of his hit, *Waiting for a Miracle*.

Many former USC staff and volunteers were on hand, including Pamela McRae who once headed USC's Canadian Programs. She offered her congratulations, saying, "I had not

heard Bruce for years and like his mature style even better. I had never been to a lecture by Suzuki (before this) and found him electrifying."

Suzuki's presentation stressed the urgency for greater harmony between humans and the environment. "We cannot afford to be complacent about the rapid deterioration of our environment," he warned. "If we don't take decisive action to change our consumption patterns soon, we risk losing our planet." His lecture also had the audience on its feet.

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This evening of dialogue and song paired two Canadian celebrities with a long history of social activism. To support USC, singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn

## BROADCASTING DEMOCRACY



*Community radio provides a great way for USC programs to reach a broader audience*

Several years ago, USC-SATUNAMA, a long-time partner in Indonesia, started experimenting with community radio. They expected it would be a good way to engage citizens in efforts to build local democracy in communities with limited access to information about their rights and responsibilities.

Their hunch proved right. Through community radio, USC-SATUNAMA has been able to promote respect for human rights, democracy, good governance and a respect for legal and citizenship responsibilities. Along with public service announcements (PSAs) about health, agriculture, and the environment, programs on these issues are broadcast to five districts in Yogyakarta province.

When I visited the station last November, staff played portions of their programs for me. A PSA about agriculture highlighted the importance of using organic fertilizers, and provided information about compost making. Another stressed the importance of hygiene and hand washing, and yet another provided information about making traditional medicines. I was impressed.

Community responses were equally impressive. Not only are listeners enjoying and learning from the radio shows, they are also finding innovative ways to use the new radio programming. While on a routine visit to discuss program results, I learned this story. A distraught farmer, having discovered a cow had disappeared from his field, reported the loss to the radio station. The report was repeatedly broadcast and a few days later the cow was returned. Community radio has given people a new voice to make their local concerns known and to strengthen community cohesion. ♪

*By Celia Borgatti, Program Officer for Indonesia and Timor Leste*

## AGRICULTURE ON THE MARCH AND ON THE AIR

Throughout the Honduran county town of Yoro and in neighbouring municipalities, Juan Pedro Herrera is a popular guy. His radio show, *Agriculture on the March*, is a hit with farmers who tune in every Thursday. It's one of the few diversions they can count on – a space where they share experience and try to influence policies in a sector that has long been marginalized in Honduras.

Juan Pedro is a farmer facilitator with USC's partner in Honduras, the Foundation for Participatory Research with Honduran Farmers (FIPAH). Through FIPAH, Juan Pedro helps facilitate the work of farmer research teams, known as CIALs. The CIALs engage in biodiversity conservation and participatory plant breeding, which is key to local food security. Recent successes include the development of two higher yielding maize varieties and one bean variety, all based on local stock and ingenuity.

The radio program is designed to broaden farmers' knowledge, helping them share their experience and work methods. By tuning in,

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*Juan Pedro conducting an interview for his radio program*

# LEADING THE WAY TO ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

For the better part of a decade, USC Canada's Adolescent Development Program (ADP) has been helping girls and boys in Bangladesh develop not only literacy and numeracy skills, but also life skills through education on health, marriage practices, and individual rights as citizens.

Now, with the generous support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), USC is proud to announce the launch of a second phase of the Program – to be called the Life Skills Education for Adolescent Development Program (LEAD) – and the name couldn't be more appropriate.

When I last visited the girls and boys in their classes, many of them told me what they want to do when they get older. It was clear they had greater plans for themselves than I could have imagined. Some wanted to be teachers or doctors. Some simply wanted to make sure their

own children would get an education. Others wanted to take their place in local government and help improve social services in their communities.

What these students were envisioning for themselves was their ability not just to succeed, but also to lead others to succeed. USC's Executive Director, Susan Walsh, saw the same drive that I saw. While visiting ADP classes together, she said to me, "There are definitely some future Prime Ministers in those classes." I can't think of a more appropriate name than to call this new phase the LEAD Program.

One graduate who is already demonstrating her leadership skills is Rebecca Sultana, a coordinator at one of the Adolescent Resource Centres (ARCs). ARCs are small community centres that USC has helped to establish for program graduates. They are a safe space to meet, interact and support each



*Girls sewing at an Adolescent Resource Centre*

other, and practice their literacy skills with library books and newspapers that are otherwise hard to find. ARCs also offer basic medical and legal services, and provide short courses that build employment skills.

In a very confident and business-like manner, Rebecca gave me a tour of the ARC, explaining all the services provided and how they benefit the graduates. She explained how she was responsible for making all the arrangements for scheduling doctor visits, securing trainers, and organizing community events.

I asked Rebecca what she would be doing if she were not a coordinator. She shrugged and simply said that she would be at home. After spending the afternoon with her, it was hard to imagine this young woman doing anything other than growing into the future leader that she will become. The LEAD Program has been designed to support young women with the ability not only to improve their own lives but those of their families and communities. ♡

*By Margot Stevens,  
Program Officer for Bangladesh and Nepal*



*Rebecca Sultana shows off some of the work she did at an ARC in Bangladesh*



## JOINING FARMERS ON A SEED CARAVAN



*Douentza farmers study local crop varieties*

**T**his past November, Aly Togo boarded a small bus in his village of Bankass, Mali, carrying several small bags of seeds. Arriving in nearby Mopti, he joined 130 other farmers on a five-day caravan, traveling about 200 km northeast towards a seed fair in the village of Douentza. Their purpose? To celebrate local crop diversity, and the knowledge and practices that sustain and regenerate it.

Farmers, men and women, came from 68 villages around Mopti and Douentza. They displayed their seeds and other planting materials –

for one another and for the large turnout of visitors, including government officials and media representatives. I was grateful to be able to join them along with two other USC colleagues from Canada. The first person I met was Aly, a farmer and health promoter who told me of the crops and seed storage practices of the Dogon, one of the many peoples of this land.

About 1,200 people joined us in Douentza for the evening events in the public plaza. Music and theatre performances, interviews with farmers, and documentaries all praised farming and traditional knowledge. Mana Diakité and Modibo Goïta of USC-SoS West Africa were both on hand to talk about the importance of local varieties, which are adapted to the difficult growing conditions of the Sahel region, but are threatened due to climate change and displacement by external seeds. These varieties must, therefore, be carefully nurtured.

Participants were given awards for displaying the greatest diversity. The jury of seven was amazed with the crop diversity and the selection criteria used by farmers. They heard how farmers plant numerous

varieties of a crop species depending on ecological, storage, and culinary needs. Varieties suited to short growing cycles and drought resistance are particularly valued in this part of Africa.

Twelve prizes were awarded in all, and participants from Douentza took the top places – a good indication of the success of USC's years of work in the area, supporting and promoting community seed supply systems that feature local seed and gene banks. During the fair, we visited some of these facilities run with pride by inter-village committees.

For his part, Aly told me he had only brought his oldest seeds, rather than all his planting materials. He spoke with a smile about the significance of the event for exchanging ideas among farmers and for focusing attention on the value of local varieties.

By the end of the fair, farmers may have been tired but there was still excitement in the air. Many vowed to return to a future event to display even more of the diversity they cultivate at home. ✨

*By Beatriz Oliver, Program Officer for the Seeds of Survival™ (SoS) Program*

## GROWING MONEY IN A VEGETABLE FIELD

**W**hen walking the steep and rocky paths leading to the Himalayan peaks, one doesn't expect to see a young man walk by with a huge basket of carrots, radishes, and cauliflower. The landscape is so steep and rocky, how could a vegetable garden flourish here?

Well, each day on the path downhill to the town of Dhunche, Kep Chhiring walks with a day's harvest of fresh vegetables to sell. He grows them himself, carries them to the town market, and walks back home with his family's income in hand.

Five years ago no one was growing vegetables in his village, nor for that matter in the other villages in Rasuwa District where USC Nepal is now working. USC has been able to draw on years of experience and success with sustainable agriculture and vegetable gardening in other areas to launch a program in Kep's community. By organizing agricultural workshops with the people of Rasuwa,



*Kep Chhiring in his Potato Field*

## VISITING THE NEWEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

While USC usually focuses on long-term development, sometimes a crisis requires us to shift focus – like in Timor Leste, the world's newest country. USC Canada has supported programs in Timor since 1995. But with the turmoil and violence that came with the struggle for independence, USC had to adapt, supporting relief efforts for several years.

I visited Timor last year with USC's Executive Director, Susan Walsh, and we were pleased to see that the Timor program has since regained a focus on long-term development – an important achievement given Timor's status as Asia's poorest nation.

While the wave of international emergency assistance that swept over Timor has subsided and many international aid organizations have

withdrawn, USC Canada and its field staff are determined to continue our support for a long time to come. During our visit, we planted a tree together with villagers in Sananain and Kalohan as a symbol of that commitment.

The active involvement of community members in Sananain and Kalohan has led to impressive achievements in a relatively short time. Villagers have launched effective, locally adapted soil and water rehabilitation activities, established vegetable gardens, and built small fishponds. These activities will not only provide more and diversified foods and additional income, but are giving new hope to people who have suffered so much trauma and devastation.

Today, USC's Timorese staff provides technical advice, training, and material assistance (small tools, agricultural inputs) to respond to needs identified by communities. Like the tree we planted – these programs will need a lot of care to ensure they grow and flourish. That's why USC has pledged to accompany these men and women on their long trek to re-build their communities and a brighter more secure future in their new country. ♡

*By Lise Latrémouille, Director of International Programs*



*USC Executive Director Susan Walsh at a tree planting ceremony with villagers in Timor Leste*



USC Nepal has been able to provide training in many remote communities.

That training simply brings out the potential to grow food that is already present in the community. Trainers encourage local farmers, particularly the older farmers, to demonstrate their traditional ways of doing things, like composting and tilling field waste back into the soil. Many of these useful, low-cost practices had been discarded after the introduction of chemical fertilizers and industrial agricultural methods. New techniques are introduced when appropriate. USC also organizes farmer-to-farmer visits to build momentum and spread opportunities to more communities.

For Kep Chhiring, the training has built confidence in his capacity not only to provide his family with nutritious food but also to build a small business and a steady income for his family. ♡

*By Kate Green, Program Officer for the Seeds of Survival™ (SoS) Program*

# ENGAGING CANADIANS

## The Ban Terminator Campaign

While our work focuses on international programs, USC continues to raise awareness in Canada about issues that affect the lives of people in the south. We build support for international social change through public education activities and policy dialogue. This year, one of the most important initiatives we've been involved with is the Campaign to Ban Terminator seeds.

Officially known as a Genetic Use Restriction Technology, Terminator refers to a biotechnology by which seeds are genetically modified to produce plants with seed that becomes sterile at harvest, thus making it impossible to save the seed for planting the following season. Calls for its ban are widespread, coming from farmers around the world and influential leaders like Maurice Strong, the former President of CIDA.

In 2005, USC joined a coalition of farmers' groups, NGOs, indigenous peoples' organizations, and advocacy groups in the International Ban Terminator Campaign to raise awareness about the negative impacts of the technology on farmers' right to save and use their own seeds.

Terminator seeds have been developed and patented by the seed industry. If they become the norm, every year farmers would be forced to buy new seeds from seed companies without the possibility of replanting. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates 1.4 billion people are fed by farmer-saved seed. Saving seed is thus crucial to a stable food supply – not just in the developing world, but everywhere.

Terminator has not yet been commercialized, but it is being tested in U.S. greenhouses, and

governments, including the Canadian government, are drafting proposals to permit field-testing that would open the door to the spread of the technology. The International Seed Federation, which represents the seed industry, is working with industry-friendly governments to dismantle the de facto UN-sponsored moratorium that has been in effect since 2000.

An all-out ban on Terminator is the only defence, and the Ban Terminator Campaign seeks to promote government bans on the technology at the national and international levels. USC needs your help to urge the government to ban Terminator in Canada. Please write to your government representative (see [www.usc-canada.org](http://www.usc-canada.org) for details) and join in an urgent postcard campaign (see [www.banterminator.org](http://www.banterminator.org) for details). ♡

## A Gift of a Lifetime

Sitting down with a family member or an estate planner to discuss wills, legacy gifts, or bequests can quickly become an exercise in anxiety. What will we leave the children? Do we have enough for the charities we support?

What if this experience led to a feeling of relief rather than worry? USC Canada recognized the concerns expressed by long-time donors who

were uneasy about the estate planning process. They told us they wanted to ensure USC could continue the work started by our founder, Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova. That concern was one of the reasons USC developed a program for bequests left in a donor's will. One USC donor told us why she felt compelled to leave a legacy gift, saying...

USC Canada has managed the Lotta Hitschmanova Endowment Fund since 2002. Currently the USC Foundation has attracted over \$6.5M, primarily from bequests, and generates important revenue that is put directly back into USC Canada's international programs.

Some donors choose to set up a family-named endowment fund, or offer one in memory of a loved one. It's uncomfortable talking about our futures, but it's important to know that the process involved in deciding to leave a gift of a lifetime, can in fact be a good one. For more information please contact Lois by phone at 1.800.565.6872, or by email at [LGraveline@usc-canada.org](mailto:LGraveline@usc-canada.org). ♡

*"From a very early age, through her involvement with USC Canada, my mother taught me the importance of giving and helping those in need. She had the privilege of meeting Dr. Lotta herself, and my mother would spend countless hours knitting sweaters and other items to help raise money for Dr. Lotta's work.*

*I know USC Canada will do the very best they can with the money I have left in my will and I'm glad to be around to see their good work in action."*

– Doreen from B.C.

### Public Education

A central part of USC's mandate involves raising awareness about international development and promoting Canadian action on policy issues. USC engages a variety of Canadian audiences in its domestic programming. This past fall we participated in the National Food Security Assembly in Waterloo, Ontario. Over 300 people from the agriculture, health, education, and development community gathered to launch Canada's first broad-based food security network: Food Secure Canada.

Susan Walsh, USC's Executive Director, was one of the keynote panellists. She spoke about USC's vision of development featuring rights, resilience, and respect, and about factors that can either inhibit or promote food sovereignty – the right to grow food and control local food supply systems. Her key message was clear: rather than assume something is lacking in the communities we assist, we need to look at the local context to recognize and build on the skills already there.

USC's Country Director from Nepal, Shree Ram Shrestha, also spoke at the conference as part of a panel on the challenges facing local agriculture initiatives around the world. ↗

### *In a Neighbourhood Near You*

USC will be at a number of key events in early 2006 – watch for them and come out to join us! For further details, contact USC Canada at 1.800.565.6872, or by email at [info@usc-canada.org](mailto:info@usc-canada.org).

- Feb 12 Seedy Saturday at the Botanical Gardens of Montreal (4101 Sherbrooke E.)
- Feb 18 Seedy Saturday at the Victoria Conference Centre in Victoria (720 Douglas St)
- Feb 18 Seedy Saturday at the Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener (10 Huron Rd)
- Feb 19 Presentation on India, Ethiopia, and food sovereignty at the First Unitarian Church of Victoria (5575 West Saanich Rd)
- Mar 4 Seedy Saturday at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre in Ottawa (at Britannia Beach)
- Mar 6 Presentation on USC's programs in Mali at the Unitarian Congregation of Guelph (122 Harris Street)
- Mar 26 Presentation on USC's work at the Unitarian Congregation of Niagara in St. Catharines (223 Church St)



*SoS Program Officer Kate Green engages with audience members at the 56 Sparks Street Festival for USC's 60th anniversary*

## NOT WAITING FOR A MIRACLE

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Cockburn, who has been USC's spokesperson for many years and has visited USC projects in Mali and Nepal, summarized his reasons for supporting the organization. "I've seen with my own eyes how, with USC's help, people are improving their own lives."

USC Canada is grateful to both Cockburn and Suzuki for donating their time and talent. The benefit helped raise our profile and gather much needed funds for our friends overseas.

### 56 Sparks Street Festival

USC staff harnessed their collective energies for another 60th anniversary event: a street party outside our renowned 56 Sparks Street headquarters. Juno award-winning Canadian folk artist James Keelaghan headlined this free concert that also included local performers.

Akpokli Drum and Dance Troupe kicked off the afternoon with some wonderful and energetic Ghanaian drumming and dance. They were followed by the Afro-reggae rhythms of Roots. The audience was then treated to Lee Hayes's unique song stylings, followed by a wonderful performance of Andalusian-inspired guitar music from the Mel M'rabet Trio. Keelaghan brought the concert to a close with a moving performance of his best-loved songs.

Like Cockburn, Keelaghan has a long history with USC. He says he was happy to help because he views USC as "the quintessential Canadian organization. USC doesn't go into another country and start telling people what to do. It sets up programs that are run by people in the country. It's how they've helped thousands of communities make better lives for themselves."

Several members of USC Canada's Board of Directors were also on hand to celebrate the 60th. Doug Cousins, Board Chairperson, had this enthusiastic response: "56 Sparks Street has such historical significance. Dr. Lotta's radio and television announcements are embedded in the memories of at least two generations of Canadians. The voices of Keelaghan and these young local artists help us to continue that outreach. Today, we feel 60 years young!" ✨

*By Ron Cross, Communications Officer*

## AGRICULTURE ON THE MARCH AND ON THE AIR

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farmers know they will hear about any new efforts the CIALs are engaged in.

The show covers everything from recipes using soybeans – a new crop introduced by the CIALs – to information on improved seeds. It also deals with complex issues like the International Convention on Biodiversity and Central American Free Trade Agreements. Getting out the results of research conducted by the CIALs is key to broadening the success of the Honduras program. ✨

*By Omar Gallardo, FIPAH Agronomist with the Seeds of Survival™ Program in Honduras*



*Jottings*

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USC Canada

### CONTACT US

This issue of Jottings is the first USC publication to bear our new logo. Its design attempts to capture key elements of our programming: growth, resilience, a bountiful harvest, fertile ground. In the coming months you'll see this new logo on all our materials. Our website has also been redesigned to capture our revitalized programming. Please visit [www.usc-canada.org](http://www.usc-canada.org) for updates on our activities, to join in policy campaigns, or to find out how easy it is to make a gift to USC. Please feel free to contact us with your opinions about Jottings, our new logo, or our website.

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