

Human Rights Newsletter



Information on the Work of the
Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights

Issue 1, 2007

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FOCUS 2007: Women's Full Enjoyment of Human Rights

The Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights launches its thematic advocacy focus in 2007. Read about the pressing issues in partner countries and regions and the priorities ahead. Pages 1-2, 4.

Safe and Legal Abortion is a Woman's Human Right

While women's right to abortion is currently winning ground as a human rights issue through case law, women are all the same meeting obstacles, not least in Latin America. Christina Zampas, Legal Adviser at the Center for Reproductive Rights, makes an analysis. Pages 3-4.

Working for Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Ecuador

Tatiana Cordero, Director of the Foundation's Ecuadorian partner Taller de Comunicación Mujer, shares some personal reflections about their work with sexual and reproductive rights in Ecuador as well as in the wider Latin American region. Pages 5-6.

Pilot Project Demonstrations do the Work in Nigeria

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Nothing About Us Without Us!

On December 13th 2006, the UN General Assembly voted for a new core convention, the ninth within the system, which deals with the human rights of people with disabilities. Page 8.

FOCUS 2007: Women's Full Enjoyment of Human Rights

The work to promote women's human rights has seen progress at the international policy and programme level the past few decades. At the national level of implementation, there is still much work to be done, however. The Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights will give special attention to this area of work in 2007. Here you will find out why.

Ever since its formation, the Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights has put special emphasis on women's enjoyment of human rights. This thematic focus has developed from a clearly identified need to increase knowledge of and strengthen the case for respecting and fulfilling women's human rights on an equal basis with men. As one of three inter-related thematic fields of work, women's enjoyment of human rights will be given special attention in the Foundation's international and national cooperation, information and advocacy work in 2007.

An explicit rights perspective permeates the overall work of the Foundation. Parallel to the efforts made by other actors in favour of women and women's rights, the Foundation sees a role to play in deepening knowledge of and understanding for the implications of a rights perspective in relation to the international and regional legal frameworks that exist for the protection of women's rights, and how these can be used in Sweden just as in international development cooperation.

Violence against women, not only in war but also in everyday life, is one important field of work which unfortunately is as burning and relevant in Sweden as in the Foundation's partner countries. Furthermore, the Foundation intends to invest work in sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR) and on how human rights can be used as tools in promoting these rights.

Women tend to be among the first to suffer from poverty and discrimination and to be blocked from fully exercising their economic and social rights in any society. A rights-based development support from the international community is of crucial importance for the social and economic development in impoverished countries. As an illustrative example, Haiti is an extremely impoverished country where women's situation is very critical, especially concerning vulnerability to violence and the right to education, to health and to work.

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The previous interim government (February 2004-February 2006) attempted to highlight the situation of Haitian women by making a systematic effort to consult civil society organisations regarding reforms and getting other ministries to cooperate. However, the elected government under President Préval has not yet acted on the initiatives.

Regional developments

Violence against women is one of the most serious issues concerning crimes against human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean region. Unsatisfactory investigations on violence against women should be seen as a systematic pattern hurting women, according to Ariela Peralta at CEJIL (Centro por Justicia y Derecho International). Since the mid-90's, quite a few improvements have been made, however. One of the most important contributing factors to the increasing number of filed complaints is the Belem do Para Convention, which aims at penalizing, eliminating and preventing violence against women.

Impunity blocks the way

In Ecuador, legally and judicially related improvements to fulfil women's enjoyment of human rights are weakened by the prevailing impunity which radically limits the possibilities for ensuring accountability. The underdeveloped legal and judicial apparatus of the Ecuadorian state underlines the need



Men rallying against violence against women in Lagos, Nigeria

to accord special focus on improving women's situation in the country. Therefore, the Foundation recently embarked on a new partnership with Taller de Comunicación Mujer, an organisation that works specifically for women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights (see page 5).

In Colombia, the recent assassination of Yolanda Izquierdo Berrío, a social movement leader of internally displaced persons and small peasants deprived of their land, is but one example of how grave human rights violations against social communicators still prevail. The situation for human rights in Colombia will receive special attention through the investigative delegation that the Foundation is planning for late Spring. The delegation will study the rights of victims concerning truth, justice and redress. Special emphasis will be put on female victims in relation to the recently concluded demobilisation process of paramilitaries in Colombia. It will be concluded by a seminar with representatives from the civil society and the government sectors with the intention to work out shared recommendations.

Structural discrimination in Congo

The situation for women and girls has not improved since a peace accord was officially signed in Kongo-Kinshasa in 2002. Available reports rather point to the contrary, with an increasing number of rapes in the eastern parts of the country. The Foundation's several years of involvement for promotion of human rights in Kongo-Kinshasa has made it clear that crimes against women's human rights are not perpetuated by isolated individuals because of the conditions of war, but result from a deeper structural discrimination which is rooted in denigration of women which shows in some parts of legislation but above all in attitudes and behaviour. The new constitution accords women a strong legal position with provisions for gender equality in public institutions. The problems lie in the implementation practices and in the fact that protection of women's and girls' human rights suffer from shortcomings in traditional judicial practices.

A more immediate question is the possible application of human rights mechanisms on the path to just peace. The transitional institutions that were created after the peace agreement, such as the truth and reconciliation commission and the human rights observatory, ceased to exist as the new democratically elected national assembly started its work. Fostering the creation of new institutions and their contribution to women's enjoyment of human rights is an important issue that will receive high priority in the near future.

Widow's Rights Strengthened in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are good examples of how measures for formal protection of women's human rights have made a few steps of progress, while there is still a long way to go in establishing the rights in people's minds and to see to it that they are fully respected. In other words, there is legislation in place to fulfil women's human rights, but not all women are reached by legal protection. Among the obstacles, the state itself is not

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Women and Human Rights

Safe and Legal Abortion is a Woman's Human Right

Women's right to abortion is increasingly debated. While a woman's right to decide over her own body is winning ground from a human rights perspective and through case law, not least in the predominantly Catholic Latin American region, women are all the same meeting increasing obstacles in law-making in the same region as well as in Europe. Legal Adviser Christina Zampas makes the case for women's right to abortion as a human right by dissecting the meaning and implications of the human right to life, to health, and to personal autonomy.

On 17 November 2006, Nicaragua's congress passed a complete ban on abortion with no exceptions for women's health, for victims of rape or incest - or even for women whose lives are at risk. By passing this ban, Nicaragua has joined Chile and El Salvador as the only countries in the world to have imposed total abortion bans in the last 20 years. In January 2007, the Polish Parliament, in an attempt to restrict abortion even further, will be reviewing a proposed amendment to the constitution which would recognize the right to life from conception. Proposals to recognize embryos and fetuses as human beings with full rights under the law are pending around the world. Such attempts to restrict abortion go against global and regional trends, which are moving towards full recognition that denial of access to abortion violates women's fundamental human rights.

Abortion implicates at least four key human rights that can be found in various international human rights treaties and in most national laws and constitutions. They are: the right to life. In countries where abortion is legally restricted, women seek abortions underground, under conditions that are medically unsafe and therefore life threatening. Every year some 70,000 women die from unsafe abortions (World Health Organization, 2003), mostly in countries with restrictive laws; the right to health. International law guarantees women the right to the 'highest attainable standard of health'. Unsafe abortion can have devastating and long-term effects on women's health (World Health Organization, 2003). The right to equality and freedom from gender discrimination. Denying women access to abortion is a form of gender discrimination pursuant to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW). According to CEDAW, "discrimination against women' includes laws that have either the 'effect' or the

'purpose' of preventing a woman from exercising any of her human rights or fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men". Laws that prohibit abortion have just that effect and that purpose. The right to autonomy in decision-making in private matters. Provisions in human rights instruments include protection of the right to physical integrity, the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of one's children, and the right to privacy. Decisions one makes about one's body, particularly one's reproductive capacity, lie squarely in the domain of private decision-making.

In 2005, the U.N. Human Rights Committee, which monitors state compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ruled, in the case of *K.L. v Peru*, that the human rights, including the right to be free from inhumane and degrading treatment and the right to privacy, of a 17-year old Peruvian woman had been violated when health officials denied her a therapeutic abortion although her foetus carried a fatal abnormality. In March 2006, the government of Mexico admitted that it violated the rights of a 13-year-old girl who became pregnant as a result of rape and was denied an abortion (*Paulina Ramirez v. Mexico*). Also, in May 2006, Colombia's Constitutional Court ruled that abortion should be permitted when a pregnancy threatens a woman's life or health and in cases of rape, incest and foetal impairment. The Colombian court found that denying women access to safe abortion care in these circumstances violated the nation's constitution and women's human rights.

In November 2004, the United Nations Human Rights Committee called on Poland to liberalize its existing restrictive abortion law, which only allows women an abortion in cases where her life or health is in danger, when there is a foetal impairment and when the pregnancy is a result of a crime, as it could conflict with women's human rights. There are two cases currently pending before the European Court of Human Rights against Poland where women have been denied abortions due to the failure of the state to ensure women access to legal abortions (see e.g.: *Tysiack v Poland*).

The African Union, on 11 July 2003, adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to supplement the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

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The Protocol represents the first time that an international human rights instrument has explicitly articulated in its provisions a right to abortion, thus, recognizing that Africa's restrictive abortion laws, which in many countries only allow abortion in circumstances where a woman's life is in danger, threaten women's human rights. It recognises the duty of the state to take "all appropriate measures [. . .] to protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus" (Art.14[2][c]).

Calls to restrict abortion also include attempts to limit abortion by granting full rights to foetus' in laws and constitutions, in opposition to the rights of women. These proposals are in conflict with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foundation of international human rights, which in its historic first sentence of Article 1 premises human rights upon birth, "All human beings are *born* free and equal in dignity and rights" (emphasis added). Likewise, other international and regional human rights treaties, including the Children's Rights Convention as drafted and subsequently interpreted, clearly reject claims that human rights should attach from conception or any time before birth. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes a state's duty to promote, through nutrition, health and support directed to the pregnant woman, a child's capacity to survive and thrive after birth (see Preamble, Para. 9 and drafting documents). And recently, the European Court of Human Rights affirmed that "the unborn child is not regarded as a 'person' directly protected by Article 2 of the Convention," and that if the unborn does have a 'right' to 'life', it is implicitly limited by the mother's rights and interests. Noting that "there is no European consensus on the scientific and legal definition of the beginning of life", the Court declined to treat the foetus as a "person" (see *Vo v. France*).

There is a consensus by international and regional human rights bodies that in certain circumstances, access to abortion is a human right. and states which create barriers in accessing abortion are violating women's fundamental human rights as protected by international law. Governments around the world are obligated to ensure that their laws and practices comply with these human rights standards. Moreover, respect for gender equality implies that a woman's right to make decisions concerning her body are hers alone and, thus, requires governments to make available abortion services that are legal, safe and accessible to all women.

Christina Zampas

Christina Zampas is Legal Adviser for Europe at the Center for Reproductive Rights

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always fully capable of respecting the law, and many times, the local traditions that violate women's human rights are still perpetuated, despite their being in opposition to the law.

To give an example, there are laws which enforce the protection of widows' right to property in those cases where a will does not exist, but special court decisions are required to establish widow's rights. These decisions tend to be made only after a lengthy process during which the widow risks losing her property to relatives. Therefore, the Foundation supports an organisation aiming at legislative changes and capacity development within the courts system, in both cases with the concrete goal of a quicker handling of inheritance cases.

At the African regional level

The coordination of women's' rights initiatives at the regional and sub-regional levels has been relatively weak; whilst significant work is being done at the national level in many states, awareness of and strategies for human rights work at the regional level is limited. Yet, the African regional human rights system has made some significant leaps ahead during the past few years. In January 2004, the protocol establishing an African court on human rights entered into force. Less than two years later, in November 2005, the protocol on the rights of women in Africa entered into force. These two protocols to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights considerably reinforces the legal ambit of human rights action in Africa.

In the area of the rights of women, the Foundation remains committed to the newly created West African Women's Rights Coalition, WAWORC, which has the ambition to deepen sub-regional coordination. Seeing that all West African states have signed, eight out of which have also ratified the Protocol on the rights of women, there is scope for focused action to both implement provisions of the protocols and to push for complete ratification. Provisions relating to the ban of female genital mutilation and women's equal access to land are human rights issues that profoundly affect many women, West African women in particular, and which merit further action.

In development cooperation work in general, and in the human rights field in particular, sustainable change requires long-term support and informed strategy. At the Foundation, we are aware of our small size and, consequently, of the need to focus and to cooperate in order to make a difference in practice. We look forward to do that journey together with our partners and friends.

Contributing writers:

**Per Bjälkander, Jesper Hansén, Ulrika Strand
Editor and Translator: Isabelle Nilsson**

Taller de Comunicación Mujer in Ecuador

Working for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Recent news from the Latin American region suggests both positive and negative tendencies concerning the situation for women's sexual and reproductive rights. In late Spring last year, a groundbreaking decision was made in Colombia allowing abortion under specific circumstances, but as late as November the Nicaraguan government passed a total ban. We asked Tatiana Cordero, Director of the Ecuadorian organization Taller de Comunicación Mujer ("Women's communication laboratory") about their work with sexual and reproductive rights in Ecuador and in the wider Latin American region, right after the national elections which brought a new President by the end of November 2006.

Q: How do you work with sexual and reproductive rights in Ecuador and what methodology do you use? Are there any new and innovative methodologies regarding this work?

TC: There are diverse approaches we use, and each one has its own methodology, because we approach the Body and Sexuality as an integral component of our work, rather than considering it exclusively on its formulation as a right. However, we have developed collective tribunals [national and regional mock trials in the Andean region, ed. note] to formulate and demand women's rights from a feminist perspective. Thereby, we have brought up issues less addressed or neglected in the general public sphere or within the women's movement.

We have carried out political actions around these issues through research, communication campaigns, and through cultural art work and exhibitions. We find that while normative work is important, there are already a lot of efforts and resources directed towards this end. In this context, we are working mainly with a cultural approach by placing issues through alternative forms of expression with the aim to transform people's imagery and cultural representations. We recognize that also cultural transformations are needed to change institutions and people's minds. Legal reforms alone will not change people's approaches and practices in countries like ours.

Q: Which is the greatest challenge regarding this work?

TC: To place the importance of the "cultural" on the agenda and work on human rights with partners at the international level carries a lot of challenges. It is a challenge to communicate that other forms of expressions are needed to change people's discourses, actions and approaches to the "Other", to different subjects.

At the international level, this means sensitizing partners and organizations concerning the need to support cultural proposals in the "South" and to value their work, because it reflects our own context and cultural perceptions.

Q: What have been your greatest successes in your work promoting women's human rights and what approach did you use for this work?

TC: The two greatest achievements in the past year were the processes of "training" Lesbian women in a Lesbian organization and of professionals and service providers of a women's organization that gives attention to women who are victims of violence.

In the first group we focussed on reflection and analysis of debates on the issue of lesbianism and feminism, and went through a process of empowerment of Lesbian activists, to strengthen their individual awareness and to support collective political actions.

In the second group we seek to raise awareness around issues of body and sexuality parallel to strengthening their capacity as a women's group organization and as individual professionals capable of supporting women victims of violence, by supporting them to regain their personal power.



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Q: How do you promote these issues on a regional level?

TC: The first step to start working at the regional level was the women's [mock] tribunals. This has been one of the most successful projects at the national and regional level initiated by Taller Comunicación Mujer, and which suggests to us a continuation of this action.

The tribunals are a political action aiming at defining and demanding women's rights. It is a collective process of capacity-building and strengthening of women's organizations through research, critical analysis of legislation, and communication campaigns presenting cases at the national and regional tribunals, as well as developing strategic alliances to bring up the issues in each tribunal, in each country and at a regional level.

Q: How has the general opinion towards sexual and reproductive rights changed over the last decade, in Ecuador and regionally?

TC: During the past ten years major shifts have occurred in Ecuador on these issues.

One of the most important shifts was the de-penalization of homosexuality in 1997 when the legal norm that criminalized it in the penal code was declared invalid. That same year, sexual abuse was included in the penal code, and thus defined as a criminal sexual act.

The second decisive event was the elaboration of the new Constitution in 1998, in which article 23 defines sexual rights and the right to a free and healthy sexuality. On the regional and international levels, the advances made for sexual and reproductive health have been the product of social processes led by the women's and feminist movements, which opened for change and new solutions to the problems women experienced in their life and in society.

At the same time there are worrying signs of a conservative backlash in the region with forces that want to revoke the successful advances. Conservative institutions like the Churches, especially the Catholic Church, influence the State in order to limit the guarantee and exercise of sexual and reproductive rights.

Q: Will the results from the general election in Ecuador affect your work on these issues in any way?

TC: When it comes to sexual and reproductive rights, the general election in Ecuador does not offer a very positive future scenario due to the fact that the President has declared himself a practicing Catholic. He has already made public declarations [December 2006] and expressed that they do agree with abortion rights but that the after day pill is still to be analyzed to assess whether it is "abortive" or not. And in relation to homosexuality, he states "no" to gay marriages, but "yes" to a form of guarantee for stable relationships. Therefore, if a homosexual couple has a stable relationship, certain rights have to be established, like those pertaining to heritage.

"Marriage is to create a family", is another quote of his (El Comercio, Quito, 28 September 2006).

Q: How do you foresee the development of sexual and reproductive rights in the future?

TC: In 2007, one of the main actions in Ecuador will be to monitor the politics of the new government with respect to these issues. On the other hand, at regional level, the Left tendency of the current governments is a positive element. In this light, it is democracy and democratic practices that should be favoured.

Editor: Isabelle Nilsson

New Action Plan On LGBT at Sida

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons

In connection to the Foundation's focus on sexual and reproductive rights in 2007, we note with interest that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, has developed an action plan for its work on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2007-2009.

The Swedish international policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, adopted by the Government in December 2005, establishes that Sweden shall strive for a decriminalisation of acts of love between people of the same sex.

Now, Sida wants to contribute to concrete measures in at least one programme country in each continent with the aim to strengthen homosexual and transgender persons' (LGBT) rights.

Today it is illegal in about 70 countries in the world to be in a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex. In six countries it may even result in a death sentence.

Marginalisation and poverty are closely connected. LGBT persons are often subject to cultural and legal injustices, that may then turn into social exclusion and economic injustice.

The work to promote the human rights of LGBT persons is a worldwide challenge, especially for religious institutions, says Sida's Head of Department for Democracy and Social Development, Maria Stridsman. One might add that it is a challenge also for human rights advocates in any culture and society where LGBT persons are systematically discriminated against or even threatened.

Isabelle Nilsson

Strategy for Human Rights Development in Africa

Pilot Project Demonstrations Do the Work in Nigeria

After the era of colonialism and subsequent decades of authoritarian and despotic rule, the varying ambitions to move from poverty and conflict towards democracy and an improved human rights situation have yielded mixed results. Voke Ighorodje puts forward one example of how an integrated approach to development cooperation with joint NGO and government programmes may be successful in achieving a more pronounced human rights development and increased government accountability in the region.

The adoption in 1981 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul formally marked the beginning of the African human rights movements. With uncoordinated work and poorly organized advocacy organisations, many human rights advocates and defenders have been exposed to barbaric and ruthless leaders, who, because of the fear of opposition, have murdered, imprisoned or caused many advocates to simply disappear. However, the efforts of these human rights advocates have positively affected Africa as many undemocratic and authoritarian governments have been changed, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Also, many age long beliefs and practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, discrimination against women, especially of widows, neglect of girl child education and other discriminatory phenomena, have almost been done away with. The dearth of modern facilities and inadequate infrastructures has made the work of human rights organizations in Africa somewhat difficult. However, the emergence of globalization and the improvement of information technology, especially access to the internet, have greatly improved the way human rights advocacy is carried out.

Many strategies have been evolved by human rights advocates in the course of their work, including media advocacy, demonstrations, public petitions, publications, legislative advocacy and lobbying. After having evaluated these strategies, many human rights advocates have nevertheless identified some of the shortcomings of these strategies. After some research and deep reflection, human rights advocates, especially in Nigeria, have concluded that the use of pilot demonstrations is the most effective strategy for human rights advocacy.

Basically, civil society organizations, because of their multiple capacities and expertise, initiate projects which help further the goal of governance and development in the communities where they operate. However, because of resource constraints, some of

these projects are not sustainable over a long period of time and this is the reason why partnership with government institutions that have the capacity for sustainability is sought. Demonstrations of pilot projects that initially started at small scale and then developed into bigger projects have helped both project implementers and donors to fully monitor their impact.

The essence of the demonstration projects is to pedagogically present the nature of work that the organization is doing. In this regard, the various researches, journals, policy briefs and project conceptualisations can actually be seen and evaluated. This in turn may help the government to assess the work and the role of its own involvement in funding the project. In brief, it defines engagement with the government both at the local, state and national level, including the state agencies.

As an illustrative example, the Community and Support Assistance Project (CSAP) is proposed to be an integrated project in cooperation with a local government in Lagos State (Kosofo Local Government). It will focus on developing an integrated governance programme involving the State Ministry of Transports, Environment and Education. A local taskforce will be created with the support from the local legislature to enforce traffic rules and regulations. As part of the engagement, the task force will collect fines from defaulters in a state infamous for its chaotic driver behaviour. The salaries of the local taskforce will be paid by the NGO in the project, and 30 percent of the fines collected will be paid into an account for the purposes of the project. Another 40 percent will be used for developing infrastructure for primary schools, street roads and pharmaceutical drugs. This will help accelerating infrastructural development and access to drugs in the public hospitals. A 30 percent of the remaining funds will be channelled to support to local groups in form of micro credits with the aim to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities.

All in all, the project takes an integrated approach to accelerating development at the local level and by involving the participation of government through innovative project implementation. The future of human rights work will depend on how projects implementers are able to develop pilot projects that encourage donors to increase their assistance and the government's willingness to partner with these organizations and where the ultimate beneficiaries are the communities.

Voke Ighorodje

Editor: Isabelle Nilsson

"Nothing About Us Without Us!"

On 13th December 2006, the UN General Assembly voted for a new core convention, the ninth within the system, which deals with the human rights of people with disabilities. In an additional protocol, the individual right to complaint is recognized for cases where the State does not live up to its responsibilities. The new Covenant implies a shift of paradigm and an acknowledgement that social barriers exclude an important part of human rights-bearers; i.e. by stating the lack of accessibility as a violation of a human rights.

The view on handicap and on persons with disabilities has gone through a remarkable change the last few decades. Previously, a handicap was considered only as a medical issue. Nowadays, the disability movement worldwide defines itself rather from a fundamental human rights perspective. Any issue which touches upon people with disabilities must be treated as an aspect of human rights at all levels of society, and must be included in everyday politics and formulation of social policies, to become reality.

The beginning of the struggle for a UN Convention for the human rights of people with disabilities dates back as far as to 1987. In 2002, the work on a new Covenant was initiated within the UN system. During this preparatory groundwork process, the UN also decided that the committees which monitor the level of fulfilment

of the other Covenants should also integrate a disabilities perspective to their work.

The work on the Convention took its starting point in the already existing tools to protect the rights of people with disabilities. While it can be said that existing international agreements about human rights also apply to people with disabilities, they do not explicitly mention these, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child as an exception confirming the

in relation to freedom of expression and material life conditions. A rights perspective also underlines the importance of involving the people concerned in the identification of their needs and the absolute responsibility of the state in guaranteeing these rights. If the rights are not realized, it is imperative to identify the intervening circumstances and to take measures for changing that impairing condition. That happens in a process where constant monitoring and evaluation are built in, evidently with human rights as tools and yardsticks. Three words suffice to summarize what it is all about: participation, transparency and accountability.

P.S.

general rule. It was agreed that the formulations of the rights in the new convention had to be designed in correspondence to the level of already existing standards for human rights, as a minimum rule. The new covenant, thus, does not present any new rights as such; the ambition with the 40 articles has rather been to find means to promote the implementation of already recognized rights, and that from a rights perspective, also for people with disabilities.

To work from a rights perspective, which the Swedish Parliament voted for in December 2003, implies that the identification of all kinds of demands that people have for a decent life are measured against the international covenants on human rights, i.e.

Representatives of the disability movement, who have been very active in the formulation of the convention, made the following conclusion about the results: "We are the objects that are now to become subjects by force of the human rights provisions that are inscribed in the convention." And the guiding message for the invested work in the process was: "Nothing about us without us!"

Anita Klum

Translation: Isabelle Nilsson

The Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights

was founded on July 1, 1991. Its principals are the Church of Sweden, Diakonia, the Swedish Red Cross and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute. The Foundation cooperates and supports grassroots organizations and human rights activists in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbeans. The work in Sweden consists primarily of information, education and opinion making activities on human rights issues.

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