

newsletter

Social Science: the research and policy connection

During 2005 UNESCO will put into effect its new focus in the field of social science as decided by the 31st General Conference: improving and increasing the linkages between research and policy. The high point will be the International Forum on Research Policy linkages that UNESCO is co-organizing with the Government of Argentina from 5 to 10 September 2005 in Buenos Aires.

The Forum will bring together social scientists, policy makers, professional social science bodies and networks, national and international funding agencies, and concerned NGOs. While its standards are those of academic excellence, it is not designed as an academic conference. Rather, its purpose is to bring together social science research and policy in the search for a common language and shared terms of engagement.

The Forum will focus on four key thematic areas where social science expertise is crucial to effective policy intervention: regional integration, social policy, decentralization and urban issues, and global dynamics. It will combine plenary sessions, major thematic workshops bringing together international experts, workshops convened by academics, activists and policy makers from around the world, and closed consultation meetings to facilitate liaison between the key operators at the policy-research interface.



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→ By disseminating its results in a range of academic and policy-relevant formats, by promoting networking among relevant actors, and by its own continuity, the International Forum proposes to strengthen the linkages between social science research and social policy. The challenges of global society far exceed social science, but without social science they simply cannot be met.

The Forum will be a “flagship” activity of the Management of Social Transformations programme (MOST), an intergovernmental scientific programme created in 1994 to promote international, interdisciplinary and comparative research in the social sciences.

In addition to the aforementioned Forum, the MOST programme has been supporting the “Forum of Ministers of Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean” and the newly established one in Southern Africa. Requests have now been received from West Africa and South Asia. The aim is to link them with the new regional research networks to be established around priorities agreed with the Ministers. Comparative research and comparative policy analysis at the regional level should help in improving the impact of social policies, thus effecting the crucial convergence between policy and research.

Pierre Sané
Assistant Director-General
for Social
and Human Sciences



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Pierre Sané
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Editorial assistant:
Rosemary Wiltshire-Romero
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Urban policy research and the Porto Alegre experience

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988, also known as the Citizen's Constitution, opened paths for new initiatives within the democratic State. One of these was the participation of the population in public decision-making power processes, thus improving the people-government relationship.

Acting upon this, from 1989 to 2003 the municipality of Porto Alegre developed an alternative political model, centred on dialogue between civil society and government. It is emerging as a model for the inclusion of social movements in public government decisions, thus creating a true democracy centred on citizenship and civil society participation. This requires an active network of entities and associations as well as a group of councils, which through public assemblies and consultations, for example, help both in the distribution of the budget (participatory budget) and in providing input for the decision-making process. This experience has changed the society-State relationship as we have known it and made much more flexible the people-government relationship, increasing the participation channels and allowing the public to define priorities and give opinions on the administration of the city.



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Evaluating the Porto Alegre experiment

In January 2003, during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, SHS, with the UNESCO Brazil Office, decided to evaluate what seemed to be a very successful social protection network system. A year and a half later, in October 2004, the final evaluation was launched in Brazil in the form of a publication. It encompasses the management aspects and results of the programme, as well as its social impacts and will be applied to reinforce and improve the programme's operation.

In brief, the results revealed high levels of civil society participation in associations and in boards established by local government. Moreover, participation was relatively independent of income or level of schooling, reflecting the diversity of the population. Concerning the social protection network, the researchers concluded that it was transparent and well conducted. The transfer of income to socially underprivileged families has had immediate results on meeting basic needs, such as food, hygiene and health. ¶

Marlova Noleto and Beatriz Coelho,

Beatriz.Coelho@unesco.org.br

www.unesco.org.br

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, MULTICULTURALISM AND INTEGRATION

Such was the title of a Forum held on 14 October 2004 in Montevideo, Uruguay. One of the objectives was to encourage the widest possible dissemination in the Mercosur countries of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The main question discussed was how best to convey basic information about the Convention and issues of multiculturalism and integration through the media and particularly through the press.

The meeting was co-organized by the Montevideo Office, the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, the CLACSO Latin American Board of Social Sciences and the Human Rights Institute of the University of Uruguay's Law Faculty. ¶

Rosemary Wiltshire Romero

and Manuel Bernales,
m.bernales@unesco.org
www.unesco.org.uy

Towards Copenhagen

+ 10

The international community is preparing for the review of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

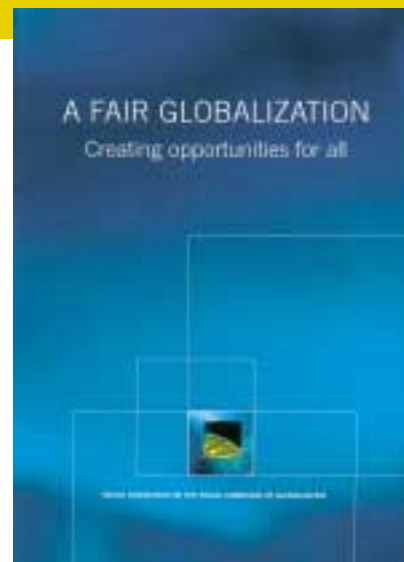
The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, was at the time the largest gathering ever of world leaders. It pledged to overcome poverty, reach the goal of full employment and foster social integration through the development objectives. The Summit adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and a Programme of Action.

Five years later, the United Nations General Assembly convened a special session in Geneva (26 June to 1 July 2000) to assess the achievements made since the Copenhagen Summit and to discuss future action. At that session Member States adopted an Outcome document with a range of new initiatives for social development. Among its goals was that of halving poverty by 2015. Three months later this objective was adopted as the UN Millennium Development Goal 1.

In order to review what has happened in the field of social development, the United Nations is holding “Copenhagen + 10” from 9 to 18 February 2005 in New York during the meeting of the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development (CSD). Participation will be broad-based, with government delegations, civil society and UN organizations.

SHS, in its capacity as focal point for UNESCO, has recently undertaken a number of activities in view of the Copenhagen + 10 meeting. In particular it prepared UNESCO’s report on its actions and activities to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and the Outcome Document. SHS has also participated in the meetings outlined below.

Report of ILO’s World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.



What are the priorities?

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly met at UN Headquarters from 4 to 6 October 2004. In his report presented at the meeting, the Secretary-General proposed that, in the context of the review of events that will take place in 2005 within the United Nations, particular attention be given to the principle of a people-centred approach and its realization in public policies and development strategies.

- According to the report, “this approach requires, in particular,
- a better understanding and management of the social aspects of globalization;
 - the gearing of national and international macroeconomic policies towards the realization of social goals;
 - the increased capacity of national governments to pursue their own social policies.”

The Under Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs stressed during the meeting that “increasing controversies surrounding globalization and the surge of security issues on the international agenda should not detract intergovernmental attention from the social and cultural implications of globalization and their impact on development. The analysis and recommendations of the recent report of the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization, *A fair globalization: creating opportunities for all*,¹ should be the subject of priority action”.

An international forum to discuss equity and equality

The International Forum for Social Development (United Nations, 5-6 October 2004) was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in the context of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. At the core of the Forum were the issues of equity and equality. Three themes were discussed by academicians, representatives from the UN/WB system and policy-makers: Interpreting current trends in inequality; National Policies for Sustainable growth and prevention or reduc-

Workshop participants concentrate on the social science e-book.



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tion of inequalities; and Contribution of the United Nations to the search for equity in an interdependent world.

In his intervention, Mr Chaibong Hahm, Director of the SHS Division for Social Sciences, Research and Policy, provided an analytical approach on how to achieve more equity and equality, and presented, *inter alia*, a number of MOST² activities which aim at contributing to social policies, namely the Network of Ministers for Social Development, as well as to the forthcoming World Social Sciences Forum to be convened in Argentina, September 2005.

Next steps

UNDESA is preparing a report on the proposals set forth during the Forum and will present them to the Copenhagen + 10 meeting. Among the proposals are the following:

- UNESCO and UNICEF must be particularly involved in social policies;
- more importance should be given to evidence-based approaches in the formulation of social policies;
- the UN research agenda should be enforced and research results efficiently disseminated;
- rights-based and value-based approaches are important;
- the UN should enforce its support to civil society organizations;
- good governance and democracy are priorities;
- there should be a focus on investment in human capital (education and health). ¶

Cecilie Golden, c.golden@unesco.org

E-BOOK WORKSHOP

In collaboration with the Technology, Electronic and Computer Centre of Suan Kularbwitayalai Nonthaburi School (SKN), RUSHSAP organized the Asia-Pacific Social Sciences School Network (APSSNET) regional training workshop in Thailand from 4 to 8 October 2004 for teachers from UNESCO Member States in Asia and the Pacific.

The workshop covered two main areas – the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in schools and the creation of an e-book on social science issues. On their return from the workshop, participants should be able to run similar workshops in their own countries for other teachers, thus having a chance to get together and share information and experiences with other social science teachers.

There were twenty-two participants from seven countries: Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand. (Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia intend organizing similar workshops at the national level in the next year or two.) ¶

Sarinya Sophia, s.sophia@unesco.org

1. See SHS Newsletter 06.

The Commission report is available at www.ilo.org/public/english/wcsd/g

2. UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations Programme

Migrants take the floor

The SHS/UNESCO Beijing Office devoted this year's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty to film presentations and discussions on the issue of migration in China, as part of its project "Together with Migrants".¹

Migration and poverty are indeed inter-related issues. For many of the poorest migrants, migration is a household or individual livelihood strategy. Others seek work elsewhere in the hope of a better income, improving their assets, or their access to better healthcare or education. For yet others, migration may be an effort to ensure against chronic insecurity. Some travel to seek farm work, perhaps seasonal or temporary labour, and others travel to find work in cities. Many are young or very young people migrating on their own without parents or families.

Poverty is the driving force behind such migration, but there is also an underlying desire for self-betterment. In China, every August and September, this desire pushes several thousands of people to travel the three-day, 3,000 km "railroad of hope" from Sichuan Province to Xinjian Province to take part in the cotton harvest.

Railroad of Hope

"Railroad of Hope" is the title of the film that was presented by Chinese film director, Ning Ying on October 17 in Beijing. It is a 52-minute documentary that gives voice to the hopes, desires, fears and worries of Chinese migrants, through a series of direct questions. This film is one of the few in Chinese cinematography where vulnerable groups, especially young and female migrants, have received so much space for communicating their innermost feelings openly and sincerely.

During the debate that followed the film, several migrants from the "Together with Migrants" Beijing pilot site expressed their own thoughts and feelings concerning migration. Commenting on the documentary, some were



Discussion with Ms Ning Ying after the projection of her film.

© UNESCO / E. Ascuitti

concerned by the fact that it exposed their real lives: they had felt uncomfortable in front of a film that had entered their private lives and been shown to an audience unaware of the challenges Chinese migrants have to face every day.

Migrants were able to speak about their uneasiness in front of a rapidly changing China: uneasiness in front of inequalities, social and economic discrimination and exclusion. At the same time, it was a way of looking for recognition for their everyday contribution to the advancement and development of their country.

Conveying a message

The UNESCO screening was an *unicum momentum*, a comfortable space for discussion, in which the real migrants' voices and emotions could be shared with a very heterogeneous public – artists, scholars, UN agency representatives, students, diplomats and journalists as well as the general public. The event was also able to draw attention to the rural labour migration issue and to reach public opinion, demonstrating that pairing artistic expression with social issues is a powerful tool for mobilizing public opinion and generating debate. Most important of all, it showed that all social actors are concerned by poverty and the social exclusion of migrants, and the screening also conveyed the message

that such matters require the involvement of every single person: migrants themselves, researchers, policy makers, artists and civil society alike.

SHS/Beijing will continue its work in consolidating and encouraging the activities of migrants' associations, so as to create conditions for their effective participation in the decision-making process in matters concerning the "sending" and "receiving" regions. The next appointment with Chinese film-makers is on Human Rights Day (10 December) in order to affirm once again that migrants' rights are human rights. ¶

Geneviève Domenach-Chich and Elena Ascuitti,
g.domenach-chich@unesco.org

1. For more information on "Together with Migrants", see Beijing SHS webpage: www.unescobeijing.org

2. For a synopsis of the film, see the SHS website agenda: www.unesco.org/shs.

Promoting human security and peace

LOW RATIFICATION OF THE UN CONVENTION TO PROTECT MIGRANTS

As of October 2004, 27 States had ratified the *United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.*

An article published in *Global Migration Perspectives* no. 3, 2004 (Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva) reviews the reasons behind this low ratification record.

The Convention represents the most comprehensive treaty in the field of migrants' rights; it was adopted in 1990 and entered into force in 2003. After presenting the main issues surrounding the human rights of migrants, the history and the content of the Convention and the ratification process, the article outlines, on the basis of reports commissioned by UNESCO, the major obstacles to its acceptance by States. It distinguishes four types of obstacles – linked to the content of the Convention as well as to administrative, financial and political issues – and shows that political obstacles are dominant. It concludes by describing possible ways of fostering the ratification of the Convention. ¶

Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire,

p.pecoud@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/migration

The promotion of Human Security is one of UNESCO's strategic objectives at present. Within this framework, Member States have emphasized the need to comprehend the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of human security.

Accordingly, UNESCO addresses “the need to prevent conflicts at their source [...] through its global network of peace research and training institutions, thereby reinforcing human security”. One of the expected outcomes, as set out in the Medium Term Strategy 2002-2007, is “the elaboration of integrated approaches to human security at the regional, sub-regional and national levels, targeting the most vulnerable populations, including the prevention and resolution of conflicts”.

Since 2003 SHS's programme on Human Security and Peace has been carrying out a series of regional conferences to determine priorities in the area of human security in different parts of the world.¹ In cooperation with institutional partners, regional frameworks for the promotion of human security are now being developed for the Arab States region, for Central Asia and for South-East Asia.² Similar regional conferences were held in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Asia. SHS will be helping Member States in the follow-up to these expert meetings, especially in implementing the recommendations and action plans.



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Three upcoming conferences

The next regional conference is being organized in cooperation with the Regional Human Security Centre in Amman, Jordan. The conference, entitled “Human Security and Peace in the Arab States”, will take place on 25 and 26 January 2005. The regional conferences for Central Asia and for South-East Asia are planned for February and May 2005.

In line with these conferences, SHS is developing ethical, normative and educational frameworks for the promotion of human security for each region, giving priority to the promotion of links with local initiatives to prevent conflicts at their source through respect for human rights and the implementation of appropriate policies. The frameworks address different aspects of human security, such as conflict resolution, promotion of human rights and democratic principles, and also threats to human security, namely economic insecurity, different forms of violence, extensive military expenditure, human trafficking, drug trafficking, etc. ¶

Max Schott and Moufida Goucha,

m.schott@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/secureipax
www.flacso.cl/flacso/ (in Spanish only)

* See also SHS Newsletter 02. The States that have ratified the Convention after its entry into force on 1 July 2003 are: Turkey, Timor Leste, Mali, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Burkina Faso, Kyrgyzstan.

1. See SHS Newsletter 03
2. See page 23 for a presentation of the International Conference

on Human Security in East Asia, published by the UNESCO-Bangkok Office.

Taslima Nasrin

winner of the 2004 UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize

Bangladeshi writer and journalist, Taslima Nasrin, has received the 2004 UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the promotion of tolerance and non-violence. The acceptance speech Taslima Nasrin gave at the ceremony held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 16 November 2004, is reproduced here.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for having been awarded the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for 2004.

Bangladesh, where I was born, is a nation of more than 30 million, one of the most populous countries in the world. More than 1500 people are crowded into a square kilometre of space. It is a country where 70 per cent of the people live below the poverty line, where more than half of the population cannot read and write, a country where there is insufficient health care, and where infant mortality is high. Nearly 40 million women have no access to education nor do they have the possibility of becoming independent.

Because of the country's strong patriarchal tradition women suffer unbearable inequalities and injustices. They suffer from malnutrition and from anaemia as well as from the physical and psychological problems that are not treated. Women normally remain untreated because they are not taken to hospitals until they reach terminal stages. Women are not supposed to become sick, because they must remain busy with household chores, bear and rear children, take care of the family, and make sure that the male members of the family are happy. A woman's destiny is to be ruled by the father in childhood, by the husband when she is young, and by her son when she is old.

Because women are considered weak, their rights, their freedoms, their desires, their wishes, all are controlled by men. Women are considered inferior beings, servants and sexual objects. For a married couple, the most unwanted thing is a female baby. If a female baby is born, it is not uncommon that either the wife gets a divorce for her crime of having given birth to a female or the wife must spend her life in disgrace. Women are considered intellectually, morally, physically and psychologically inferior by religion, tradition, culture and customs.

As a result, far too many women suffer from trafficking, from slavery, from all kinds of discrimination. Men throw acid on women's bodies, burn their faces, smash their noses, melt their eyes, and walk away as happy men. Women are beaten, are flogged, are stoned to death. Women are raped,

Viewpoint



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“In my poetry, prose, essays, and novels, I have defended the people who are oppressed. I have cried loudly for equality and justice, justice for all people whatever their religion and gender.”

are accused of allowing the rape, and the rapists are set free. Violence against women is not considered a crime in my country.

For example, let me tell you about Yasmin, a 15-year-old girl. Employed as a maid, she was raped by her master, she fled from the master's home, and she was observed by the police as she walked towards her parents' house. The police told her it was not safe for a girl to be walking on the road at night, they offered her a ride home in their van, and what happened? Six policemen raped her, killed her, then threw her body into the bushes. When news of her murder broke out, villagers demonstrated against the police. The police shot at the protesters, killing seven. The Government then issued a statement the following day that Yasmin was a girl of bad character, she was a prostitute, and the police had every right to treat her as they did. Such is not a rare case in Bangladesh. I know that it happens in other countries, also.

Nobody told me to protest, but from an early age I developed strong feelings about the importance of fighting against oppression. Nobody asked me to shed a tear, but I did. By writing books, I wanted to do something constructive. I wrote about the need for women to understand why they are oppressed and why they should fight against their oppression. For centuries, women have been taught that they are slaves of men, that they are not supposed to protest against the patriarchal system, that they must remain silent against their abusers. As a result, it has been difficult for women to accept the idea that they are, in fact, human beings and have the right to live as independent and equal human beings. Through my writing, I tried to encourage women to fight for their rights and freedom. My voice gave the chance to women to think differently. That did not make the religious fundamentalists happy. Quite the contrary! As a result, the fundamentalists refused to tolerate any of my views. They objected to a woman's breaking the chains and becoming free. They could not tolerate my saying that the religious scriptures are out of time and out of place. They were upset at my saying that religious law, which discriminates against women, needs to be replaced by secular law and a uniform civil code. Hundreds of thousands of the extremists appeared on the streets and demanded my execution by hanging. A *fatwa* was issued against me, setting a price on my head. The Government, instead of taking action

➡ **Taslima Nasrin**

Taslima Nasrin, who trained as a medical doctor, became known towards the late 1980s for her articles denouncing the oppression of women in some Asian countries. Despite death threats from Islamic fundamentalists, she continues to fight for a new civil code in her country, a code based on gender equality and secular education.

Author of over 20 books in Bengali, some of which have been translated into more than 20 different languages, she has received several prizes including the Ananda Puroshkar Indian literary prize, the European Parliament Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and Swedish PEN's Kurt Tucholsky Prize. ¶

against the fundamentalists, took action against me. I was charged with having hurt the religious feelings of the people. An arrest warrant was issued. But despite all the pressure, I continued writing. In my poetry, prose, essays, and novels, I have defended the people who are oppressed. I have cried loudly for equality and justice, justice for all people whatever their religion and gender. I have spoken loudly for the separation of religion and State, for secular law, for secular education.

During my struggle for a secular and ethical humanism, I have tried to defend the poor and also the ethnic and religious minority communities that were being oppressed. It was impossible for me to accept the idea that people living miserable lives did so because they had a different faith, or spoke a different language, or had a different culture. I believe that the diversity of our world's many religions, languages, cultures and ethnicities is not a pretext for conflict, but is a treasure that enriches us all, words identical to those of UNESCO's affirmations. Diversity is a treasure to be appreciated. There is no superior, no inferior culture in this world, only various cultural patterns that make up our beautiful multicoloured mosaic.

But, humans should not allow oppression in the name of religion. Humans should not allow torture such as female genital mutilation in the name of custom or traditions. Humans should not allow barbarism, humiliation, inequality, or injustice in the name of culture. Culture should not be and must not be used against humanity.



→ When I look around, I see the same picture everywhere: women are oppressed. Whether they are poor or rich, beautiful or ugly, have blue, black or brown eyes, have white, black or brown skin, are unmarried or married, illiterate or literate, believer or non-believer, women are oppressed. Everywhere women are oppressed, and the source of the problem is male-devised patriarchy, religion, tradition, culture and customs. Because of blind faith, humans are suffering from bloodshed, hatred, ignorance, illiteracy, injustices and poverty. But if we on Earth sincerely wanted to replace injustice with justice, we could eliminate all the problems of humanity which are caused by a blind faith in religion. Both the Judaeo-Christian Bible and the Qur'an clearly accept and condone slavery. Jesus explicitly tells slaves to accept their roles and obey their masters. No one in this world today would defend chattel slavery in any public forum or allow it under any legal code. Neither fundamentalist Christians nor Orthodox Jews talk about animal sacrifice or slavery. In those countries in which *sharia* or Islamic law exists, where stoning for adultery and amputation for stealing are legalized, no legitimization of slavery is ever mentioned. Polygamy and use of concubines are clearly accepted in the Old Testament, but nowhere in the Judaeo-Christian world are either of these practices legalized. Thus, insistence of continuation of practices which denigrate, oppress, and suppress women under the guise of scriptural reference is a hoax. Such practices could and should be de-legitimized just as chattel slavery has been de-legitimized.

Humankind is facing an uncertain future. The probability of new kinds of rivalry and conflict looms large. In particular, the conflict is between two different ideas, secularism and fundamentalism. I don't agree with those who think the conflict is between two religions, namely Christianity and Islam, or Judaism and Islam. After all, there are fundamentalists in every religious community. I don't agree with those people who think that the crusades of the Middle Ages are going to be repeated soon. Nor do I think that this is a conflict between the East and the West. To me, this conflict is basically between modern, rational, logical thinking and irrational, blind faith. To me, this is a conflict between modernity and anti-modernism. While some strive to go forward, others strive to go backward. It is a conflict between



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Trophy for the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize. Gift of the Japanese artist Toshi.

the future and the past, between innovation and tradition, between those who value freedom and those who do not.

I have been writing against all kinds of physical and sexual violence, religious terrorism, and patriarchal discrimination against women. I have a dream: I dream of a beautiful world, where no woman will be oppressed, will not be a victim of trafficking, acid throwing, rape, and sexual assault. I dream of a tolerant world where human beings will respect each other, a respect that would not give way to war, bloodshed, or violence. I have been writing to make my dream come true, an ethical world in which humanity will flourish with humans full of love, not with humans full of hatred.

My pen is my weapon in such a fight for a secular human-

➡ The UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize

The UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence was created in 1995 thanks to the generosity of Indian writer and diplomat, Madanjeet Singh, who is also a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. With the aim of developing a spirit of tolerance in the arts, education, culture, science and communication, the Prize is awarded every two years in recognition of exceptional achievements on the part of individuals or institutions that have contributed to the promotion of tolerance. The laureate receives a sculpture by the Japanese artist Toshi and a sum of US \$100,000. Previous prizewinners are Rwanda's Pro-femmes Twese Hamwe, a group of 32 women's NGOs (1996), the Egyptian Patriarch Shenouda III, Head of the Coptic Orthodox Church (2000), and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar (2002). ¶

www.unesco.org/shs/prizes

“I believe that the diversity of our world’s many religions, languages, cultures and ethnicities is not a pretext for conflict, but is a treasure that enriches us all [...]”

ism, but the extremists have come to kill me with their swords. They have burned my books, sued my publishers for publishing my books, attacked the bookshops where my books are kept. My freedom of expression has constantly been violated by the authority. I have written 28 books, 5 of which are banned by the Government – and cases have been filed against me to ban my other books. One Bangladesh court sentenced me to one year in prison for what I have written. In recent years, the Government banned all four books of my memoirs.

In my memoir, what I have written is not just my life story. It is the same story that thousands of women know about, how women live in patriarchal society that has hundreds of traditions that allow them to suffer. I have looked back into my childhood days and described the life of being a female child. I have told how I was brought up and have explained that I had privileges that many others did not have. I was able to study and become a medical doctor, something that thousands of girls cannot even dream about. I wanted to show where and how I grew up and what made me think differently, what made me do things differently. It is important to give other women some inspiration to revolt against the oppressive system that I grew up under and which still continues for them. I told the truth. I expressed everything that happened in my life. Normally it is taboo to reveal rape or attempted rape by male members of one’s family. Girls shut their mouth, because they are terribly ashamed. But I did not shut my mouth. I did not care what people would say to me or to my family. I know well that many women feel that I am telling their untold stories, too. We, the victims, should shout loudly. We need to be heard. We must protest loudly and demand our freedom and rights. We must refuse to be shackled, chained, beaten, and threatened.

If women do not fight to stop being oppressed by a shameful patriarchal and oppressive religious system, then shame on women! Shame on us for not protesting, for not fighting, for allowing a system to continue that will affect our children as well as our children’s children.

My story is not a unique one. My experiences, unfortunately, have been shared by millions of fellow sufferers. In my books, I cried for myself. I also cried for all the others who have not been able to enjoy the productive life of which they are capable and which they most assuredly

deserve. We who are women no longer must remain solitary, crying softly in lonely places. I do not cry alone any more, and because of that I have been suffering. I was thrown out of my own country. Instead of being able to live in the area of the world in which I was born and brought up, I was given that alternative of living in the West where I am forced to feel like an outsider.

I am, in other words, a stranger in my own country and a stranger here in the West where I am living now. Where can I go? Nowhere. Exile, for me, is a bus stop, where I am waiting for a bus to go home. I have been living in exile for more than 10 years. Still, I do not feel that any home is my home, any country my country. Mine is a hopeless, helpless feeling. Sometimes I ask myself, is this true, do I really have no home? Actually, it’s not true. I do have a home. My home is love, the love I receive from women all over the world. That is my home, the love I receive from rationalists, free thinkers, secularists, and humanists is my home. The love I receive from you is my home.

I regret nothing that I have done or that I have ever written. Come what may, I will continue my fight against all the extremist, fundamentalist, intolerant forces without any compromise until my death.

Today is the 16th of November, International Day for Tolerance. Today, I know, many are being killed as I speak. Today, I know, many women are being beaten, raped and murdered, as I speak. Today, I know, many children are being abused, because of hatred and intolerance. The challenge is to educate the world’s peoples about tolerance and non-violence. The challenge is to make Earth liveable. The challenge is to make every day of the year Tolerance Day. Tolerance is a concept that recognizes everyone’s human right and everyone’s fundamental freedom. People are naturally diverse, and should be, but only through tolerance can that diversity survive in the mixed communities of every region on the globe.

I am delighted, yet humbled, to be awarded the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize. I am grateful for the sympathy, support, and solidarity that UNESCO has shown to me. This award, this recognition, has made me all the more committed and all the more determined to continue my struggle.

Thank you all. ¶

Lithuania promotes bioethics

BIOETHICS WORKSHOP IN CUBA

A bioethics information and training workshop was held in Havana on 3 and 4 September 2004. The aim was to promote UNESCO's Bioethics programme and to integrate new countries into the UNESCO bioethics network for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDBIOETICA). Participants came from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The main results of the workshop was the establishment of a REDBIOETICA Committee for the Caribbean and the organization of an intensive course in bioethics for English-speaking Caribbean countries in 2005. The new committee will be coordinated by Dr Piedra Herrera, Secretary-General of the Cuban National Bioethics Commission and member of the Board of REDBIOETICA. ¶

Alia Saada, a.saada@unesco.org

A newly established documentation centre in Vilnius will store information in the field of bioethics.

The old city of Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It is a place that exudes history. The University, built in 1579 by the Jesuits is one of the most ancient universities of Eastern Europe. Inside the medical school buildings of the University, Lithuania is launching a new institution thus demonstrating the country's ability to turn towards the future – the Vilnius Bioethics Centre.

Experts, education programmes and legislation

This Centre, established on UNESCO's initiative and with its support, will have the task of collecting and disseminating data and information on experts, education programmes and examples of legislation in the field of bioethics. The opening of the Centre was celebrated during a conference which took place on 13 September 2004 in Vilnius, during a series of rotating conferences on bioethics organized by UNESCO. Several personalities took part in the event, notably Mme Roma Žakaitiene, Minister

of Culture and Chairperson of the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO, Mr Juozas Olekas, Minister of Health, and Mr Algirdas Monkevičius, Minister of Science and Education and Vice-Rector of the University of Vilnius.

The decision to create this Centre had been made at the International Conference on Bioethics in Central and Western Europe, co-organized in November 2002 by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO. During that Conference, participants had emphasized "the need to disseminate information on bioethics across Central and Western European countries" and they strongly encouraged "initiatives that aim to establish information networks on bioethics at national, regional and international level".

A real need for points of reference

Lithuania's engagement in the promotion of ethics in the field of the living being is, however, not new. Shortly after the country's independence, a National Bioethics Commission was established. It is now celebrating its first ten years of existence. Why is there such an interest in bioethics? According to several participants at the Conference, there is a real need to strengthen capacities in bioethics in the former Soviet republics.

A doctor who addressed the Conference explained, "the ethical debate did not exist under the Soviet Union. At the most, we spoke of Marxist values". He went on, "today we need points of reference". "For example, representatives of the Church – an institution that was previously banned – now take part in the National Bioethics Committee. In the course of discussions on some ethical issues, it may happen that I change my mind; but that is more unusual for representatives of an institution like the Church. If the Church's position really reflects the values and wishes of the population,



I think it should be followed. And yet how can we know if that is the case? How should we react when young girls from neighbouring countries where the Church's influence is even greater, want an abortion? How can we deal with the request of a pharmaceutical firm that wants to put some new medication on the market or a food processing company that wants to sell genetically modified products, when we haven't got the necessary information at our disposal to come to an informed decision?"

All these are examples of questions that have to be faced by many scientists and decision-makers in our societies. Hence the interest for setting up documentation centres that can collect and disseminate information on what is happening regionally, nationally and internationally in the fields of research, education, legislation and new ethical institutions. Our acceptance of ethics is firmly anchored in our respective cultures, our traditions and our history, but international instruments, values and examples of good practice can be a source of inspiration for countries that intend to set up their own codes of ethics and their own codes of conduct.

The establishment of the Bioethics Documentation Centre in Vilnius – the first of its kind to be launched under the aegis of UNESCO – is in line with the Organization's will to support its Member States in strengthening their capacities in bioethics. ¶

Jeanette Blom, j.blom@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/ethics

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ASTRONAUTS IN SPACE SOJOURNS

“Legal and ethical framework for astronauts in space sojourns” was the title of an international Conference held on 29 October 2004 to discuss the nature and status of current space exploration and use. UNESCO organized the Conference together with the European Space Agency (ESA) and the *Institut du Droit de l'Espace et des Télécommunications* (IDEST) of the University of Paris XI Sceaux. Discussions were structured around four themes: the status of astronauts, the general principles of law governing persons, criminal conduct and other behaviours on board space devices, and liability and insurance coverage. From the early days of space conquest, astronauts were recognized as “envoys of mankind”, notably in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and the 1968 Rescue of Astronauts Agreement. Apart from these two accords, there has been little consideration of ethics in space activities since the 1960s. As today's geopolitical situation is very different,

does it require new regulations and ethical consideration of astronauts' activities, and how do the existing principles apply to the present situation? These were among the issues discussed at the Conference. A full account of the proceedings will shortly be available online. ¶

Julien Tort, j.tort@unesco.org

URUGUAY SEMINAR ON BIOETHICS

“The epistemological foundations of bioethics” was the title of the seminar held in Montevideo, Uruguay on 8 and 9 November. Around forty participants from ten neighbouring countries took part in discussions on subjects ranging from definition and demarcation to principles in bioethics, communication and language. The papers given at the seminar will be published in book form. The seminar was organized with the UNESCO Bioethics Network for Latin America and the Caribbean “REDBIOETICA” in cooperation with the Bioethics Commission of Uruguay's Union of Doctors and with the support of the UNESCO Montevideo Office. ¶

Alia Saada, a.saada@unesco.org

The fight against poverty and promoting human rights

At a time of wealth and abundance with 1.1 billion people living in poverty, the two extremes of opulence and utter need constitute an immoral, intolerable paradox. Is this the aim of humanity at the height of technological advancement and production of wealth – to produce poverty?

Every year, 17 October is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. And since 1987, it has been World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, thus named by the International Movement ATD Fourth World. The Day mobilizes humanitarians and defenders of human rights. In a way, it is a “celebration” because it celebrates the world community’s awareness of duty – the duty to mobilize, to finally put an end to a human tragedy which should never exist in an era of growth and prosperity. It is a dramatic situation, silently ravaging the world.

Seminars at UNESCO Headquarters

On 18 and 19 October 2004, in Paris, SHS organized four international seminars on the moral, ethical, legal and socio-anthropological aspects of poverty when considered by Human Rights law. The seminars brought together research specialists, experts in multilateral cooperation, and United Nations specialized agencies and provided an opportunity

➡ Each year, 36 million people die of hunger or its ravages. Poverty kills a child every three seconds. Ten thousand people die every day because of water unfit for drinking. How many more times will we have to remind people of these dreadful, spiralling statistics?



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for discussion within UNESCO itself to face up to and to strengthen the Organization’s plans for the future concerning its contribution to the Millennium Development Goals. Two eminent experts gave public lectures: the philosopher, Professor Thomas Pogge, and Professor Arjun Sengupta, independent expert on extreme poverty and human rights.

Despite the variety of speakers, all of whom are active in the fight against poverty, each one responded to the issue of poverty and its link to human rights, which goes to show that this link certainly exists. Now we need to find a way to turn it into effective action, making human rights the indicator and basis for all social construction so that, like slavery and apartheid, poverty is banished to the pages of history. ¶

Chifa Tekaya, s.tekaya@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/povertyday2004

A LATIN AMERICAN FORUM TO FIGHT POVERTY

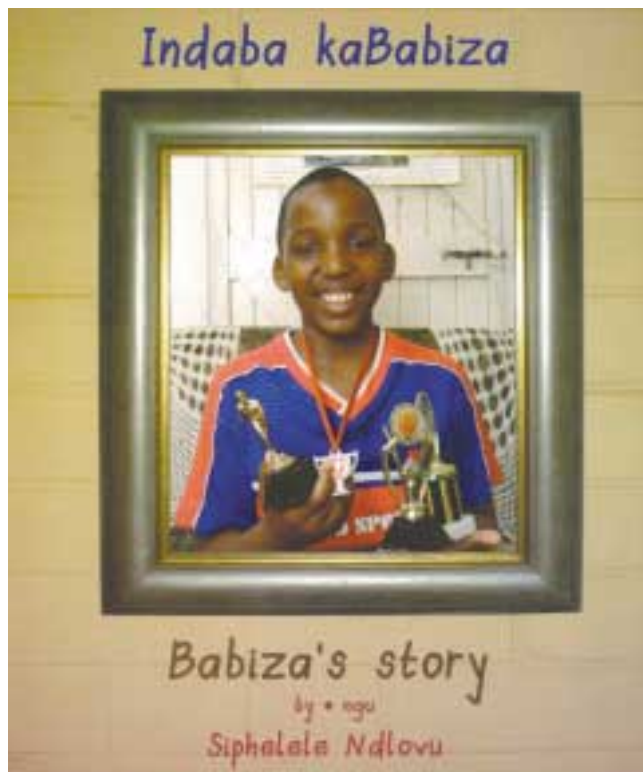
To mark International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October), a forum entitled “Instead of poverty, another world is possible”, took place on 15 October 2004. This forum was organized jointly by the Secretariat General of the Organization of American States, the CLACSO Latin American Social Science Board, the Latin American Human Economy Centre (CLAEH) and UNESCO’s Montevideo Office. Human development strives to increase people’s options by giving them the tools to enable them to choose their lifestyle. The Forum’s objective was to strengthen the links between economic, social and cultural rights – those rights that are set out in the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report – cultural freedom in today’s diverse world. ¶

Rosemary Wiltshire Romero
 and Manuel Bernales,
m.bernales@unesco.org

Babiza's Story: The first of a new book series

The human race is in the midst of a momentous movement into urban settlements. The United Nations Population Fund predicts that during the next 25 years, almost 95% of the world's population growth will be in African and Asian cities, and that by 2025, half the populations of Africa and Asia and more than 80% of those living in North America, Latin America, Europe and Australia will live in urban areas. To understand how urbanization is affecting the world's youngest citizens, UNESCO initiated the Growing Up in Cities project,¹ which involves children and adolescents in cities around the world in documenting and evaluating their living conditions.

The project has just launched a new book series, "By Children For Children Through Books", so that young people can share their stories with others their age. The first publication, *Babiza's Story*, shows children contending with the AIDS epidemic that is sweeping communities in Africa. Babiza is a nine-year-old boy in a peri-urban area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, whose mother is HIV positive. He tells his family's story forthrightly, sharing his hopes and fears and the strength he has gained by reaching out to his family, friends and a support group organized by the local hospital. The text is in English and Zulu, with photographs of Babiza and his community and colour drawings by the young author himself.



© UNESCO and HIVAN

Other children have praised the story's authenticity, but older readers as well can learn from Babiza's courage and wise counsel. Jill Kruger, Director of the UNESCO-MOST Growing up in Cities project in South Africa and Deputy Director of Social and Behavioural Sciences at HIVAN (Centre for HIV and AIDS Networking) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, captured and edited Babiza's narrative. Information about the book series and Growing Up in Cities is available on Internet (address below). ¶

Louise Chawla, environmental psychologist and coordinator of the Growing Up in Cities Project
www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm.

¹ First launched in 1970 by Kevin Lynch with UNESCO, it was revived in 1996 by the author of this article as part of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme. Ed.

1 DECEMBER – WORLD AIDS DAY

On World AIDS Day, in Pachuca, Hidalgo State, Mexico, UNESCO's Mexico Office presented a publication on the conclusions of the Central American Workshop (organized in Antigua, Guatemala, in May 2004) on the cultural approach to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The publication (in Spanish only) has been produced in cooperation with UNESCO's Culture Sector and it provides the main lines of action to be followed in the Central American and Mexico subregion with regard to HIV/AIDS prevention.

Alia Saada, a.saada@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/culture

Culture, Women's Rights, and the Reform of Family Laws

Family laws or personal status codes are civil codes that govern marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, paternity, and custody of children. Over time and space, these laws (or in some countries, customary practices) have been difficult to tackle because they have been seen as central to the cultural identity or religious integrity of a nation or community; or because the private sphere of the family has been regarded as outside the purview of the State.

In Europe and North America, family relations were based on patriarchal norms until relatively recently, and scholars have examined the evolution of family laws from patriarchal to egalitarian in the 20th century.¹ In recent decades, family laws in Muslim societies have been the focus of attention. This is because when seen in the light of international human rights and women's rights discourses and standards, Muslim family laws discriminate against women by placing them in the position not of equals but of minors and dependants.

The globalization of the women's rights agenda, along with the growth of women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa, has thus made the reform of family laws a key objective. In Muslim countries and communities, these laws generally are based on interpretations of the Islamic *Sharia* that distinguish between men and women (and Muslim and non-Muslim) in the allocation of rights and responsibilities.² Family laws may also give men/husbands nationality rights but deny them to women, or may exonerate men in the event of domestic violence or "honour crimes".³

Action of feminists and of women's organizations

Since the early 1980s, and in a more concerted fashion since the early 1990s, feminists and women's organizations in the Middle East have prioritized the reform of family laws in order to obtain for women more rights and equality within the family. Concomitantly, they have struggled for the criminalization of domestic violence, equality of nationality rights, and greater political and economic participation. They have done this through research, advocacy, and lobbying efforts directed at their governments, clergy, the media, international organizations, and the transnational public sphere. And they have deployed secular, universal, and Islamic discourses to disseminate their ideas and achieve their goals. A notable example of a successful endeavour in this regard was the reform of the family law, or the *Mudawwana*, in Morocco in 2003-04, following a ten-year campaign by women's organizations.

Taken together, these objectives and forms of collective action by feminist activists and women's organizations have helped to expand women's citizenship rights, but they also have wider implications. The "third wave of democratization" entails in part the formation or expansion of a democratic public sphere or the building of civil society. Feminist collective action and the activities of women's organizations contribute to the enhancement of civil society, the feminization of the public sphere, and the democratization of the polity.

Studies undertaken by UNESCO

Within SHS, the Gender Equality and Development Section is undertaking a series of studies examining the family laws in the Middle East and North Africa, and highlighting the extent to which they converge with or diverge from international instruments – to which most MENA countries are signatories – such as CEDAW, the ICCPR, and the ICESCR. These studies also discuss remaining gaps in those family laws that have seen wide-ranging amendments (e.g. Tunisia), such as the continuing problem of mixed marriages (that is, the rights of the non-Muslim spouse) and of unequal inheritance.

Reform of family law is important for several reasons: (1) it is a central element in the modernization of religious institutions and norms in Muslim societies; (2) it establishes women's human rights and their equality within the family and vis-à-vis male kin; (3) it has implications for women's wider citizenship rights and their social participation, including economic citizenship, thus challenging the hegemony of the patriarchal gender contract; 4





and (4) it brings the Middle East in line with international norms and codes as enshrined in such conventions as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

On-going: analysis and evaluation

For many feminists, cultural and social institutions have been a source of women's oppression and of gender inequality. But for others, culture is a source of identity and a site not only for contestation but also for reconciliation and advancement. Activists in many social movements have used cultural resources in struggles for reform, change, or empowerment. In that context, we are exploring the role of cultural practices and institutions in enabling or impeding women's participation and rights in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

Last but not least, we are confronting the question of measuring, evaluating, and assessing women's rights. What are the appropriate indicators, qualitative and quantitative, for women's civil and political, and their economic, social, and cultural participation and rights? At SHS, we are drawing on existing databases to develop a set of indicators that will allow us to better understand, and to compare, women's civil and political, and their economic, social and cultural participation and rights, in the countries that are part of our programme of work. ¶

Val Moghadam, v.moghadam@unesco.org

www.unesco.org/shs/gender

1. Mary Ann Glendon, *The Transformation of Family Law* (University of Chicago Press, 1989).

2. Abdullah An-Naim, *Islamic Family Law in a Changing World: A Global Resource Book* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

3. In Israel they are based on the Jewish Halacha, and in Lebanon there are 15 personal status codes for the 18 recognized ethnic-religious communities, including Christian ones. In Muslim-dominant countries, non-Muslim communities are exempt from Islamic family law and family matters are governed by religious

codes supervised by churches. (Thus, Catholics cannot divorce because their churches do not allow it.) In Iran this is the case also, except that all women, Muslim and non-Muslim citizens alike, are required to observe *hijab*.

4. Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (London and Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003) 2nd. ed.

“CHILDREN IN NEED” GALA

For twelve years, Mrs Ute-Henriette Ohoven, UNESCO Special Ambassador for the Education of “Children in Need”, has organized a charity gala in Düsseldorf, to which she invites international personalities influential in culture, industry, politics, sport, film or the media. Ranked among the three most prestigious galas of Europe, it is also one of the ten largest international galas according to *USA Today*. Every year, the event is sponsored by a very high-level personality – the Dalai Lama, Queen Noor of Jordan, the Queen of Bhutan, Helmut Köhl, the Abbé Pierre, etc. More than 1,400 guests attend. This year, on 6 November, Vivienne Westwood, Bibi Russel, Heather Mills McCartney, Lorenzo Quinn, Montserrat Caballé, Rigoberta Menchú, Phil Collins, Manu di Bango, Linda Evangelista – to name but a few – were

invited to attend this prestigious gathering and, in just one evening, helped to collect 2 200 000 Euros. The entire sum will be invested by the UNESCO Programme for the Education of “Children in Need” in projects that bring direct, concrete aid to children in need. ¶

Cécile Krug, c.krug@unesco.org

AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The UNESCO project to fight human trafficking in Africa was launched in 2004 as a pilot project within the framework of poverty eradication. This intersectoral (SHS and the Culture Sector) initiative, aims to inspire more effective and culturally appropriate policy-making in the fight against the trafficking of women and children in Western and Southern Africa.

Regional teams of NGOs and researchers are currently carrying out research on the root causes of trafficking in six pilot countries (Benin, Nigeria, Togo, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa). In addition, a reflection on best practices to combat human trafficking, especially of women and children in Africa, is being developed by the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Finally, a case study of the trafficking of Nigerian women to Italy, comparing the historical slave trade with contemporary slavery, has been commissioned in this, the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition.

The studies' findings and policy recommendations will be converted into training

sessions for stakeholders, i.e. policy makers, NGO heads and media people. These sessions are planned to be held in mid-2005 in Western and Southern Africa. All reports will be available online in early 2005 at the address below. ¶

Saori Terada and Caroline Bacquet,
s.terada@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/humantrafficking



GRANTS FOR RESEARCH ON POVERTY ERADICATION

Through a small grants programme, SHS is hoping to encourage specialists in mid-career as well as the institutions to which they belong to contribute to drawing up strategies and national action plans for the eradication of poverty, based on human rights.

SHS is aiming to strengthen national capacities for research and analysis of poverty eradication policies, to help Member States draft strategies and action plans for the fight against poverty based on human rights and to monitor their implementation. This

programme is initially geared to researchers in Member States of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and certain regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Candidates may obtain the Programme brochure by writing to their country's UNESCO Regional Office or through the SHS website. Those who meet the requirements may apply through the UNESCO Regional Office by sending their curriculum vitae plus one detailed research project (20 pages maximum). The deadline for receipt of applications is 31 March 2005. ¶

John Nkinyangi, j.nkinyangi@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/poverty-grants

“A VIRILE MALE? OK, BUT WHY VIOLENT?”

That was the title of journalist Martin Staub's article which appeared in the 9/10 October 2004 edition of the Swiss paper *Tribune de Genève*. In his article he wrote an account of co-author Michael Kimmel's presentation at the launching of the French edition of *Male roles, masculinities and violence – A culture of peace perspective*. (See *Newsletter 05*) “Behind this brutish title, there hides a study of the close ties between violence and men. With different



examples, Michael Kimmel, Sociology Professor at Stony Brook in the United States, shows to what extent the education of boys and role of the male in our society pushes men towards violence. They must be strong and capable of taking decisions. That sort of stereotype of the ‘complete man’ – a virtually impossible ideal – often makes for feelings of frustration which in itself breeds violence.”

The book launch took place during the UNESCO Open Forum in Geneva. This was the first in a series of presentations or discussions on current affairs in UNESCO's fields of competence. ¶

Gillian Whitcomb and Ingeborg Breines,
i.breines@unesco.org

1. The Forum was organized by Ingeborg Breines, recently appointed Director of UNESCO's Liaison Office in Geneva. She was previously in charge of SHS's Women and Gender programme. (Ed.)

UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education is awarded for the 14th time

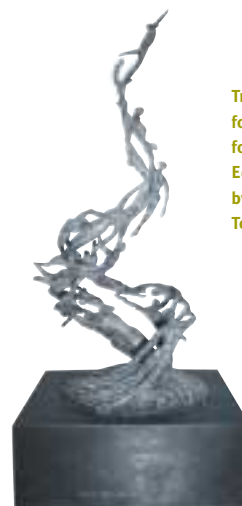
This year, 2004, is the fourteenth time the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education is being awarded. The Prize was established in 1978 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to honour the efforts of institutions, organizations or individuals that have made a particularly significant contribution to human rights education and to the promotion of human rights. It is intended to encourage and stimulate new initiatives in this regard.

Upon the unanimous recommendation of the International Jury, UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura awarded the 2004 UNESCO Human Rights Education Prize to Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand) for his outstanding contribution to education for human rights and diverse activities at national, regional and international level aimed at the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Jury¹ agreed that Vitit Muntarbhorn, a recognized expert in human rights with many publications to his name, combines the qualities of a scholar, an educator, a policy-making adviser and grass roots human rights activist who upholds the universal values of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. He has been involved in human rights teaching as university professor for more than twenty years. In 1990-1994, he was Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. He is Chairperson of the national Sub-Committee on the Rights of the Child and author of Thailand's first country report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As member of various committees of Thailand's National Human Rights Commission, Vitit Muntarbhorn has made a remarkable contribution to drafting human rights legislation, elaborating Thailand's First National Human Rights Action Plan and evaluating implementation of social, economic and cultural rights in his country and the Asia and the Pacific region. He has run legal literacy and human rights programmes for rural populations to promote multiculturalism and tolerance between Buddhist and Muslim communities. Throughout his professional career, he has actively participated in training courses, seminars and conferences on human rights designed to target professional groups such as the police, the military, prosecutors, judges, immigration officers, civil servants, teachers, non-governmental organizations and volunteers.

In addition, the Director-General, following the unanimous recommendation of the Jury, has decided to give four Honourable Mentions to: Professor David Jan McQuoid-Mason (South Africa) for his prominent contribution to human rights education and research and in appreciation of his anti-racism and democracy activities which he carried out as human rights activist and university professor for more than thirty years; Dr Anatoly Azarov (Russian Federation), Director of the Moscow School of Human Rights, for his important contribution to human rights education in the Russian Federation and mobilization of civil society for the implementation of the objectives of the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004); The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief (Norway)



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Trophy specially created for the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education. Donated by the Japanese artist, Toshi.

for the important contribution to human rights education and to the promotion of tolerance and freedom of religion or belief; and the Instituto Peruano de Educación en Derechos Humanos y la Paz (Peruvian Institute of Education for Human Rights and Peace), for its important contribution to education for human rights at all levels and in appreciation of its activities aimed at the dissemination of knowledge on human rights and democracy, in particular among indigenous peoples. ¶

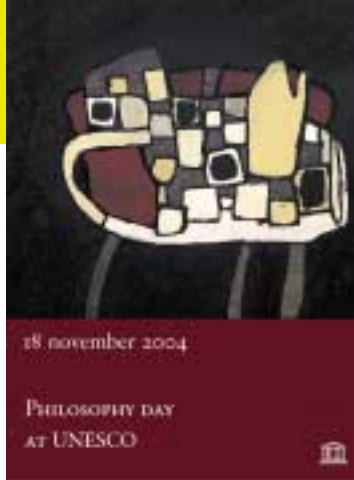
Vladimir Volodine, Irina Zoubenko and Agnes Gerbaud-Morales,

i.zoubenko@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/prizes

1. The Jury was composed of Abdelfattah Amor (Tunisia), chairperson, Kinhide Mushakoji (Japan), Nasila S. Rembe (South Africa), Dina Rodriguez Montero (Peru), Rumen Valchev (Bulgaria) and Antoine Valéry (France).

Why philosophy at UNESCO is a must

© UNESCO / Alexis Fraikin



Poster created
for Philosophy Day.
Oil painting
by Alexis Fraikin.

PATHWAYS OF THOUGHT: READINGS OF UTOPIA

As paradigms lose their stability, the teleological issue of the perfectibility of our world takes a severe blow. Should utopian thought and practice be abandoned in our day and age? Is it not precisely when we lose confidence in our visions of society that the need arises most forcefully to rethink the spaces and the faces of human relations and exchanges? Edgar Morin, Eduardo Portella, Gianni Vattimo, In Suk Cha, Rafael Argullol and Souleymane Bachir Diagne were among the thinkers and researchers from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe brought together by UNESCO and Mexico's Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA) in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico, from 22 to 24 November 2004 to confront the dilemmas presented by new "Readings of Utopia". ¶

Frances Albernaz
and Véronique Aldebert
f.albernaz@unesco.org /
v.aldebert@unesco.org

Reflections on one of UNESCO's fundamental roles

UNESCO is an inherently philosophical institution. It arose out of a desire to explore the causes of the "great and terrible war", whose roots were traced back to a neglect of the principles of democracy and human dignity, aggravated by an intake of noxious thinking. And it has set out to define and address the monumental issue of relations no longer just between governments – an ancient art or science – but between peoples, and between the men and women of the nations burgeoning in a world faced with a succession of major, concomitant changes capable of throwing every known point of reference into the deepest confusion, and of fomenting latent anxieties over what ends to pursue, and what means to consider acceptable.

Identifying education, science, culture and communication as its fields of competence has given it not just a range of sectors of intervention that it may not always have the necessary material and human means to handle at the level of an ever-expanding world, but a host of philosophical problems to grapple with.

Custodian of respect for the human and for the universal

And it has a philosophical mission to serve as the custodian of respect for the only two absolute orders of greatness to survive the *Götterdämmerung* of modernity – the eradicator of transcendence¹ – namely the human and the universal. The former is unfathomable, indivisible and irreducible; the latter incommensurable, inexhaustible and forever beyond reach. Both are indefinitely elusive, *relative* absolutes, so to speak. As such, they are constantly raising two sets of philosophical questions: the first

concerning their nature, and the second regarding the hiatus between that nature – which is continually in need of further discussion and redefinition – and the actual facts of life in a world that can hardly be expected to revolve around the human person or the universal for they are both, by nature, ever-evasive.

So UNESCO really has its work cut out.

Three imperative tasks

But that is not all. There are three other tasks to be undertaken where philosophical attitudes are concerned:

- to ensure that there is no let-up in critical thinking geared to detecting and clarifying the content of concepts, arguments and generally accepted ideas, so that they can be used in a lucid, sincere and effective manner;
- to set aside space for "secular" thinking,² offering thinkers of every persuasion a common ground for collective thought and exchange, a concourse where they can meet in peace, away from any war of words, not beneath the sun of some supreme truth of which "pure" philosophers might claim to be the custodians and guarantors – for plainly, such an abstract and disembodied truth does not exist – but on a mutually agreed, level playing field where everyone has an equal right to join the debate;
- to put words and the ideas they convey constantly to the test in a relentless pursuit of meaning, not with the prescriptive and normative spirit of academia but out of a chronic dissatisfaction with conventionally accepted meanings. This task, given the destructive nature of certain wording and the corrosive power of some labile forms of speech or thinking, is crucial.

Recalling Paul Ricœur's much admired writing on culture as interpretation, or rather translation, UNESCO should espouse the cause of translation, which

– since Jean Bollack and the late lamented Jacques Derrida at least – is known to involve strictly philological issues, each of which amounts to a philosophical issue. Articulating those issues often means drawing on the full range of human sciences, for they cannot be presented *sub specie aeternitatis* but call into play every imaginable key needed to open the door to mutual understanding among people and societies.

The future hinges on the accuracy of the aims that we set for it and, as such, on the words that we choose to use. It is crucial to the substance of those words that the ideas remain open – neither wide open nor tight shut.

Dealing with the fields of education, culture, science and communication is a matter of paramount importance. What that actually involves will remain an open and, hence, inherently philosophical question. ¶

Philippe Ratte, Bureau of Field Coordination,
p.ratte@unesco.org

1. In other words, of the idea that transcendence stems from a pre-existing – and transcendental – source. People may, of course, continue to abide by one form of transcendence or another; more so now, perhaps, than ever before. But such transcendence can no longer be considered “already there”, rooted in an irrefutable pre-existing ontology. Nowadays, it is always in need of rehabilitation at best, of corroboration at worst and of accreditation where possible. So it forms part of a world no longer underpinned by any transcendence whatsoever, a world that existed before there was ever any question of having

to recognize, corroborate or detect a transcendental dimension.

2. The quote marks here are intended to exclude any pointless debate about secularity in regard to the various forms of spirituality, including religions. The idea is to contrast not secular spirituality (the degree zero of religions, but a religion all the same) with other attitudes, but the concept of secularity with that of the **cleric**. The hallmark of the philosopher is that he does not behave in a *clerical* manner – as all-knowing pedant, officiating priest or clerk.



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THIRD PHILOSOPHY DAY AT UNESCO

Thursday 18 November was UNESCO’s third Philosophy Day and, as with the previous two events, the Day was filled with activity: discussions, lectures, learning and listening. At UNESCO’s Headquarters in Paris, Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura opened the event, reiterating the importance of the Organization’s “commitment to encourage all different traditions and forms of philosophy”. As in 2003, this year’s Philosophy Day organized round tables, lectures, a *café philosophique*, painting and photography exhibitions and a book fair. Each of the nine round table discussions had a central theme ranging from *The future of the human being through Philosophy and women’s liberation*, *How should we philosophize in Africa now?* *Philosophy and the protection of human rights* to *The impact of*

a cultural and philosophical East-West dialogue on university education.

Third Philosophy Day at UNESCO really did have “something for everyone”: intellectual discourse, political debate, intercultural philosophical discussion, artwork, literature and music. Philosophers, lawyers and teachers from the world’s five continents participated together with students and members of the general public. The Day’s closing activity – and highly attended – was a concert-debate with Herbie Hancock, Dianne Reeves, Wayne Shorter and the Thelonious Monk Jazz musicians. ¶

Rosemary Wiltshire Romero,
r.wiltshire-romero@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/philosophyday2004



The International Social Science Journal (Issue 181 – September 2004)

Mega-cities

Editorial adviser for the issue:
Mattei Dogan

The future of humanity will, for the most part, be urban. And urban management, which is difficult enough as it is, faces the emergence of metropolises on a scale unprecedented in human history. Around 1900, there were a dozen cities in the world with populations greater than one million. Today, 28 conurbations exceed the usual, rather arbitrary, threshold of 8 million that serves to define a “mega-city”. From the large city to the mega-city, there is a quantum leap rather than a difference of degree. Whether the concern is spatial planning, waste management, collective infrastructure or transport, the solutions appropriate to a mega-city cannot just be scaled up from those – imperfect as they are – designed for and implemented in less gigantic urban units. There is also a need to understand the place of mega-cities within a world social, political and economic system into which, it seems, States and nations are finding it ever harder to fit. Furthermore, the fact that most mega-cities are to be found in the developing world and that their growth is extraordinarily rapid, places enormous strain on administrative capacities, physical infrastructures and environmental resources that are often exceedingly fragile. Yet, the reality

of mega-cities is poorly known since, in addition to the speed of their transformations, they remain remarkably difficult to apprehend in statistical terms. This issue proposes to take stock of mega-cities and of their distinctive features, taking account both of their position in world systems and networks and of their internal dynamics and problems, and to sketch on this basis some perspectives for innovative research. ¶

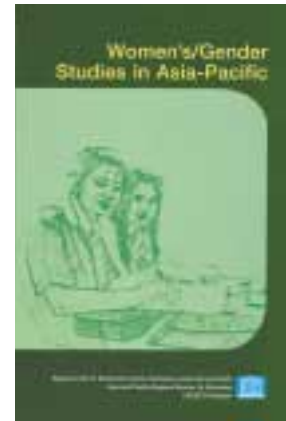
John Crowley, j.crowley@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/issj



Ciências sociais unisinos

Ed. Jacqueline Oliveira Silva, Editora UNISINOS,
São Leopoldo.
Vol. 39, No. 163, 2003, 278 pp. ISSN 1519-7050
Vol. 40, No. 164, 2004, 180 pp. ISSN 1519-7050

This twice-yearly publication is produced by the Social Sciences postgraduate programme of the Do Vale do Rio dos Sinos University’s Human Sciences Centre in São Leopoldo, Brazil. Although the publication is in Portuguese, the authors of each issue are social scientists from all over the world. Issue N°. 163 carries eleven contributions on a range of subjects: education, philosophy, Western civilization, globalization, democracy, migration and even football. The contributions to N°. 164 have as central theme the world of work: workers, the labour market, industry, unemployment, cooperatives and private enterprise. ¶



Women's/Gender Studies in Asia-Pacific

Ed. Philip Bergstrom, UNESCO Bangkok, 2004,
376 pp. ISBN 92-9223-034-4

UNESCO’s Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific (RUSHSAP) has just published this very useful resource book on “promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women” – one of the Millennium Development Goals. This is a direct result of the meeting convened by RUSHSAP in Bangkok in December 2003: the Regional Consultation on Women’s/Gender Studies Programmes in the Asia-Pacific Region. The publication is a compilation of studies, consultations, discussions and recommendations on women and gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region. It is divided into two sections: the first comprises Country Papers commissioned by RUSHSAP, and the second section reproduces summaries of Country Institutional Reports which were presented at the Bangkok meeting. *Women’s/Gender Studies in Asia-Pacific*, “dedicated to the pioneers of Women’s Studies and Gender Studies throughout Asia and the Pacific” is the first concrete result of the Regional Consultation. ¶ The publication is available at: www.unesco.org/shs



Ethics in Asia-Pacific

Ed.: Philip Bergstrom, UNESCO Bangkok, 2004, 376 pp. ISBN 92-9223-027-1

Ethics in Asia-Pacific is published by the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. This book reproduces four papers commissioned by RUSHSAP for the regional meeting: “The Ethics of Science and Technology in the Asia-Pacific Region”.

The first paper, “Bioethics in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues and Concerns”, discusses the global threat of diseases and problems involving access to health care, fertility and reproduction, biomedical research, HIV/AIDS, organ donation and transplantation, genetically modified organisms, and reproductive cloning and embryonic stem cell research.

The second paper, “Ethics of Economic Development”, backed up with statistics, tables and diagrams, studies all aspects of the economy: development, employment, environment and energy. In their concluding remarks the authors write: “the approach to development should be pro-poor, pro-women and pro-nature”.

“Ethics of Information Communication Technology (ICT)” is the third paper. It concentrates on the digital divide, human rights, cybercrime, poverty, piracy and gender equality. With detailed graphs and statistics it argues for fair and equal access to ICTs, the promotion of anti-piracy programmes, the provision of cyber laws and the adoption of common policies and

principles for the information society. The fourth contribution is “Ethical Issues of Nanotechnology Development in the Asia-Pacific Region”. The paper examines what exactly nanotechnology is and what are its related areas of development. It discusses the convergence of nanotechnology with biotechnology, information and communication technology, and environmental technology, and how the ethical issues applicable to the latter are therefore also relevant to nanotechnology. ¶



Proceedings of the International Conference on Human Security in East Asia

Published by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO with the Ilmin International Relations Institute of Korea University and UNESCO, Seoul, 2004, 285 pp.

This publication (in English only) contains presentations by regional and international experts on human security who participated in the International Conference on Human Security in East Asia (16-17 June 2003, Seoul, Republic of Korea), jointly organized by UNESCO, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO and the Ilmin International Relations Institute of Korea University, with the support of the UNESCO Chair on Peace, Democracy and Human Rights.

Raised tensions in the region and the subsequent strengthening of the military-oriented security paradigm create a need for new approaches to security. The issue should be resolved taking human security as being complementary to traditional security.

The conference sought to contribute to defining the major issues inherent in human security in East Asia and to facilitate the elaboration of the specific policy agenda for the subregion, in order to provide civil society and governments with an opportunity to promote human security as their mutual responsibility. The final recommendations, presented in the publication, include many significant issues, observations and practical measures for reflection and action.

The structure of the book follows the Conference agenda: Part I deals with the concept of human security in theory and in practice, touching upon topics such as peace, human security and conflict prevention, and reviews measures to promote human security from an Asian standpoint. Part II explains the main theories and current issues associated with human security in the subregion, namely in China, Japan and the Democratic Republic of Korea. Part III includes the case analyses of human security in East Asia, with particular emphasis on the perceptions of insecurity in the region, and on the role of civil society to promote human security. ¶

Copies may be requested by email:

peace&security@unesco.org

The publication can also be accessed online at the address below.

Max Schott and Moufida Goucha,

m.schott@unesco.org

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001365/136506e.pdf>



A citizenship education handbook

UNESCO's Director-General Koichiro Matsuura launched, on 27 September, a manual/handbook for citizenship education, a joint project with the French National Commission for UNESCO and several French institutions such as the education and defence ministries.

The idea to write the manual, entitled "La défense au service de la paix" (Defence in the Service of Peace), first took shape in 2001. The goal was to provide secondary school teachers with a complete package of information about French defence policy, how it works, what it stands for and its specific components, as well as the corollaries related to citizenship, human rights, democracy, and the universal values of law and civic education.

The manual (in French only) is made up of forty fold-out fact sheets. Each one contains a series of sections: Introduction, Facts, References, Key Dates, Figures, Legal Groundings, Documents, Analysis and Development, Help for Educational Use and Educational Challenges. This last section was written by secondary school teachers and underlines the main challenges their peers could face when applying the handbook to classroom lessons. Finally, a glossary of legal terms, a complete bibliography and detailed, updated maps round out the handbook.

The fact sheets were reviewed by a multidisciplinary committee made up of representatives of UNESCO and of the various institutions that worked on the project, under the chairmanship of Antoine Valéry, President of the Commission on human rights and ethical issues of the French Commission for UNESCO. ¶

Moufida Goucha and unescopresse,
m.goucha@unesco.org
www.unesco.org/shs/philosophy



Democracia, Gobernanza y Desarrollo en el Mercosur

Eds: Manuel Bernales Alvaredo and Gerónimo de Sierra, 242 pp., UNESCO-CLACSO, 2004, ISBN 9974-0-0262-1

Democracy, Governance and Development in Mercosur (in Spanish only) is a recent UNESCO-CLACSO co-publication, edited by Manuel Bernales and Gerónimo de Sierra. The book is a compilation of the papers given at four seminars on Democracy, Governance and Development in Mercosur, held in 2002 and 2003. The first seminar was on the challenges facing regional integration as a result of the new social and political context in the region; the second seminar tackled democracy, politics and civil society confronting the new challenges for development; the third was on conflict, social violence, governance and citizenship in Mercosur; and the fourth gave the inside view on how Mercosur is perceived by its own institutions and social organizations. ¶

The publication is accessible online:
www.unesco.org/uy/shs/gobernanza/LibroDemocracia.pdf

DECEMBER 2004

29 November-4 December: Peri-Urban Landscapes: First international workshop of the UNESCO Chair in Landscape Architecture and Environment. Marrakesh, Morocco. (b.colin@unesco.org)

6-7 December: Annual Joint Plenary Meeting on Reform of the Multilateral System, organized by the "Bridge Initiative" and the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind, in cooperation with UNESCO. Paris, France. (g.solinis@unesco.org)

9-10 December: Official launch of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism, organized within the framework of the Fourth European Conference of Cities for Human Rights. Nuremberg, Germany. (j.morohashi@unesco.org)

10 December : Human Rights Day

JANUARY 2005

24-25 January: Fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC). Paris, France. (h.tenhave@unesco.org)

24-29 January: 5th World Social Forum. Workshops and round tables: "Environmental Ethics: a proposal for international action" and "Encounters in Open Space" (SHS); "Archives and Human Rights" (organized by the Communication Sector and the IT Section); "Learning Societies" 3rd Conference (organized by the Education Sector). Porto Alegre, Brazil. (g.solinis@unesco.org)

26-27 January: Joint Session of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) and the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC). Paris, France. (h.tenhave@unesco.org)

28 January: Extraordinary Session of the International Bioethics Committee (IBC). Paris, France. (h.tenhave@unesco.org)

FEBRUARY 2005

21-23 February: Conference on "Empowering Women in the Great Lakes Region". Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. (e.smith@unesco.org)

SHS wishes you
all the best for 2005