

## Beijing +5 and Geneva 2000

In June 2000, two Special Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly were particularly important for social development. The first, in New York, reviewed progress toward meeting the goals of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. The second, called Geneva 2000, discussed ways to promote the Programme of Action of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

UNRISD sponsored events in both New York and Geneva. This issue of UNRISD News contains excerpts from speeches and papers presented there, as well as brief reports on other Institute conferences held over the past six months.

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**THE LAST WORD:** Results of the Special Session on Social Development, by John Langmore

# Looking for Progress in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries Needs, Rights and Social Development

Rodolfo Stavenhagen

If this meeting to review progress in implementing the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development had been held a hundred years ago, we would no doubt have been presented with a most extraordinary account of the situation of the world. Some speakers might have celebrated a long, unbroken period of peace and prosperity in Europe. Others would have underlined spectacular advances in science and technology that opened up new vistas of unparalleled progress and well-being for mankind. Observers would have noted that the world had shrunk and that railroads, shipping lanes and the telegraph were uniting people far and wide. Commerce and industry had greatly increased among nations, bringing the peoples of the world closer together. Responsible statesmen had been able to craft treaties and agreements that would make a repetition of the predatory or dynastic wars of yesteryear very unlikely. The world had been divided up into “spheres of influence” and an equilibrium had been reached that would guarantee stability and peace for the coming generations. Europe (and now the United States as well) had assumed its *mission civilisatrice* and its “manifest destiny” to bring the light and benefits

of civilization and progress to the “lesser breeds” of humanity. It was the age of smug, self-glorifying imperialism. Queen Victoria, Bismarck and Teddy Roosevelt (the Thatcher, Kohl and Reagan of that gilded era, *toutes proportions gardées*) sat, literally, on top of the world.

But even then there were doubters and challengers. Industrial capitalism had created a dissatisfied and restless working class that was demanding certain basic rights: decent working conditions, minimum wages, freedom to associate and organize. Peasants were abandoning poor and backward rural villages to flock to the cities, whereas others fled from famines and religious and political persecution across international borders and oceans. While a burgeoning urban middle class flouted its lifestyle and levels of consumption, masses of illiterate, unemployed and undernourished populations subsisted at the margins of bourgeois society. Women were demanding equal rights with men, and citizens were claiming a place of their own in emerging democratic polities. More dramatically, the peoples of the colonial empires had begun to question the inevitability of having to carry the white man's burdens and were preparing for

the long march toward freedom. During the previous half-century, remarkable men of vision had theorized about the internal contradictions of the world capitalist system, and had prophesied its revolutionary downfall. Indeed, revolutionary groups and movements were already at work trying to bring this about.

Does all this sound familiar a century later? Has the world really changed as much as we are led to believe? Has the end of history finally been achieved (that is, has humanity been stopped in its tracks) or are we witnessing the lull before the next storm? Is it merely a coincidence that the “short twentieth century”, as historians like to call it, begins and ends in Sarajevo? This short twentieth century has been full of contradictions and extremes. We can understand Yehudi Menuhin when he states: “If I had to sum up the twentieth

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century, I would say that it raised the greatest hopes ever conceived by humanity, and destroyed all illusions and ideals”, though if we agreed completely with the last part of the statement we might not be sitting here today.

While major global tendencies have been identified, there is no widespread consensus as to what the world’s priorities might be at this turn of the millennium. Should the economy just keep growing and create more wealth? Are environmental concerns paramount? Do we have to stop the “population explosion”? Must employment top the list? Is the eradication of poverty the major concern? What about human rights and fundamental freedoms? Is not democratic governance the basic pre-condition for all other concerns? And how important is the need for conviviality and tolerance in a world prone to conflicts and violence? Perhaps if we had an impartial and well-informed global panel of concerned citizens, we might have reached agreement on a ranking of world priorities. But as such is not the case, it must be recognized that our planet is a highly diversified congeries of societies and cultures in each one of which there are different perceptions of what is wrong and what is right, of what the tasks are and in what way these issues must be addressed.

Even when priorities have been identified and agreed upon, there is still no agreement as to how these ought to be met; the best of subscribed intentions may flounder when there is no political will, or simple incompetence and neglect. That the idea of social and human development (which are closely linked terms from any perspective) should remain the stepchild of international priorities is unfortunate, but that the concept of development can still be wielded without reference to human values and social goals is inexcusable. What I refer to is of course the widespread habit of confusing development with economic growth and measuring economic achievement principally in terms of GNP and other macroeconomic indicators.

Several decades ago, reflecting broad disillusionment with growth-centred measures of development, there was much talk of a basic needs-oriented approach to development, and some

interesting theoretical work was produced on this topic. The concept of basic needs, however, was criticized by scholars from the poorer countries, who suggested that it was being used to lock the Third World into persistent poverty,

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while allowing richer countries to continue on a growth-oriented track. Basic needs were soon replaced by human needs or simply by the concept of needs, and scholars tended to agree that basic or not, all human beings have to satisfy material, cultural, social and spiritual needs somehow, it being the purpose of development strategies and policies to contribute to the satisfaction of these integrated packages of needs. While the needs approach to development seems to have fallen out of favour in the councils of the mighty, the debate still wages strong regarding the wider objectives of growth strategies and policies, beyond maintaining a certain growth rate or raising a country’s GNP.

In an era of global transactions, mega-mergers and macrostrategies, perhaps it is necessary once again to turn the world upside down, or rather downside up. It cannot be stressed often enough that development is not to be confused with economic growth. There can be growth without development—and, though many may not agree with this, there can also be development without growth. What I mean is that the well-being of people who live on the lowest levels of the social pyramid—to use an old graphic metaphor—can change for the better even in the absence of macroeconomic growth.

But how can this be achieved? We must turn to some old ideas and values, which,

curiously, seem to have gone out of fashion in recent decades. These are really simple and well known, and it is surprising that at the beginning of the third millennium we are again debating them as if nothing had been learned from the history of the last two centuries.

*The first idea is that development must serve the needs of the people, and in the first place those who have less. This means that needs must again be factored into development strategies, and these must be so designed to address the issue squarely: not as a hoped-for secondary fallout or an afterthought, but as the centrepiece of development thinking.*

*Second, development—however defined, and definitions abound while consensus is lacking—must be considered not only as a process of accumulation or change, but rather as a collective good, to the extent that it addresses the common needs of specific social and cultural groups. I refer not only to the old *problematique* of the commons, but also to the more thorny issue of the relationship between individual or corporate enterprise and the well-being of the group—whether*

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this group is a small peasant village, an indigenous tribe, an urban neighbourhood, a geographical region or a nation. Development cannot be reduced to kilowatt hours of energy, or for that matter output of steel or automobiles, without taking into consideration the impact on the daily lives of peoples, their environ-

ment, their survival, their life chances and their identities, as well as those of future generations.

*Third, let us assume that society—and not the economy—is a self-regulating mechanism, and therefore it requires the knowledgeable and committed participation of its members in devising and managing institutions for the collective good. One such institution is, of course, the state, but it is not the only one. The trouble with the state in the twentieth century was that, to put it bluntly, we couldn't live without it but we couldn't live with it either. Can we do better during the twenty-first century?*

I think it should be clear by now that people-centred development requires not only people who participate, but also people-oriented institutions including a people-oriented state.

Allow me to say a few more words about these three simple—and not very original—ideas.

Except for the most basic of all physiological functions (say, food intake, sleep) all human needs are socially constructed, as are the ways in which all of them (including food intake and sleep) are satisfied, because humans are social and cultural animals. The way needs are formulated, defined, expressed, gratified or deferred, becomes in all human societies a culturally determined process. And all past and present human societies have instituted mechanisms whereby such needs may or may not be satisfied through a host of mores, customs, norms and relationships. When needs are felt, expressed and recognized but not satisfied, or not sufficiently or adequately satisfied, then human beings possess the wonderful faculty of doing something about it. When they are hungry, they should work harder, according to some advisors, but they can also try to emigrate to greener lands, or plunder a warehouse or storm the Bastille. When they feel the need to participate (a very human need

indeed), they can sit in a community assembly, sing at a prayer meeting, dance in a disco, form a political party, stage a protest or make a revolution.

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How they react in each case becomes a social and cultural issue, and not infrequently, a political drama. We could draw up a long list of how needs and needs satisfaction are embedded in the sociocultural matrix of space and time.

But what might be emphasized is that most human needs have been framed in modern times as legitimate rights to which citizens can aspire, and which society at large has an obligation to respect and provide for. Johan Galtung has suggested that most of the human rights that appear in international legal documents (the Universal Declaration, the International Covenants) respond in fact to some basic human need. Throughout history, people have struggled—sometimes violently and against formidable odds—to obtain need satisfaction, from the slave revolts of antiquity to trade union organization drives in industrial capitalism, to national liberation struggles and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in our days. Through these struggles needs begat rights, which in turn became the legitimate and legal frame-

work for political and social action in modern nation states. We live in an age of rights in which, as Norberto Bobbio reminds us, “the current increasingly widespread and intense debate on human rights can be interpreted as a ‘prophetic sign’ (*signum pronosticum*) of humanity’s moral progress, given that it is so widespread as to involve all the peoples of the world and so intense as to be on the agenda of the most authoritative international judicial bodies”.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1966, recognizes “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”. It also recognizes the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, and obligates the States Parties to the Covenant to take adequate measures for the fulfilment of this right. As everybody recognizes, this is a large order, and it has led to important debates regarding the concept “adequate”, and the specific measures and steps that states are required to take in order to acquit themselves of this obligation. It is quite clear that we are dealing here implicitly with development strategies based on the international formulation of human rights that derive from the recognition of specific human needs. What we have here is a concept of development anchored in the dyad human rights-human needs. To what extent does market-driven growth address this challenge? It is well known that the laws of demand and supply can fix the market price of bread, but they do nothing to alleviate hunger and famine. Should not development strategies be expected to provide a response? And if so, as I believe they must, how should these be formulated and by whom?

It is significant that during the 1980s the members of the UN saw fit to address development as a human right. As so many international declarations be-

fore it, however, this one did not generate any large-scale activity seeking its immediate implementation. Moreover, human rights specialists did not quite know how to translate the principles set out in the Declaration into practical measures, and as far as I can tell, national development strategies were not generally adjusted to heed these principles. Rather to the contrary, it appears

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that development strategies were subordinated to overall growth objectives in the emerging global marketplace. Is it not time now to return to the principles of the United Nations Declaration and attempt to adjust development strategies to the integrated and indivisible package of human rights?

Granted that sustainable development strategies must be based on investment in future growth, and not on quick fixes to immediate demands, yet we have learned from brutal experience during the twentieth century that betting on a bright but distant future by deferring immediate needs is a recipe for political and human disaster. But betting on the invisible hand of the market and ignoring the needs and rights of the socially excluded is just as dangerous and morally unacceptable.

The “good society”, of course, is one in which human needs and human rights are equitably taken care of. While in the countries of the North this requires rethinking the welfare state, rebuilding human capital, providing opportunities for employment, and regulating trans-

fer payments to the underprivileged (let alone reconsidering immigration policies, the importance of which is indicated by the recent tragic incident in Dover in which over 50 undocumented migrants were found dead in a closed trailer, and by “illegal immigrant” hunting in the desert of Arizona), in the South the challenge is considerably greater. In fact, it is immense. One of the great illusions of the last couple of decades has been that market forces by themselves can pull the poorest countries, and the poorest populations of these countries and all countries, out of the morass they are in. But the issue is not only poverty of individuals in statistical terms (how many persons subsist below an arbitrarily defined “poverty line”), but rather the *problematic* of structural inequality and collective social exclusion.

We may conclude from the foregoing that development policies designed to alleviate poverty, overcome social exclusion and reduce persistent inequalities, must focus on the needs and rights of specific categories or groups in society. But they must do so in areas that make a difference: productive activities and ownership and control of the means of production and the fruits of labour; organization of the workplace; decision-making processes; the legal framework enabling autonomous participation, respect for cultural differences and social identities; and, of course, democratic governance.

Futures that include socially valued ends must be based on the understanding that human needs and human rights can best be served through the articulation of people-oriented participatory institutions at all levels of society. The state must be seen not only as a regulatory mechanism for diverse and sometimes conflictive interests (which is how free-market libertarians would like to see it), but also as an instrument for the achievement of socially desired collective goods and the

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## Globalization, Income Inequality and Trends in Social Policy

Jomo K.S.

As we all know, there are many disturbing indicators of growing inequality in the world today. One of the most recent studies to this effect comes from a rather unlikely source, but that is why I would like to bring it to your attention. The study, by Branko Milanovic of the World Bank, is perhaps the first of its type to use data from the entire world to try to estimate income distribution between 1988 and 1993—when neoliberal globalization was accelerating significantly. Milanovic finds that both intra- and inter-country inequality rose during this period, with the latter growing most. The average income of the top 5 per cent of the world's population, which was 78 times greater than that of the bottom 5 per cent in 1988, was registered as 114 times greater in 1993. The bottom 5 per cent grew

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poorer, while the richest quintile gained 12 per cent in real terms. That is more than twice the increase in mean world income. The richest 1 per cent

of people in the world received as much as the poorest 57 per cent.

This occurred against a background of policy changes during the 1980s, when accepted approaches to economic development came under tremendous pressure. Keynesianism was under special attack, and so was the counterpart of Keynesianism as far as the Third World is concerned—development economics. State socialism suffered a deep crisis, resulting in the creation of what are now called transition economies. But most importantly, during this period—in the aftermath of the debt crisis—we saw the rise of finance capital. And, in my opinion, this is one of the principal challenges we face today.

In the 1990s there was a reaction to the early excesses of neoliberalism, including neoliberal globalization. The Bretton Woods institutions began to express a commitment to addressing social problems. The Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development was organized to focus attention on some of the major issues of social development. And more recently, we have seen the emergence of a very influential school of thought in the West, “Third Wayism”, which incorporates a great deal of the logic of neoliberalism, but insists on greater social concern. This is echoed in some of the new thinking about social development in parts of the Third World, particularly in Latin America.

Nonetheless, I would insist that the trend toward liberalization and globalization continues relatively unabated. We have seen a significant shift toward greater trade liberalization, which has encouraged a further decline in terms of trade for both primary and manufactured exports from

the South. Although both the original negotiations on Trade-Related Investment Measures and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's initiative on Multilateral

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Agreement on Investment were unsuccessful, efforts to promote investment liberalization also continue. Moreover, there has been significant movement in terms of liberalization of trade in services. This has special consequences for our concerns today, because it involves both financial liberalization and liberalization of trade in services in the social sphere—including insurance, pension funds, health and education.

On the other hand, we have seen a retreat from liberalization in two very important areas. First, significant restrictions on the movement of people continue to be enforced; and this is clearly related to growing gaps between countries in the world economy today. Second, barriers to liberalization have been raised through strengthening intellectual property rights, thus limiting the transfer of technol-



ogy, raising the cost of such transfers (where they continue to occur), and consolidating the strength of technological monopolies. Finally, and most importantly as far as trade is concerned, we have seen the replacement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) with the World Trade Organization (WTO)—which is not simply a renaming of the old organization. The ideology of the “level playing field” has become very important in the new organization, while GATT recognized that the world is made up of countries with different capacities, sometimes requiring different treatment. Furthermore, the WTO provides for retaliatory mechanisms, which allow powerful countries not only to use legal means, but also to employ other economic sanctions against recalcitrant members.

Let me focus now on the implications of international financial liberalization because, as I suggested earlier, this reflects the ascendancy of finance capital, which has rather ominous implications for all of us. Contrary to the promises of those promoting international financial liberalization, the cost of funds to recipient countries, particularly in the South, has not really gone down. It has probably gone up. The net flow of funds from the capital-rich to the capital-poor countries, which was promised, also has not occurred, except temporarily in East and Southeast Asia during the early and mid-1990s. This was, as we know, reversed in mid-1997 with tremendously disruptive implications for the people of the region. In recent years, there has been a significant flow of funds into parts of Latin America, but such flows are also reversible. Neither has the promise of reduced volatility been realized. Although some of the old sources of instability within the international financial system have certainly been reduced, they have been replaced by derivatives and other financial instruments that imply new forms of uncertainty and risk.

The ascendancy of international finance capital has put tremendous deflationary pressures on governments throughout the world. It introduces sharp constraints on fiscal policy, with important implications for social spending. Financial liberalization also limits possibilities for selective industrial policy, which has been so important for latecomer industrialization in

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East Asia. And it constrains government initiatives for employment creation, as well as other types of redistributive policies. All this, in my view, has created a situation in which—contrary to the neoliberal rhetoric of a commitment to growth—we actually see commitment only to a *particular type* of growth favouring finance capital. This is a much more restrained growth than that which characterized the postwar golden age of the 1950s and 1960s.

Some trends in thinking about social policy also have had negative implications for development. One of these is overconcentration on targeting. UNRISD has done a very important critique of assumptions about targeting, pointing out that the same Third World governments now being urged to concentrate on targeting the poor, through means testing and so forth, were previously told that they were in-

capable of targeting when it came to such economic strategies as selective industrial promotion. This is not only ironic, but it suggests a certain selectivity in thinking about the capacities of governments and states in the South. And there is a more pernicious implication of this new emphasis on targeting: it suggests that the social exclusion inherent in neoliberal growth models should simply be attenuated, not rejected. Amelioration of exclusion, I would insist, is not inclusion. We should insist instead on inclusion.

We must also put an end to the current bifurcation, in the development debate, between the realm of the economic and the realm of the social. Recent discussions about more holistic forms of development have not gone far enough in this regard. It is necessary to *mainstream* social policy—to recognize it as an important element in macroeconomic policy itself. The kind of inequality that prevails today is unsustainable both in economic and in social terms. And it is incompatible with the basic human rights of all people.

**Jomo K.S.** is a Professor in the Applied Economics Department at the University of Malaya, Malaysia.

This article has been excerpted from the keynote address he delivered at the UNRISD conference, *Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development* (29 June 2000, Geneva).

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## “I was in Geneva!”

**Roberto Bissio** *delivered this speech at the opening of the Geneva 2000 Forum on 25 June 2000.*

Poverty can and will be eradicated from the face of the earth, as was slavery. The debt burden will be lifted from the backs of the poor. Structural adjustment programmes will be reformulated, and people will be put at the centre of development. These are the commitments that our governments made in 1995 at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the largest meeting of heads of state ever. And they are indeed inspiring commitments. Yes, there is always some public scepticism about what politicians say, be it electoral promises or international declarations like those emanating from the Social Summit. And we know that actual policies are heavily constrained by binding agreements, such as those that came out of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations or the conditionalities imposed on developing countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

But we do believe that our leaders were honest when they made the 10 commitments in 1995. Since then, civil society organizations from around the world have asked their governments what they are doing to meet these commitments and have reported their findings. This is what Social Watch is all about.

People were protesting in the streets of Geneva today—as they were in Seattle last December—against the global casino economy. But today the demonstrations were not trying to stop the General Assembly of the United Nations from meeting, as they did with the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. What they were doing was voicing concerns and demands, in the hope that they would be taken into account.

The United Nations is a transparent and democratic institution, the only global

institution that has such legitimacy. People know that the UN is not dominated by a few governments meeting in secret rooms, and is certainly not a place where money decides the votes. It is where every country has a vote. While we fight with our governments at the national level, we do know that governments are necessary. Without a state to mediate conflicts, civil wars erupt. We are not citizens if there is no state, critical as we may be of what our representatives do after they take office.

What are the findings of Social Watch? First and foremost, we feel that the goals and targets set in Copenhagen can be accomplished. They are not unreachable. In fact, many of the world's poorest countries are showing enormous progress in their social indicators. There are fewer human rights violations in many countries, there are fewer corrupt governments (many of them have been kicked out by civil society in the past years), there are fewer civil wars. Such changes have an immediate, positive impact on human development.

But we regret to have to report that not a single country in the world has met all the targets for the year 2000 as set out in United Nations conferences. Some 30 countries are worse off now than in 1990. And progress, if any, is painfully slow in the large majority of countries.

Social Watch puts a lot of effort into gathering data about progress toward each target in each country, North and South. Statistics, goals and numbers about infant and maternal mortality, illiteracy, schooling of boys and girls, vaccination and so many other issues are extremely important. We can discuss passionately about globalization and about invisible hands and their existence, but when we are faced with fig-

ures about the number of children dying each year and how many of them could have been saved with proper policies, then we are seriously discussing actions, not ideology.

We were therefore very happy when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) invited us to contribute to the preparation of a report about the targets set by the international community and how to measure progress toward achieving them. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has just announced that he will be launching this report tomorrow. It is signed jointly by him and by the heads of the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF.

I am sorry to be forced to comment that many NGOs have already seen the final version of this report, **A Better World for All**—and that we don't like it. While the report does good work in reporting progress toward seven targets in developing countries, it does no reporting at all about social problems in the North—forgetting that each government committed itself to addressing social issues in each country of the world.

On several occasions rich countries have committed themselves to increasing aid, reducing debts and opening markets to the poorest countries. These commitments have not been met, and **A Better World for All** ignores such shortcomings. The report calls for developing countries to open their markets to imports, exports, investment and financial flows, and to go on privatizing social services, without basing those recommendations on any international agreement. Why is this report recommending further opening of financial markets, when the issue at stake in the discussions of the General Assembly starting tomorrow is how to con-

trol financial speculation, maybe through mechanisms such as the Tobin tax?

Civil society respects the United Nations and wants it to deal with the problems of the global economy. In fact, given the inability of the WTO to reach any agreement and the critique of the performance of the World Bank and the IMF by so many mainstream economists, the role of the United Nations in reshaping the global economy is seen as necessary by more and more people every day.

But the UN cannot be simultaneously the referee and an associate of the players on one of the teams. The OECD is a club of rich countries, and its members have absolute control over the IMF and the World Bank.

All of these issues that worry us will be discussed this week here in Geneva by the United Nations General Assembly. We all have an opportunity to make a difference. The video we just saw reminded us of Seattle. It reminded me

of how, when I was a teenager, I was envious of people who could claim “I was at Woodstock”. These days, it has become a source of pride to be able to say that one was in Seattle. I do hope we all will be proud to say, a week from now, “I was in Geneva!”

**Roberto Bissio** is the Secretary of Social Watch.

## Multiculturalism, Universalism and the Claims of Equality

Anne Phillips

**F**eminism challenges the existing pattern of relations between the sexes, wherever these are characterized by subordination and inequality. In doing so, it takes issue with the customs and practices of societies. This suggests that feminism is committed to a strongly universalist discourse of rights and equality. If cultural relativism were the only alternative to universalism, this suggestion would surely be right.

I take cultural relativism to be the view that norms of justice are always relative to the society in which they are formed. This view wrongly represents cultures as hermetically sealed and internally self-consistent. It ignores the multiplicity of cultures in which any one person is involved. Cultural relativism also suggests a degree of insulation between “us” and “the others” that is far from the realities of the contemporary world. From a gender perspective, the additional problem is that the “society” that generates and authorizes existing norms is never a benign actor; on the contrary, since no society yet operates under conditions of gender justice, what is considered to be right and just within any given society must always be open to scrutiny.

Cultural relativism is therefore not a useful ally for feminism. But the very

reasons that make cultural relativism so unattractive have posed problems for universalism as well. If feminists have been sensitive to the dangers of elevating existing cultural understandings to the status of unquestioned norms, they have been equally (and rightly) sensitive to the way these cultural understandings shape what are then presented as universal principles of justice and equality. Universal discourses of rights and equality often fail to address difference (of class, gender, ethnicity, and so on). On this point, there is an obvious area of overlap between achieving gender justice and achieving justice between different cultures.

One of the critiques of universalism is that it looks to a common core of humanity behind all the differences. In doing so, it tends to equate equality with sameness, and thereby ignores systemic inequalities in power. Part of the objection is that there are some differences that will always be there, and that many of these differences are ones we value and want to sustain. Women do not want their acceptance into the world of equals to be made conditional on others not noticing whether they are female or male; and the same clearly goes for those whose skin colour, for example, marks them out as a minority group.

### Tensions between sexual and cultural equality

Sexual difference has almost always been associated with inequality: what marks women as different from men is also taken to mark them as of lesser value. Cultural difference, too, still resonates with images of superiority and inferiority: there are said to be “better” and “worse”, “more advanced” and “more backward” cultures. The deployment of universal principles as a measure for judging the practices and values of other cultures then looks rather suspect.

The twist, in this case, is that one way currently employed to differentiate “better” and “worse”, “more advanced” and “more backward” cultures is their treatment of women: whether they insist on the confinement of women to the home, or their veiling when they go out in public, and so on. Some feminists (myself included) have perceived a close relationship between feminism and multiculturalism: we see these as linked not just because they tackle issues of both inequality and oppression but, more deeply, because the types of oppression they address share a common structure. In each case, the failure to recognize people as equals seems to be bound up with the inability to accept difference. It is assumed that those marked by difference (and it is always the people on



the margins who get marked by their difference) should bring themselves into line with the others in their society in order to be included as full members. This generates a strong coincidence of concerns between sexual and cultural equality—and yet it also points to certain tensions.

In an influential statement of the conditions for multicultural citizenship, Will Kymlicka argues that the case for minority cultural rights is entirely consistent with universalism, so long as universalism is conceived on a relatively weak model. One of his points is that we should distinguish between the “external protections” that may prove necessary to secure the rights of minority cultures, and the “internal restrictions” that illegitimately constrain individual members of a group. In this view of multicultural accommodation, groups should not be allowed to discriminate among their members on the grounds of sex, race or sexual preference.

At first glance, this would seem to resolve any tensions between sexual and cultural equality. But on closer examination, Kymlicka’s argument is less satisfactory. First, it is not always easy to distinguish between the legitimate “external protections” and the illegitimate “internal restrictions”. A main concern of identity groups vis à vis other groups or the state is to retain the authority to decide who is a group member: to decide, for example, who is a Jew, or who is to be recognized as a member of a particular indigenous group. This authority operates primarily through family law, which can involve significant restrictions on the rights of women. Indeed, in many cases, criteria for membership in a particular group have been discriminatory: as when tribes on North American Indian reservations have recognized as full members the children of men who marry outside the group, but not the children of women who marry outside. It is not always possible to draw a line between the external rights of the group and the

internal rights of its members, and the first may often conflict with the second.

Another problem arises when Kymlicka considers the conditions in which the state could reasonably act against discrimination within a cultural group. “Obviously,” he notes, “intervention is justified in the case of gross and systematic violation of human rights, such as slavery or genocide or mass torture and expulsions.” This still leaves a very large area open to debate. Kymlicka further argues that if there is a consensus within the community on the legitimacy of restricting individual rights, it may not be appropriate for governments to intervene. Theoretical protections for women thus dissolve in the face of worries about state coercion, and it seems that only “gross and systematic violations” would qualify for action. Much of discrimination against women would fail this test, being of its nature more informal, “private” and covert.

It is in this context that Susan Moller Okin poses the question: “Is multiculturalism bad for women?” The aspect of multiculturalism that most concerns her is the claim (associated with Kymlicka) that minority cultures or ways of life are not sufficiently protected by guaranteeing the individual rights of their members, but should also be protected through special group rights or privileges. Examples include the decision of the French government in the 1980s to extend the normal understanding of marital “dependant” so as to enable immigrant men to bring multiple wives into the country; and the exemption of minority groups in Britain from a variety of legal regulations that might otherwise be construed as imposing a discriminatory burden on them. Further examples would include the recognition of customary (religious) law in countries like India, where worries about the political effects of imposing standardized legislation on Muslim and Hindu alike left considerable areas of family law under the control of religious authorities; or the

delegation of marriage and divorce disputes in Israel to the religious courts of the different communities.

In all such cases, sensitivity to ethnic or religious difference has meant a modification of what would otherwise be universally applicable rules and regulations. In many of these cases, the exemptions enable greater inequality between women and men.

### Equalizing women’s power

Neither cultures nor principles should be considered as static, and while we should unabashedly assert the value of equality—including sexual equality—we must recognize that this leaves many areas open to interpretation, and often leaves us with competing equality claims. What should be stressed here is the importance of dialogue in the formulation of principles of gender justice, and the importance of “political presence” in resolving tensions between gender justice and multicultural rights. Where women are excluded from (or just significantly underrepresented in) decision-making assemblies and forums, we cannot but suspect the supposed universalism of the principles that emerge. This applies *a fortiori* to the voices of any “community” or “culture”.

Anne Phillips is a Professor of Gender Theory and Director of the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics. This article is excerpted from a paper she prepared for the UNRISD workshop, Gender Justice, Development and Rights: Substantiating Rights in a Disabling Environment (see article on page 16).

### References

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## Making Electoral Representation Count: Strengthening Women's Constituencies in South Africa

Shireen Hassim

In 1994, when South Africa became a democratic state, the idea of elections and of citizens as electoral agents was foreign to most participants in that election. So was the idea of constituencies that might have to be appealed to by political parties on concrete policy issues. In both elections (1994, 1999) arguments for the increased representation of women in elected offices, and for greater visibility of "women's concerns" in national political debates, marked the substance of women's organizations' engagement in electoral debates. By the 1999 elections, however, debate about representation and electoral participation had shifted from concern with numbers to a concern with the nature, or *quality*, of representation and issues of accountability. These shifts suggest a maturing of women's electoral politics, and a consolidation of women as an electoral constituency.

### Feminist collective action:

#### The desirability of constituencies

Despite the collective struggles by women against apartheid, neither women's organizations nor feminist writers in South Africa have argued that women form an undifferentiated political constituency. On the contrary, a central feature of women's politics in the 1990s has been the notion of difference—of race, age, location and ethnicity. There is, however, extensive feminist debate on the ways in which women may be considered a coherent group for political and electoral purposes.

The demand for greater representation, in its broadest formulation, does not prejudice the ways in which gender inequalities will be taken up by representatives once they have entered the legislature. The issue is

rather one of access to arenas of public decision making so that the *various* interests of women can be debated and acted on. Without broad representation, it is unlikely in fact that the complexities of gender inequalities can be fully appreciated in policy terms. It is a significant gain of the widespread debate on the 1994 quota that most political parties in South Africa have formally accepted the need for greater female representation.

There are various arguments (justice, different values, different interests) for positive mechanisms to increase women's representation as a group in politics. Fundamental to all arguments is that the presence of women in legislatures in proportionate numbers is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the raising of gender awareness. At the more general and pragmatic level the argument is that the greater the number of women in politics, the greater the likelihood that issues of gender inequalities will be raised and dealt with in policy terms. This, in effect, is a "scattershot" strategy; it agrees that the mere presence of women does not necessarily translate into the representation of women's interests, but nevertheless argues that it increases the probability that gender equality concerns will be addressed. Some of the women elected may have neither the ability nor the inclination to address gender inequalities, but the cumulative effect of their presence will have an impact on Parliament.

South African gender activists have used the formal constitutional commitment to equality to problematize the underrepresentation of women in Parliament. However, there is no consensus among feminists as to how this could be rectified, and there are major

differences over the use of quotas. The gradualist argument (that women's representation will increase as women become socially and economically empowered) is most fully articulated by the Democratic Party (DP), and supported by the New National Party (NNP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The DP has been opposed to the use of quotas to increase women's representation, seeing these mechanisms as an unnecessary incursion into civil liberties. By contrast, the NNP has tended to be more reactive to the way in which gender issues are articulated by the African National Congress (ANC), which has allowed some room in the party for gender activists, despite the absence of a clear policy on gender equality.

Women activists in the ANC have argued that the systematic and institutional bias against women as political actors has to be addressed through special interventions. The ANC Women's League has successfully demanded the adoption of a quota for women on the party's electoral lists. The 30 per cent quota that was adopted by the ANC for the 1994 and 1999 elections placed a substantial number of women members of Parliament (MPs).

### Representation: Electoral outcomes

Electoral systems have been shown to have the most significant impact on the proportion of women elected. The electoral system used for the 1994 and 1999 elections was proportional representation (PR) with party lists. The principal value of the PR List system is that it allows progressive party leadership to override traditional sentiments against women's election. This system facilitated the use of a quota to ensure representation of women in Parliament, although only the ANC used the mechanism for both elections. Nevertheless, it

is widely believed to have affected other political parties, resulting in a relatively high number of women being elected to Parliament in 1994. The outcome was similar in the 1999 elections, enhanced by the large majority of votes won by the ANC. Its high proportion of women MPs makes South Africa's Parliament the seventh highest in the world in women's parliamentary representation. This degree of representation has had significant effects on the profile of gender issues in the first democratic Parliament. For example, three far-reaching, though highly controversial, pieces of legislation have been passed.

#### **The internal politics of constituency building**

Apart from successfully making women's representation a multiparty concern, women's organizations also ensured that the majority of political parties expressed a commitment to gender equality in their electoral manifestos. For the most part, though, these were rhetorical commitments, thin on policy detail. The response of women's organizations was to intensify the demands on parties at public forums, demanding greater policy specificity. This was most evident with regard to the debate on offering HIV/AIDS drugs to rape survivors.

National campaigns were aimed at increasing women's representation and at ensuring that women voters considered party positions on gender issues when voting. Not surprisingly, this shift to concerns about the *quality* of women's representation, and about accountability to women's interests, resulted in contestation between women in political parties over policy issues. Although women activists in all parties had been united about maintaining the pressure for greater political representation, in the domain of women's forums there has been a painstaking reiteration of the limits of common interests. Below the surface of collective action simmered discontent over the relative power of

certain women's organizations over others, and mistrust about the extent to which particular political parties could be trusted to advance the agendas of the women's movement. In Parliament, early attempts to create a multiparty forum for women MPs, such as the Parliamentary Women's Group, foundered as a result of tensions between the DP, ANC and NNP.

Women are not a homogeneous constituency. Even where women MPs are committed to broad principles of gender equality, their definitions of what this means, their strategies for achieving equality, and the constituencies of women they represent may be vastly different. It is significant that the driving force behind legislative reform to eliminate gender discrimination has been the ANC Women's Caucus, rather than the multiparty forum, reflecting the different weight given to gender equality by different political parties. Differences in party ideologies could not be overcome by broad commitments to gender equality.

By the 1999 elections, women's organizations were much more sceptical of the extent to which women MPs represented women's interests rather than party or even personal political interests. The issue of accountability emerged very forcefully in various electoral forums. Although accountability remains an elusive notion in women's politics (accountability to parties? to women within parties? to all women?), the South African debates have focused on both formal (to political parties) and moral (to the cause of gender equality) aspects of accountability. In both cases, the consolidation of women's constituencies is vital.

To ensure formal accountability, women within political parties have to become significantly more organized—both so that women MPs can be even more effective in the legislative arena *and* so that there are internal party

mechanisms for holding them accountable to women members and not just party leadership. Without active women's sections within parties, women MPs can be left adrift, with no clear political direction (*vis-à-vis* gender) to their work. The primary task of women MPs should be to define areas of intervention in the legislature, and to support and report to women in the party: to *represent*, not to build, constituencies. The failure to separate these tasks has led to tensions between women in political parties and women's organizations in civil society.

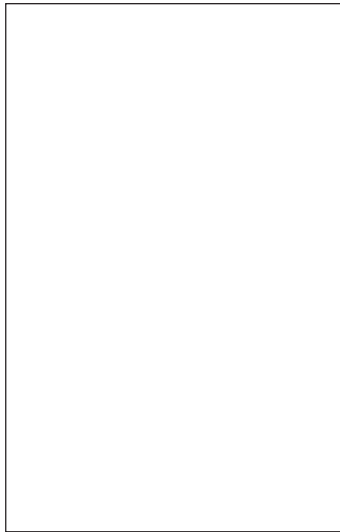
There is also an expectation of moral accountability within the women's movement. The first cohort of women in Parliament was very aware of this responsibility, as it was argued that their election was the product of collective struggles. Many women MPs made enormous efforts to consult with civil society, and to share information and build strategies collectively, despite the pressures of being pioneers. However, the relative demobilization of the women's movement since 1994 will result in fewer women on party lists who have long and deep connections to women's organizations. Without the moral and political pressure from outside Parliament, there is always the danger that women MPs will be unable (or increasingly unwilling) to adequately represent the various interests of women.

**Shireen Hassim** is a lecturer in Political Studies at the University of Witwatersrand. She is a member of the Gender and Elections Reference Group co-ordinated by the Electoral Institute of South Africa, and a member of the board of Women'sNet (<http://www.womensnet.org.za>), a Web site for women. This article is excerpted from a paper she prepared for the UNRISD workshop, Gender Justice, Development and Rights: Substantiating Rights in a Disabling Environment (see article on page 16).

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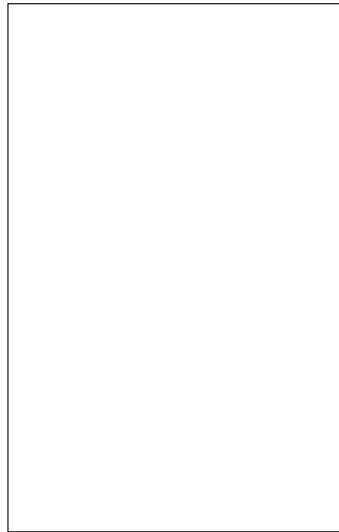
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**Jaime Joseph** is Co-ordinator of Alternativa's Escuela de Líderes del Cono Norte-Lima, an innovative training centre for community leaders. He co-ordinated research in Lima for the UNRISD/United Nations Volunteers (UNV) project on **Volunteer Action and Local Democracy: A Partnership for a Better Urban Future**.

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**Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara** is Deputy Director of UNRISD. **Alberto Minujín** is Senior Specialist in Policy Analysis with the Policy, Planning and Evaluation Division of UNICEF.

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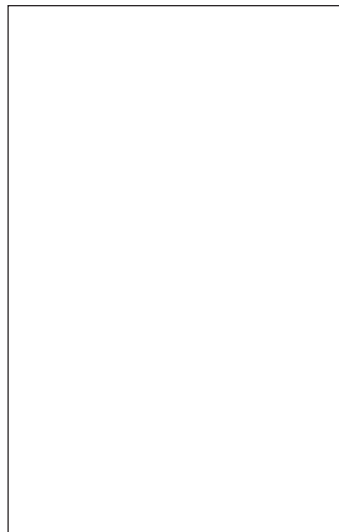
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## Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development

29 June 2000, Geneva

**F**ive years ago, UNRISD prepared a special report for the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Called **States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization**, it was eventually translated into seven languages and used to stimulate debate on development in a large number of countries around the world. For the fifth anniversary of the Social Summit, the Institute has published a sequel, **Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development**.

**The Event:** This new report was presented at a conference held to coincide with the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly and Geneva 2000. Jomo K.S. set the tone for the morning session by reviewing some of the important trends in globalization, income inequality and social policy over the past decade, focusing in particular on the rise of finance capital (see pages 5–6). Sessions on globalization and social policy, and regulating big business, followed. In opening the afternoon session,

Rodolfo Stavenhagen lamented that, at the dawn of the third millennium, relatively little has been learned from the past. He challenged the international community to push for people-oriented solutions and states, and talked more broadly about needs, rights and social development (see pages 1–4). Discussions on democratization and public sector reform, and “getting development right for women”, followed.

**The Report:** Given the short time since the Social Summit, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect significant progress toward meeting the goals set out in Copenhagen. What we should expect, however, are signs that policy changes and institutional reforms are promoting a favourable environment for social development. In eight chapters, **Visible Hands** assesses what has been achieved in areas ranging from macroeconomic policy to democratic governance and gender equity. It also identifies some of the major conditions and constraints impeding further advance.

What emerges is a fairly disturbing picture of initiatives that remain more at the level of agency rhetoric than effective implementation; and patterns of economic growth, liberalization and inequality that continue to obstruct rather than facilitate social development. Nevertheless, the ideological climate for rethinking development policy is more favourable than it has been for years. There is growing political opposition to the social blindness of structural adjustment, while academic inquiry has eroded the theoretical and empirical underpinning of the dominant neoliberal model. Human rights are very much on the agenda.

As its title implies, **Visible Hands** is a call for reasserting human values, human priorities and human agency. The invisible hand of the market has no capacity to imagine or create a decent society for all. Only governments and public-spirited people can do that.

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3 June 2000, New York

This one-day public workshop was held by UNRISD to coincide with the United Nations General Assembly Special Session for the Beijing+5 review—Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The workshop was part of a year-long research project that is assessing how contemporary debates on rights and democracy have strengthened women's struggles for greater gender justice. A series of papers has been commissioned, and eight were presented and discussed at the workshop.

The UNRISD workshop examined three related dimensions of “rights-based” development: the relationship between needs and rights; whether democracy has empowered women; and women's rights and multiculturalism.

### Reconciling needs and rights

In many countries, the formulation of formal rights has not been matched by an improvement in the quality of life of the majority. Financial crises stalked the 1990s, and the gap grew between rich and poor countries and peoples. At the same time, there was a global shift in the consensus over the role of the state in welfare provision. This entailed the downsizing of public services and the reallocation of service delivery to commercial interests, charitable groups, NGOs and families.

A paper on Chile, presented at the workshop, analysed the devolution of responsibility to civil society for managing welfare and development projects. On one hand, this is associated with a renewed emphasis on participatory approaches, which have the potential to give a voice to the marginalized in development planning and decision making. On the other hand, there is a danger of even further reliance on women to

perform low-paid or unpaid care work as NGO workers and members of families and communities.

More generally, workshop participants from different regions expressed concern that political rights have been granted at the expense of social rights. The extent to which even political rights can be exercised in the absence of adequate social provisions was a question that several speakers and participants raised.

A paper on female educational deprivation in India argued that even if the state recognizes a right in principle, it also has a responsibility to adopt policies to ensure the universal realization of that right. Civil society organizations often play a useful role in monitoring progress and pressing for the fulfilment of such a mandate, but they cannot substitute for the state.

One of the panellists considered the charge that rights are being pursued at the expense of needs. Rights can be usefully seen as the codification of needs, reformulating them as ethical and legal norms and thus implying a duty on the part of those in power to provide all the means necessary to make sure those needs are met. In other words, the language of rights enables individuals or social groups to make official claims in defence of their needs.

### Women in contemporary democratization

Rights of any kind depend on prior political conditions, and we might say that without political and civil rights there is no guarantee that other rights, even when they are inscribed in laws and constitutions, may be made effective. The absence of powers to make governments accountable and responsible to their citizens is one of the greatest

obstacles to rights-based agendas, and those rights and powers are normally associated with democracy.

The 1990s saw considerable advances for women in terms of political representation, albeit from a shamefully low base. In many countries, women's organizations and female members of political parties have vigorously lobbied to increase women's representation, notably through quotas. This pursuit of numerical representation (“getting women in”) does, of course, beg many further questions. Are “representatives” accountable to their constituents? Are they effective in promoting gender-equitable change?

The presentation on Iran considered women's movements in periods of regime change. In contemporary societies women have become active in many domains of political life, including grassroots and formal institutions. Movements that are promoting greater democracy must take account of women's needs and concerns in order to grow in strength and vitality. In South Africa, women achieved increased representation through activism in the African National Congress, the responsiveness of party leadership, and the support of an active women's movement. And while some women representatives may have neither the ability nor the inclination to address gender inequalities, women's cumulative strength does have an impact on deliberations in the national assembly. However, there has been little progress in making macroeconomic policies more responsive to women's needs and interests.

In general, participants felt that women's accession to political power in recent decades had resulted from a particularly favourable context, and the

gains made may be more fragile than they appear.

#### **Multiculturalism and universalism**

A related, and perhaps the most politically sensitive, issue surrounding rights-based strategies is whether and how such strategies might find a universal application without denying cultural specificity. While the language of rights and citizenship has broad appeal, and is politically acceptable and effective in some countries, others may respond to it with suspicion. The claim is sometimes made that universal rights and norms are a form of Western hegemony and are inappropriate for other cultural contexts. There are many difficult issues concerning what traditions are essential to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of nations and cultures. Is there some way of reconciling such traditions with

a quest for gender equality? The presentation on Uganda noted that women's movements had challenged cultural practices that were harmful to women, such as female genital mutilation. They had success when they were able to enter into dialogue with community authorities based on an understanding of the prevailing cultural norms and values. The evidence showed that culture was more adaptive than was sometimes claimed, and that cultural identity did not have to depend on practices that harmed women.

Conference participants expressed the view that the West has no monopoly on ideas of rights and justice. Whether they arise from indigenous traditions or through a historical process of transnational dissemination, such ideas have wide moral appeal, and they have

served as the basis for collective and individual claims for justice across the world. If there is to be a meaningful international consensus on rights, and especially on rights for women, this can only be achieved as part of a process of dialogue in which women's voices are heard.

This UNRISD project is financed by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) and UNRISD core funding (provided by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

## **InfoTech Project Workshop in Senegal**

**31 January–1 February 2000, Dakar**

A new UNRISD research project on **Information Technologies and Social Development in Senegal** was officially launched at a workshop held on 31 January and 1 February 2000 in Dakar. The research team was joined by a small group of businesspeople and union officials working in computer and telecommunication industries, journalists, NGO activists and academics.

The opening session of the meeting was devoted to presentation of a state-of-the-art paper on **Information Technologies and Social Development in Senegal**, prepared by Olivier Sagna. In it, he explores the development of information and communication technologies in the country from the introduction of the telegraph in the mid-nineteenth century through the explosive growth of telephone access in the 1990s. The paper includes a review of academic, NGO, government and donor-sponsored studies on

IT and development. And it highlights some of the most significant gaps in understanding how information technology (IT) is being used by different social groups.

Following discussion of Sagna's study, the 11 members of the team presented their research proposals. These can be grouped into six broad areas.

#### **IT, growth and development**

The implications of new information technologies for growth and patterns of economic development are being considered by two Senegalese economists, who begin with an empirical study of how these technologies are being introduced in various sectors of an economy suffering from long economic crisis and from the effects of various structural adjustment programmes. They consider changes in social and economic relations inherent in the incorporation of IT in exist-

ing industries and service sectors, as well as attempts to energize the local economy through occupying new niches in the growing international market for Internet-based services. And they explore some of the principal difficulties that countries like Senegal encounter when they set out to benefit from, and participate in, the "new international division of labour".

#### **Private sector use of IT**

Two other research projects look specifically at how information technologies are being incorporated in formal private-sector enterprises in Senegal. One focuses on the opportunities and threats posed by the Internet for small and medium enterprises in Dakar, and on how 100 of these businesses are attempting to respond to changing times (among other things, through use of Web sites and e-mail, development of new marketing strategies, changing personnel policies and new forms of work). A complemen-

tary study asks similar questions for a sample of 50 medium and large industrial enterprises (in fishing, food processing, textiles and machine parts, among others), registering changes in management and in relations with suppliers and clients, new international contacts, and the perceived benefits or costs of adapting to the new business environment.

#### **IT and Senegalese migrants**

Another study looks at the role of new information technologies in facilitating financial and social “relations at distance”, between Senegalese migrants and their country of origin. The rapid growth and diversification of telephone services and Internet options is changing the way migrants are able to intervene in day-to-day decisions about family matters and to manage businesses dependent on their investments. It is also stimulating new businesses in countries where migrants work, as Senegalese residents abroad respond to their compatriots’ demand for money transfer services, cheap international communication, and new forms of transnational barter.

#### **Mouride brotherhoods and IT**

There is also a study of how information technologies are being used to strengthen the religious and business interests of Mouride brotherhoods in Touba—the second largest city of Senegal, whose rapid growth is based above all on its ceremonial role within the traditional religious structures of Wolof society. Worldly and other-worldly interests of the brotherhoods are furthered not only through a large informal commercial sector, but also through the creation of new religious ties with people in other parts of the world. Research will consider how new opportunities are changing existing identities and social relations (between women and men, spiritual leaders and followers) in a once-traditional setting.

#### **IT and the media**

Two further research projects are concerned with IT and the media in Sen-

egal. One looks at the role of computer-mediated systems in the modernization of journalism. The future of African journalism depends on developing the capacity to use new information technologies. Yet its ability to serve the public well also depends on avoiding an

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overdependence on pre-packaged international news. New techniques must be used in ways that respond to local needs. How are Senegalese journalists responding to this challenge? How are they gaining access to new information technologies and how do they make use of them? The second media-related project is concerned with the development of radio, which—especially following the creation of FM stations in 1990—has become a vital source of information in local languages for the majority of Senegal’s people, who are neither literate nor French-speaking. The relation of local to global concerns becomes especially complex in this medium, as satellite radio and television begin to offer new sources of information and entertainment.

#### **Popular participation and democracy**

Then there are two studies that deal with issues of popular participation and democracy. One documents the changing use of information and communication technologies by the NGO community in Senegal. Another analy-

ses changing official policy on information and freedom of expression, including the gradual loss of state control over the media and the recent attempt to improve communication with citizens through creating offices, at the neighbourhood level, where anyone can have access to public records and obtain needed documentation. The role of IT in the recent presidential election, which transferred power from the dominant party to the opposition for the first time since Independence, will also be explored.

#### **Uses of IT in education**

Finally, there is a study that documents and analyses the way in which information technologies (and particularly the Internet) are being used in secondary and higher education in Senegal.

First drafts of reports are expected in Autumn 2000, and final drafts by the end of the year. A volume drawing on all project material will be prepared by the project co-ordinator, Momar-Coumba Diop, during the first quarter of 2001. In the meantime, Sagna’s state-of-the-art paper has been placed on the UNRISD Web site in French and English. The paper will be published in French in autumn 2000 by UNRISD as a Technology and Society Programme Paper. Plans have been made to distribute it widely, through various university programmes, technical schools and NGOs in Senegal.

The UNRISD project on **Information Technologies and Social Development in Senegal**, including this project workshop in Dakar, is funded by the Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation.

## The Role of Civil Society in Policy Formulation and Service Provision

31 March 2000, New York

The World Summit for Social Development put a fair amount of the responsibility for making the world a better place on the shoulders of civil society. As part of its preparations for Geneva 2000, the five-year review of progress in implementing the Social Summit commitments, UNRISD held a seminar on The Role of Civil Society in Policy Formulation and Service Provision. The seminar brought some of the main messages from the Institute's current research on civil society and social movements at local, national and international levels to delegates, NGOs and agencies at the second Preparatory Committee meeting.

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The first session centred on discussion of the changing role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in social service provision. Participants found it difficult to confirm the often-stated advantages of CSOs as service providers in reaching the poorest, providing high-quality services, being more efficient and cost effective than government providers, and developing innovative approaches. Speakers also pointed out that the transfer of responsibility for service provision from the state to CSOs is falling disproportionately on the shoulders of women.

The second session began with a presentation highlighting the importance of collaboration between trade unions and NGOs: trade unions today cannot advance their agenda without NGOs, and NGOs need unions as well. Some of the major challenges to organized labour's efforts to advance social development in Bangladesh were also outlined. Among these are stringent regulations governing labour organizing, and the factionalization of the labour movement itself. Even NGOs do not support unionization among their employees and often pay little attention to workers' rights.

In session three, four key elements that crucially affect the role of CSOs in making and implementing policy at national and local levels were discussed. These are existence, knowledge, access and influence. Existence depends on legal, political and financial environments, which can all be restrictive to setting up and running CSOs. Two kinds of knowledge are crucial: knowledge of what is happening and needed on the ground, and knowledge of the policy process. Access, the third element, refers to the most influential people—often the economic ministers—and the public, through the media. Both groups must be persuaded of the validity of CSO strategies and goals if CSOs are to have an impact. The fourth element is influence, or making a difference, through intellectual persuasion, political strength and financial power.

The final session of the seminar dealt with reform of international institutions, beginning with a description of the efforts on the part of the Inter-American Development Bank to open up to CSOs. It was argued that they deserve to be matched by CSO efforts to learn how to work with financial institutions, form stronger and

more effective alliances with international CSOs, and lobby their own governments. In summing up, participants agreed that as long as CSOs remain sidelined from key decisions over trade, investment, finance and global economic governance,

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*Four key elements that crucially affect the role of CSOs in making and implementing policy are existence, knowledge, access and influence.*

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the environment would not be conducive to social development. The chief challenge for global civil society, they felt, is to develop a framework that will hold multi-lateral economic institutions accountable.

UNRISD distributed a draft of the seminar report at the second Preparatory Committee meeting, and the final version is available as an issue of UNRISD Conference News (see page 14) and on <http://www.unrisd.org>.

The seminar was UNRISD's second contribution to Geneva 2000 preparations from its research programme on Civil Society and Social Movements. In autumn 1999, UNRISD prepared a paper on *Civil Society Organizations and Social Integration* at the request of the United Nations General Assembly. It is available from the United Nations, New York, as General Assembly document A/AC.253/16/Add.6 (10 February 2000) or on <http://www.un.org>.

This seminar was funded by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).

## HIV/AIDS and Development Workshop

### 30 May 2000, Geneva

The AIDS pandemic is destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the world. An estimated 15,000 people are being infected every day, and the rate is set to rise. The situation is worst in regions and countries where poverty is extensive, gender inequality is pervasive, and public services are weak. In fact, the spread of HIV/AIDS at the turn of the twenty-first century is a sign of mal-development—an indicator of the failure to create more equitable and prosperous societies over large parts of the world.

In collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNRISD is preparing a paper on HIV/AIDS and development, which provides background for new comparative research in this field. Moving away from an epidemiological or public health focus on the pandemic,

the document sets the spread of HIV/AIDS in the context of the multiple factors that have impoverished and uprooted increasing numbers of people. This social science research focuses on concrete local situations and draws attention to the factors encouraging high-risk behaviour on the part of different groups. It also examines trends in social service provision and provides new insights on the way existing AIDS programmes are perceived by local people. Research results should help the personnel of local governments and agencies come to grips with some of the complex social and economic changes associated with an AIDS emergency.

At national and international levels, it is important to analyse AIDS-related public policy, and to compare the responses of different governments and agencies. Social scientists should be able to place these efforts in a broader

political context, and to explain why some approaches are chosen over others. What different interests are at stake? What are the political components of effective HIV/AIDS programmes? And why has the international community been relatively ineffective in dealing with one of the most critical problems of the past two decades? Unless some of the deeper structural problems of existing national and international programmes are understood and overcome, it is unlikely that larger appropriations of money for dealing with the epidemic will have the desired effect.

Questions like these were discussed at a small, informal workshop held in Geneva and funded by UNAIDS. Insights from the discussion will be incorporated into the final document, to be published by UNRISD in autumn 2000.

#### Looking for Progress in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

*continued from page 4*

well-being of all of society's members. Such a state can only be built up from the grassroots level and thrive in a democratic environment. It is accountable at all levels and linked to the various other institutions of the civil society. These institutions, in turn, must become the countervailing power to state authority. Democratization, decentralization, deregulation and devolution are all concepts linked to a socially responsible state. In this sense the current emphasis on democratic elections may strengthen certain kinds of political regimes and the competition between political parties—but it does not guarantee state responses to collective needs, nor the participation of civil society in decision-making processes, nor the social and political accountability of the ruling classes in

developing and transition societies. By "state" I do not mean only central government, but rather public institutions of governance at all levels, sometimes well integrated, at other times loosely linked to national-level institutions.

With regard to development, the retreat of the state cannot serve the cause of socially valued ends; the state in all its ramifications must be brought back in as a socially responsible and accountable institution of governance with a clear vision of what the public sphere is to provide in terms of addressing the human needs and human rights of human beings. This can only be achieved, as mentioned before, in close association with the many-faceted organizations and institutions of civil society. And where does the market stand in all of this? As a necessary mechanism for the allocation of certain kinds of consumer goods and services and a stimulant to

changes in productivity. But certainly not as the judge and provider of socially valued collective goods. For this we must return to politics: the politics of consensus building, collective participation, transparent decision making and democratic commitments, inspired by the values of freedom, justice and morality.

**Rodolfo Stavenhagen** is a Research Professor at El Colegio de México. This article has been excerpted from the keynote address he delivered at the UNRISD conference, *Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development* (29 June 2000, Geneva). The full speech will be published as an UNRISD Programme Paper in autumn 2000.

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## What Choices Do Democracies Have in Globalizing Economies?

27–28 April 2000, Geneva

Under its project on **Technocratic Policy Making and Democratization**, UNRISD organized an international conference to draw attention to the constraints placed on new democracies by their increasing integration into the world market. The discussion was structured around four panels: independent authorities and accountability; democratization and social policy; civil society and technocratic governance; and economic policy making and parliamentary accountability. There were also two keynote addresses, one on globalization, economic policy making and democratization, and the other on ways of strengthening democratic institutions in the era of globalization.

Sylvia Maxfield's keynote speech examined the complex ways different types of international investors influence the policy choices of governments and the consolidation of democratic institutions in emerging markets. The time horizons and preferences of direct foreign investors and stockholders, she argued, may be different from those of commercial banks and bond holders seeking high interest rates, conservative fiscal policies and central bank independence. International investors may act as a

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*Different types of international investors influence the policy choices of governments and the consolidation of democratic institutions in emerging markets in complex ways.*

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constraint on democratic institutions when capital moves in and out of countries in volatile ways, when investors force policy makers in developing economies to raise interest rates in or-

der to follow trends in the advanced economies, and when developing countries cannot adopt countercyclical policies in periods of shock for fear of provoking capital flight. Investors whose choices encourage capital volatility are more likely to be bondholders rather than direct foreign investors or stockholders. According to Maxfield, therefore, changes in the structure of capital may help strengthen democratic institutions in several ways. First, trends toward liberalized bond and equity markets may undermine oligopolistic corporate structures and make credit available to more groups of investors, with recent developments in Internet technology leading to a "democratization of capital markets". Second, efforts by investors to overcome information deficiencies may lead to demands for transparency in public policies, reliable financial reporting and strong regulatory institutions. These are likely to have spillover effects on political institutions, such as electoral office, the judiciary and law-making bodies.

The first panel discussed the trend toward independent institutions to check the discretionary powers of governments in key areas of policy making. These institutions include central banks, tax authorities and executive agencies. Three cases were considered. The first is the experience of the European Central Bank (ECB), which enjoys enormous autonomy from national governments. Although the ECB has made strong efforts to be transparent, it still suffers from an "accountability deficit". Much of this can be corrected without changing the treaty that established the ECB: by raising awareness among ECB officials of broader economic policy goals other than price stability, and by changing the way the institution relates to the public and elected representatives.

The second case is Japan's use of insulated bureaucracies in the trade and industry sectors to support the policies that have helped transform the country into an economic giant. Over the

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years, as democratic practices have been consolidated, Japanese politicians have gained more influence in economic policy matters but have not seriously undermined the overall power of the technocratic elite. This is because of the low levels of expertise available to political parties and the legislature. The recession of the 1990s encouraged major proposals for bureaucratic reform, the outcomes of which are still uncertain.

The third example is the rapid growth of executive agencies and new public management reforms in OECD countries, as well as others dependent on foreign aid. In Tanzania and Uganda, for example, donors pursue contradictory reform policies: decentralization of

power to elected local officials coexists with support for social service boards that are centrally managed.

Technocratic policy making can also be observed in the social field, as discussed by the second panel. One presentation examined the social and economic costs of technocratic styles of regulation in health care delivery systems in Tanzania. These techniques are counterposed with more collaborative and inclusive approaches that seem to offer greater prospects for effective and sustainable health care delivery. Discussion on this issue focused on the larger question of the connections between poverty, economic reforms and democracy, and on why African policy makers have not been able to reduce poverty among a large proportion of the African population, given the strong links established by poor voters between democratization and welfare.

The discussion then shifted to Latin America. In recent years the region has experienced a more structured form of policy making that privileges a narrow circle of economic policy elites who are highly sensitive to the dynamics of international financial markets. Some governments have used residualist programmes of targeting and social safety nets to deflect participation in macro-economic policy making. Some groups in civil society are even incorporating technocratic management styles in their operations.

The third panel discussed efforts of civil society groups to influence decision making in multilateral and national settings. It is difficult to change technocratic policy-making styles in multilateral institutions because of the lack of integration between policy areas in different institutions, as well as the priority granted to efficiency over other values such as social justice or environmental sustainability. There was a rich comparative discussion of the efforts of industrial unions to use social pacts to influence the economic policies

of governments in eight countries. There was also lively debate on labour and environmental standards in trade relations, as well as the North-South and union-NGO divides over these issues.

The panel that discussed economic policy making and parliamentary accountability produced an interesting mix of experiences from seven countries: Chile, Argentina, Malawi, Benin, India, the Republic of Korea and Hungary. In Chile, a process of professionalization, in which economists play prominent roles, is evident in the operations of political parties and the legislature. This has led to a consensus on fiscal management and a worrying trend toward depoliticization. In Argentina, concerns for policy sustainability seem to have encouraged a shift from rule making by decree toward greater involvement of

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the legislature in economic policy matters. In Malawi and Benin, the multilateral lending agencies, rather than financial markets, play prominent roles in economic management, including the recruitment of experts for key economic agencies. The role of parliament in economic policy making in the two countries is weak.

In the case of India, problems of parliamentary oversight in economic policy

making owe less to technocratic styles of government than to general capacity problems. India, like Hungary, is a parliamentary democracy: all major laws and policies must be debated in parliament. The Indian bureaucracy is also critical of experts recruited outside the bureaucracy. The main objective of Hungarian parties is to meet the conditions set by the European Union for membership, even though there has been some backlash against the social cost of integration. Korea's economic development, like Japan's, has been based on a strong technocratic regime in which key state institutions in industry and trade are insulated from politicians and interest groups. Korea's bureaucratic regime suffered a setback after democratization in the 1980s: economic management became more complex as interest groups and parliament increased their influence on how policies were made. However, the financial crisis of 1997 led to a recentralization of policy making through the creation of powerful institutions that are not sufficiently accountable to parliament.

The conference was concluded by Richard Joseph's keynote speech, which challenged the audience to transcend the constraints imposed by neoliberalism on economic policy making and democratization. The building of democratic institutions, he stated, should be grounded in a robust programme of social development, which takes seriously the goal of overcoming poverty. Joseph also argued for the promotion of citizen self-rule, the guarantee of civil rights, and the encouragement of the broadest level of participation in the deliberation of public policies.

Full coverage of the conference is forthcoming in an issue of **UNRISD Conference News**. Some conference papers are available on UNRISD ON-LINE (<http://www.unrisd.org>). The conference was financed by UNRISD core funding (provided by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

## Cities of the South: Sustainable for Whom?

### N-AERUS 2000 International Workshop

3–6 May 2000, Geneva

UNRISD and IREC/EPFL\* recently co-hosted the N-AERUS\*\* 2000 International Workshop titled *Cities of the South: Sustainable for Whom?* Researchers, urban planners and architects, international and national civil servants, and NGO activists set out to explore two questions:

- What should be the goals of and approaches to urban sustainable development?
- How can the research community help donors understand these needs and develop effective means of addressing them?

Despite their different perspectives and backgrounds, participants agreed that the dominant neoliberal model of development is largely inimical to sustainable development. Social and cultural diversity and differences of country, city and community have tended to be neglected in debates about the nature of sustainable development. In fact, there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of “sustainable development”, which has resulted in models of sustainability being imposed on the poor in the South, either by Southern elites or Northern donors. Workshop participants felt that such shortcomings must be addressed if cities of the South are to become more liveable for the majority of their residents. Participants also agreed that, in designing more balanced and realistic paths to global sustainable urban development, there is an urgent need to focus attention on the lifestyles of the rich in both North and South. Finally, because sustainable urban settlements depend primarily on the actors involved (community, government and business) and on institutions and democratic political systems that allow local actors to determine their own development processes, the po-

litical and social aspects of sustainable development deserve greater attention than they receive in current approaches that focus narrowly on environmental, technical and economic concerns.

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*Sustainable urban settlements depend primarily on the actors involved (community, government and business) and on institutions and democratic political systems that allow local actors to determine their own development processes. Therefore the political and social aspects of sustainable development deserve greater attention than they receive in current approaches that focus narrowly on environmental, technical and economic concerns.*

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In order to design more effective approaches to sustainable urban development, Northern and Southern researchers at the workshop acknowledged the importance of jointly conceiving, designing and carrying out research, and making their findings available to those directly involved in efforts to build more democratic and humane cities. A first step in this direction, they agreed, would be to work toward common understandings of concepts and to formulate clear theo-

retical frameworks. But it is also important to balance this with research that has immediate practical value. Researchers in the North could also make special efforts to forge better links with research networks in the South, with the goal of increasing the sensitivities of funding institutions in the North to the research priorities and capabilities of Southern researchers and institutions.

A workshop report is forthcoming from UNRISD and N-AERUS, and will be available on the Web sites of IREC/EPFL (<http://www.urb.ch>) and UNRISD. A selection of the papers submitted to the workshop will be published as a double issue of the Oxfam journal, *Development in Practice*, in May 2001, just before the five-year review of Habitat II. A book on the role of international technical cooperation in promoting sustainable development in Third World cities is also planned.

The role of UNRISD and IREC/EPFL in the workshop went beyond substantive orientation and logistics, with the co-sponsors urging N-AERUS to open its 2000 meeting to Southern researchers. UNRISD and IREC/EPFL supported the participation of 15 researchers from developing countries, who played prominent roles in all aspects of the workshop. The workshop received funding from the European Science Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Agence de la francophonie.

\* Institute for Research on the Built Environment, Federal Technical Institute of Lausanne (IREC/EPFL)

\*\* Network-Association of European Researchers on Urbanization in the South

## Neoliberalism and Institutional Reform in East Asia

12–13 May 2000, Bangkok

The Asian financial crisis, which started in Thailand nearly three years ago, was brought on by a failure of “institutions” on several levels. By some accounts, the biggest failure rested with global capitalism—with its inadequate institutional regulation of speculative capital flows in and out of fragile markets in the developing world. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was also blamed for its questionable responses to the crisis. This has led to much debate about reforming the international financial architecture, centring on the Bretton Woods system of institutions. Attention has also been drawn to the failure of institutional accountability in the individual countries affected by crisis.

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*Even in the legal system of the United States (seen as the home of ‘rule of law’ rhetoric), the rule of law has been intentionally subordinated to other institutional goals and political values. ... The more important point is that law should be a matter of political theory; and reform of the legal system should be a normative process reflecting wider societal aims.*

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These countries are charged with having systems of “crony capitalism”, understood as the absence of transparency, moral hazards, and the inadequate rule of law. Dismantling

the institutions of crony capitalism, and replacing them with regulatory agencies, as one might find in the Anglo-American world, has become the thrust of reform demanded by international financial institutions. The UNRISD project on *Neoliberalism and Institutional Reform in East Asia* held this conference to consider the relative merits of such reform proposals.

The first session of the conference considered *the meaning and practices of the rule of law* in East Asia, particularly in view of allegations of crony capitalism in many countries of the region. Cronyism is a relative concept, running the gamut from its original usage—the frenetic feeding of Ferdinand Marcos and his associates from the state trough—to the relationship between the state and business forged through industrial policy as in Japan and the Republic of Korea. Conference participants discussed how transparency could be encouraged in the nexus between the state, banks and business. They also addressed the question of how certain informal relationships that worked well could be built on to create a different legal culture that would bring about economic development and empowerment. Participants also considered different ways of understanding and implementing the rule of law in different legal traditions. One of the important points that emerged from this session was that even in the legal system of the United States (seen as the home of “rule of law” rhetoric), the rule of law has been intentionally subordinated to other institutional goals and political values. In other words, any legal system must be related to political theory and social values. The argument that even in the United States courts do not always enforce

law (narrowly understood), is a minor point. The more important point is that law should be a matter of political theory, and reform of the legal system should be a normative process reflecting wider societal aims.

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*Rather than dismantling the now derided state institutions of industrial policy making, should there not be an attempt to reinvent them? ... It is critical to examine aspects of industrial policy and bureaucratic co-ordination that have worked well, with an eye to adapting them to the challenge of protecting domestic societies in an era of economic globalization.*

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In session two, participants focused on *industrial policy and the economic bureaucracy*. The guiding economic bureaucracy in the Republic of Korea was long believed to possess many secrets of development, but is now thought to be a primary obstacle to progress. The state in Taiwan Province of China, on the other hand, has been most successful in jump-starting businesses related to information technology. So rather than dismantling the now derided state institutions of industrial policy making, should there not be an attempt to reinvent them? In Latin America and Africa, neoliberal reforms often led to the splintering of state institutions for economic development,

with nothing as a replacement. Conference participants felt that it is critical to examine aspects of industrial policy and bureaucratic co-ordination that have worked well, with an eye to adapting them to the challenge of protecting domestic societies in an era of economic globalization.

*Social and labour policy* were the subjects of session three. So-called inflexible labour markets are being dismantled as part of the reforms being prescribed in East Asia. In the absence of social welfare programmes, however, the institution of lifetime employment is often people's only social safety net. In this sense, large corporations in Japan and the Republic of Korea, for example, not to mention state-owned enterprises in China, are agents of public purpose. Through schemes of near-permanent employment, they have fulfilled many of the welfare functions carried out by the state in Western industrialized countries. Yet in the wake of the financial crisis, the IMF has demanded

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*Will neoliberal reforms shift the burden of social welfare from the private sector to the state, thus creating Keynesian welfare states in East Asia? If so, what is likely to be the new role, in that expanded political realm, for labour and other participants?*

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massive layoffs in the Republic of Korea, Thailand and other countries. This, combined with the demand for new bankruptcy laws to liquidate firms, has wreaked havoc with the existing social compact in parts of the region. Thus conference participants

discussed how labour markets really work in developing East Asia, and whether they are really as inflexible as alleged. They considered what, if anything, might replace paternalistic practices in industrial relations. Will neoliberal reforms shift the burden of social welfare from the private sector to the state, thus creating Keynesian welfare states in East Asia? If so, what is likely to be the new role, in that expanded political realm, for labour and other participants?

The fourth area considered during the conference was *governance of the private sector*, given that the Asian financial crisis emanated from that sector (unlike crises in Latin America). Business conglomerates in Northeast Asia are often likened to feudal fiefdoms, family owned and controlled, often hugely leveraged and inefficient—or at least that was the story when the financial crisis hit. During this session, participants discussed whether it is possible—or desirable—to take a pattern of business governance that has such a long and definite history, abstract it from the larger social structure, and try to make it mimic Anglo-American corporate governance.

Finally, in session five, participants reflected on *cultural norms, ideology and other mobilizing myths*—such as “Asian values”. They discussed whether norms and values specific to different civilizations could be used differently in order to obtain socially desirable outcomes. Is it possible to articulate communitarian norms in East Asia in such a way as to highlight social rights? How can we create economic institutions that work with the existing culture and the value system, rather than those that work against them?

This UNRISD project is based on the premise that institutional reform in East Asia must rest on the acknowledgement of failures in the past, and

on the record of successful industrialization—which worked well in the best of times. Change, to be enduring, has to come from within, and needs to be predicated on past and

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*Institutional reform in East Asia must rest on the acknowledgement of failures in the past, and on the record of successful industrialization—which worked well in the best of times. ... East Asian institutions are likely to change and develop along a continuum of what has existed, rather than as a result Western-imposed remedies.*

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current practices. East Asian institutions are likely to change and develop along a continuum of what has existed, rather than as a result Western-imposed remedies.

The papers commissioned by the project—the basis for discussions at the conference—are being brought together in an edited volume, which should be of interest to scholars as well as policy makers in East Asia and in international financial institutions. The conference was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and UNRISD core funding (provided by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).



## UNRISD and Expo 2000

**Global Dialogue 4—Fighting Poverty: Social Innovations and New Coalitions**, World Exposition, Hannover, Germany, 25–27 July. UNRISD co-sponsored Global Dialogue 4 at the World Expo in Hannover. This three-day session focused on:

- social responsibility and existing globalized economic, trade and financial relationships;
- new alliances for peace, freedom from violence, and human rights;
- culture as a resource for the poor and as a neglected dimension of sustainable development;
- long-term power and influence for poor populations;
- best practices: business initiatives to promote social responsibility; citizen's initiatives for peace and freedom from violence; traditional knowledge and the management of natural resources;
- empowerment and new forms of co-operation; and
- influencing structural adjustment programmes, national policies and government economic management on behalf of the poor.

*Information contact:*

Marc Beckmann, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)*, Büro EXPO 2000, Postfach 5180, 65726 Eschborn, Germany.  
Tel: (49 6196) 797316  
Fax: (49 6196) 797369

## UNRISD and Development and Change

**Gendered Poverty and Well-being**, Special Issue, Vol. 30, No. 3 of **Development and Change**, edited by Shahra Razavi, ISSN 0012-155X, July 1999. The papers in this special issue (see page 13 for contents) were first presented at a workshop co-organized by UNRISD and the Centre for Development Studies in India in 1997.

*Information contact:*  
*Blackwell Publishers Journals*, P.O. Box 805, 108 Cowley Road,

Oxford, OX4 1FH, United Kingdom.

Tel: (44 1865) 244083

Fax: (44 1865) 381381

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Web: <http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk>

## Others' News and Views

**Geneva 2000.** Documentation from the Twenty-Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly "World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalizing World", can be found on the Web site of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Documents include: Part I: Draft Political Declaration; Part II: Review and Assessment of Implementation of the Social Summit; Part III: Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Commitments Made at the Summit.

*Information contact:* Web: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/geneva2000/index.html>

**Building a World Community: Globalisation and the Common Good**, edited by Jacques Baudot, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISBN 87-7265-923-8, June 2000, 272 pages. In March 1995, Denmark hosted the World Summit for Social Development. The conference adopted the Copenhagen Declaration for Social Development, a text committing governments to pursue the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and the fostering of stable and just societies. To contribute to the implementation of these goals, the government of Denmark organized the Copenhagen Seminars for Social Progress. This book presents a synthesis of work undertaken by these seminars. Chapters include: Dimensions of Global Democracy; Economies to Serve Human Needs and Aspirations; A Humanist Political Culture; Social Forces with a Global Agenda; and Institutions to Promote the Common Good. Additional contributions from Richard Falk, Peter Marris, Saad Nagi, Deepak Nayyar, Ignacy Sachs, Nafis Sadik, Peter Townsend and Tu Weimng are included.

*Information contact:* Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Public Information, Asiatiske Plads 2, 1448 Copenhagen K, Denmark. Tel: (45) 33920000, Fax: (45) 3254 0533  
E-mail: [um@um.dk](mailto:um@um.dk)  
Web: <http://www.copenhagenseminars.dk>

**Development**, Vol. 43, No. 2, June 2000, published by the Society for International Development. This journal issue, entitled **Commitments and Challenges: Reviewing Social Development**, was published for the five year review of the World Summit for Social Development in Geneva. Articles focus on employment, poverty, gender equity, food security, finance, debt and health. Common themes in all articles are the need for people-centred development, major institutional reform, and a more participatory and responsible engagement by all actors. Articles also suggest that it is no longer possible to argue that the path to social development resides in structural adjustment, economic growth and globalization, and almost all recognize that paths to social development are related to the culture, history, political expectations, ethnicity and gender of the people involved.  
*Information contact:* Wendy Harcourt, Editor, Society for International Development, 207 via Panisperna, 00184, Rome, Italy.  
Fax: (39 06) 4872170  
E-mail: [WENDYH@sidint.org](mailto:WENDYH@sidint.org)

**Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**, edited by Caroline Sweetman, Oxfam Focus on Gender Series, ISBN 0-85598-4297, 2000, 119 pages, £7.95/\$12.95. From the perspectives of development specialists and feminist activists, this book considers the challenges facing gender and development practitioners and policy makers in the twenty-first century. Despite some successes, women in many countries remain in abject poverty, lacking food, clean water, education and medical care. Women throughout the world are still economically, politically and socially marginalized, at a time when the globalization of business, industry, and communication technology is radically changing our world. But who is deciding the rules of this "stateless society", and how can women and men who live in poverty challenge them? What other questions do gender and development workers face?

*Information contact:* Bournemouth Book Centre, P.O. Box 1496, Parkstone, Dorset BH12 3YD, United Kingdom.  
Tel: (44 1202) 712933, Fax: (44 1202) 712930  
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In the United States contact: Stylus Publishing LLC, P.O. Box 605, Herndon, VA, 20172-0605.  
Tel: (1 703) 6611581, Fax: (1 703) 6611547  
E-mail: [styluspub@aol.com](mailto:styluspub@aol.com)

**Development, NGOs and Civil Society**, Oxfam Development in Practice Reader, ISBN 0-85598-442-2, 2000, 208 pages, £9.50/\$15.95. As public spending has



declined in many parts of the world, the non-governmental sector has benefited significantly from taking on a service delivery role. At the same time, NGOs, as representatives of civil society, are a convenient medium through which official agencies can promote political pluralism. But can NGOs facilitate governments' withdrawal from providing basic services for all, while simultaneously claiming to represent the poor and the disenfranchised? Are NGOs legitimate political actors in their own right? This book considers such issues in depth.

*Information contact: Bournemouth Book Centre, P.O. Box 1496, Parkstone, Dorset BH12 3YD, United Kingdom. Tel: (+44 1202) 712933, Fax: (+44 1202) 712930 E-mail: bebc@bebc.co.uk*  
*In the United States contact: Stylus Publishing LLC, P.O. Box 605, Herndon, VA, 20172-0605. Tel: (1 703) 6611581, Fax: (1 703) 6611547 E-mail: styluspub@aol.com*

**Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Development: Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

The 29<sup>th</sup> ICSW International Conference on Social Welfare, 23–27 October 2000, in Cape Town, South Africa, includes plenaries, symposiums and workshops addressing issues of international significance in relation to social welfare and social development. More than 50 workshops will consider topics such as: finance for social development; land, the environment and poverty; regionalism and social development; women and poverty; economic cultural and social rights; HIV/AIDS; privatization and social welfare; social safety nets; work and well-being; corruption and social justice; community development; disability issues and care for older people. To convene a workshop or to receive further information, visit the ICSW Web site at <http://www.icsw.org>.

*Information contact: Conference Secretariat. Tel: (27 21) 762 8606, Fax: (27 21) 762 8600 E-mail: icsw@globalconf.co.za*

**Market Power in Agricultural Markets: Some Issues for Developing Countries,**

by Sophia Murphy, Trade-Related Agenda, Development and Equity Working Paper No. 6, South Centre, November 1999, 29 pages. This paper draws attention to some of the oversights of the Uruguay Round/World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture, in particular the role of multinational companies. The evidence presented raises questions about some of the basic assumptions underlying the Agreement, starting from the theoretical

model of global competition on which it is based. The paper raises basic questions for the future direction of the negotiations. It also points to the need for a thorough review of the Agreement on Agriculture, in particular from the perspective of development.

Finally, it suggests that there is a need for a comprehensive treatment of agriculture in the broader framework of the United Nations, because the interrelationship between agriculture, food security and development transcends the domain of the WTO and affects many aspects of human life and society.

*Information contact: South Centre, 17 chemin du Champ-d'Anier, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. Tel: (41 22) 7918050 Fax: (41 22) 7988531 E-mail: south@southcentre.org Web: <http://www.southcentre.org>*  
*In Tanzania contact: South Centre, P.O. Box 71000, Dar-es-Salaam. Tel: (255 51) 113431 Fax: (255 51) 112790*

**Green Politics**, edited by Anil Agarwal, Sunita Narain and Anju Sharma, published by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in India, 1999. This is the first report in the CSE's new series on global environmental negotiations. It analyses important environment-related conventions and institutions, and demystifies the politics of "saving the environment". The book examines environmental politics between rich and poor nations, and how the stand of one country influences others. A comprehensive Southern perspective on the impact of global environmental governance on people's lives, it takes information as the starting point to promote understanding between Northern and Southern governments and civil society.

*Information contact: CSE, 41 Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 062, India. Tel: (91 11) 60811110 Fax: (91 11) 6085879 E-mail: webadmin@cseindia.org Web: <http://www.cseindia.org>*

UNRISD is an autonomous agency engaging in multidisciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary development problems. Its work is guided by the conviction that, for effective development policies to be formulated, an understanding of the social and political context is crucial. The Institute attempts to provide governments, development agencies, grassroots organizations and scholars with a better understanding of how development policies and processes of economic, social and environmental change affect different social groups. Working through an extensive network of national research centres, UNRISD aims to promote original research as well as strengthen research capacity in developing countries.

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UNRISD  
 Palais des Nations  
 1211 Geneva 10  
 Switzerland  
 E-mail: [info@unrisd.org](mailto:info@unrisd.org)  
 Web: <http://www.unrisd.org>

Editorial committee:  
 Jenifer Freedman & Rosemary Max  
 Advisor: Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara  
 Proofreading & layout: Pamela Smaridge

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## Results of the Special Session on Social Development

John Langmore

The results of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on social development (26–30 June 2000, Geneva) were highly significant. More than 5,000 people attended the conference, and 2,000 participants were members of delegations, led mostly by ministers, from the 160 attending countries. Nineteen heads of state or government came to Geneva as well. While the heads of delegation were speaking during the five days, or attending the outstanding Geneva 2000 Forum, their colleagues were completing negotiation of the Geneva Declaration. This Declaration includes a ringing political statement on the centrality of more equitable, socially just and people-centred societies; an assessment of what has happened since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen; and about 160 paragraphs on new initiatives.

Perhaps the most important new initiative is that which calls for “a rigorous analysis of advantages, disadvantages and other implications of proposals for developing new and innovative sources of funding, both public and private, for dedication to social development and poverty eradication programmes”. That is, there is to be a study (authorized without dissent by the member countries of the United Nations) of a currency transaction tax (CTT)—the Tobin tax—and other potential sources of revenue for social development. At the final plenary, the Canadian delegation, speaking also for Norway, reiterated that the intention of this initiative is that such a study should be made.

It is appropriate to emphasize this decision among many others because it could lead to the start of more effective global public management of the international financial system. The study could lead to proposals for additional means of raising desperately needed financial resources for education and health services, infrastructure and credit to stimulate socioeconomic development. This and other paragraphs also articulate the importance of reducing financial volatility and of managing financial crises better, through temporary debt repayment standstills when large financial outflows threaten, and through protecting expenditure on social services during crises.

There was agreement for the first time on a global target for poverty reduction: halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. This is implicitly understood to include all people with income of less than \$1 per day—an estimated 1.2 billion individuals. A decision to begin a more integrated global campaign to reduce poverty was taken. Preparation of an international employment strategy by the International Labour Organization will begin with a global employment forum next year.

These are among the 40 or so substantial, fresh initiatives or new international agreements for action in the Declaration. Others include: recognition that achievement of the agreed

target of access to basic education for all by 2015 will cost around \$8 billion a year; a call for all UN agencies to more effectively integrate health policies into their programmes in other areas; action through trade agreements and increased incentives for research to improve access of developing countries to affordable and effective pharmaceuticals; strengthened commitment to basic workers’ rights, and to social protection for the vulnerable; and recommendations for national targets and major new action to reduce HIV/AIDS infection rates. After extensive debate there was agreement on the importance of “positive or affirmative action” to achieve gender equality. Corporate social responsibility was added to the international agenda for the first time.

There were concrete announcements as well. For example, Ireland announced plans to reach the aid target of 0.7 per cent of GNP; Japan announced cancellation of debt for low-income countries; and Italy announced an aid initiative of over \$100 million.

There were enough decisions to feel elated about the outcome. Of course, not enough was achieved, much of the wording is too cautious and carefully modulated, and many more issues should have been addressed. But huge tasks were agreed on, and there is plenty for all national governments, parliaments, international agencies, corporations, trade unions, NGOs, and concerned individuals to do.

Implementation depends principally on governments, but much is also required of the international system. The Social Policy and Development Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has already begun writing to other parts of the system to draw attention to recommendations of relevance to them. Plans are being made for an independent inquiry into new sources of funding. A regionally representative group of authoritative experts is likely to be appointed and asked to report in time for the UN event on Financing for Development in 2001. The group may invite submissions from interested governments and civil society organizations. The United Nations Development Programme and other relevant organizations have begun planning ways of consolidating ongoing initiatives into a global poverty eradication campaign.

Let’s conclude this review by recalling the challenge at the end of the Special Session’s Political Declaration: “At the dawn of the new millennium, aware of our responsibilities towards future generations, we are strongly committed to social development, including social justice, for all in a globalizing world. We invite all people in all countries and in all walks of life, as well as the international community, to join in renewed dedication to our shared vision for a more just and equitable world.”

John Langmore is Director of the Social Policy and Development Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.