



# NGO Reporter

Published Quarterly by  
the NGO/DPI Executive  
Committee

Vol. 11 No. 3

By NGOs For NGOs

October 2003

## Human Development Report: 2003

Each year the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issues a report by an independent team of experts that reflects global change in human development. This year's report concerned the progress made toward achieving the Millennium goals. There was good news and bad news. The good news was that absolute poverty (people who live on less than one dollar a day) has declined greatly overall, because the economic success of China and India has lifted vast numbers of people out of the ranks of abject hunger. The bad news was that 54 developing countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa, had slid back in the last decade, actually suffering income declines. More than a billion people still live in absolute poverty. Much of the negative growth is attributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. In 2001, over 14 million children lost one or both parents to AIDS, and the number of AIDS orphans is expected to double by 2010. War and burgeoning foreign debt also contribute to the problems of the poorest countries.

The last several Reports have included human development indices that go beyond a country's income levels and include quality of life factors like literacy, freedom, women's rights, and longevity. The Human Development Index ranks countries according to a comprehensive yardstick. This year, the highest ranking countries were Norway, Iceland, and Sweden. The lowest in rank were Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sierra Leone.

21 countries have seen their ratings decline in the 1990s. The Report notes that people in the cities fare better than those in the countryside. Services are scanty away from urban centers. In Cambodia, for example, where 85 percent of the population is rural, only 13 percent of government health workers work in rural areas. Governments in developing countries should focus on primary schools rather than universities; rural clinics, not technologically advanced hospitals in big cities.

## 56<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference

*Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling  
the Promise of the United Nations  
September 8-10, 2003*

*UN Headquarters, New York*

The Chair, Co-Chair and the Planning committee extend our sincere thanks to NGO Community Worldwide for its support of the Conference. More than 3,500 NGO representatives from 100 countries registered to participate. These numbers indicate the interest and dedication of the NGO community. We have learned from our survey that 40% of the NGO Representatives were from developing regions, and they represented organizations in 65 countries.

Another milestone was the record number of young people who participated in the Conference. The Secretary General was able to attend the Monday evening Conference Reception (after a day filled with meetings that dealt with the death of United Nations Staff members in Iraq as well as other pressing issues.)

*Continued page 2*

---

In this year's Report, two other indices rank rich countries in a separate category. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) takes into account illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and life-expectancy.

Sweden, which has a lower per-capita income than the United States, ranks first, while the US ranks last because of persistent inequities in literacy and economic status. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) reflects women's participation economically and politically. Some poor countries are more equitable than their rich counterparts. In terms of participation and inclusion, women fare better in Botswana, Costa Rica and Namibia than they do in Greece, Italy and Japan. But, as the report notes elsewhere, there is great disparity. A woman in sub-Saharan Africa is 100 times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than her counterpart in Western Europe.

*Continued Page 3*

This support indicates the level of interest that Secretariat has in the work of non-governmental organizations working in cooperation with the United Nations.

As Chair, and with the approval of the NGO Executive Committee and Conference Planning Committee, I dedicated the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO to those United Nations Staff members who were killed in Iraq, and those who have lost their life serving humanity in other areas of the world during the year.

This year was our first effort to broadcast the Conference by UN TV, and the Internet. It was an innovative feature to make sure that we reached as many NGOs as possible throughout the world. Though we did not reach as many regions as we had hoped, the figures indicate that we can get the Conference out of the United Nations headquarters in New York and into the field. We had, on September 8, 2003, some 489 visitors or "hits" to the website; September 9, 375; and September 10, 112. Countries that visited the site included: Canada, United States, Sweden, Mexico, Switzerland, Netherlands, Japan, Brazil, United Kingdom, Austria, Italy, Australia, France, Spain, Germany, Argentina, New Zealand, Belgium, Israel, Hungary, Costa Rica, Vatican City State, Peru and Norway. We were disappointed that people from more countries did not visit the Website. This was our first attempt to webcast the Conference, but we know that with more publicity and getting information out earlier, and in all the languages of the United Nations, we will increase the participation in the Conference via the internet.

We also received positive feedback from the Wednesday morning networking sessions where NGOs were able to discuss areas of interest and share information about what works and what does not. We are exploring these suggestions for next year. Your feedback has been informative. Keep sending us your ideas on how we can improve and provide you with the assistance you need. Let's move forward toward a global village where we share and work together for the betterment of the world. - *Fannie Munlin, Chair*

## Communicating the U.N. Message

The NGO/DPI Communications Workshop Committee organized a one-day workshop in late May, entitled *Communicating the UN Message: Effective NGO Approaches*. This workshop brought together NGOs and the DPI/NGO section, and offered an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of both groups to furthering the UN message to civil society. The morning session began with introductions and presentations by NGO/DPI Section staff. All stressed the urgent need for NGOs to "get the word out" about the principles and work of the UN. DPI staff presenters emphasized how much the UN counts on NGO support to underscore its everyday relevance. The importance of NGO participation in the many activities and projects sponsored by the Department of Public Information was also stressed. A significant NGO contribution to the UN and to the DPI is the preparatory work for the very successful annual DPI/NGO Conference, spearheaded by a DPI/NGO Planning Committee, meeting over a period of nine months.

The morning session continued with a presentation by Paul Hoeffel, NGO Section Chief, of the association and review process for currently affiliated NGOs. This process, renewed every three years, began in 2002 and will end in 2005. In brief, it entails the following categories: 1) In good standing: The NGO has provided the required one-page description, the accreditation form and six samples of information material. 2) More information required: A letter is sent asking for additional information. 3) No response: If the NGO has not responded, DPI will continue trying to establish contact. 4) Disassociation: If there has been no response to repeated attempts, or if there has been a misuse of the DPI/NGO association process, disassociation will follow. The morning session also provided a verbal tour of the NGO Resource Center. Located in the basement level at the front end of the main building, the Center provides useful information and materials for all NGOs. Its staff and interns are present to provide assistance. Available materials include documents from various organizations affiliated with the UN as well as brochures and PR material of NGO activities, and the Center's audio visual collection. Four internet ready computers are reserved for NGO use.

The Center sends a monthly mailing to a designated representative of each affiliated NGO. The morning session concluded with a discussion and demonstrations of the DPI/NGO website and the DPI/NGO Executive Committee's counterpart. Included on the DPI/NGO Section website ([www.un.org/dpi/ngosection](http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection)), which is continuously updated, is information on the weekly briefings, communication workshops and annual conferences.

## Calling All Stonecutters

Hieroglyphics may survive because letters were inscribed in stone, or on tablets that resisted the passage of time, but what will become of today's deathless prose if it exists only in digital form? Computer programs change and become obsolete; computers themselves end up in junk heaps. When data was sent back from Mars in 2001, no one could read them because the tapes were 25 years old. According to UNESCO, which is proposing a Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage, the internet has about a billion pages whose average life span ranges from 44 days to two years.

## ***Human Development Report, continued from pg 1***

Although many of the solutions are known, disease and preventable disaster are rife. Every minute of the day, a woman dies in pregnancy or childbirth. Over 13 million children have died of diarrhoeal disease in the past decade. 800 million suffer from malnutrition. Current research and development devotes only 10 percent of its effort to the health problems of 90 percent of the world's people. Unless the well-off nations pitch in to help, nothing will change. The very nations who should be saviors become part of the problem because of their trade policies, tariffs, and subsidies. Subsidies to US cotton growers equal more than triple the amount of US Government aid to sub-Saharan Africa. In the European Union, the cash subsidy to every dairy cow exceeds total per capita EU aid to sub-Saharan Africa. Investment in poor countries must be directed to those businesses that create jobs, like textiles and manufacturing, rather than those that require a huge amount of capital, like oil production. Without aid, an already dire situation could become even worse.

### **What They're Doing**

After two decades of war and drought, a generation of Afghan children have gone entirely without education. Afghan girls are especially disadvantaged, joining the school system after years of being banned from education completely. They lack basic literacy skills, social abilities and often the self-confidence to learn comprehensively in a classroom setting. Those that had begun their education are now returning to classes with children half their age, having lost vital years of their lives to working on the street. The psychological damage to Afghan children caused by war includes over one million Afghan children now suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome.

**Bond Street Theatre** of New York is training members of **Exile Theatre**, an Afghan theatre company, to incorporate the expressive arts into education programs for both rural and urban communities. The two companies will travel to eight districts in Afghanistan, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, to facilitate interactive theatre workshops for teachers and students in schools and orphanages, train educators, and work with the children to illuminate issues such as hygiene and land mine awareness.

The children will help create theatrical projects and will perform them. The integration of theatre-based psycho-social programming in the school systems of Afghanistan will provide a comprehensive educational environment to encourage recovery, personal growth and development among the children through creative, interactive methods.

In a peace project initiated by Dr. Ruth Corey Selman, the **American Montessori Society** hopes to educate children as citizens of the world by bringing teenagers to the United Nations for a teach-in on United Nations Day. UN personnel, and staff from Columbia University, will brief them. They will also be escorted on a tour of the UN. The emphasis will be on ways to communicate the knowledge they acquire during their 2-day intensive visit, and how to disseminate it to their schools, peers, and communities. The Department of Public Information is happy to cooperate with NGOs who want to arrange visits, especially by young people.

**Best Friends** is an organization that rescues abused and abandoned animals in the United States. A recent issue of their magazine told the stories of sister animal rescue organizations that are struggling to survive in the war-torn regions of the Middle East, where, in the midst of atrocities against people, scant attention is given to their animals. Donkeys, for example, are considered expendable by the people who use and abuse them: they can be bought for as little as \$20. US. An animal lover has established **Safe Haven for Donkeys in the Holy Land (SHADH)**. Another local organization is **Kol-Chai**, which tries to bring peace to children by encouraging Arab and Israeli children to cooperate in rescuing pets, many of which wander when their families are uprooted or killed. They have established the first mobile spay/neuter clinic, which should help to cut down on proliferation and further animal misery. **Let the Animals Live** is the old-timer in the group. It was established 15 years ago and has a no-kill sanctuary that rescues dogs and cats, and tries to find homes for them. The **Palestine Wildlife Society** tries to tackle environmental problems, many of which are worsened by the continued warfare. All of these organizations have tried to work together and have fostered cross-border projects, most of which have been thwarted by continuing hostilities. All are dependent on individual contributions, which have become more and more sparse as the war continues to deplete everyone's resources.

## Editor's Desk

It is ironic that the United Nations, which has been grappling with issues of terrorism for decades, has itself become the victim of terrorist acts. The recent bombings in Baghdad that cost the lives of so many dedicated UN personnel, and resulted in the death of the beloved Sergio Vieira de Mello, are a grim reminder that terror strikes the innocent. Terrorism is a political act that rejects the legitimate paths of law and mediation and seeks to impose its agenda by creating panic. Like a snake with its tail in its mouth, it creates a circle of dread. It thrives in places where human rights have been violated while it is, itself, one of the greatest despoilers of human rights.

The United Nations recognized the threat of terrorism decades ago, although the word itself did not appear in the headers of the early documents. Conventions were forged on the unlawful seizure of aircraft, the taking of hostages, the protection of nuclear material, the protection of airports, the immunity of diplomatic personnel. By 1997 the threat became overwhelming, and it was obvious that terrorism transcended borders and closely meshed with organized crime. Drug trafficking, trade in illicit arms, and money laundering were its partners. The UN passed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, followed two years later by the International Convention on the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism. It also brokered several regional agreements, most of which have entered into force. The Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council was established and has been actively seeking solutions..

After the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001 efforts to combat terrorist activities permeated all UN Departments and filtered into most agendas. Terrorism exacerbates many of the problems of the Organization. There is a need for an international norm respected by all Member States, agreeing that terrorist acts are *never* justified, no matter what underlying ideology prompts them. Without that basic agreement, there is no hope that the funding of mayhem will end. Member States must act together before the unthinkable happens. There is an illicit trade in fissionable material, as well as small arms, and many nations cannot account for every bit of nuclear material they are supposed to have in storage. Terrorists are becoming more sophisticated and more ruthless in their methods.

It is generally agreed that the United Nations should not be diverted from its basic goals by turning the bulk of its attention to a single issue. The world is full of problems that are immediate and unrelenting. Most of all, the Organization must protect human rights. That puts it into a double bind.

## Communicating the UN Message ...

A preliminary survey indicated that 73% of the NGO representatives gathered information directly from this website. The 18-member NGO/DPI Executive Committee contributes in many ways to establishing links with civil society around the globe, ranging from communication workshops, weekly briefings, the annual conference, a webpage information source, and extensive fund raising efforts. In view of its goals and objectives, the Executive Committee recently initiated a website([www.ngodpiexecom.org](http://www.ngodpiexecom.org)) designed to foster its outreach mission of providing easy access to NGO information world-wide. The Committee's website can also be used as a link to all other relevant UN core activities. It will be especially useful to NGOs who are unable to attend the annual conferences. It should also be noted that the *NGO Reporter* is now posted on the website. It remains available in print format. The afternoon session included representatives from three NGOs who were selected for their organizations' innovative approaches to spreading the UN message to their staff and to the public. Topics of discussion included list serves, press releases, newsletters, websites, and personal commitment. An important point stressed by the NGO presenters was the need to involve youth and to spread the word to members of the younger generation. This session provided an opportunity for considerable audience participation. Following each session, evaluation surveys were distributed. They are of great value in planning future communications workshops. - *Karen Andrade and Lester Wilson*

### NGO REPORTER

#### EDITOR

**DORRIE WEISS**

*Economists Allied for Arms Reduction*

*Associate Editor & Layout*

**Patrick Sciaratta**

*Friendship Ambassadors Foundation*

#### Contributors

**Karen. P. Andrade**

**(with Lester Wilson)**

*Milano Graduate School of Non Profit Management*

**Fannie Munlin**

*National Council of Negro Women, Inc.*

**The Executive Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations  
Associated with the United Nations Office of Public Information**

*Please leave comments and suggestions in Executive Committee box  
in UN Resource Center or email [DorrieWeiss@aol.com](mailto:DorrieWeiss@aol.com)*

It must coordinate efforts to prevent terrorism, but it cannot condone human rights violations that are committed under the pretext of combating terrorism. It must try to provide assistance to countries in the throes of upheaval while trying to protect its own personnel from death, the ultimate violation of human rights. It must withstand the pressure from member States that try to wedge narrow partisan agendas into the universal dictates of the UN Charter. In short, it must try to protect all of us while fighting for its very life to protect itself.