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Centre for Human Rights

Global Consultation on the Realization of the  
Right to Development as a Human Right

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"The role of education in the promotion of  
development as a human right"

Document submitted by the World University Service

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Declaration on the Right to Development is obviously not a new theory or model for development. Nevertheless it is a progressive departure from the traditional concept to view development as merely a right of the nation state. The right to development is of course a right of the nation state as well, which is not often respected or adhered to by the international structures or institutions. However the central importance of the Declaration, as WUS sees it, is the recognition of development as a human right i.e. a right of the human person which also implies inter alia the necessary responsibilities of the nation state as well as the international community in ensuring that right.
2. The recognition of development as a human right is important at least in three counts. First it can create a necessary psychological condition to motivate people for development if the message is communicated through necessary and effective educational and awareness building initiatives. This is badly lacking in many developmental efforts, in our opinion, and the objective of this effort should be to ensure peoples' participation on an active and voluntary basis.
3. Secondly the concept of development as a human right presupposes certain duties and responsibilities on the part of the nation state, as spelled out in the Declaration, to guarantee progressively necessary conditions and/or minimum standards to achieve development on the part of its citizens and peoples. These minimum standards are commonly known as basic human needs. Therefore the concept of development if it were only a claim before, becomes a duty on the part of the nation state. Positive state action, as it may required at a given situation, is central to the whole concept of right to development.
4. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly the concept of development as a human right poses itself as a common global cause and challenge and places much more responsibility on the part of the international community to ensure that right to its so far deprived members in different corners of the globe. From mainly a bilateral sphere, the development efforts and questions of aid and assistance turn into an international responsibility if we were to take the concept of development as a human right seriously.
5. Of course one can strongly argue against the whole concept of right to development as a human right and perhaps come to almost diametrically opposite conclusions on all three points stated above. However WUS believes in the concept and considers the importance of the present global consultation within the responsibility of the international community to work out proposals for its realization. There are many other merits of the Declaration which will be addressed later in this paper. However it warrants some introduction to WUS at this stage to link our views to the question more closely. This paper does not attempt to address the concept of sustainable development and the essential need to see economic and social development and environmental concerns as mutually reinforcing and not in any way antagonistic. However, WUS believes the management of resources sustainably must form an integral part of development. ( see annex )

## WUS AND RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

6. World University Service(WUS) is an international, non-governmental organization focusing on education. It is made up of a network of national committees and contacts in 60 countries which involve academics and students in its international programmes. Since its foundation in 1920 under the name of European Student Relief, the organization has undergone considerable transformation. An initially European focus was gradually replaced by an international one, as committees were established in Africa and Asia, and later in Latin America. Renamed World University Service in 1950, the organization began to take on its present form. An exclusive concern with the universities evolved into a policy linking the education resources of the universities to the needs of the community especially in the third world.

7. The objectives of WUS are mainly two fold. On the one hand WUS is committed to resist all forms of undue interference in freedom of teaching, study and research. It is from this objective that WUS derives its present programme on academic freedom and adopted "the Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education" at its General Assembly in September 1988. On the other hand WUS ventures to promote the social role of the university and to ensure that academic communities are involved through its national committees and contacts in the solution of the problems which face society; through this process, and the full participation of the majority in a democratic decision-making process, WUS believes a just society is encouraged and economic, social, cultural and political development promoted on the basis of the needs and cultural values of the whole population. It is on the basis of this objective that WUS sponsors and/or implements a variety of projects and programmes including community development, women's programmes and training/education.

8. The interlinkages between development and human rights has been a constant concern and a discussion point within the organization for over a decade now. Two major international workshops focused on the subject were: " Education, Human Rights and Development" held in Harare, August 1982; and " Aid and Development in Crisis: What Role for Education" in Nantes, July 1984. Within one year of the establishment of the Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Right to Development in 1981 WUS as a non-governmental organization discussed the issue of the right to development at its Harare international workshop in August 1982.

9. Two experts who facilitated the discussions at the above workshop were Konrad Ginther, Professor of Law at the University of Graz, Austria and Ramendra Trivedi, Director of the Human Rights Institute of Lucknow, India. Ginther analyzed the concept of right to development within the " three generations of rights" and argued that the third world was the rightful protagonist of the right to development. Trivedi contested the above interpretation and argued "if the first and second generation of human rights were enforced, development would result". The workshop considered the right to development as a composite right, to mean a symmetry between both civil and political rights on the one hand and the economic, social and cultural rights on the other. Ginther suggested that means had to be found to implement the right and warned that "if this were not done... the third world would take up arms and enforce the right to development by military means".

10. As a "foot note" it should also be mentioned that Ginther suggested that WUS should consider preparing a draft declaration on the right to development which could be submitted to the Working Group on the Right to Development, a suggestion which never materialized for various reasons. The discussions at the above workshop obviously reflected the perceptions on the question at its initial stages of international debate and could nevertheless be useful for some of the discussions of this consultation.

### EDUCATION AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION: SOME EXPERIENCES FROM PROJECTS

11. WUS implements through its national committees a manageable number of short to medium term, small scale developmental projects in the fields of community development, women's activities and training/education. Although the experiences of these projects cannot be exaggerated some are perhaps indicative of the problems encountered in the realization of the right to development. All cannot be related but some experiences from Bangladesh can be taken as an example. Since mid 1980s WUS has been implementing four developmental projects with five other developmental/educational activities. The projects were: "Rural Poultry Development Project"(RPDP) in Mymensingh; "Rural Manpower Training Project" in Jurain; "Target Group Oriented Rural Development" in Rajshahi; and "Low Cost Health and Sanitation Project" in Jahangirnager.

12. RPDP in Mymensingh was the largest and most challenging of the above projects which attempted to cover 70 villages in a poultry vaccination programme and to introduce a new mixed poultry breed to the villages. The idea of a mixed new breed was scientifically sound which originated from local experimentations. Technical skills and knowledge necessary to implement the programme was forthcoming from university professors and graduate students of the Mymensingh Agricultural University. Finances were granted for five years by DANIDA.

13. However the project encountered major problems for the lack of an educational component, a motivational programme and most importantly for lack of popular participation. The village poultry keepers were women but this aspect had initially been neglected. The project was completely overhauled as a result of continuous evaluations by WUS and DANIDA with the participation of the target group, the village women. When women were motivated and trained as the subject group they not only learned how to manage a small poultry farm but also how to vaccinate poultry and even to make a living as poultry vaccinators.

14. The other problems that the project encountered were the lack of managerial type skills at village level and knowledge on the part of villagers as how to utilize available public infrastructures for their economic activities. All these point to the importance of education in the process of development. It is also through education that people could learn how to deal with the village bureaucracy and power structures in their efforts to assert the right to development.

15. Problems are unavoidable in any development effort. Perhaps what can save them is the method of evaluation and continuous monitoring. Evaluation should take two main forms, material and behavioral, in assessing the progress in the right to development. This matter again will be dealt with at the end of this paper while making some suggestions on possible criteria and mechanisms for identifying progress. Sufficient to say here that WUS is now particularly interested in undertaking projects based on those experiences which combine development with community education and peoples participation. A project of this type is the "Community Education and Mobilization for Development" which was planned by the Consumer Association of Penang(CAP) in conjunction with WUS to be implemented soon in Penang, Perak and Kedah in Malaysia.

16. The main methodology of the above project is participatory development. It is a process of self-development where self-initiative of the people is the central element. The people concerned or the subject group (in the case of the above project the small fisherman, padi farmers and estate workers) who will investigate and analyze the social reality in which they live, identify their problems and initiate various action processes to tackle these problems with the assistance of the project. The basic assumption of this project is that the people are creative but social structures have denied opportunities for people to express their creativity and to assert their right to development. The CAP has a wealth of knowledge in initiating these kind of activities to motivate people to assert their right to development in many spheres of life in Malaysia.

#### SOME COMMENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION

17. The Declaration on the Right to Development represent only a broad policy and legal frame work for its realization. Admitting its abstract nature the Declaration in its Article 10 prescribes further steps including the formulation, adoption and implementation of policy, legislative and other measures at the national and international levels. One initial step can be towards giving broadest publicity to the Declaration and its main principles at the national and local levels. This could be in the frame work of the world public information campaign on human rights.

18. The most innovative aspect of the Declaration as mentioned in the beginning of this paper is its recognition of the right to development mainly as a right of the human person. Several core principles of this concept runs through several articles of the Declaration: Article(1); Article 2(1&2); Article 3(1); Article 6 (2&3); and Article 8 in full. These sections perhaps written in a more lucid way could stand as a "Peoples Charter" to assert their right to development. Any popular education programme on the right to development could use these principles as its basic guidelines. It is also important that these principles go into national legislation and the relevant sections are followed by all national development programmes.

76

19. The right to development as a right of the nation state derives, in WUS's opinion, from the right of nations to self-determination. This is a political principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations itself. Article 1(2) of the Declaration has much relevance in this regard which incorporates the nation's right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources. The realization of the Declaration in its international dimension requires among other things increased international cooperation; the promotion of a new international economic order; steps towards eliminating flagrant violations of human rights like apartheid; complete disarmament and new thinking on North South cooperation in the context of emerging cooperation between the East and the West.

20. The Declaration places much responsibility on governments in implementing the principles. However given the Declaration's abstract nature it may be necessary to work out clear guidelines for the benefit of governments as how to implement the right to development in a tangible way. Technical assistance may also be necessary through perhaps UNDP and other agencies. Needless to say that an increased level of material assistance is required in the form of aid, loans or other assistance to realize the right to development. A rational recycling of trade surpluses can be one measure. A greater degree of restructuring of trade agreements, monetary arrangements and international economic policies are also required. Major restructuring should also come at national levels to avoid corruption, mis-management and lethargy.

#### THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITIES

21. The role of education was intermittently discussed in the previous sections in relation to project implementation and the promotion of the Declaration itself. However there is a general role that education and universities in particular have and could play in the realization of the right to development. The right to education is a part of the right to development. Therefore the realization measures of the right to development should include specific measures to ensure education for all on a better quality and in a free atmosphere. There can be some input from this forum to the "World Conference on Education for All" which will be held in Bangkok from 5-9 March. "Education for all", however, should not be at the expense of higher education.

22. Most of the population in developing countries is young and needs to be educated to fulfill developmental needs with respect for all human rights. Managerial and technical skills at middle level are much needed components in any development effort. Education should be a major priority in a successful development strategy. The more successful developing countries have recognized this, but more often than not education budgets are among the first to be reduced in difficult economic situations. Education should always be closely related to developmental needs and human rights. Education to be meaningful to development and human rights, should be among other things "an instrument of positive social change; should be relevant to the social, economic, political and cultural situation of any given country; contribute to the transformation of the status quo towards the full attainment of all rights and freedoms; and be subject to permanent evaluation". ( "The Lima Declaration" )

23. It is important to ensure academic freedom at the higher educational level as a condition for the right to development. Academic freedom can help arrest brain drain, improve the quality of higher education and motivate graduates for better input to national development and to the promotion of human rights. The "Lima Declaration" can be a major reference document in this respect. Universities and academics could play a unique role in the promotion of the right to development as a human right by being advocates of the concept, researchers and participants of the process at various levels. The study of the Declaration and its promotion can be part of activities of relevant university departments such as economics, sociology, law and political science. There can be special operational research units in universities to undertake research as well as other related activities.

#### CRITERIA AND POSSIBLE MECHANISMS

24. A major objective of the present consultation is to identify criteria to measure progress in the realization of the right to development and to discuss possible mechanisms for identifying and stimulating such progress. The following are some tentative suggestions.

25. The methods of assessment of progress in relation to the right to development can include two criteria, material and behavioral. The material criteria to assess progress should include 1) the level and quality of employment 2) progress in income and income distribution mainly at village level 3) the level and quality of housing and sanitary conditions 4) education indices from literacy to schooling and higher education and 5) indices of health and nutrition especially of children and women. Particular emphasis throughout should be on indices relate to women.

26. The behavioral criteria of assessment above means basically the activity and motivational level of people both in developmental activities and in various public decision making processes. Criteria to assess activity and motivation are difficult to formulate since they relate to micro conditions and inner factors of personalities but can include level and quality of participation in development projects, cooperatives, farmer societies, elections, trade unions, women groups and qualitative measurements of public opinion, morale and attitudes.

27. Mechanisms for assessing such progress at national level could include three year evaluations by multilateral teams composed of representatives of the government, UN Human Rights Commission, donor agencies, the World Bank, universities and NGOs involved in developmental activities. To avoid any superficiality to this top level activity which could possibly end up in interpreting already available official statistics and information the assistance of local universities and research institutes can be sought to be involved on an ongoing basis in the process of evaluation and research.

### ***SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FROM AN NGO PERSPECTIVE***

Expanding on the concept of sustainable development expressed in the policy statement, ICVA member agencies reached consensus on the following objectives for the pursuit of sustainable development, which were endorsed by the ICVA Governing Board on 29 September 1989:

**"Non-governmental organizations support a participatory development strategy that manages natural resources so that, within a context of social justice, they provide for the basic human needs of today while ensuring the resources of tomorrow.**

**To achieve this, development planning must:**

- recognise that people are the core of sustainable development both as actors and beneficiaries;
- promote environmentally sound food production and agricultural policies that enhance food security and self-reliance;
- meet energy needs designed to meet human needs while minimising environmental destruction;
- conserve essential natural habitats and biological diversity;
- recognise the impact of population on sustainable development and respect the right of access to health and family planning information and services;
- respect and protect the cultural and ethnic quality of peoples;
- recognise the critical role that women play in achieving sustainable development;
- promote financial and technical self-sufficiency through income-generation and appropriate skills transfer;
- recognise the right to basic human needs: health, shelter, education and food;
- respect and facilitate peoples' participation and enhance their capacity to organise so as to achieve self-reliance in development."

From "Documents In Development, 1981- 1989, presented to the General Conference of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies(ICVA), 3-8 December 1989.