

**LINKING & LEARNING PROGRAMME
ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
- LATIN AMERICA -**

2 – 10 NOVEMBER 2006

QUITO, ECUADOR

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

ORGANISED BY:

CENTRO DE DERECHOS ECONÓMICOS Y SOCIALES

COHRE - AMERICAS PROGRAMME

DECA - EQUIPO PUEBLO

DIGNITY INTERNATIONAL

SOCIAL WATCH

WITH THE SUPPORT OF:

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PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

A. Summary of the Project

Eradicating poverty is one of the biggest human development challenges of today. In an attempt to combat poverty, the world leaders have agreed to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half, by the year 2015, as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and International Development Targets (IDTs). To meet the targets, it is necessary to engage in a serious examination of the processes of impoverishment. A search for a far-reaching framework that will truly address the root causes of poverty is required. Indeed, global poverty cannot be eradicated by isolated projects alone, it can only be achieved through the adoption and implementation of consistent policies rooted in human rights, at the national, regional and international levels.

Human rights provide a framework to tackle the root causes of poverty. Increasing awareness of human rights can strengthen and invigorate efforts for social change, as people learn what obligations and commitments their governments have made to ensure the realisation of human dignity for all.

Dignity International has a significant experience in capacity building in Human Rights. In collaboration with several other international organisations working in that same area¹, Dignity has been organising, since 2002, a Global Linking & Learning Programme on Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) Rights and, more recently, on Human Rights in Development.

In 2005, for the first time, a Linking & Learning Programme on ESC Rights for the Latin American region was organised by Social Watch and Dignity International, in partnership with COHRE–Americas Programme and Equipo Pueblo (Mexico). This programme took place in Uruguay, and was born in response to repeated demands from Latin-American groups and organisations over the past 3 years.

Bearing in mind the success of the 2005 programme in Uruguay, which received a tremendously positive evaluation from the participants, as well as the impressive amount of applications received (around 250 to 25 places), the decision was taken of having another programme this year of 2006.

This year's programme, similarly to last year's programme, aims to equip selected participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate human rights in their daily work. The programme is aimed at activists from social and economic justice movements and at those working directly with persons living in poverty. The programme is

¹ Forum-Asia, International Human Rights Internship Program, International Network for ESC Rights (ESCR-Net); People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE) and Hakijamii Trust. These programmes have been counting with the financial support of NOVIB (OXFAM Netherlands) and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

implemented by Social watch and Dignity International, in partnership with Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions - COHRE (Americas programme) and DECA Equipo Pueblo, A.C.

This year, the programme will be taking place in Ecuador - in accordance with the delicate situation of the indigenous populations in the whole region of Latin America, as for example occurs in the Amazon region. Even though the programme aims at offering the participants an overall understanding of ESC Rights, indigenous and gender issues will be transversally explored during the whole programme.

B. Background

At present, people continue live in conditions of extreme poverty - without employment, adequate access to food, shelter, basic education and healthcare. Both in the North and in the global South, people are denied of a life in dignity. The world's picture today it is one of great poverty and deprivation amidst great wealth and abundance. The 2005 MDG Report states that extreme poverty is the reality for more than a billion people in the world today and that hunger and malnutrition affect around 800 million people, who do not have access to food provided with the nutritional properties needed per day. Of the world's total 6 billion inhabitants, and merely considering income, almost 2.8 billion (nearly a half) live with less than 2\$USD per day, and 1.2 billion (a fifth) survive with less than 1\$USD a day (World Bank 2001). If other dimensions of poverty are considered, the world situation, by regions and/or countries is even more negative.

Latin America is the so-called land of contrasts – the world's most unequal sub-continent. Poverty in Latin America goes hand-in-hand with inequality. Latin America is highly unequal with respect to incomes, and also exhibits unequal access to education, health, water and electricity, as well as huge disparities in voice, assets and opportunities. This inequality slows the pace of poverty eradication and undermines the development process itself. In addition, Latin America has been suffering a great deal due to the neo-liberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) also the Inter-American Development Bank.

Latin America is not on track to achieve the MDGs. In accordance with the MDG Report of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the region holds unsatisfactory records on halving poverty, on universalising primary education and on protecting the environment. Extreme poverty is still very high – in the year of 2002, 222 million of Latin American and Caribbean people are considered poor. From these, 96 million live in the streets – which amounts to 18,6% of the population. In 2003, this number raised to 226 million people (ECLAC, 2005).

On the positive side Latin America has a very vibrant and an active civil society. In this region, economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights discussions are placed at a high-level, if compared with other regions of the south and even

when compared with some of the so-called developed nations. Civil society organisations have been playing an extremely important role nationally, regionally and globally to advance discussion and activity around economic, social and cultural rights. Civil society has on record some land-mark achievements, such as presentation of excellent alternative or shadow reports to the UN Committee on ESC Rights. Latin American civil society is also very active in the Inter-American System where organisations have been making significant advances in the area of ESC Rights litigation.

There are also increasing examples of participatory budget processes throughout the continent. Moreover, in Latin America, social movements as well as other more recent movements (such as the indigenous movement) are vocal, and are heard all over the world. Their struggle is now known worldwide and the international attention to their issues have forced many of the governments in the region to take action.

In the last 5 years, the political context has been changing in Latin America. Leaders from social movements have reached top positions – presidential positions – and this has redrawn the social and political scene. Several social movements, as the ones fighting for the right to land, indigenous rights, women’s rights, etc., have seen their claims acquiring a certain level of priority in the governmental agendas. It is indeed important an “independent eye” to demand from the States and their respective Governments the respect and fulfilment of their human rights obligations – it is needed an active and independent civil society strongly assuming its role as “watch dog”.

Although the civil society in Latin America has such a great record, something is still missing. Whilst ‘some’ human rights organisations, development organisations as well as community based organisations, are often indeed strong on economic, social and cultural rights, there is still a need to carry with us a large part of the civil society who do not yet fully use human rights and illustrate to them clear connections between human rights and the struggle for food sovereignty and land reform, the connection between trade union demands and those of esc rights as well as the primacy of human rights over international financial and trade policies.

The Linking & Learning Programme on ESC rights for the Latin American Region aims exactly at filling this gap, by enhancing the capacity of civil society movements and organisations, especially of those working at the grassroots level and not yet fully using human rights, to make connections between their work and human rights and to practically strengthen their work using a human rights based approach. The Programmes aims to provide social movements with the tools necessary to strengthen their work.

The Linking & Learning Programme is organised with the conviction that a human rights framework by empowering the poor and their movements will contribute to establishing the primacy of dignity of individuals over trade and markets and ensure adoption of effective policies and programmes by governments for eradication of poverty.

C. Rationale

Human rights are more than just civil liberties. They are also the rights to food, to adequate housing and to a decent standard of living – the right to live in dignity. In short, ESC rights are human rights - human rights with the same importance and urgency as civil and political rights. Enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the ideal of a free human being – free from fear, from want and from hunger. When ESC rights are not respected, all human rights suffer. The UN Committee on ESC Rights reinforces this idea every time it affirms that poverty is the biggest human rights violation (E/C.12/2001/10).

Interest in economic, social and cultural rights has grown in the past few years. A number of organisations specifically dealing with ESC rights have sprung up and global networks have been formed to encourage communication and exchange on activities related to ESC rights. Realising the potential of a human rights framework in helping to tackle the root causes of poverty, some development NGOs are even beginning to integrate human rights in development work through human rights based approaches. Local organisations and movements working with the poor and socially excluded are taking greater interest in human rights, as their concerns are now increasingly being recognised as human rights concerns.

There is a “hunger” for knowledge of human rights and for what a human rights framework can offer to advance social and development goals. What are economic, social and cultural rights? Who is obliged to do what to realise these rights? What is the meaning of a human rights approach to development? How can a human rights framework help achieve social change? How can we integrate human rights, in practical terms, in our daily work?

By building on existing resources and materials and bringing in creative facilitating methodologies, the programme aims to enable those working with the grassroots communities to effectively use human rights as an empowering framework for their daily activities.

D. Aim of the Programme

The overall goal of this programme is to strengthen the knowledge and skills of those working to empower people living in extreme poverty through the adoption of a human rights framework and thereby contribute to build the capacity of grassroots movements to better promote and defend basic ESC rights.

E. Programme Objectives

- Provide participants with knowledge and a better understanding of human rights and in particular economic, social and cultural rights and their direct relevance and impact on their work;

- Equip participants with the skills necessary to integrate human rights and human rights based approaches in their work;
- Affect change in international policy and campaign work by paying more attention to international human rights instruments and how these help to strengthen our work to tackle the global processes of impoverishment; human rights are legal obligations and not only programmatic aspirations;
- Equip participants with the knowledge indispensable to understand and deal with international human rights instruments – being them declarations, treaties or ‘political objectives’ (as the MDGs);
- Affect change in development strategies to tackle the root causes of poverty through human rights and what this means in the actual programme implementation;
- Provide participants the skills to better understand and make use of instruments of monitoring and evaluation, as statistic data and indicators (quantitative and qualitative);
- Provide a space for the exchange of experiences and ideas in the area of ESC rights and facilitate, where necessary, collaborative action in the sub-regions through appropriate follow-up after the learning programme;
- Create a space of comprehension/understanding and respect of the other – to become aware of the different ways of life of all different groups and communities cohabiting in the whole range of the Latin-American region.

F. Expected Results - Participants will:

- gain additional knowledge and skills on using a human rights framework for poverty eradication and will be able to apply this in their daily work;
- based on the inputs and the experiences shared, develop strategies for strengthening their work in the area of ESC rights;
- plan appropriate follow-up and remain in contact with the other participants and organisers, for joint action and exchange.

G. Project Partners

Centre for Economic and Social Rights – CDES (www.cdes.org.ec)

CDES is an Ecuadorian civil society organisation, founded in 1997, with headquarters in Quito, Ecuador.

CDES vision is one where, in Ecuador and in all countries of the Andes and Amazon region, all economic, social, cultural, environmental and collective rights are no longer forgotten rights, but vital pillars of state action. To achieve that, CDES works on the promotion of ESC Rights amongst social organisations and movements in

order to strengthen the discussion, development and implementation of a socio-economic alternative model - through multidisciplinary research, campaigns, denounces, political lobby and legal aid.

DECA Equipo Pueblo, A.C. (www.equipopueblo.org.mx)

Equipo Pueblo is a Mexican Social Network working for the democratic transition of the country, promoting dialogue and elaborating proposals on the main topics part of the international agenda of social and economic development, of justice and citizenship. Equipo Pueblo Works at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Equipo Pueblo is a well-known democratic actor, with the capacity of mobilising and engaging civil society. The network puts social and economic development, justice and citizenship into the country's agenda, as pillars for the democratic consolidation of Mexico.

Equipo Pueblo works for active citizenship, sustainable development and for an alternative model of globalisation – always from a human rights perspective, especially from the perspective of economic, social and cultural rights.

Equipo Pueblo is based in Mexico City.

Dignity International (www.dignityinternational.org)

Dignity International was founded in October 1999 largely by the communities directly experiencing poverty and social exclusion who felt that there was a need for a global human rights movement that will promote and defend economic, social and cultural rights on par with civil and political rights – a human rights movement that will defend the human rights of the poorest and most vulnerable in our societies.

Our aims are to: empower the affected communities through human rights awareness and enrich the contents of human rights with their input; work with and affect change in the lives of the poorest communities through local, global campaign action; and advance the human rights framework in the overall debate on globalisation, in particular at the World Social Forum. Our activities include a Global Programme in Human Rights in Development, Learning Programmes on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (global and regional programmes - in Mekong, Latin America and others), as well as thematic programmes on Budget Analysis and ESC rights.

Dignity's International Secretariat, at present, operates from Strasbourg, France.

COHRE - Americas Programme (www.cohre.org)

COHRE has set as its challenge to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights and places particular emphasis on securing respect for the housing rights for everyone, everywhere. To achieve this, COHRE has carefully developed a varied work programme, guided by international human rights law, and designed to reach as many people as possible.

COHRE is committed to local and national capacity-building in the area of economic, social and cultural rights and places particular emphasis on securing respect for the housing rights of traditionally disadvantaged groups, including women, children, ethnic or other minorities and indigenous peoples. To this end, COHRE is available to assist non-governmental organisations and government agencies to better promote and protect human rights.

To ensure COHRE activities reach every corner of the world, COHRE maintains three regional programmes: COHRE Asia & Pacific, COHRE Africa and COHRE Americas.

The headquarters of COHRE are located in Geneva, Switzerland. The COHRE Americas programme has its office in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Social Watch (www.socialwatch.org)

Social Watch is an international network of citizens' organisations struggling to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realisation of human rights. We are committed to social, economic and gender justice.

Social Watch holds governments, the UN system and international organisations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty.

Social Watch will achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organisational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.

The international secretariat of Social Watch is hosted by the Third World Institute in Montevideo, Uruguay.

H. Methodology

This programme will use a variety of training methods and combined pedagogical schemes: small group discussions and practical exercises, presentations, case studies, lecture presentation, role play, simulation, brainstorming and other teaching aids, such as video presentations, tape recordings, proverbs, poems and drama.

The process will be participatory, since the learners will be actively involved in their own learning. The principle is learning to learn together, in an enriching intercultural environment. The programme will be based on the needs or expectations of learners and will be structured in a way to facilitate participation. The learning process is based on the assumption that everyone in the programme has a positive contribution to make on the basis of his/her experience and knowledge.

I. Educational Team of the Course

The educational team for this course is composed of facilitators with deep knowledge of ESC rights and with creative skills to facilitate a learning process. The trainers have complementary experience and are recruited specifically to further design and implement this course. It should be expected that the team will reflect gender balance and the cultural, political and geographical diversity of the region.

J. Working Language

The programme will be conducted in Spanish. No translation will be provided. Spanish and Portuguese people should be able to understand each other – it will be necessary to speak slowly and articulately - '*Portuñol*' is accepted.

K. Schedule of the Programme

Arrivals: 2 November

Linking & Learning Programme: 3 to 9 November (inclusive)

Departures: 10 November

L. Profile of Participants

Special attention will be given to organisations which are in the process of taking up human rights in their work or that wish to reinforce their knowledge in ESC Rights. Moreover, due to the already referred particular emphasis of the programme, priority will also be given to indigenous and '*campesino*' organisations and/or organisations which have these groups as the focus of their work.

The programme will bring together 'catalysts' from different countries of Latin America. These persons will be in a position to spread knowledge and skills they have acquired from the programme and to introduce/implement what they have acquired within their own organisations or environment. The number of participants will be around 25.

Whatever networks or movements they come from, all the participants must meet the following selection criteria.

Participants should:

- play an active role within an organisation, movement or community, and plan to continue this work in the near future;
- have their application supported by their organisation/community/group and only one application per organisation will be considered;
- be in a position to act as multipliers within their organisation/community;
- be able to present the context of their work, their way of tackling problems, the challenges they meet and identify;
- have already some qualification or experience in terms of training and project work;
- be committed to attend the full duration of the course;
- be able to work and communicate in Spanish or Portuguese and understand the other (please see working language section above).

Programme organisers will take into account gender balance as well as representation from diverse social and geographical backgrounds (including disadvantaged and minority groups). Priority will be given to women and those coming directly from grassroots organisations. Applications from indigenous representatives will also receive special attention.

M. Financial and Practical Information:

Participation Fee

The organisers will charge a subsidised participation fee of 50 USD. The fee symbolises an institutional or organisational commitment to the learning process.

Travel Expenses

All selected participants are requested to cover their own travel, board, lodging and other incidental expenses. A limited number of scholarships will be available for selected candidates with no alternative financial means to participate.

Scholarships

Please note that no one will be excluded for financial reasons and that limited scholarships will be available for those with no alternative financial means to participate.

Types of scholarships:

Category A: Fee waiver (to waive the participation fee of 50 USD)

Category B: Partial Scholarship - Fee waiver + board & lodging

Category C: Full scholarship - Fee waiver + board & lodging + 80% of the cheapest available economy class travel

HOW TO APPLY

You should fill the enclosed application form. Applications should be sent to Social Watch with a valid signature and stamp from the sending organisation, community or group. Twenty to twenty-five (20 to 25) participants will be selected on the basis of the profile and the overall criteria outline above. All candidates will be informed of their application status by the end of September 2006. The organisers will, then, immediately start arrangements with the selected participants.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS

Application forms should be sent no later than **1 September 2006**.