



# THE WATCHDOG

## In this issue...

- Impressions on the World Summit outcome document
- Reforming the UN: What youth SRR activists can say?; by Med Manzanal
- We should stop that Global Apartheid; by Mirlande Demers
- Chile: a Catholic Mistake; by Moises Russo
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Rights for everybody; by Nadia Ribadeneira
- Some thoughts about the women's movement; by Mirlande Demers

## Impressions on the World Summit outcome document... *What governments had to say about gender, HIV/AIDS and youth*

As the World Summit comes to an end today, one has to reflect on what we have gained and what we have lost. Will this World Summit really be a contribution to society's development and rights, or is it actually a step backwards, or even many steps backwards?

A look at the Summit's outcome document gives us an idea about this. Among the many issues that the document attempts to address - with different levels of success - are those of gender, HIV/AIDS, and "children's" rights.

In terms of gender, the outcome document includes some positive and progressive language. For example, it clearly states the importance and need to end the impunity for violence against women; reaffirms the goal of universal access to reproductive health, as stated in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); the right of women to own and inherit property; equal access to labor protections; the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict; and increased representation in government decision-making bodies.

The outcome document also includes a section on HIV/AIDS, which was grouped together with Malaria, Tuberculosis and other health issues. We were happy to see that the document does include at least some basic language on the need to implement measures to increase capacities of adults and adolescents to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection; as well as the need to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and

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Development (ICPD). Nonetheless, it must also be recognized that the language used in this document is far from as rights based and protective of human dignity as others that these same States have adopted in the past (for example, during the ICPD process, as well as the Beijing process).

When it comes to children's rights, though, the outcome document clearly lacks this progressiveness and rights based approach. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, "children" is everyone up to 18 years old, so this clearly affects youth. Nonetheless, these paragraphs make no mention at all of the need for basic needs and rights, such as sexuality education, access to sexual and reproductive health services and information. Though the document also contains a section on education, which emphasizes the importance of formal and non- formal education, these paragraphs also omit to include any reference at all to these important rights, which are fundamental to the development of any and every person.

This World Summit ends with both high and low notes. But, governments around the world have already committed to the MDGs – they themselves drafted them! We will not forget that, and we will continue to hold them accountable for these minimal goals and for the outcome of the World Summit. They will have to answer to both this and the coming generations!

### **Reforming the UN: What youth SRR activists can say?**

*Med Manzanal, Philippines*

What SRR had to do with UN reform? Before I answer that, let me start by saying that structural change is needed in the reformation of the UN not just management reform, creation of the Human Rights Council, expansion of the composition of the Security council and other institutional partial remedies. I believe that UN reform is such a big issue that should not be left alone to experts and world leaders who by the evidence of history may not carry the interests of the people of the world. Right now, the process is characterized by non transparency, non accountability, absence of democratic participation as evidenced by lack of consultations with civil society, and very taken to the agenda/intentions of those few elites in the highest levels.

We cannot say at this point that we should not look at international institutions to solve global problems for institutions especially can be hostage to hegemonic interests and only proceed to engage it with issues. As civil society, however frustrating and utterly disappointing to see governments play around with people's lives with rhetoric in summits, and however imperfect and coopted these institutions are, the UN remains to be the instrument of world peace and site of international cooperation and not to say various

contestations.

To reclaim the UN to reflect the desires of the “We the peoples” requires more than demonstrations and direct actions but more sophisticated strategies and reflections around what the civil society can do to reclaim it back. Reclaiming back discourse puts us to the notion that it is the people that should be heard, their demands represented, and their interests upheld.

For the civil society needs a stronger, more effective UN to stand up to the aggressive and blatant attack of the fundamentalist States now than ever, it is tremendously important that civil society works out vigorously in that department so that the reshaping is done in our favor.

There are limitations to what the civil society can do about this for the climate of openness has now ended. But the good old-fashioned coordination with all the initiatives around this process can move forward projects in a more effective way.

The sexual and reproductive rights movement as part of the broader rights movement relies on the UN to keep its commitments from all the consensus documents crafted in the 1990s. These commitments have been endangered and will never ever be realized if the UN buckles down from unfriendly pressures and challenges within and without. The rights regime must be ensured and must be protected and championed by the UN and we really count on the UN to do that. It's a total shame to see it otherwise.

### **We should stop that Global Apartheid**

*Mirlande Demers, Canada*

I was a reporter for the "*Economic and Military Violence-International Monetary Funds/ World Bank policies: Two Sides of the same Coin?*" work shop during the *Civil-Society Forum of the Open Un*. What came out of the resource persons speeches and the dialogue with the participant, was that the life of a human being in that world is shaped by the race and the place where you are. They speak about a global apartheid because the major part of the world which are poor, are people of colour or indigenous people and those people don't have access to the decision making process, they are not represented in those institutions which are taking the decisions for them. The main instrument of that global apartheid is the international debt. That's the minority of mostly white male that are taking decision for the majority of the south people economically poor, especially women, youth and children. Even the black people of United States receive different treatments that's the white people have received.

*The quarter of the world debt from the south country was used by dictatorship such in Congo, Argentina, Indonesia, South Africa to oppress, kill, kidnap and rape the population.*

*We called those debt odious.* An other odious debt example is Haïti and the impact of that debt is terrible. The government, because of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) and now the poverty reduction facilities, has to follow the conditions of the loan of the World Bank or the IMF. For example, Haïti is not allowed to invest in his health care system and has privatized it since, it has the highest rate of the women dying when they are giving birth. These women in "Cit  Soleil " the biggest slum in Port-au Prince-Haiti, because the water system is privatize, have to wash their babies in an open sewer . The other debt are illegitimate because they were not used for the population, many government put the money in their pocket and the IMF and the World Bank was aware of it. When those countries received theirs first loan, the interest rate was 4 time smaller that it was 1 year, which is illegal. The IMF and Worl Bank didn't have the right to change the interest rate throught the exchange. Since then, the debt is illegally growing and the countries have already reimburse many time what their received. Each year, the continent of Africa, Asia, Latin America and Carribeans are refunding 3 or 4 times what they received in loan.

In Ghana, because of the privatization or the health system, many women have to go in jail after they give birth because they are not able to pay the fees at the hospital. Also, some babies are kidnapped because theirs mothers are not able to afford the fees. In South Africa, the privatization of the water system and the electricity system when 40% of the population is unemployed doesn't work. Those people lose their drinkable water access, their possibility to cook and to do their work. South Africa has to reimburse 79\$ billions for the debt and a big part of it was contracted during the apartheid regime. They invest only 3 billions \$ in they health care system when they got 20% of their population with HIV. In Senegal, the children and the youth are going to school only one day or an half of a day on two and that's a policy of the World Bank.

Finally, even the 18 countries which the G-8 has promised to cancel totally the debt, will have, if that promise is not broken by the IMF and World Bank meeting, to follow the conditionalities closed to the SAP. Those countries will have to privatize their health care and education systems, they will have to open their markets, cut in the labour rights, no environmental protection, so on and so on... . All of that will take out of those countries their own sovereignty. Unfortunately, the youth and the women of those countries will not have theirs sexual and reproductive health's rights fulfilled. The population of those countries is asking for the total cancellation of the debt of the south countries. **Let's stop that global Apartheid!!!**

### **Chile: A Catholic Mistake**

*Mois s Russo, Chile*

Perhaps there is no country in the world where the influence of the Catholic Church is as deep as it is in Chile. And no country in the world where the Catholic Church has made so many mistakes in its inevitable movement towards extreme conservatism and away from the real world its followers are living. (Unless we think of the Vatican, which I doubt it falls under the definition of country, and where all three powers of the state are controlled by the same person. What difference we could have if they had a standard separation of powers! And how better things would be if they had some checks and balances in their policies, instead of just following the ravings of a single man!).

For the past few years, the public discussion in the field of sexual and reproductive rights in Chile has had little changes. The condom is still criticized by the church, which has sank every governmental policy aimed at massive education of the population on its use and the risks you face when engaging in sexual intercourse without it. The church has continued to blatantly disregard the population's safety in favor of an erroneous interpretation of its own holy scriptures, that regards sexual intercourse as a means to reproduction, a posture widely criticized by theologians, and which has no support in catholic holy books, much less on laypeople.

Sexual minorities' rights in Chile have been spoken against over and over by the Catholic Church, which as an institution has decided that the trampling of sexual rights is a priority, leaving behind the always "treacherous" ways of love and respect. Can the population trust and institution that preaches about love, and on the other hand believes in the denial of harmless ways of life? An institution that forgets the poor and stands side by side with the rich and powerful, on a crusade to make people believe that homosexuality is abominable, and that the denial of natural sexual impulses is a virtue? It is a mistake the Catholic Church seems not to be willing to recognize, furthering the abyss between the formal views of the institution and the differing views of both Catholic theologians and laypeople. The result is a contradictory, internally divided, heterogeneous religious tradition, which every day moves further away from its initial course. The result is a powerful rights trampling machine, which could have been the front runner in a race towards love and free will.

Chile is probably one of the best run developing countries in the world, but only in numbers. We still have much to do on the road to separating church and state. There is still much room we have to claim for personal conscience and autonomy, and it falls not only to those of us who don't belong to the church to make this change. We know thanks to Liberation Theology that changes are still possible inside the church, or at least, that there are people willing to make changes. In no way do I mean to eliminate the church, this is just a call to make it more humane, and to shorten the gap between its hierarchy and its members. Just a call to have the Catholic Church share my country with those of us that believe different, and letting us chose our own way to heaven, be it here or elsewhere.

*Nadia Ribadeneira, Ecuador*

The sexual and reproductive rights are human rights and they are recognizing like that inside all the International Treatments like the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo- 1994), IV World Conference of Women (Beijing- 1995), CEDAW (The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), MDGs (Millennium Development Goals- 2000), etc.

Ecuador has signed the most of this treatments and it has compromise to fight defending the sexual and reproductive rights, specially the women rights, creating, modifying and regulating a lot of laws for guarantee the clumpish and the apply of this rights. Also, our Political Constitution has recognized at the Ecuador like a secular state (without a church's influences) !Everything so far away of the reality!!!! Because even a lot of laws protect the SSRR, the violation against those are a common situation that affects in particular at all the vulnerability population, mainly because the Catholic Church (since the Conquest Period) has been a very strong power inside the Ecuadorian State, influence directly in all the government decisions, affecting and controlling 12 million lives.

For prove this situation just is necessary analyzed this recent case.

After long years to fight, groups of Ecuadorian feminist women's gets to obtain, few months ago, an permission gives by the Health Public Ministry for sailing without restraint (in almost all the drugstores at the country) the Next Day Pill also called like "Postinor". Immediately the most conservative sectors of ultra right, including the church, began a dirty campaign against this contraceptive method, argue that this pill is abortive and cause terrible effects like a very cruel died of the baby.

For the dirty campaign the church utilized photos with fetus cripples with the objective of scaring people and put at all the population against the Next Day Pill

The church also utilized apocalyptic and ultra conservative speeches, (at the same way of the Holy Inquisition).

The Catholic Church is not only against the Next Day Pill, It's against all the sexual and reproductive rights, pretending pass by all the International Treatments and not recognized at Ecuador like an the secular state.

Few months later, the process (begins by the Catholic Church) for determinate if the Postinor will be take out of the market was been negotiate in the Constitutional Tribunal, but now the process is stopped by the political instability that the Ecuador lives. And like always, the women's are who paid the consequences.

Like this, there's another examples in which the sexual and reproductive rights are been violated. One of this is the right of decide freely about our sexual orientation.

In Ecuador, the LGBTQ person lives in a permanent fight, defending your right to be respected like everybody, with the same rights and the same responsibility that an heterosexual person has.

The young mothers are rejected in the most of the educative establishments (publics or privates) having to left the school. This situation take place even our Politic Constitution said clarify that all the person has the right to study, no matter the situation or the condition.

Most of the time, the young mother never finished the school and never gets a good job.

This happen at the same time that young people, mostly of the rural sector, they can't not access for a complete, scientific, without taboos, without discriminations and without prejudices information about your sexual and reproductive rights. The consequences are that annually 35% of the framers woman's and indigenous woman who has between the 15 and the 25 year old becomes in adolescent mothers, and 700 young people between 12 and 25 years old has been infected with HIV-SIDA and other diseases.

All these problems go on because in the moderns occidental societies (specially the Latin America societies) are been constructs in a way that shut out the minorities groups like: women's, children, young people, ethics minorities, LGBTQ groups, etc.

The occidental societies were building for heterosexual and white mans with power and money. This mans control our world and control our live also. This mans create the laws and determinate what is good or what is bad, what is correct or what not, and they defending you benefit, sacrifice the entire humanity destiny.

But what can we do for changing this situation? Long time ago this was an important question for me and until now continues be the most important question for me, but I think that finally after read the Héctor. P. Agosti phase took of his book *El Hombre Prisionero* (The Jails Man) Finally I found the answer: "*Toda vida merece ser vivida, pero es menester vivirla para cambiarla*" (All live has to be lived, but is necessary life for changing the live).

Now more like never I'm convinced that is necessary fighting for change the world and build in a better place for everybody.

That's why I'm part of the YC and that's why with another women's group we create "Mujeres Resistiendo", a small urban activism group that works defending the young women's rights.

It's all about changing the World, because it's fundamental and urgent, especially in a country where the 20% of the population lives with less of one dollar per day, particularly in a diverse country where most of the 95% of the Ecuadorian people don't represent the hegemonic model of the white, heterosexual man with money and power.

### **Some thoughts about the Women's movement pre-report about the MDGs process + 5 and the UN reform**

*Mirlande Demers, Canada*

Some women are happy to see that finally gender based violence is include in the outcome document of the UN meeting and they got also 2 paragraphs on women in conflict. It seems that they got a repeal of the laws on discrimination against women which is great. Also, the ressources for the human rights reporter will be doubled. There is very strong statement on human rights. They have hope for the peace building coalition. That peace building coalition seems to be interesting but we don't know who's gonna take care of it. Unfortunately there is nothing on disarmament. The UN has a responsibility to react and to reconstruct after a conflict . There is a paragraph on the disabled people with recognition of

the need for them to be guaranteed the full enjoyment of their rights without discrimination and the need of the comprehensive draft convention on the rights of the disabled people.

Otherwise, the women think that we need a lot more than the MDGs. We understand that this paper is only the minimum that we can ask for. Actually, the international geo-political situation is really bad even at the regional level, so that's hard to advocate for the women's right and to reach a consensus. The women's movement is really disappointed by the fact that the civil society didn't have access to the meeting with the heads of states.

Some women from the south think that the UN are a way to much New York focus which means that feels left out. Some women think that even some governments are not satisfied by the process and they also think that the process will not go further. Some women's groups have concerns about the human right commission. On gender equality, they gain the land's rights but not the property rights. On the sexual and reproductive health's rights, we just have the assurance that the access of the reproductive health.

Finally, all of that process is a reflection of the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.

Working internationally for Sexual and  
Reproductive Rights

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