

## 8. Combat HIV/AIDS

## 9. Listen to children and ensure their participation

## 10. Protect the Earth for children.

❖ Representatives of Governments who participated in the Special Session, which included Australia, agreed to develop, *by the end of 2003*, a national plan of action with a set of specific time-bound and measurable goals in order to achieve the above objectives, which are based on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

### So the question arises: what is Australia doing about this?

When, late last year, a member of Amnesty International Victorian Branch's Children's Rights Group wrote to the Hon. Larry Anthony, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, asking about the development of the Plan, she was informed that the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) was undertaking its preparation, and that 'key stakeholders' would be consulted. This has since been reiterated in a face-to-face meeting with Ms. Suzan Thomas, Director, FACS recently.

Larry Anthony committed to a National Plan of Action (NPA) at a regional forum held in Bali several months ago and an intergovernmental task force has been established to work out how to proceed with the NPA and government departments on the task force include: FACS, DIMIA, AG's Dept, DFAT, Health and Aging, Employment and AusAid. They had not at that stage decided on how NGOs would be consulted or involved in the drafting of the NPA or how children would participate.

Amnesty International, the Victorian Branch Children's Rights Team, and DCI are asking to have input into the Plan by reading and commenting on a draft and stressing the importance of asking children for their opinions. The Plan is a very important document, able to set standards against which behaviour towards children can be measured.

DCI urges the Australian government to develop and consult on the plan.

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## ILO and Child Labour

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Update from the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Disabilities

Following is a summary of the opening session which took place on June 17th. Discussion at the meeting was about the principle of non-discrimination and equality from a disability perspective.

### ACCESS: Think About It

Presently, the UN is considering adopting a Convention on Disabilities. As part of the process, the UN has undertaken a process to improve access to its own facilities. Process is about change and it is fair to say that since last year's Ad Hoc Committee meeting, there has been change. For example, this session, unlike the last, we have from the beginning a more accessible meeting room and some communication accommodations.

As with any process, there is considerable room for improvement. Were it not for the Convention process, there would not have been this level of understanding at the UN Headquarters about the issue of access for persons with disabilities. Similarly, the international human rights framework can benefit from this understanding.

When we talk about the Convention, we say we need it to:

- provide an immediate statement of international legal accountability regarding the human rights of people with disabilities
- clarify the content of human rights principles and their application in the context of people with disabilities
- provide an authoritative and global reference point for domestic law and policy initiatives
- establish independent mechanisms for more effective monitoring of the rights of people with disabilities, including reporting

on the enforcement and implementation of the new convention as well as existing international instruments

- ensure public dialogue and accountability for human rights situations
- ensure that the human rights of persons with disabilities are equally prioritized
- provide a tool for advocates to help bring about changes in legislation and implementation of progress in human rights
- contribute to the prioritization of the rights of persons with disabilities in national and international agendas.

Principally, it is an opportunity to raise awareness about the human rights of persons with disabilities and place this on the agendas. This in turn, provides opportunities for government, disability organizations and people with disabilities to build knowledge that results in the improvement of the lives of people with disabilities. It is about education, and the evolution of understanding.

Dr. Robert H. Nagel, member of the UNESCO Experts Council on People with Special Needs and chairman of the UN's Central Communication Committee's Subcommittee on Communication for Persons with Disabilities, has experienced first-hand how much accessible technology can vastly improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. It wasn't until halfway through his life that he learned that he had a disease which would eventually leave him completely without vision. Through the upcoming World Summit for an Information Society, he hopes to promote the importance of integrating accessibility into the fundamental design of technology – both as a cost-effective measure and an indispensable part of equalizing the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities. For example, the actual cost of the captioning systems that are automatically included in the design of modern televisions is a mere penny per television produced. The integration of the system into the fundamental design of the product means that accessibility is incredibly cost-efficient, as opposed to the installation of captioning systems into already-existing equipment, which may take thousands of dollars. Nagel points out that such integration will provide persons with disabilities with access to the rights they are entitled to and help make it possible for persons with disabilities to be viewed as assets,

rather than liabilities, as their access to working opportunities is improved and the cost of such access is lowered.

There are an estimated 400 million persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. The majority are poor and have been excluded from the benefits of ICT development due to the lack of appropriate or affordable technology for persons with disabilities. More effort, including implementation of disability-concerned regional plans of action and programmes, should be made to ensure equitable access to ICTs for persons with disabilities.

In more recent years a movement known as “Universal Design” has evolved. Universal design is based on the principle that the built environment, communication and products should be accessible to the widest range of people possible. Universal design is different from accessible design in that accessible design creates products and environments for people with disabilities, which often tend to segregate people [by] creating separate systems. Universal design is considered to be usable and inclusive to all, including people with disabilities.

Although the concept of universal design is well documented, the unique design needs of persons who are blind and partially sighted have not always been fully considered or incorporated into the built environment.

### **International Labour Conference, 91st Session, June 3-19, Geneva, Switzerland: A Child Labour Analysis**

The 91st session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva had as its main focus of discussion the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Through a four-year cycle of Global Reports, every year the Conference analyses one of the four main principles of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Elimination of discrimination is the last of the first four-year cycle.

The Global Report entitled “Time for Equality at Work” was presented to the Conference plenary

on June 13. The focus was on the cyclical relationship between poverty and discrimination. The main goal was to analyse the possible social consequences of discrimination related to employment and to identify the means to avoid consequences and guarantee protection. The Report made it clear that discrimination related to employment often reduces parents' opportunities to access the job market and the consequences are particularly borne by the children.

The Reports of the Director General and the Governing Body were also presented to the Conference in the plenary. The Report of the Director General entitled "Working out of Poverty" looks at child labour as "both a cause and symptom of poverty" which has to be tackled through "an integrated, gender-sensitive, family-centred strategy" (p.10). Partnership between different groups and at different levels must be a key component, while replication of community-scale initiatives at a broader level should be encouraged. All these ingredients and others (especially the provision of education for children and employment opportunities for adults) are essential in the Time-Bound Programme (TBP), in which a set target is achieved within a specific timeframe.

The Report of the Governing Body included the outcome of the examination of IPEC's work in 2002. It emphasised the momentum of the first World Day against Child Labour and the new statistics and Global Report on child labour presented at the 90th session of the Conference. The tendency to shift towards provision of technical advice for ILO member States to formulate their own legislation and policies and the importance of the Time-Bound programmes were also highlighted. In fact, the TBP were launched in Salvador, Nepal and Tanzania during 2002.

In the discussions of the Governing Body and DG's Reports numerous countries mentioned child labour as one of the priority areas in the Decent Work Agenda. Specific attention was drawn on child labour and related Conventions in the following countries: Kenya and India.

Kenya spoke in relation to Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age), 1973. In particular, they highlighted the efforts of the Government in revising the country's

labour law. An important element of the new legislation would be the rising of the minimum age for employment to 16. Within this framework, the Government has issued several protection policies, and in particular in the education sector making primary education "truly free and compulsory" (p.63 of the Report).

As for India, the focus was on Convention No. 29: Forced Labour, 1930. The Committee praised the Indian Government's efforts to reduce the high number of children in hazardous child labour, child bonded labour and prostitution. The Committee noted that there is also a very large presence of children in the informal sector and urged the Government to strengthen the legislative apparatus, the capacity of data collection and to continue introducing socio-economic measures to combat the problem.

All the reports submitted to the Conference may be found at: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc91/reports.htm>

## **2nd World Day Against Child Labour: 2nd June**

According to the ILO, 246 million children are child labourers and 171 million children aged 5 to 17 are in hazardous occupations. The highest proportions of child labourers are found in Africa, followed by Asia and Latin America. The ILO and the world community celebrated the **2nd World Day against Child Labour** to raise awareness about the millions of children who are forced to work in dangerous conditions, cannot go to school and are not in the position of enjoying their rights.

On June 12 the ILO and the world community celebrated the 2nd World Day against Child Labour. This year's celebrations focused on trafficking of children worldwide. The ILO estimates that 1.2 million children are trafficked every year in different ways and for economic and sexual purposes worldwide. The statistics on the trafficking of human beings for forced labour indicate that children appear to be very vulnerable and more likely to be trafficked than adults, as they can be more easily smuggled and abused.

One event was organised by the ILO event within the context of the International Labour Conference. The session featured as a keynote speaker Her Majesty Queen Rania of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan who condemned the brutal “billion-dollar business”, nurtured by poverty above all, but also lack of education, conflict situations and natural disasters. This modern form of slavery begs for the world to “join hands” said Her Majesty. The problem should be addressed through better education at all levels, training for law enforcement, better rehabilitation for trafficked children and a commitment on behalf of the governments to prevent, protect and persecute.

The action element was illustrated by examples of good practices to prevent and combat child trafficking in different geographical areas: Philippines, Latin America, Togo and the Mekong Sub-Region. One project in the Philippines spots and provides protection to trafficked children. The project has managed to rescue 1,000 victims of child trafficking since January 2001. Another project, the ILO Triple-Boarder Project, is located at the border between Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. Trafficking reaches huge proportions in the area and sex tourism is wide spread.

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## How do governments form meaningful partnerships with children and young people?

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### Save the Children / Save the Children Fund, Canada, 2002

This paper provides guidance on how to involve children and young people in the development of **National Plans of Action** for children (NPAs).

Drawing up these NPAs by the end of 2003 was a commitment made by all governments attending the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. The guidance is provided by children and young people themselves interviewed by Save the Children, Canada in 14 countries around the world.

Previous NPAs for children that have failed have done so due to a lack of involvement of children and young people and the failure to link the goals of the NPAs

to the human rights of children.

Common areas of agreement amongst the children and young people consulted in different parts of the world included:

- They are the people directly targeted by the plans and the most important stakeholders
- They are the people with the most direct experience of the situation of children and they can help governments understand their problems better
- Children are not all the same and governments need to hear the views of different groups of children
- They have a right (contained in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) to be consulted on all decisions which affect them
- Children and young people can - and want to play a part in supporting implementation of the plan they will improve the effectiveness and impact of the plan
- It helps to build democracy and encourages responsibility among children for their lives, communities and societies
- Young people feel they have valuable resources to bring to the processes new ideas and a future-oriented perspective.

The children and young people also wanted to see improvements in the way governments work with them outside of the NPAs:

- Governments must consult with children and young people on their issues and problems and not just when they are on election campaigns
- Children and young people need to know more about how governments work
- and how they can contact the right people
- Governments should set up mechanisms and channels to enable them to consider children and young people’s views
- They should ensure that all children and young people know about them
- Special provision may have to be made for groups of children and young people who find it more difficult to speak to government e.g. children in rural areas, in more remote provinces, children caught up in armed