

Notice
Education for All: From Rights to Reality!

WUSC International Development Symposium Series 1995

"Everyone has the right to education...Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- 1948

Education For All: From Rights to Reality!, is the title for WUSC's development education activities in 1994-95. By focusing on this theme, we hope to stimulate discussion and action on the part of Canadians, and especially students, to promote a more equitable and sustainable world. Since WUSC's inception in the late 1930's, the right to education has been fundamental to our work; by focusing on this theme, we reaffirm the links between education and sustainable development.

As an affiliate of world University Service (WUS), we echo the belief that a holistic vision of Education for All must be understood as a lifelong and permanent learning process covering both formal and informal education. Basic education is a tool that every person has to develop as an individual in society; this is a comprehensive process striving towards sustainable people-centered development.

Education is a basic human right. As a global community, through the legal instruments of the United Nations, most nations have ratified the basic premise established in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. We have recognised the need and established all the beautiful words; the question is do we, as an inextricably linked global community, have the will and the wherewithal to implement the vision of education for all as a human right?

The concern that the goals of the Declaration were not being met, in an increasingly complex world, lead to a series of exchanges, notably the World Conference on Education For All in 1990 in Thailand later followed by a more targeted venue in New Delhi in 1993. The process, far from complete, holds as a fundamental goal to ensure that basic education remains high on the agenda of world leaders and donor agencies.

The world however, presents a different face on the reality of education as a human right. More than 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling. More than 960 million adults, two-thirds of whom are women, are illiterate. More than one-third of the world's adults have no access to printed knowledge, new skills and technologies. More than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes.

The realities are that for many people on both sides of the "development equation",

accessing education is not easy and sometimes impossible. Educational goals of the individual and community are affected by many factors such as inequalities in global economic and political relationships as well as marginalization by class, ethnicity, and gender.

Extreme cases of marginalization, such as those of refugees, occur globally. Specific obstacles such as cultural factors are at play in an already difficult situation when that refugee is female. War continues to disenfranchise many from not only education, but also from a stable and predictable existence.

Neither are we exempt in Canada from problems surrounding access to education. Seven million adults have literacy problems across the nation. Both indigenous communities and minority language groups need to employ specific strategies to not only access education but access appropriate education defined by their own needs. Issues of poverty directly impact the directions that women, in particular, approach education. Economics shape our choices in attaining tertiary education.

Alternatives do exist to empower individuals and communities; learning does happen. Focused on the grassroots, a number of NGOs foster creative programmes to access primary education, vocational training, and literacy. National policy choices directing funds away from high military expenditures to basic education programmes engender growth. Distance education extends access geographically. Popular education techniques also educate locally on social issues such as the reality of AIDS.

Solutions can be challenging at an international, national and local level. Implementation takes political will. How can individuals and communities influence the direction of foreign policy; of aid? How can we get communities involved, concerned and working towards global change?

Education can broadly be interpreted as a process of knowledge acquisition, of ultimate personal and cultural survival; it is not only a basic human right but a lifelong and permanent learning process which is both formal and informal. Basic education acts to develop the individual in society and to further the range of opportunities which can be linked into by the individual. However, the reality is that individual choice is limited by global and national constraints. At WUSC, we hope that this kit is used as a stepping-stone for thinking, discussion and action on attaining the vision of education being accessible to all. This vision is directed to the full development of the human personality, the community, the nation; to the strengthening of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The WUSC Conference at UPEI will be held February 10 to the 12. The two main speakers will speak Friday evening at a public presentation as part of the 1995 WUSC International Development Symposium Services. Their biographies are as follows:

Fatima Freire Dowbor

"Sustainable development requires a change in values and attitudes", so believes Ms. Freire Dowbor who sees education as a basic instrument for change. **Education For All: From Rights to Reality!** is but another avenue for this multilingual educator, born in Brazil, to reach out and effect change.

Interest in constructing "a social mind" in young people has found Ms. Dowbor training at the Institut des Sciences de l'Education (Piaget's Institute) in Geneva; taking courses in Poland at the Warsaw University; in Portugal at the Coimbra University; twice in Brazil at the Catholic University and, of course, being exposed to the teachings and practices of Paolo Freire at an early age.

Currently the Pedagogical Director of the Instituto Educacional Poco do Visconde, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Ms. Dowbor's experience in education has been multifaceted. Ms. Dowbor acted as a high school teacher at the Liceu Nacional Kwame Nkrumah in Guinea-Bissau, as an advisor to the Minister of Culture in that same country and has given countless courses and lectures on education at various institutes. Ms. Dowbor acts as a consultant to a number of schools in Brazil and Nicaragua, and has also toured in Canada under the auspices of the Camrose Institute.

Ms. Dowbor believes in providing the necessary tools to students so that they can empower themselves, work for change and create a sustainable world. In Sao Paulo, her work is directed at correcting an unjust economic and social structure by changing attitudes and behaviours.

John Hardbatt

The theme of **Education For All: From Rights to Reality!** is integral to the work of John Hardbatt with indigenous populations in Botswana. Access to culturally defined education; education pertinent to indigenous lifestyles and guided by indigenous beliefs is a pivotal concern for his community.

The experiences of the N/oakhwe, also known as the Basarwa, the San, and the bushmen are applicable, and perhaps universal to other indigenous peoples internationally.

A N/oakhwe farmer, Mr. Hardbatt spent a significant part of his youth outside of Africa but later returned. Currently, Mr. Hardbatt is in the process of establishing an indigenous non-governmental organization in Botswana at the request of his community. He has linked with other international non-governmental organizations and worked with international partners.

Mr. Hardbatt is committed to improving the lives of his community members and to raising awareness of indigenous international development issues through his work locally, participation in development education activities, international speaking tours, and increasing the profile of indigenous communities through participation in international conferences.

He has distinguished himself as a gifted and eloquent speaker and a committed and dedicated activist for indigenous rights. Saturday's activities will include workshops on the theme of accessibility to education. Lori Palano from the University of Manitoba will make a special presentation on the Global Change Game, a unique initiative created by students at the University of Manitoba to promote development education. The conference will wrap up with a regional meeting on Sunday morning.

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