

International Conference:
Human Rights and Intercultural Dialogue in Development

Paris, 10th December 2012

167 boulevard de la Villette, 75010

Paris Federation of the *Ligue de l'enseignement*

Summary Report

The event began with a welcoming speech held by Mr François Didier, Director of CIDEM (Civisme et Démocratie) who stressed the importance of WTD project to favour multi-stakeholder cooperation at EU level and as a relevant tool to support future projects. The discussions consisted in a reflexion about Human Rights and cultural dialogue towards European citizenship especially through commitment of NGOs and local authorities. In addition, Mr Jean-Pierre Gohel, from Maison de l'Europe in Caen (FR) and Organization Member of the Governing Board of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), explained that its collaboration with ALDA was based on common values diffused through their local democracy agencies which encourage good governance and facilitate citizenship exercise in European countries where rule of law and transparent political institutions are still to be strengthened.

The morning session continued with a round table on linkages between Human Rights and global development which aimed at having a reflexion on a way to have a better international action in the field of development. It was moderated by Ms Antonella Valmorbida, Director of ALDA, and gathered five speakers from different professional backgrounds.

Firstly, Mrs Catherine Lalumière, President of the French Federation of the Houses of Europe, explained that the multiplication of « white elephants », corruption and embezzlement, and the absence of professionally trained administrations able to manage funds were responsible of past development policies' failure. Since development has the paradoxical objective to change funds beneficiaries' mentalities and behaviours while respecting local cultures and rule of law, the question of Human Rights shall be addressed in a larger framework. Development, however, requires the respect of some basic principles of community living where intercultural dialogue is an important tool to pass the message from one culture to another one.

Afterwards, Mr Pierre Barge, Honorary President of the European Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AEDH) tackled development issue from the perspective of identity and culture in democratic process. Identity shall be considered as linked to individual personality beyond any belonging to social groups while culture is a collective creation and not the property of a human being. In a democratic process and development, respect of individual identity as not linked to a fixed social group is necessary, namely to develop participation, a basic element of democracy.

Then, Mr Christoph Eberhard, Professor in Anthropology and Theory of the Law at the University of Saint Louis in Brussels presented his 20-year experience and research in intercultural dialogue in human rights in sustainable localities, two concepts linked to development by essence. Because the issue of governance has become more and more important on political agenda since 90s and that European approach ideal is to combine unity and diversity, a development policy should be thought in a more « glocal » way according to a methodology based on 4 steps: awareness of alterity, understanding complexity, implicit into own mental framework and respect of humanity.

Furthermore, Mrs Cécile Leuba, from Terre des Hommes (France) and member of the CONCORD Human Rights Based Approach Task Force gave a presentation on Human rights based approach to development which can be summarized as a way of thinking development in terms of rights and not in terms of needs, considering Human Rights both as a tool and a goal. Concretely, this approach consists in diffusing international norms into development process so that beneficiaries become actors of their own development. Since it acts on structural causes and on States' liability to international law, this approach can be considered as efficient and legitimate.

Finally, Mrs Mélanie Laudriec, Member of the Steering Committee of the Parlement Européen des Jeunes de France stressed that fundamental rights were a priority of their approach of development while respecting the different definitions of development in each culture. As consequence, new ways of development are still to be created and should be given time rather than trying to reproduce the development process of occidental countries in a shorter time-frame.

The round table ended with a Q&A session from which different positions emerged. Some participants stressed the need for education as the cornerstone of development and making Human rights closer to citizens while articulating with a strong leadership. Similarly, development is not only linked to quantitative elements and some principles have to be respected if we want to reach sustainable economic development. To this topic, a reflexion is needed in link with cultures. Some elements in certain cultures are contradictory to development. In this case, what is crucial to know is the objective one wants to reach : development or respect of local culture that we know is contradictory to development. Moreover, economic development should not be considered as more important than acting to change the living environment because even a sustainable environment is needed to have economic development. So development in other areas than economic field and entrepreneurship should not be considered as secondary or soft business. Last but not least, some participants pointed out that Human Rights were not enough for development and the top-down approach should meet on-the-ground realities.