

GSP Digest

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

At the time of the G8 summit in St Petersburg in July 2006 arguments continued as to whether the G8 was fulfilling its pledge made in July 2005 to double Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2010; whether the increased ODA was new money or double counting of old pledges; and whether it was enough to pay for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The G8 said (<http://en.g8russia.ru/docs/13.html>): We are working hard to deliver on our substantial aid commitments which, with those of other donors, will lead to an increase in ODA to Africa of \$25bn a year by 2010, out of an OECD estimated \$50bn worldwide aid. (...) We have made good progress in lifting the debt burden from the poorest countries. The IMF and IDA have implemented the G8 proposal to cancel 100% of the debts owed by eligible Heavily Indebted Poor Countries and the African Development Fund is expected to implement it soon.

However the World Development Movement

(<http://www.wdm.org.uk/campaigns/debtstrings.htm>) argues of the promised additional US\$50 only \$15 billion is new money; and that the UN estimates that an additional \$50 billion is needed each year starting now: "An extra \$50 billion by 2010 is simply too little, too late and sets a course for failure". In relation to that share of the extra ODA that was to go to ensure there would be universal access to drug treatment for AIDS by 2010, Stephen Lewis, a UN special envoy, speaking at the World AIDS conference in Toronto, said: "the promises made at Gleneagles are unraveling – all of them"¹. Nevertheless, Jose Antonio Ocampo, UN Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, in his foreword to the 'Millennium Development Goals Report of 2006' (<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2006/MDGReport2006.pdf>) suggests that some progress has been made: The challenges the Goals represent are staggering. But there are clear signs of hope. The data (...) suggest that providing every child with a primary school education is within our grasp. The handful of countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are successfully lowering HIV infection rates (...) demonstrates that the war against AIDS can be won. Step by step, we see that women are gaining political participation.

¹ Boseley, S (2006): "G8 accused of failing Africa over AIDS funds", Guardian August 19th

Part of this progress may be due to the growing tendency for donors to channel their ODA through the budgets of developing countries. An Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD:DAC) evaluation of this trend concludes "it has helped to improve access to services like health

and education” (<http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/general-budget-support/>). In terms of measuring how Northern donors perform the Centre for Global Development’s (www.cgdev.org) ‘Commitment to Development Index’ for 2006 demonstrates that Netherlands tops the league in terms of its policies to promote development in poor countries. The USA comes a low 13, because of the small size of its ODA compared with the size of the economy and because a high proportion of its ODA is tied to purchase of USA goods. The same Centre has however published papers sceptical of whether countries can absorb the extra ODA promised², and also sceptical of the extent to which debt relief has actually put new money in country coffers.³

Of more significance in terms of the development of global social policies of redistribution is the progress being made with implementing innovative forms of financing for ODA and global public goods. Following on the Paris Ministerial Meeting held in February (see GSP Digest 6.2) the government of Brazil convened a conference on 6-7 July. This meeting was attended by 40 countries and 20 nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and according to Frank Schroeder of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

(<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/glotax/general/2006/07fesbrasil.pdf>) it “demonstrated that international support for an air-ticket tax (ATL) is moving fast”. Five months after the Paris conference six more countries have signed up making a total of 19. Discussion took place about sharing the funds between the proposed but controversial new International Drug Purchasing Facility (IDPF) to be launched at the UN in September 2006 and the existing and functioning Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The report of the event by David Hillman (Stamp Out Poverty) and Peter Wahl (WEED) (<http://www.cttcampaigns.info/brasil-july06>) noted that the initiative had now become a North-South project, and that in future there will be special sessions a Currency Transaction Tax (CTT) and Tax Havens. They suggest that moves to establish a full International Finance Facility (Gordon Brown’s proposed mechanism to bring forward future ODA via issuing bonds) will not be widely supported. Only a mini (“pilot”) version to fund immunisation programmes will be launched in 2006. In addition to the ATL tax for drugs, the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) borrowing mechanism for immunisation, there is now also a voluntary contribution mechanism, the Global Lottery for the World Food Programme. Concerns remain that the UK has not agreed to pay its Air Passenger Duty of £1billion annually into the IDPF while France has committed \$2billion to the UK-driven IFFIm, and that the new funds might substitute for rather than add to normal ODA contributions. In the run up to the G8 summit there was public squabbling between France, the UK and USA and other countries about which fund to support (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/bwi-wto/g7-8/2006/0707glovaccine.htm>). Norway is to host the next meeting of the group in February 2007.

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Barder, O. (2006): Are the planned increases in aid too much of a good thing? Working Paper No 90 www.cgdev.org/files/8633_file_WP90edited.pdf

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Moss, T. (2006): Will Debt Relief Make a Difference? Impact and Expectations of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. Working Paper No 88 www.cgdev.org/files/7912_file_WP88_moss.pdf Meanwhile the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria has estimated the funds it needs to meet its expected commitments for 2006-2007 as US\$5.5 billion as compared with an existing donor commitment of USA\$ 3.4 billion (http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/files/about/replenishment/resource_needs_2006.pdf). Not confident it will receive all the money it needs from donor pledges and knowing the new global “taxes” will probably go to the new IDPF the Fund has launched a new

Global Awareness Initiative to raise private donations through a “hope spreads” postage or metered mail donations.

(http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/media_center/press/pr_060814a.asp)

Two reports are available evaluating the new trends to global funds and innovative sources of finance for development. Uma Lele, formerly of the Independent Evaluation Department of the World Bank, Nafis Sadik, advisor to the UN Secretary-General, and Adele Simmons, advisor to the World Economic Forum, writing for the OECD, conclude⁴ such global funds might conflict with country led development strategies and that they are of more value when they address genuinely cross border global public goods. The OECD:DAC is to hold a policy workshop in December 2006 examining the relationship of such global programmes to country-lead development strategies. David de Ferranti⁵ asks (<http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/20060720DeFerranti.pdf>): can innovative approaches to mobilizing and utilizing financial resources make a difference in the fight against global poverty? Potentially yes, he argues; however new approaches can be useful additions to the current array of instruments and activities for helping developing countries, but will not be so broadly applicable and effective that the present mainstays will be needed less.

REGULATION

The UN Global Compact (GC) saw the inauguration of a Board to oversee its work. The UN Secretary General appointed the 20 strong board including ten representatives of global businesses or business organisations based in USA, China, Brazil, South Africa, France, Japan, Denmark, Chile, Egypt and India, two of global chambers of commerce (employers), two of global trade unions and four of global civil society.

(http://www.unglobalcompact.org/NewsAndEvents/news_archives/2006_04_20.html)

The first meeting took place in New York on June 28 For this meeting on 28 June a Background Briefing Note was prepared

(http://www.unglobalcompact.org/NewsAndEvents/news_archives/2006_06_28.html).

This reports non-compliance of a large number of companies signed up to the compact but had failed to deliver reports to New York on progress they are making to fulfil the “terms” of the voluntary compact. Of the 1434 member companies who joined before June 2004 and who therefore should have made a Communication on Progress (COP) within 2 years 60% had failed to do so. “A continued lack of communication by more than half of the GC participants poses a serious threat to the credibility of the initiative” (page 42). Among other concerns noted in the report were

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Lele, U/ Sadik N/ Simmons, A (2006): The Changing Aid Architecture : Can Global Initiatives Eradicate Poverty (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/54/37034781.pdf>)

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Ferranti, D (2006) “Innovative Financing Options and the Fight against Global Poverty: What’s New and What Next?” In: Brainard, L (ed) (2006): Transforming the Development Landscape. Brookings Institution Press (pre-publication draft)

examples of unauthorised use of the GC logo and the failure of companies to respond to the GC office relaying complaints received about the activities of such companies. The first Board meeting appears to have taken a don’t-rock-the-boat approach to the voluntary basis of the GC. Working parties were set up including one to explore greater compliance with the COP process. There was debate about how the emerging “Social Responsibility Standard” being drafted by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) related to the GC and to the UN norms and standards underlying the GC.

Events and publications speeded up in anticipation of the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held on 14-15 September. The Secretary General presented his report on 'International Migration Can Benefit Countries of Origin and Destination' (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10476.doc.htm>) to the General Assembly on 6 June. He argued that migration can benefit both countries of origin and countries of destination but only if the rights of migrants are respected and it is a managed process and those countries who benefit don't just lie back and enjoy the benefits without thinking of the possible costs to development (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ga10476.doc.htm>). He concluded his report by calling for the establishment of a permanent forum to share ideas on migration (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10504.doc.htm>). In preparation for discussion at the High Level Dialogue a Symposium was convened by the Population Division of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in Turin on 28-30 June (http://www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration/TURIN/Symposium_Turin.html). Jose Antonio Ocampo delivered an overview presentation on the three themes of the Secretary-General's report. In terms of the third theme 'An Agenda for International Cooperation' he listed: protection of rights of migrants, co-development, a global approach to human capital formation, mutual adaptation of migrants and host societies, combating racism and xenophobia, channelling migration through regularised streams, combating trafficking and improvement of data. Peter Sutherland, the Secretary General's Special Representative on the issue and ex of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), noted the positive examples of inter-country cooperation he had observed since starting his work: the Phillipines, Morocco and Mexico working with their emigrants to protect their rights and leverage their experience and assets, the "blossoming of bilateral and regional cooperation", and governments working with the private sector to reduce remittance transfer fees. The permanent International Forum would encourage best practice and "complement (...) regional consultative processes". Among the papers presented was a comprehensive account by Mary Kritz of the Polson Institute for Global Development at Cornell University on "Globalisation and the Internationalisation of Tertiary Education"(Un/POP/MIG/SYMP/2006/02/Rev). This review did not however address the issue of the global regulation of education service standards and any role that the WTO and GATS might play in that. A paper produced for the American Friends Service Committee (<http://www.afsc.org/tradematters>) by Bjorn Jensen⁶ addresses this issue with regard to the bid by India and other countries to open discussion about how the Mode 4 commitments can be used to

Jensen, B (2006) Labour Mobility and the Global Economy: Should the WTO set Migration Policy. <http://www.afsc.org/trade-matters/issues/LaborMobility.pdf> regulate temporary migration so that, for example, migrants would no longer have to pay social security in home and host countries. The paper concludes that the WTO is not the organisation to regulate these matters and manage global migration. From the OECD is the first edition of the 'International Migration Outlook'. It brings the reader detailed analysis of recent trends in migration movements and policies in OECD countries (http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,2340,en_2649_33931_36770438_1_1_1_1,00.html). From the OECD:DAC is a Working Paper 'Migration Policy and its interactions with Aid, Trade and Foreign Direct Investment Policies' (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/28/37036220.pdf>). From the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Organization for Migration and the International Labour Office comes a 'Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination' (<http://www.osce.org/item/19187.html>).

RIGHTS

The most significant recent event in the field of human rights was the first meeting of the new Human Rights Council held in Geneva 19-30 June

([http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/1524F5A29A4DC535C125719D006D07C9?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/1524F5A29A4DC535C125719D006D07C9?OpenDocument)). This Council was designed to overcome the

shortcomings of the UN Human Rights Commission within which members had used their membership to block criticism of their human rights record. The first meeting was

however largely taken up with procedural business ([http://www.fes-](http://www.fes-globalization.org/publications/InauguralSessionHRC.pdf)

[globalization.org/publications/InauguralSessionHRC.pdf](http://www.fes-globalization.org/publications/InauguralSessionHRC.pdf)). The new Universal Periodic

Review procedure whereby all countries will be reviewed will be elaborated by a

working group set up at the Geneva meeting. The Human Rights Watch has published its

views on how this and other aspects of the work of the new Council should proceed in

“Human Rights Council: No more Business as Usual”

(<http://hrw.org/backgrounder/un/un0506/un0506.pdf>). The South Centre

(<http://www.southcentre.org>) has contributed an Analytical Note (SC/CGDP/AN/HR/1)

on Development and Human Rights and argues that the new Council should adopt a

developmental approach to its work in promoting and protecting civil, political, economic

social and cultural rights, including the right to development. It argues (para 44) The

Human Rights Council must have and exercise the authority to intervene in situations

where historically conditioned structures undervalue the worth of one human being in

relation to another, whether it is based on race, colour, religion, sex, class or origin. How

the Council might intervene in such questions is an operational question, but this matter

must be put on its agenda as early as possible. It is of interest in this context that the

Council convened an emergency meeting in August and passed a resolution condemning

Israel for its assault on human rights in Lebanon with the majority Global South in favour

and all (but Russia) of the Global North against

(<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=19495&Cr=leban&Cr1>).

Global Social Governance

As reported in GSP Digest 6.2 the terms of reference for the High Level Panel on the

United Nations System-Wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian

Assistance and Environment (www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10406.doc.htm)

rather suggest that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will take on a

more central role and hence upgrade its social policy analytical work in helping countries

plan for the MDGs. Policy dialogue between the World Bank and UNDP is well

advanced to ensure the MDGisation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)⁷.

Equally, the formulation and planned dissemination by UNDESA with UNDP of the new Social Policy Guidance Notes is central to

this probable development (see the section on Social Protection below). Specialised agencies such as the International Labour

Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(UNESCO) might occupy more of a think-tank or advisory rather than operational role in this scenario. Certainly the 2006 annual

report of the UNDP (<http://www.undp.org/publications/annualreport2006/english-report.pdf>)

asserts in the section on ‘Supporting the UN agenda for reform’ (p. 30): UNDP is a

leading member of the UN Development Group (UNDG), (...) the coordinating umbrella

for all UN funds, programmes and departments working on development issues, which is

chaired by the UNDP Administrator. UNDP is also the funder and manager of the UN

Resident Coordinator (RC) system, and promotes greater synergy in UN operational

activities in developing countries Discordant notes are however struck both by UK DFID

and UNCTAD and the G77. Although the High Level panel is mandated to examine the

UN’s role in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, a new UK

Department for International Development (DFID) white paper⁸ asserts (Para 8.11): We think the UN

should focus more on two areas. First it should do more to prevent conflict, broker peace, help fragile and conflict-affected states

recover after crises and lead humanitarian assistance where needed. Second, it should continue to develop international agreements and standards – as it has on human rights – and push for and report progress on these. At the same time the white paper asserts (Para 8.6) The World Bank, IMF and regional development banks should help developing countries finance investments for sustainable and equitable growth and public services. No role for the UNDP as spender of increased ODA here, only advisor on policy. In this scenario the Bank would in effect continue to shape social policies not necessarily in line with the emerging UNDP/UNDESA guidance notes. Perhaps to guard against this, the White Paper also stresses that the World Bank (Para 8.18) should provide more long-term, predictable funding for developing countries (...) (and) help developing countries pay the wages of health staff or teachers, for example; and take the lead in managing increasing donor finance for education through the FTI And it also states that the UK will (Para 114) Press the World Bank, IMF and others to avoid economic policy conditionality in such areas as privatisation and trade liberalisation.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meanwhile in the shape of its Report of Eminent Persons on ‘Enhancing the Development Role and Impact of UNCTAD’

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Gerd Trogeman at the Development and Peace Foundation’s Summer Dialogue 2006. Multilateralism in Transition, 8/9 June

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‘Making Governance Work for the Poor’ (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/>) (http://www.unctad.org/sections/edm_dir/docs/osg20061_en.pdf) also muddies the water by recommending that (recommendation 3). Clustering or regrouping UN system-wide activities under the headings of development, environment and humanitarian assistance does not appear to be an effective way of dealing with ‘core economic development issues’. UNCTAD’s core competences should be maintained and enhanced Statements adopted by the G77 (<http://www.g77.org>) at its meetings in Vienna 8-9 June and in Malaysia on 29 May include the sentiments that the System-Wide Coherence Panel process should not limit the mandate of the UN to these “niche” areas. (<http://www.g77.org/vienna/ViennaSpirit.pdf>) We emphasise that one of the fundamental reforms required would be for the United Nations (...) to provide policy direction and guidance to the Bretton Woods Institution, the WTO and other relevant organisations” (Para 13. Vienna). “September 2006 does not have to be the final deadline” (Para 10. Vienna).

We will have to wait the outcome of the High Level panel. However the several issue notes published for the Panel on ‘Funding for development, environment and humanitarian relief’

(http://www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/IN_funding_UN_sys.pdf), on ‘Meeting with the IFIs’ (<http://www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/AgendaIssuesNote-IFIs.pdf>) and ‘Consultation with Civil Society’ (http://www.un.org/events/panel/resources/pdfs/agenda_IP_final.pdf) are instructive. The key issues in the funding paper include unpredictability of funding, lack of coherence in funding and reliance on voluntary donor earmarked funds and unclear procedures for burden sharing among states. Three options are presented; improving the status quo, consolidating all donor funding at country level, creating a central development fund under the UNDP or the Secretary-General. The issues in the IFI meetings include a) planning for MDGs and strengthening PRSP and their country ownership and b) global issues management for global public goods. The IFI issue note asks “Where would the IFIs be positioned with respect to a consolidated UN presence at country level?”

Meanwhile discussions and ideas abound about how and whether to bother to increase the influence and legitimacy of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or let them be

sidelined. The Overseas Development Institute Briefing Paper ‘Bretton Woods Reform: Sifting through the Options in the Search for Legitimacy’

(<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/pubs/ph/details.cfm?lng=en&id=19404>) concludes we do need the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but legitimacy and transparency is crucial and sets out options for increasing the voice of smaller countries. The European Network on Debt and Development’s (EURODAD) report on ‘The World Bank and IMF conditionality: a development injustice’

(<http://www.eurodad.org/articles/default.aspx?id=711>) concludes that they must stop imposing policy conditions. The Head of the IMF says he will put forward proposals to increase the representation of developing countries on the IMF board before the September Meetings.

(<http://www.cgdev.org/content/general/detail/8956?print=1&id=8956&datatype=13>).

However resulting from the ‘Strategy Session on the IMF’ convened by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington on the occasion of the April 2006 Bank-IMF meetings is a paper entitled ‘The IMF: Shrink it or Sink it: A Consensus Declaration and Strategy Paper’.

(<http://www.gendirection.org/images/IMF%20Shrink%20or%20Sink%20Jul%202006.pdf>). Endorsed by several International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) and policy advocacy groups it calls for a campaign to decommission or sideline the IMF by encouraging countries to disengage from it. A paper by Nancy Alexander for the Citizens’ Network on Essential Services – ‘Globalization and International Institutions: the IMF, the WB and the WTO’ – helpfully reviews the positions of the IFI abolitionists and the reformers (http://www.servicesforall.org/July2007uploads/6-06_Globalization_&_IOs.doc).

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The WHO held its annual World Health Assembly (WHA) and the meeting of the Executive Board in May. The WHA was shadowed by the untimely death of the Director-General on 22 May. Assistant Director-General Anders Nordström was then appointed by the WHO Executive Board as Acting Director-General until a new Director-General would be appointed in November 2006.

In the WHA the most controversial resolutions were clearly two proposals on pharmaceuticals as these dealt with intellectual property rights. One of the resolutions was made on the basis of the WHO Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, innovation and public health, and the other proposed by Kenya and Brasil on research and development of pharmaceuticals. The two resolutions were finally combined to a single resolution (WHA59.24) on a global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation, essential health research and intellectual property rights. The proposed resolutions were opposed by both US and European Union (EU), however, this time the EU was the strongest opponent. This shows how trade-related interests may dominate in the EU negotiating position in international organisations. Statements or actions are resisted if these might interfere with the commercial or competitive interests of European industries. The EU standpoint for the drafting group on the resolution was leaked during the WHA and found to be of close resemblance to those promoted by Pharmaceutical Industry. These can be compared on the website of the Consumer Project on Technology, which has compiled substantial archives on the issue (<http://www.cptech.org/rnd/ec-industry-compared-rnd.pdf>). The relationship between trade and health is also problematic in the context of the resolution calling for better consideration of health impacts of trade policies, which became substantially diluted already during an earlier

Executive Board drafting group. The final texts and resolutions can be found from the WHO documentation and archives of Executive Board and WHA decisions and resolutions (<http://www.who.int/gb/>). The intergovernmental working group is expected to become established in November 2006.

Other resolutions in the 59th WHA dealt with issues raised by the World Health Report 2006 with focus on rapid scaling up of health workforce production and strengthening nursing and midwifery. Resolutions were also made on a draft global strategy on prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections and on infant nutrition and HIV/AIDS and nutrition. Resolutions also dealt with the 11th programme of work, UN reform and coordination processes (<http://www.who.int/gb/>). The WHO 11th General Programme of Work, accepted in the WHA, is based on six main areas of work with focus on 1) investing in health to reduce poverty, 2) building individual and global health security, 3) promoting universal coverage, gender equality and health-related human rights, 4) tackling social determinants of health, 5) strengthening health systems and equitable access, 6) harnessing knowledge, science and technology and 6) strengthening governance, leadership and accountability (http://www.who.int/gpw/GPW_En.pdf).

The World Bank has provided a first background note for a strategy for Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP) Results for a Briefing to the Committee on Development Effectiveness on the preparation of the New World Bank HNP Strategy (<http://tinyurl.com/rrap2>). The proposed policy objectives are to: contribute to improving level and distribution of health, nutrition and population status (outcomes) at country and global levels; contribute to protecting households from the impoverishing effects of illness (improve financial protection); contribute to ensuring financial sustainability in the health sector and the sectors contribution to sound country fiscal policy and to country global competitiveness and to contribute to improving governance and reducing corruption in the health sector (<http://tinyurl.com/rrap2>).

The new OECD health data 2006 has shown that while public spending on health has decreased in some countries, such as Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic, it has also risen in countries with relatively low public expenditures, such as Korea, Mexico, Switzerland and United States. It claims that with one exception health spending has risen faster than GDP in OECD countries. Private insurance accounts for 37% of health spending in the United States, but still represents only around 6% of total health spending on average across OECD countries (www.oecd.org).

WHO World Health statistics presents the most recent statistics since 1997 of 50 health indicators for WHO's 192 Member States. This second edition includes an expanded set of statistics, with a particular focus on equity between and within countries. WHO is also to publish its first regional report covering health of the people in Africa. (<http://www.who.int/publications/en/>). The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has published a 10th Anniversary Special edition Report on Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic 2006 (www.unaids.org). The Commission on Social Determinants website has also provided for several documents and background papers on social determinants and health based on the work of knowledge networks (http://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/en/index.html). The World Bank has published a new practitioners guide on health financing (www.worldbank.org) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has provided for a paper on health policies and economic blocks (<http://www.iadb.org/sds/doc/HealthEconomicBlocks.pdf>).

The 2006 High-Level Meeting on AIDS was held in the end of May in New York, resulting in the adoption of a resolution and a political declaration on HIV/AIDS (A/RES/60/262). It was presented by UNAIDS as a follow-up meeting to review progress in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, focusing on both constraints and opportunities to full implementation; consider recommendations on how

the targets set in the Declaration may be reached, including through the “towards universal access processes”; and to renew political commitment (<http://www.unaids.org/en/AIDSreview2006/AIDSReview2006/default.asp>). The meeting gained criticism from NGOs due to diluted aims and lack of ambition in the political declaration, which was especially raised by African NGOs claiming that African civil society delegates went through something of a roller-coaster experience as the result of the meeting being much less ambitious as one decided earlier in Abuja in the Special Summit of African Union on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (<http://tinyurl.com/p5gxd>).

The XVI International AIDS Conference was held in August in Toronto (<http://www.aids2006.org/>). The conference was focused on the promises and progress to scale-up treatment, care and prevention under the title ‘Time to Deliver’. The large conference was slightly shadowed by the decision of the Canadian Prime Minister not to attend the conference. The International AIDS conference has traditionally been dominated by a scientific agenda with less political exchange. However this Conference seems to have slowly evolved also as a policy forum with more official representation and agenda.

The GTZ-ILO-WHO Consortium on Social Health Protection in Developing Countries convened a Meeting on Expanding Social Protection in Health on 28-30 June in Copenhagen (<http://www.shi-conference.de/>). The Consortium plans to develop a joint conceptual framework, host a web site, and engage in international conferences such as the upcoming conference on Health Financing organised by the International Health Economics Association (IHEA) in July 2007.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

In recent months there has been a veritable flurry of activities within intergovernmental organisations concerned to formulate desirable social policies for developing countries. Most significant is the work being undertaken by UNDESA together with UNDP to formulate a set of Social Policy Guidance Notes for countries to assist them in preparing National Development Strategies (<http://esaconf.un.org/WB/?boardid=ndsnet>)⁹. This initiative follows from the UN Summit in September 2005 calling on countries to develop such plans to achieve the MDGs and other development goals set out in recent global UN conferences. The UNDP/UNDESA social policy guidance notes are one of a set of six that have been commissioned. They will be given high priority and disseminated through all the UNDP offices and UNDESA political processes and UN regional Commissions. They are part of the wish on the part of UNDESA to offer the best policy advice available (and by implication challenge the World Bank’s hegemony in these fields). The Social Policy Guidance Notes are being authored by Isabel Ortiz taking advice from a number of scholars and policy analysts in UNDESA, UNRISD, UNICEF, UNDP, GASPP etc. The current draft (16 August) insists “the residual approach (to social policy) has dominated for about three decades, and has led to increasing social tensions and malaise” (p3). In contrast these notes recommend “abandoning residual approaches and investing solidly in the two main aspects of social policy, redistribution/protection (supporting people’s needs and buffering risks) and production (building human capital and promoting employment)” (p8). In the context

Also to be found at the UNDP’s website www.undp.org of its argument for mainstreaming equity recommended social protection policies include “non-contributory pensions, cash transfers and social services” rather than “private

pension systems” (p23). Significantly the draft guidance notes point out the shortcomings of the MDGs: “The priority given to achieving the MDGs has put a lot of emphasis on basic education and often the importance of other essential education services is overlooked, damaging development efforts.” (p29) It will be interesting to observe the passage of these guidance notes through the UN policymaking process.

These emerging guidance notes chime with policy ideas about social protection and social policy being articulated by the ILO (See GSP 6.2 Digest) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). For example the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, in conjunction with UNRISD ([http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/\(httpEvents\)/06E50E2E536763C5C12571760042D03B?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/(httpEvents)/06E50E2E536763C5C12571760042D03B?OpenDocument)) held a Workshop on ‘Social Services: Towards Transformative Universalism’ on 24-25 May in Katmandu. Among the speakers were Richard Jolly, Jomo KS of UNDESA, Santosh Mehrotra, Enrique Delmonica and others. The conclusions of this workshop were that there were key social policy issues that needed to be taken account of in seeking to attain the MDGs. Among these were the multiple roles that social policy played as “a key instrument for social protection through social services and social security, economic development through human capital formation and generating consumer demand, equity through redistribution, social reproduction through assisting with care, and social and national cohesion.” (Lotse 2006)¹⁰ UNICEF are to follow this up with a New York conference on Social Protection Initiatives for Children, Women and Families in 30-31st October 2006 (<http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=8143>)

The UNDP International Poverty Centre in Brazil (www.undp.org/povertycentre) (which was set up as a joint enterprise between UNDP and Brazil to promote South-South Cooperation on applied poverty research) anticipating the increased role UNDP will have in social protection issues chose to focus the June 2006 issue of ‘Poverty in Focus’ on ‘Social Protection: the role of cash transfers’. Articles by Mkandawire of UNRISD¹¹, Barrientos of the Institute for Development Studies (IDS)¹², Mehrotra of UNDP¹³, Voipio of Finland¹⁴ among others review aspects of this policy field. Most interesting is an article by Haroon Bhorat of the Development Policy Research Unit, Cape Town addressing the proposal in South Africa to introduce an income grant for all.¹⁵

Typically it was left to the World Bank Institute to organise the biggest and “best” conference on the theme of social protection during the period under review. According to the report of Dag Ehrenpreis, editor of UNDP’s ‘Poverty in Focus’, the main objective of the 3rd International Conference on Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) was to share knowledge among countries with varying degrees of experience

¹⁰

Lotse., C. 2006. 'Brief Summary of Discussions at UNICEF ROSA/UNRISD/UNICEF IRC Workshop on Social Policy'. Kathmandu 24-25 May.

¹¹

Targeting and Universalism in Poverty Reduction

¹²

Barrientos, A./ Hulme, D./ Moore, K.: Social Protection for the Poorest: Taking a Broader View

¹³

Job Law with Right to Information can Cut Poverty in India

¹⁴

Social Protection for Pro-Poor Growth

¹⁵

An Income Grant to all South Africans?
of CCTs. The conference was huge: it brought together about 350 participants, including over 200 practitioners and policy makers from 44 developing countries (in six regions) with experience or interest in designing and implementing CCT interventions, plus about 40 people from international development agencies including UN agencies such as ILO, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, many of which came from country offices, some 70 World Bank staff from head quarter and country offices and about 30 ICT sector representatives. Furthermore, there were about 1600 virtual participants who logged into the conference webcast in real time and many more who have participated in the subsequent e-discussion forum. The conference was an impressive arrangement with a well-balanced mixture of plenary and parallel sessions, nine parallel one-day field trips to CCT sites in the Istanbul region, and several social events. Excellent comprehensive documentation from the conference is available on the website <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/ICCT06/welcome.asp>. Among the issues discussed was whether such cash transfers should be conditional or not. DFID and the South African Economic Policy Research Institute led the unconditional side of the argument (see www.epri.org.za) but – suggests Dag – the issue may more productively be rephrased: not whether but how conditionality is designed and monitored, and how non-compliance is treated. The Brazilian “soft conditionality” aiming to help enable all beneficiaries to fulfil the conditions to maximise human capital formation is impressive.

Meanwhile, however, the World Bank Institute is continuing to run training courses on ‘Safety Nets’ in OECD countries for ministers from developing countries. The primer for such courses focuses not on the universal tax or social insurance based social security systems but on targeted, means tested benefits (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1124119303499/SSNPrimerNote25.pdf>). A useful critical analysis of the World Bank’s push to private pensions – ‘Too Many Grannies: Private Pensions, Corporate Welfare and Growing Insecurity’ – has been published by The Corner House (<http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/pdf/briefing/35grannies.pdf>). Divergent opinions and actions continue within the World Bank. Branko Milanovic, now as lead economist in the Development Economic Research Group, is convening the 3rd World Bank Conference on Inequality, Politics and Power (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDECINEQ/Resources/conference_on_inequality_2006_agenda.pdf).

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at its meetings in Geneva in July 2006 deliberated on aspects of these issues. It considered two reports from the Secretary-General on a) ‘Sustained economic growth for social development, including poverty eradication and hunger’ (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/ecosoc6214.doc.htm>), and b) ‘Creating an environment at the national and international level conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all’ (<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents.asp?type=1&type=2&year=2006>). The former concluded “donor countries should take further steps to harmonize and align their efforts with national development strategies and priorities in accordance with the development agenda endorsed by the UN summits and conferences (...) this requires minimizing policy conditionalities.” (para 56f) At this meeting, the ILO hailed the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration ‘on strengthening global efforts to promote decent work for poverty reduction’ (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/event/ecosoc/declaration.pdf>).

Further evidence of the renewed role and influence of the ILO in the global discourse on

social protection comes in the form of an upcoming 'World Conference on Social Protection and Inclusion: Converging Efforts from a Global Perspective' to be convened by the ILO, the European Commission and the Government of Portugal in Lisbon October 2-3rd. 45 countries are to participate. (http://www.psi-confliisboa.com/portal/index.php?option=com_frontpage&lang=EN).

There will be an opportunity for a stock taking of all of these parallel developments at an upcoming workshop to be convened by the Finnish Government October 30-Nov 2nd under the provisional title of 'Appropriate Comprehensive Social Policies in a Globalizing World' to which UNDP, UNDESA, ILO, UNRISD, ICSW, GASPP, World Bank, donors (Germany, Sweden, Norway, UK, Switzerland, Canada, Ireland) and several Southern countries (South Africa, Brazil, Tanzania and UNRISD partners in Africa Asia and Latin America) are to be invited. This might provide an opportunity for a political stock take among like-minded actors of the new post-Washington Consensus in the sphere of social policy.

EDUCATION

At the G8 meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, 15-17 July (<http://en.g8russia.ru>), education was one of the main topics, resulting in a statement on effective education systems to meet the challenges of a global knowledge-based economy. Before the official meeting, Russia's President Putin met up with an international labour delegation, including leaders of the national confederations of the G8 countries, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) (for a general statement see http://www.tuac.org/statemen/communiq/G8_StPetersburg2006_E_Whp.pdf). At this event, Education International (EI) representative Fred van Leeuwen called for the acknowledgement of quality public education, a policy field that should not be left to market forces. Further he stressed the need for the G8 leaders to keep the promises made in Gleneagles, namely concerning the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in order to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (<http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/show.php?id=230&theme=gats&country=global>). In an article for the Russian newspaper 'Vedomosti', also published at the World Bank's website (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20948951~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>), Ruth Kagia, director of the World Bank's Education Department, similarly reminds G8 leaders of the need of "delivering on a promise, amplified time and time again since the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, to help all countries achieve Education for All (EFA)", and points at the fact that FTI and EFA initiatives require much more funding in order to reach the goal of universal primary education for all by 2015.

Related to the WTO trade negotiations, EI organised a lobby of WTO delegations to raise concerns about the impact of GATS on education (<http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/show.php?id=227&theme=gats&country=global>). EI is particularly concerned about new rules on domestic regulations as discussed by WTO members prior to the Geneva meeting, as these rules potentially have negative implications for the education sector (school licensing, quality assurance standards etc.). The failing of the trade talks does not imply that those issues are no longer relevant: "If anything, [...], EI and its affiliates need to step up the pressure, particularly as the July 31st deadline for new GATS offers looms and as negotiations on domestic regulation press ahead."

At a meeting of OECD Finance Ministers as part of the Annual OECD Ministerial Council (23-24 May) (<http://www.oecd.org/mcm2006>), TUAC and the Business and

Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) expressed consensus on the necessity of governments to invest more in education, but disagreed sharply on macro-economic policy. (http://www.tuac.org/statemen/communiq/StMin-2006E_WHP.pdf, http://www.biac.org/statements/high_level/BIAC_Statement_to_MCM_2006.pdf) At a meeting of the OECD Education Committee at Ministerial level in Athens on 27-28 June higher education was addressed, summarised in IMHE¹⁶ info (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/20/37126826.pdf#search=%22imhe%20info%20July%202006%20Higher%20Education%22>). It was stated that higher education systems must address broad objectives of growth, full employment and social cohesion, within governance frameworks which encourage institutions, individually and collectively, to fulfil multiple missions. Institutions, systems, and stakeholders must seek to ensure that quality, equity and efficiency characterise all aspects of higher education. The summary discusses some of the key questions addressed during the ministerial meeting, presents publications to the topic and lists future meetings. (www.oecd.org/edumin2006) Tertiary education is also the focus of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' 'Global Education Digest' (<http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/ged/2006/GED2006.pdf#search=%22UNESCO%20Global%20Education%20digest%202006%22>).

HABITAT, LAND, HOUSING

Due to the third session of the World Urban Forum (<http://www.wuf3-fum3.ca/>), held in Vancouver, Canada, on 19-23 June, with around 10,000 participants, many global activities occurred focusing on urban issues. Governments, municipalities, as well as various civil society organisations, the private sector, etc. were represented at the event. It was recognised that there was a “critical need for increased financial resources to attain the slum upgrading target of the Millennium Declaration” (<http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=3305&catid=5&typeid=6&subMenuId=0>). Further there was a call for guidelines and policies on decentralisation and empowerment of the local level. UN-Habitat published the ‘State of the World’s Cities: the Millennium Goals and Urban Sustainability’ (<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2101>). The June issue of Habitat Debate (<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=periodView&period=2104>) concentrates on past developments and current challenges of urban development. The United Nations Population Division released an online interactive database containing the results of 2005 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects (<http://www.unpopulation.org>), intended as a tool for researchers, policy makers and assessment of progress made towards achieving the MDGs. Many of the publications stress the point that the urban poor are at least as worse off as the rural poor, and –

Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education especially regarding the fact of ever increasing urban population – call for increased action in combating urban poverty. UN-Habitat further published its second global report on ‘Water and Sanitation in the World’s Cities 2006: Meeting Developing Goals in Small Urban Centres’ (<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2057>). It discusses how small urban centres function as first tier markets and service providers for rural enterprise and development, and how an improved situation in such locations depends on access to clean water and improved sanitation. Similarly, a working paper by the Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid (GPOBA) focuses on water issues in urban areas, and starts with the assumption that “taking account of poor households in regulation is paramount in order to meet objectives such as promoting the efficient development of

services whilst ensuring some basic adherence to equity principles” (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWSS/Resources/OBAWorkingPaperNo.8.pdf>) . It “aims to provide practical guidance on how to evaluate regulatory arrangements (...) and adapt them to be more conducive to expanding access and improving service to poor customers”. The 6th meeting of the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation took place in Paris, France, on 10-11 July (http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/environment-sustainable-development_1097/). At this event, Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, presented his organisation’s activities in the field (the International Hydrological Programme (IHP); the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education; the UN World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP); and the rapidly expanding network of water centers operating under the auspices of UNESCO) and called for the ILO to be included into the WWAP and to be engaged in the production of the 3rd World Water Development Report. (http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33815&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

UNRISD organised a final workshop to its research project on ‘Social Policy, Regulation and Private Sector Involvement in Water Supply’ (<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/search/28E8CC0F8D4C3232C125716C0034D401?OpenDocument&cntxt=C1A36&cookielang=en#top>) on 11-12 September in Geneva, Switzerland.

For ECOSOC’s substantive session of 2006, 3-28 July, the Secretary-General provided a report – “Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda” (<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/g2006/document.shtml>) – summarising the key outcomes and activities undertaken by UN-Habitat.

The fifth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (INPFII) took place 15-26 May entitled ‘The MDGs and indigenous peoples: Re-defining the MDGs’ (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/session_fifth.html). The outcome includes the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People.

Trade and Social Policy

UNCTAD has provided for new reports on Least Developed Countries (LDC) and Trade and Development. The LDC report (http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/lcd2006_en.pdf) argues that in spite of achieved higher rates of economic growth and exports there is a widespread sense that this is not translating effectively into poverty reduction and improved human well-being, and that the sustainability of the accelerated growth is fragile. The development of productive capacities will be the key to achieving sustained economic growth. The report on Trade and Development (http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/tdr2006_en.pdf) argues that in order for all developing countries to reach the MDGs, the global partnership for development needs to be strengthened further. It further claims that much depends on the ability of developing countries to adopt more proactive policies in support of capital formation, structural change and technological upgrading, and on the latitude available to them in light of international rules. Doha development round negotiations were suspended in the end of June 2006 in all areas of negotiation. While global trade negotiations are only suspended at the moment, it is now expected that some of the work will be taken further as part of bilateral and regional trade agreements. This has also some worrying aspects as

bilateral free trade areas (FTAs) have been found to be especially problematic in the sphere of pharmaceutical policies and intellectual property rights. National pharmaceutical policies have been raised as an international trade issue in the context of the Korea-US FTA negotiations (http://www.ustr.gov/Trade_Agreements/Bilateral/Republic_of_Korea_FTA/Section_Index.html; http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php3?id_article=5591), however, this is not new as pharmaceutical pricing issues have also been raised before in the context of other OECD countries (<http://tinyurl.com/lquc2>). Furthermore, bilateral agreements are not only of concern with respect to the US policies, but also EU and its bilateral and Economic Partnership Agreements have gained criticism and campaigning (http://www.bilaterals.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=17). The WHO initiated analysis of health policy implications of the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) has finally been published and is available from the WHO website (<http://www.who.int/trade/resource/gatslegalreview/en/index.html>). The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development has held a roundtable on GATS and domestic regulation on the basis of a draft issue paper on the matter, available from the web (<http://tinyurl.com/qd2nr>). Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has also published a critique on negotiation tactics under title Crunch Time in Geneva (<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/Reports/2006/06/CrunchTimeGeneva/index.cfm?pa=BB736455>). Environmental and health standards have been at the core of two WTO related debates. The European Commission (EC) is currently challenging Brazil's ban on the importation of retreaded tyres complaining that Brazil's ban is disguised protectionism that violates several General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) disciplines. Brazil has argued that since retreaded tyres cannot be reprocessed for subsequent use, they are more strongly linked to the adverse environmental and health effects caused by waste tyres. Brazil has been supported by number of environmental organisations in the form of amicus briefs, which have been sent to the first panel hearing in July (http://www.ciel.org/Tae/BrazilRetreadedTyres_Amicus_7Jul06.html). Another debate has concerned European chemicals legislation (REACH), which has been rallied against by the US and twelve other trading partners claiming that proposed legislation would have disruptive impact on international trade and should be revised. (http://useu.usmission.gov/Dossiers/Chemicals/Jun0806_REACH_Statement.asp). The 2006 World Trade Report has its focus on subsidies. Since subsidies are often used to promote social, regional and equity related objectives this bears relevance to debates and discussions concerning national policy space (http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres06_e/pr447_e.htm). The World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) (www.wider.unu.edu) has published, amongst other issues, research papers in the area of international mobility of health professionals, and WTO agreements on agriculture and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Southern Voices

Civil Society Organisations from Commonwealth countries have called on African Finance Ministers to encourage home grown development strategies based on wide consultation with all stakeholders (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200608070875.html>). These recommendations were contained in a statement issued by the civil society representatives in the end of July, in preparation towards the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting taking place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 12-14 September. The statement referred to noted Asian countries, which have successfully addressed growth and poverty issues without resorting to the policy impositions of the World Bank and the IMF –

"empirical evidence from the last four decades (...) suggests that development paths are best determined by developing countries themselves, with external actors playing a limited role." It is unfortunate that marginal social groups such as slum dwellers, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, and indigenous people continue to face basic livelihood challenges because of a lack of innovative policies to create a more development-friendly international environment, improved market access, improved availability of and access to credit, increased and more effective aid as well as total debt relief for the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

A major African-initiated anti-corruption convention took effect on 8 August. (<http://www.transparency.org/>). Fifteen countries ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences (AU Convention) and made a binding commitment to implement its provisions. 37 other African countries, however, have so far failed to ratify including Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya and Egypt. The Convention requires African government officials to declare their assets, adhere to ethical codes of conduct, provide citizens access to government information about budget spending and to protect those who blow the whistle on state fraud. Leading the way in certain aspects, the Convention establishes procurement standards, accounting standards, transparency in the funding of political parties and recognises the need for civil society participation. It also requires African countries to establish criminal offences bribery, diversion of property, trading in influence, illicit enrichment, money laundering and concealment of property. In addition, a framework is provided for cross-border law enforcement regional cooperation within Africa.

The struggle towards self-determination is a key priority for regional indigenous leaders, who had gathered for the 1st Congress of the Andean Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations, which took place in Cusco, 15-17 July. (<http://amlat.oneworld.net/external/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alainet.org%2Factive%2F12338%26lang%3Dpt>). Indigenous leaders from Peru, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala, participated in the meeting, addressing problems such as the exploitation of natural resources, privatisation, and free trade agreements, which ignore ancestral rights. The indigenous leaders recognised, however, that not all indigenous people in the region were aware of the political project of the Coordinator. The digital divide, inequities brought about by the high speed of modernity, collide with many communities, some of which have only very recently been contacted for the first time. These communities suffer high levels of discrimination and live in situations of extreme vulnerability. Often they are treated as thieves or terrorists, when really in their way of thinking everything in nature is for consumption. And so they collide with the petrol extractors and others who are ravaging the natural resources.

UNAIDS has set up a regional commission to study the disease and its impacts on development in Asia and the Pacific (<http://southasia.oneworld.net/external/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scidev.net%2Fcontent%2Fnews%2Feng%2Fun-commission-to-study-hivaids-in-asia-pacific.cfm>). The ten-member commission, launched on 14 July, will examine the state of the epidemic, including disease incidence and levels of awareness, prevention and treatment. It will also assess the epidemic's medium-to-long term socio-economic impacts, including its effects on national budgets and health systems. Some scientists predict a rapid growth of HIV infections in the region over the next two to three years because they fear certain governments are underestimating the epidemic and are not implementing adequate strategies to control it. The commission will submit its report at the end of 2007, giving recommendations for policymakers in the region.

The Organization of American States (OAS), the IDB and UNICEF announced a new regional alliance on 8 August to work toward ensuring free, timely, universal birth registration for children in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2015, with 50 per cent progress in that direction by 2010

(http://www.oas.org/OASpage/press_releases/press_release.asp?sCodigo=EIDOASUNI).

The partnership seeks to end the economic, political and social exclusion of undocumented citizens. "The lack of birth certificates typically leads to a lifetime of invisibility and exclusion for those working and living at the base of the pyramid," said IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno. Although the region exceeds world averages in birth registration, there are considerable disparities both among and within countries. For example, while Cuba (99%) and Chile (95%) can boast nearly universal registration, Haiti (70%) and the Dominican Republic (75%) are still a long way from achieving that goal. In the region, it is estimated that more than one in six children who are born every year go unregistered. Poor, rural and indigenous populations are least likely to be registered. Children from ethnic minorities, those residing in areas affected by armed conflict, the internally displaced and refugees are among those who lack birth registration. Overall, it is estimated that close to 2 million of the 11 million annual births in the region remain unregistered.

Almost three million people in the Asia Pacific region leave their homes every year in search of work

(http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/features/06/asrm_migrants.htm). This is one of the key findings of a recent ILO report discussed at the ILO's 14th Asian Regional Meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea (29 August -1 September). Government, worker and employer leaders from some 40 Asian, Pacific and Arab countries gathered at the meeting to shape an agenda aimed at addressing a wide range of employment and workplace issues in the region. In the absence of proper management of recruitment, migration can lead to fraud, trafficking abuses and mismatch of skills with jobs. Remittances have enabled migrant workers' families to have higher standards of living and better education and health for children, but inefficient systems for transferring their savings severely penalise migrant workers. The return of migrants to their home countries offers potential benefits in the form of technology transfer, but these opportunities may be lost when returning migrants cannot find work. Workers' remittances to countries of the region have been larger than ODA and already represent a stable source of development finance. It is estimated that Asian migrants sent home a combined remittance income of more than US\$40 billion in 2003. All the indications are that labour migration in Asia will not only continue, but will grow in the years to come. While the growing mobility has benefited sending and receiving countries as well as the migrant workers themselves, migration also poses enormous challenges for states of the region. Many still have to develop policies and programmes for regulating cross-border movements, protecting the basic rights of migrants, including those in an irregular status, and adjusting to the external shocks that globalizing labour markets often bring.

Civil society representatives from Asia and the Middle East convened in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (4 July) calling on their governments to fulfil commitments made in the Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action (UPA). The Asian Civil Society Forum for Democracy (ACSFDF) reminded governments of the key message of the UPA -the adoption of "a regional (...) charter, to create a regional monitoring mechanism on human rights (...) for countries undergoing democratic transitions and to promote regional cooperation against corruption." The UPA commitments were made at the 5th International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) in 2003 (<http://groups.google.com/group/sapa>). The ICNRD is an international process for the

promotion of democracy under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly, involving governments, parliamentarians and civil society. ICNRD began as a periodic international conference to review the progress of new or restored democracies in 1988 in Manila and has then been held in Managua in 1994, Bucharest in 1997, Cotonou in 2000 and Ulaanbaatar in 2003. The 6th ICNRD will take place in Doha, Qatar from 29 October to 1 November 2006.

Participants of the 5th Workshop on the ASEAN Regional Mechanism on Human Rights (30 June), representing governments of most ASEAN Member Countries, the ASEAN Secretariat, the national human rights commissions of Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, and members of civil society organisations, called for stronger efforts to establish a regional human rights mechanism (http://www.forum-asia.org/news/in_the_news/30jun06_asean_hr.shtml). At its 2005 meeting in Laos, ASEAN had agreed to set up panels to protect the rights of women and children, migrant workers and to promote human rights education. But only four of ASEAN's 10 members -Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia -are ready to take the further step of creating a set of standards on human rights in these areas.

Calendar of Upcoming Events 2007

January	
20-25	World Social Forum, Nairobi, Kenya
24-28	World Economic Forum, Annual Meeting, Davos, Switzerland

February	
7-16	Commission for Social Development, 45 th session, New York, US
26-9 March	Commission on the Status of Women, 55 th session, New York, US
*	UNCTAD, Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, Geneva, Switzerland
March	
12-30	Human Rights Committee, 89 th session, New York, US
19-23	Committee for Development Policy, 9 th session, New York, US
*	UNDESA: "Innovative Financing for Sustainable Development"
*	ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalisation, Geneva, Switzerland
April	
9-13	Commission on Population and Development, 40 th session, New York, US
23- 1 May	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 37 th session, Geneva, Switzerland
*	Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank Group
*	Special high-level meetings of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD, New York, US