

Special Report on the occasion of the Human Rights Day 10 December 2008

Human Rights is global commitments

Dignity and justice for all of us

"Hope for the Future"

December 10th marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On this historic occasion, we should reaffirm the fundamental principles that its inspired group of framers articulated. In the Universal Declaration they recalled the "disregard and contempt for human rights" that led to actions that "outraged the conscience of mankind" and they heralded the "advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want," proclaiming this as "the highest aspiration of the common people."



"Dignity and Justice for all of us" reinforces the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a commitment to universal dignity and justice. It is not a luxury or a wish list. The UDHR and its core values, inherent human dignity, non-discrimination, equality, fairness and universality, apply to everyone, everywhere and always. The Declaration is universal, enduring and vibrant, and thus, a living document that concerns us all.

The UDHR declares in its preamble "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." It was the first, and remains the foremost, statement of the rights and freedoms of all of us as human beings, without distinction of any kind.

The UDHR belongs to all of us. No matter where you live, how much money you have, what faith you practice or political views you hold, all the human rights in the UDHR apply to you and have everything to do with you. It was the UDHR, almost 60 years ago, which first established what have become universal values: that Human Rights are inherent to all and the concern of the whole of the international community. Human Rights are everyone's business.

The comprehensive vision of the Universal Declaration is a beacon of hope for the future – it contemplates a world with full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights without distinction, a world in which every man, woman and child lives in dignity, free from hunger in a world without violence and discrimination, with the benefits of housing, health care, education and opportunity. This vision represents a global culture of human rights, and it should be a unifying force, within and among all cultures.

The world is facing a food, environmental emergency and a global financial crisis. Humankind's assault on the natural environment continues. There is political repression in too many countries. And as ever, the most vulnerable continue to be on the frontlines of hardship and abuse. The luckiest among us, those who are spared the most negative effects of disaster, poverty or instability, cannot turn a blind eye. The cascading effects of abuse and indifference can eventually engulf the entire planet. Rights, and especially their violation, must hold the whole world in solidarity.

The Declaration's enduring relevance is more compelling still when we listen to the voices of people at the grassroots level. When the World Bank conducted its "Voices of the Poor" surveys in the late 1990s, interviewing over 80,000 people in villages and local communities on their values, needs and strongest aspirations, the results read like the list of everyday rights in the UDHR.

The success of human rights work depends on its commitment to truth, with no tolerance for double standards or selective application. We must work for the full implementation of human rights on the ground in a way that affects and improves the lives of the men, women and children who are all entitled, regardless of their race, sex, religion, nationality, property or birth, to realization of each and every right set forth in the Universal Declaration.

WFWO's Communications Team