



International

people unlimited

Human rights high on the agenda

Successful UN World Summit on the Information Society



Human rights, and not technology, was the central theme of the UN 'World Summit on the Information Society' (WSIS). The official outcome, adopted in Tunis on 16 November, is clearly more positive than anticipated, according to Hivos. Alongside agreements on Internet governance, development and civil rights are at the heart of the 'Tunis Commitment'.

To Hivos – a member of the Dutch delegation – the value of the concluding docu-

ment lies primarily in the concrete recommendations for realising the benefits of the information society, especially in developing countries. Responsibility for the implementation lies directly with Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In his opening speech he said it is time to move from 'diagnosis to action.' The outcomes of the summit confirmed Hivos in its opinion that modern media such as the Internet and blogs can play an important role in stimulating critical debate and democratisation, particularly in repressive societies.

Tunis turned out to be a case in point of the importance of freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and other fundamental rights as the basis for the information society and democratisation. The Hivos seminar 'Expression under Repression' met with resistance on the part of the Tunisian authorities. The seminar's purpose was precisely to draw attention to people living in repressive countries who are not able to express themselves freely. According to Paul Maassen, programme manager ICT, Media & Knowledge Sharing, this made the seminar 'a forceful example of the need to fight for and safeguard freedom of expression. Rights that apply in the real world should also apply in the virtual world. The possibilities of technology may never be a reason to undermine fundamental human rights.'

At the invitation of Hivos and the UNDP, 35 of Hivos' southern partners were present at the summit. For them, the meeting was an opportunity to network and exchange knowledge.

For more information and the outcomes of the summit, visit: www.itu.int/wsisis/

Partner survey on ICT

The importance of production and the use of 'local content, not just multilingual content', the need for 'a people-centred Information Society' and the usefulness of 'ICTs as a tool towards poverty eradication' – these are just a few of the outcomes of an in-depth survey amongst a number of Hivos (ICT) partner organisations in the South. The survey provided input for Hivos' contribution to the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The organisations that were invited to participate in the survey are all familiar with ICTs in some way or another. Most of them indicated that they see ICT as the primary sector they work in; others combine or use ICTs to support their primary work and objectives. The respondents emphasised the importance of improving access and infrastructure and the need for capacity building among users and organisations in developing countries.

Outcomes of the survey can be found at: www.hivos.nl/english

ICT future central at Fill the Gap!-3

Prior to the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) one hundred fifty delegates attended the discussion session Fill the Gap! The 2005 meeting was the third organised by Hivos, the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) in cooperation with ICT and development organisation OneWorld.

Harmony and diversity



Photo: Marleen Kortekaas

Whether it is in emergency relief or in structural development projects, effective help requires coordination. For this reason, the most important donor countries signed the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* last year. This is a step forward, as developing countries are now often saddled with an enormous workload in order to satisfy the various criteria set by donors. The question is: what does this mean for NGOs? Efficiency and effectiveness have long been important indicators in assessing their work. The government and the general public want proof that their money has been well-spent. They want assurances that NGOs are not working in isola-

tion or at cross-purposes. Complementarity, or aligning of activities between government, NGOs and business and industry, is high on the political agenda.

Fine words, but the question is whether reality will allow itself to be harmonised along these lines. Does this leave room for innovation? Innovative thinking also means that an organisation puts forward controversial topics. Risk-taking is essential to the core-business of many NGOs, including Hivos. Aid harmonisation should not form a straitjacket that stifles NGOs.

This does not mean that Hivos does not favour better coordination. We have, for instance, helped set up MicroNed, a new network of Dutch NGOs working to better coordinate their microfinance activities. At the European level, Hivos works closely with five other like-minded NGOs in Alliance2015. Next spring Hivos is organising an international expert meeting on aid harmonisation and the consequences for European development organisations. An important topic will be how to ensure that the objective of harmonisation can be made compatible with the freedom that NGOs have -and indeed must have- to set their own, sometimes unorthodox, agenda. Development cooperation surely stands to gain from harmony, but dissonance can be equally positive.

Manuela Monteiro
Managing Director

Confronting the State, Engaging the State Civil Society Building under Adverse Political Conditions

Failed states share a number of characteristics, including dysfunctional governments and eroding institutions. Civil society organisations within these states must develop creative ways of engaging with the state. How does this occur in practice?

The *Civil Society Building Knowledge Network* aims to expand and share knowledge on civil society building in developing countries. The network, hosted by Hivos and the Institute of Social Studies, kicked off with a two-day seminar bringing together Hivos staff and partners, ISS researchers and students, and the broader community of development thinkers and practitioners. Together, the 150 participants explored strategies used by civil society organisations in various

political contexts with the aim of influencing and strengthening the performance and responsiveness of the state.

Ultimately, the seminar identified ten points for research activities and policy innovation which will be pursued by the Hivos-ISS Civil Society Building Knowledge Network. These points relate to improving donor, practitioner and research effectiveness, and include such topics as social movements and NGOs, citizenship and participation, knowledge sharing, and others.

Lessons learned, case studies and context analyses can be found on www.civilsocietybuilding.net/seminar2005. To join the network, see www.civilsocietybuilding.net/join



Report on 10 years of Hivos Culture Fund available online

Last June, the Hivos Culture Fund (HCF) celebrated its tenth anniversary. Hivos seized the occasion to bring back the theme of Culture and Development on the Dutch development agenda. A symposium was held in Amsterdam on the 2nd of June on 'Culture & Freedom of Artistic Expression'. The symposium consisted of a central debate, workshops and an exhibit of productions from Hivos partners in various disciplines. Download the report in English from www.hivos.nl

Support to organic farming in Kyrgyzstan

Farmers in Kyrgyzstan are discovering that organic farming can be a powerful weapon in the struggle against environmental issues such as large-scale soil degradation and the consequences of excessive use of chemical pesticides. This is a key motive for Hivos to help numerous farmers and organisations apply organic farming methods in the region. According to Hivos staff member Marieke Kragten, there is also an economic motive. 'Hivos's experience in other countries has shown that organic farming is a tried and tested means to raise farmers' income.' To support organisations interested in moving into organic farming, Hivos organised a workshop in South Kyrgyzstan in September. There, some thirty farmers and people from agricultural organisations in Kyrgyzstan and surrounding countries exchanged experiences about sustainable production and marketing. Hivos organised the workshop together with Center InterBilim and Hivos partner organisation Ulgu, which trains farmers in organic production methods. Another Hivos partner in Kyrgyzstan is the Bio Cotton Project, which focuses on the entire organic cotton chain. When supporting farmers, Hivos adopts what is termed the chain approach. Marieke Kragten: 'First of all, a purchaser was found for the cotton. Then we investigated whether farmers were interested. After that a procedure was set up to teach the organic method to farmers who were used to cultivating cotton in the conventional way. To guarantee both a supply and a demand for the product, we have to involve the entire chain, from the production process all the way to a potential market.'

According to Marieke Kragten, a major challenge in Kyrgyzstan is to get organic farmers back into some form of collaboration. 'It is the only chance small farmers have of working in the organic sector. But many people do not want to return to old Soviet structures. At the same time, many farmers have no idea of how a market operates – another Soviet legacy. Hivos provides training in this field.'

Response to eviction campaign Murambatsvina

To many people, Africa is the continent of armed conflicts and disasters. Some of these disasters are entirely man-made, as is the case in Zimbabwe. In May and June, a government-induced eviction campaign swept through the townships of Zimbabwe. People's houses were destroyed, their businesses and workshops razed to the ground. According to UN estimates, more than 700,000 people were evicted from their homes and businesses. Hivos responded with an emergency fund for food, blankets and sanitary items for women and men in temporary shelters. Hivos partner Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights brought several cases of eviction and destruction of businesses and houses before the courts – with limited success as the courts are biased towards the government. Funds were also spent to trace street kids who had been expelled.

In one of the most affected townships, Mbare, Hivos provided funds to women and men to restart their small businesses. However, many people who once had a business and provided for their dependants in this way opted not to risk eviction for the second time and decided to leave the country to join the growing number of illegal Zimbabweans in Botswana and South Africa.

Lastly, Hivos supported a publication, to be released soon, on the impact of the operation on ordinary people's lives.

Role for radio in reconstruction of Aceh

Immediately after the tsunami, the local need for information was greater than ever. Information such as warnings about possible new disasters, information on where to find medical care and food, information about reconstruction programmes and about how funds were spent. In remote and poor areas such as Aceh, radio is still the best way of reaching large numbers of people. However the disaster had not spared radio and television stations. According to Internews, an international non-profit organisation that supports open media worldwide, a well-functioning radio station would significantly improve information provision, and would be a welcome adjunct to reconstruction. To compensate this gap, Internews founded a radio station in Banda Aceh, and trained journalists to man it. The Indonesian Aceh is one of the areas hardest hit by the tsunami – 180,000 people were killed, buildings were destroyed along hundreds of kilometres of coast and half a million people lost their homes. The radio station made several news broadcasts every day between March and September 2005, reaching an estimated 120,000 listeners via 36 radio stations and 147 refugee camps. Radios were provided to people in refugee camps so that they could receive the popular broadcasts. Hivos was one of the organisations that supported the Internews initiative.

See: www.internews.org

Building a new Future Aceh one year after the tsunami

Travelling along Aceh's coastal areas, one still frequently encounters camps of tents and barracks, however the coastline is also rife with signs of reconstruction: newly built brick houses, red painted sticks marking building sites, huge hoardings displaying the layout of new villages, and heavy equipment used for restoring shrimp ponds. After months of distributing emergency aid, Hivos partners in Aceh are now busy encouraging tsunami-affected local communities to move forward.

Smiling, fisherman Osman Hanafia proudly shows his newly built brick house in the Blang Kuta Dua Meunasah village on Aceh's east coast. His house is one of the first batch of forty houses across seven villages that have been constructed by the regional



farmers' organisation Permata in cooperation with Hivos partner Sintesa. The standard 36 m² structure is no doubt on the small side for Hanafia and his six children, but modifications introduced by Hanafia have created extra space. While helping the village masons, Hanafia proposed to use the bricks intended for an inner kitchen wall to build a kitchen and bathroom annex outside of the house instead. The design now has become standard for all houses constructed by Permata.

'Working with local masons gives us more flexibility,' claims Huseimi (27). The local farmer activist and member of Permata is in charge of the housing project. 'It took some time to get started, but now that construction is under way it goes amazingly fast. Local masons were able to finish the first batch of forty houses within one month. The remaining 58 houses should be finished well before the end of the year.'

Strategic alliances

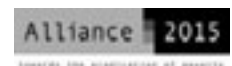
Given their limited Hivos funds, Permata and Sintesa chose to focus on those villages where only part of the houses were destroyed by the tsunami in the Bireuen district. In the meantime Hivos and its Alliance2015 partner German Agro Action (GAA) secured additional funding to help build an additional 270 houses in the neighbouring Pidie district. This project will be implemented by local partners PASKA and FORSOMA, who also received technical inputs from the Indonesian support organisation LPTP. The first houses will be completed in December.

Capacity building

Housing is the immediate priority, but in the process Hivos also hopes to help strengthen local communities and to increase the capacity of local NGOs. Aceh's institutions have been weakened and undermined by decades of armed conflict. The emergency aid and rehabilitation process may open the door for long-term cooperation; Hivos has grasped this chance to open a field office in Banda Aceh. From this office, Hivos provides grants to Acehnese NGOs working on relief and rehabilitation and providing technical assistance. Permata is one of the beneficiaries of this field office. It has received funds as well as consultancy support to start planning community development activities for the future.

Hilde Janssen

Hivos is a development organisation which stands for emancipation, democratisation and poverty alleviation in developing countries. For this purpose financial and political support is given to more than 750 local private organisations in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and South-East Europe. Their operations concern economics, culture and the arts, human rights and Aids, sustainable development and gender, women and development: the five policy spearheads of Hivos. Part of the work has been decentralised to four regional offices in Zimbabwe, India, Indonesia and Costa Rica. They take care of an important part of the contacts with partner organisations.



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