

Fostering Global Citizenship

Newsletter with December-January 2015/2016 Articles

This newsletter is part of a Soka Gakkai International (SGI) project with IPS. It includes independent news and analyses as well as columns by experts, news from international NGOs and a review of global media for a glimpse of what is happening on the ground. Newspaper articles reproduced in this newsletter are for personal use and aim at giving information to readers. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is forbidden.

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News media and journalists play a crucial role in creating conditions conducive to fostering global citizenship. With this in view, a UNESCO approved and funded an event on December 14-15 in Bangkok in which a group of Asian scholars and media practitioners participated. They examined how the traditional Asian way of communication could be adopted to train 21st century journalists to create a media that would promote harmony rather than conflict and thus help foster global citizenship. >> *Pages 7-8-9*

First Ever UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security

NEW YORK - The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution on youth, peace and security, which for the first time in its history focuses entirely on the role of young men and women in peace-building and countering violent extremism. The resolution, sponsored by Jordan, embodies an unprecedented acknowledgment of the urgent need to engage young peace-builders in promoting peace and frustrating extremism. Adopted on December 9, 2015 it also regards the youth and youth-led organizations as important partners in the global efforts to thwart violent extremism and promote lasting peace. >> *Pages 10-11*

A Turkish Recluse Bridges the Western and Muslim Worlds

PENNSYLVANIA - A free global and interconnected citizenship might be the pathway to foster a non-violent and peaceful culture within societies. This is the main objective of a grassroots movement that advocates enhancing education, promoting universal values, interfaith dialogue and democracy. A Turkish Muslim scholar Fethullah Gülen is the inspiration behind the movement called "Hizmet" ('service' in Turkish). Seen as a moderate Muslim, he emphasizes the need for interfaith dialogue, educational projects as an emancipatory tool of society to live freely and fairly, and the idea that science and religion can go hand in hand. >> *Pages 12-13*

Bribing One's Way to Basic Necessities of Life in Africa

BERLIN - A man raped a nine-year old girl who was on her way to school and infected her with HIV. The Zimbabwean police initially arrested the attacker, but then released him in secret. The reason: he paid bribe. This case is by no means an exception. The police and private sector have regularly been rated as highly corrupt, says Transparency International in a report entitled People and Corruption: Africa Survey 2015, adding: "we hear stories like this every day..." >> *Pages 14-15*

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UN Acts to Achieve Complete Gender Equality Ahead of 2133

By Rita Joshi



Photo credit: UN | Sylvain Lietchi

BERLIN | DAVOS - Declaring that the empowerment of the world's women is "a global imperative", UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has announced the first-ever High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

The establishment of the Panel, backed by the United Kingdom, the World Bank Group and UN Women, was proclaimed in Davos, Switzerland, the venue of the annual World Economic Forum (WEF), on January 21.

The announcement did not surprise observers: The UN's fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5) envisages achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. And gender equality is one of the ten key global challenges the WEF has singled out this year for the four-day event concluding January 23.

For the past decade, the World Economic Forum has been measuring the pace of change through the Global Gender Gap Report. With a decade of data, this edition of the Global Gender Gap Report – first published in 2006 – shows that "while the world has made progress overall, stubborn inequalities remain". At this rate, "it will take the world another 118 years – or until 2133 – to close the economic gap entirely", says the report.

This is because, as the report finds, despite an additional quarter of a billion women entering the global workforce since 2006, wage inequality persists, with women only now earning what men did a decade ago.

The global gender gap across health, education, economic opportunity and politics has closed by only 4% in the past 10 years, with the economic gap closing by just 3%, suggesting it will take another 118 years to close this gap completely.

Asking whether education is failing women, the report finds that the gap has widened in 22% of 145 surveyed countries since 2006 and, while more women than men are enrolling at university in 97 countries, women make up the majority of skilled workers in only 68 countries and the majority of leaders in only four.

The Nordic countries still dominate the Global Gender Gap Index. Ireland is the highest placed non-Nordic country, ranking fifth. Rwanda (6), Philippines (7) and New Zealand (10) are the only non-European countries in the top 10; and the United States falls eight places to 28th.

On the other hand, research shows that women invest their income back into their families and communities, including in health and education. McKinsey Global Institute estimates that if women in every country were to play an identical role to men in markets, as much as US\$28 trillion would be added to the global economy by 2025.

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But at present, women continue to earn less, have fewer assets, bear the burden of unpaid work and care and be largely concentrated in vulnerable and low-paying activities. Women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men and women on average are paid 24 per cent less than men globally for the same work.

Moreover, 75 per cent of women's employment in developing regions is informal and unprotected. These gaps constrain women's rights and hinder economic growth and productivity.

Significantly scaled up actions and political will are therefore considered necessary by the UN to ensure that governments, development organizations and others invest in the economic empowerment of women for the benefit of whole societies.

Against this backdrop, the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment will provide thought leadership and mobilize concrete actions aimed at closing economic gender gaps that persist around the world.

In particular, it will give recommendations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to improve economic outcomes for women and promote women's leadership in driving sustainable and inclusive, environmentally sensitive economic growth.

The Panel will advise recommendations for key actions that can be taken by governments, the private sector, the UN system and other stakeholders, as well as policy directives needed to achieve the new targets and indicators in the SDGs that call for the economic empowerment of women.

"The empowerment of the world's women is a global imperative," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announcing the establishment of the Panel.

"Yet despite important progress in promoting gender equality, there remains an urgent need to address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and full inclusion in economic activity. If the world is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need a quantum leap in women's economic empowerment," Ban said.

The Co-Chairs of the Panel are Luis Guillermo Solis, President of Costa Rica, and Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO of IKEA Switzerland. They will be joined by the leaders of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group, UN Women and a diverse range of eminent gender and equality actors, economics experts, academics, trade union leaders, business and government representatives from all regions.

The Panel will be supported by an independent Secretariat, hosted by UN Women with backing from the UK Government.

UK International Development Secretary Justine Greening, a founding member of the Panel, welcomed its launch. She said: "I am hugely proud to be a part of this Panel. Investing in girls and women isn't just about basic human rights, it's about fully unlocking the potential of half the world's population. The UK is already at the forefront of this effort."

She added: "At the Department for International Development I have put improving the lives of girls and women at the very heart of our work and Britain is successfully leading the fight against FGM and child marriage, as well as getting girls into school and women into jobs. Strong economies need the contribution of everyone – including women – and this panel will spearhead a movement to put women's economic empowerment on the global agenda like never before."

Jim Yong Kim, World Bank Group President, also a founding member of the Panel, stated: "The World Bank Group is strongly committed to gender equality, which is integral to ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Our new Gender Equality Strategy puts a much sharper focus on economic empowerment."

He added: "No society, community or economy can achieve its full potential – or meet the escalating challenges of the 21st century – until all its people can achieve theirs. We are pleased to partner with the UK's Department for International Development and the United Nations in convening this important panel, whose work will accelerate progress towards the goals we share."

The High-Level Panel will help tackle gender gaps in economic opportunities and outcomes which persist around the world, building on the growing evidence and recognition by governments and the private sector that women's economic empowerment has a multiplier effect and boosts whole economies.

The High-Level Panel will have its inaugural meeting during the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in March 2016. A series of regional consultative meetings will also take place, and the Panel's first report with action-oriented recommendations will be issued in September 2016. [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 January 2016]

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UAE World's Major Aid Giver and Sponsor of Tolerance

By Bernard Schell e



Sheikh Mohammed. Credit: www.sheikhmohammed.co.ae

MUMBAI - As the international community starts to implement the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, funds from countries that are not members of the Paris-based 29-nation Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have “an increasingly important role in financing development co-operation”, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Though China, Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa are some of the major non-DAC countries giving concessional loans or grants to the countries in need, over the past years, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has ranked as one of the world's largest donor of official development assistance (ODA), relative to its gross national income (GNI).

According to latest figures released by the 34-nation OECD, official development aid provided by the UAE amounted to about 4.9 billion USD, being 1.17 per cent of its GNI – a significant share when compared to 0.30% of the gross national incomes of the DAC members mainly comprising the U.S. and Western European countries.

The largest DAC donor countries by volume were the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Japan. But Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom continued to exceed the United Nations' ODA target of 0.7% of GNI.

Reports in the UAE media quote Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai stating that the Emirates' “renewed position as the most generous aid donor in the world” reflected the nation's founding principles of unconditional support for those in need.

In October 2015, Sheikh Mohammed launched the Global Initiatives Foundation to consolidate a range of charitable and human development initiatives worth about 272.23 million USD annually.

In a series of tweets, he said: “Humanitarian work has changed and today's challenges require huge global foundations to contribute in achieving societal change. We will not turn our backs on our region, we will provide our support and bring hope in a better future for our youth.”

The project hopes to reach more than 130 million people in at least 116 countries by 2025, though much of its work will target the Arab world. The foundation also plans to invest 544.5 million USD to set up medical research centres and hospitals in the region and 136 million USD on water shortage research.

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Sheikh Mohammed further stressed that humanitarian and development work should keep pace with, and benefit from technology developments and work in an institutional manner to fulfil the UAE's vision of transforming into "a real humanitarian capital".

"The culture of giving is deeply rooted in our society, and it has been always nurtured by UAE leaders since the inception of the UAE. We are humbled and pleased that the UAE came in the first place worldwide in terms of the value of its official aids as a percent of gross national income," Sheikh Mohammed said.

The foundation will consolidate the work of 28 organisations focusing on four main sectors: fighting poverty and illness, spreading knowledge and culture, empowering the community and driving innovation.

By 2025, the Mohammed bin Rashid Global Initiatives Foundation plans to support and educate 20 million children, and prevent or treat blindness and eye diseases for 30 million people.

Commenting on the launch, Sheikh Mohammed said: "The Arab region is undergoing massive challenges. We will not turn our backs on our region, we will provide our support and bring hope for our youth."

He added: "The world today is facing great challenges on all levels; in terrorism, wars and mass immigration and the only solution lies in human development which can be achieved by educating people and helping them build their future."

The Foundation will continue with its relief work and will empower more than 2 million families, enabling them to become self-sufficient within the next ten years. The new institution will also support young entrepreneurs in order to provide more than half a million jobs over the next few years.

In the field of spreading knowledge and science, and encouraging the translation of key works into Arabic, the Mohammed bin Rashid Global Initiatives will work on printing and distributing more than 10 million books, and the translation of the top 25,000 titles from various languages to Arabic, as well as continuing with promoting a vibrant reading culture among school students.

The Foundation will support programmes that aim to see over than 500 million books read over the next ten years across the Arab world. The investment in educational, knowledge, and scientific initiatives will total about 409 million USD to create real change in this sector.

The Global Initiatives will also work within its overall development strategy on establishing a new culture in societies based on tolerance and cultural and civilization openness.

"To achieve this goal, the foundation has dedicated more than 163 million USD to promote a transparent and lively media dialogue and also to enable communities to live in harmony, away from extremism, ethnic, religious or sectarian discrimination." The institution will target over a million participants in awards and forums related to community empowerment over the next 10 years.

As part of its overall vision to develop the region, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives will support innovation and scientists in the region by fostering 5,000 innovators and researchers and will invest more than 1.5 billion USD in building a better, world-standard environment for innovators in the region.

The institution will also focus on fostering entrepreneurship by supporting and nurturing 50,000 young entrepreneurs and supporting the establishment of new companies that will provide 500,000 job opportunities in the region during the coming years.

"All of this is part of the institution's comprehensive development vision to contribute, even if for just a little bit, towards eradicating unemployment and providing Arab youth with a dignified life, preventing them from being misguided and lured to terrorism," states the Global Initiatives on its website. [IDN-InDepthNews – 5 January 2016]

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‘Good, But Not Perfect’, Pacific Islands Women on Climate Deal

By Catherine Wilson

CANBERRA, Australia - Women leaders in the Pacific Islands have acclaimed the agreement on reducing global warming achieved at the United Nations (COP21) Climate Change conference in Paris as an unprecedented moment of world solidarity on an issue which has been marked to date by division between the developing and industrialized world. But for Pacific small island developing states, which name climate change as the single greatest threat to their survival, it will only be a success if inspirational words are followed by real action.

“It’s a huge step forward and I don’t think it would have been possible without the voices of indigenous Pacific Islanders banding together and demanding action and justice.... I am very optimistic about the future,” Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, climate activist and poet from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, who attended the historic meeting, told IPS.

Intense negotiations and compromise between the interests of 195 countries, plus the European Union, which make up the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the climate change convention, marked its 21st meeting in Paris last month.

Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the regional Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), said that “while not all the issues identified by Pacific Island countries were included in the final outcome and agreement, there were substantive advances with recognition of the importance of pursuing efforts to limit temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the inclusion of loss and damage as a separate element in the agreement and simplified and scaled up access to climate change finance.”

Claire Anterea of the Kiribati Climate Action Network in the small Central Pacific atoll nation of around 110,000 people added that the outcome was “good, but not perfect,” highlighting that the new temperature goal and call to boost climate finance were particularly important.

The World Meteorological Organisation predicted this year will be the hottest on record with average global temperatures expected to reach 1 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial age. Meanwhile Pacific Island countries are bracing for further rising temperatures, sea levels, ocean acidification and coral bleaching this century. Maximum sea level rise in many island states could reach more than 0.6 metres, reports the Pacific Climate Change Science Program.

Due to rising seas in the Marshall Islands “a simple high tide results in waves flooding and crashing through sea walls built of cement and rocks and completely destroying homes. The salt from the flooding also destroys our crops and food,” Jetnil-Kijiner said.

In the best case scenario, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea could experience a temperature increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius, but under high emissions this might soar to 2.9 degrees Celsius by 2090.

Global warming could result in yields of sweet potato, a common staple crop, declining by more than 50 per cent in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands by 2050, estimates the Asian Development Bank. The burden of crop losses will fall on the shoulders of Pacific Islands’ women who are primarily responsible in communities for growing fresh produce, producing food and fetching water.

Pacific Islanders led a campaign in Paris this year to recognize a new temperature rise threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is critical, they argued, to stem future climate shocks and mitigate forced displacement as islands become increasingly uninhabitable due to loss of food, water and land.

And in a sign of shifting views in the industrialized world, Pacific Islanders were joined in their campaigning on this issue by numerous developed and developing nations in a ‘Coalition of High Ambition’ which emerged during the second week of COP21. Solidarity was demonstrated by, amongst others, Mexico, Brazil, Norway, Germany, the European Union and United States.

The final Paris agreement which seeks to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and ‘pursue efforts’ to further reduce it by another 0.5 degree was a win for the coalition.

“1.5 degrees Celsius wasn’t even on the table before the conference began, so hearing it first announced that it even made it into the text made me cry with relief. That being said, the vague wording definitely has me worried and I know it’ll take a continued push from all of us to actually reach 1.5,” Jetnil-Kijiner said.

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This will not decrease the immense challenges the region already faces in adapting to extreme weather, which cannot be met by small island economies without access to international climate finance. This year island leaders called for the international community to honour its pledge to raise 100 billion dollars per year by 2020 to fund adaptation in developing countries, an objective first conceived in Copenhagen in 2009. Assessments since then of how much has been raised vary, but the World Bank claimed in April there was a serious shortfall of 70 billion dollars.

Taylor believes “there is a positive outlook for climate financing post-2020 with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement identifying that, for Small Island Developing States, financing needs to be public and grant-based resources for adaptation.” There has been debate about whether finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), should issue free grants or concessional loans.

Anterea emphasised that, to be effective, funding “needs to reach grassroots people through a simple processing method.”

Recognition of loss and damage caused by extreme weather and natural disasters in the final pact was also a milestone, the PIFS Secretary General added, even though it does not provide for vulnerable nations to claim liability or compensation from big polluters.

“The legal right of countries to test the liabilities of other Parties using other avenues has not been diminished by this decision,” she said.

But the greatest hope is being invested in the binding commitment by nations to set emission reduction targets and be subject to a process of long term monitoring and review, a move which would accelerate the global transition toward renewable energy and make the burning of fossil fuels, the greatest driver of greenhouse gas emissions, increasingly unviable.

“We need the five-year review as a crucial step to keeping countries’ governments accountable to our targets and goals.” Jetnil-Kijiner emphasised. If nations are not emboldened to better their goals every time, the planet may continue toward a devastating temperature increase of 2.7 degrees Celsius or more, experts conclude.

The most pressing question, after the euphoria of the global accord demonstrated in Paris has died down, is how will these lofty promises be implemented? Pacific Islanders are depending on it. (IPS | 1 January 2016)

UNESCO-Funded Event Encourages Journalists To Foster Global Citizenship

By Kalinga Seneviratne*

News media and journalists play a crucial role in creating conditions conducive to fostering global citizenship. With this in view, a UNESCO approved and funded an event on December 14-15 in Bangkok in which a group of Asian scholars and media practitioners participated. They examined how the traditional Asian way of communication could be adopted to train 21st century journalists to create a media that would promote harmony rather than conflict and thus help foster global citizenship.

BANGKOK - While a ‘Mindful Communication’ fad is currently sweeping across the United States, a group of Asian scholars and media practitioners gathered here to examine how this traditional Asian way of communication could be adopted to train 21st century journalists to create a media that would promote harmony rather than conflict.

Phuwadol Piyasilo Bhikku, a communication arts graduate from Chulalongkorn University and a former journalist, who is now a Forest Monk in northern Thailand, in an opening speech to the symposium noted that mindfulness practiced in the West is “a bit problematic”, because it is used mainly on an individualistic level to de-stress.

“Mindful practice in the West tries to be secular and is practiced without having any religious values in it,” he argued. “You need to accompany it with panna (wisdom). Without this moral wisdom, the practice will not be enough to drive us in the right direction to help society.”

As a practical approach to journalism, Bhikku Phuwadol explained that because at the root of Buddhism is the need to eradicate suffering, by being mindful of the suffering, you can report an issue without promoting division and conflict.

*Dr Kalinga Seneviratne is ASEAN Correspondent of IDN, flagship of International Press Syndicate, for Asia-Pacific. He teaches international communications in Singapore.

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The symposium titled ‘Mindful Communication for ASEAN Integration’ was held on December 14 and 15 at the Communication Arts Faculty of Chulalongkorn University in association with the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) of UNESCO. This gathering was part of a process to develop a new journalism training curriculum for Asia incorporating thoughts, concepts and ideas from Asia’s age-old Buddhist, Hindu and Confucius philosophies.

The other keynote speaker, renowned Thai social activist Sulak Sivaraksa warned that a fixation on mindfulness could lead to something negative. Pointing out that mindfulness training has become popular with American corporate executives, he said it could make them more ruthless in pursuit of profit making, if this training is not accompanied by ethical training. “Learning about sila (ethics), greed, hatred and delusion are needed for mindful communication towards sustainable development,” he argued.

Many speakers pointed out that these Asian philosophical thoughts are as valid today as these were 2000 years ago, and these are being appropriated by western intellectual community – like the current Mindful Communication fad – without giving due recognition to its origins. At the same time young Asians are growing up with the delusion that anything modern comes from the West, and their ancient philosophies are irrelevant to shaping their modern lifestyles.

Dr Binod Agarwal, former Vice Chancellor Himgiri Zee University from India pointed out that UNESCO’s earlier attempts to introduce a journalism curriculum for ‘emerging countries’ have “largely been Euro-American in approach and incorporated theoretical and ideological perspectives being followed in the West”. He blames this more on the Asian intellectual communities that are largely educated in the West and uncritically transmit this knowledge to their Asian counterparts.

As one speaker said, Asian communication scholars teach their students that the mass media originated with the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in Germany in the 15th century, while ignoring the fact that six centuries earlier the Chinese had printed the ‘Diamond Sutra’ that helped to spread Buddhism across Asia through the printed word.

There was also discussion on why the Asian media uncritically follows the western media’s focus on the South China Sea disputes that could lead to conflict in the region, while paying lip service to China’s proposed Silk Routes projects on land and sea that could bring much economic progress to the region and propel cooperation and prosperity across Asia.

Professor Kwangsoo Park, Director of Research Centre of Religions at Wonkwang University in South Korea, pointed out a similar trend in the media in his country when it comes to reporting North Korea. “They always report of North Korea’s nuclear weapons but ignore such issues as family reunions and economic relations between the two countries,” he noted, adding that “(Korean) media needs to

Going to the roots instead of sensationalizing

Retired Malaysian diplomat Dr Ananda Kumaraseri of the Human Development and Peace Foundation believes that, we need to “de-culturalise” the journalist. “We need to understand what the mind is because problems are created by humans,” he said, arguing that the media plays on the mind by sensationalizing the problems, promoting sensual desires and consumerism. “We need to train journalists to direct their minds towards the roots of the problems (not sensationalizing it),” he added.

Professor Supaporn Phokaew of Chulalongkorn University’s Communications Arts Faculty tends to agree. She argued that a good knowledge of the concepts of loving kindness and compassion towards living beings, a fundamental aspect of Buddhist teachings, could

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equip the journalist with a deep sense of empathy towards others (they report about). “We teach students writing and speaking skills, but not listening skills,” she noted, adding: “We need to introduce teaching deep listening skills to practice mindful communication. We need to listen to people to relate to society.”

The western gospel of human rights also came in for much criticism with Asian scholars pointing out that ill conceived and arrogant applications of individualistic rights have created chaos in the Middle East turning the Arab Spring into a bleak winter. They also pointed out that free speech has limits citing the Prophet Mohammad cartoon episodes in Denmark and France. They argue that this gospel needs to be critically examined in Asia.

Bhutan’s Royal Thimpu College Dean Dorji Wangchuk believes that what is good from the West could be adapted in Asia “to suit our needs and values”. He described his kingdom’s national ideology Gross National Happiness (GNH) as “development with values”. He pointed out that the ‘fourth estate’ model of western journalism is fast disappearing due to the rise of the social media, which is offering different forms of story telling and social interaction. Rather than a commercial model, he argues that Asia should aspire to development of a media model based on contentment.

He calls the contentment media model as the Middle Path. “Bhutan is building a form of journalism that advocates contentment, community, compassion and core values of Bhutanese society,” Dorji explained. “The Middle-Path journalism will promote news as a social good and not as a commercial commodity – and will help build communities, consensus and contentment and not thrive on conflicts, controversies and commercialism.”

While open discussion and debate is essential for a healthy human community, Malaysian Lim Kooi Fong, Director of the Buddhist Channel argued that it has to be accompanied by responsibility. He pointed out that there is much to learn from the Buddhist philosophy in this regard, but it should not be used to distract criticism of authoritative ruling elites, like in the ‘Asian Values’ debate of the 1990s.

“Underlying some of the Asian voices is the genuine concern that a liberal individualistic ethos in conjunction with a legalistic, aggressive and consumerist attitude does not meet traditional values of Asian societies, that is, values such as social harmony, respect for family and authorities and in particular emphasis on duty and responsibility rather than on claimable rights,” argues Lim, adding: “The representatives of ‘Asian Values’ and the defenders of a ‘Western Liberalism’ could learn from one another and in a sense complement each other.”

Responsibility and accountability, argues Thai writer and poet Khunying Chamnongsri Hanchanlash, should come naturally to a mind that is trained in the three principles of Buddhist practice of moral conduct (sila), composure of mind (samadhi) and insight (panna).

“Mindfulness, is a quality that is developed from the practice,” she points out. “For communication, it is an exploration of what arises in one’s own mind, the emotions, the bias, the motive, before the actual act of communication. It is the space of ‘knowing’ in which one is able to decide rather than react.”

A Vietnamese Catholic scholar is of the view that in presenting mindful journalism to the ASEAN community one needs to be careful, so that it is not seen as a religious concept. “To sell this to a non-Buddhist audience this needs to be attached to ethics and virtues that are reflected in other religious traditions too.”

Ethics and virtues are indeed an important part of the Asian tradition argues Professor Park, noting that not only in Buddhism but also in Confucius philosophy these practices are given pride of place. Quoting Taoist philosopher Chuangtzu, he argues that the adversary style of journalism could be transformed into a more cooperative and active problem-solving style of journalism.

Fellow Korean, Emi Hayakawa of the Korean Buddhist TV Network (BTN) gave an example of how this could be practiced. She showed an example to illustrate it, when a major shipping disaster happened in Korea in April 2014, while the major KBS network reported extensively on the number of dead, rescue operations and showing body bags and the grieving, BTN focused on how the Buddhist community is praying for the safe return of the survivors and how they are consolidating family rescue plans and helping in the healing process.

“The journalist has a critical role to convey that communities and spiritual leaders of the world can play an important role in addressing the enormous (development) problems (of the human race),” argues Prof Park. “The journalists should develop their interest in new ethical values to benefit the weak and poor people in the global economy (and point out) it is necessary for all of us to change our lifestyles (to avoid) a global financial crisis.”

Noting that the practice of mindful journalism is a secular practice rather than a spiritual one, Hanchanlash believes compassion and respect for the individual, as a positive link, will be essential in the creation of ASEAN community as a beautiful mosaic of culture and beliefs. “With mindfulness of the users, the powerful tool of mass communication can become an effective agent in the building of an unselfish and constructive society,” she argues. [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 December 2015]

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First Ever UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security

By J Nastranis

NEW YORK - The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution on youth, peace and security, which for the first time in its history focuses entirely on the role of young men and women in peace-building and countering violent extremism.



The resolution, sponsored by Jordan, embodies an unprecedented acknowledgment of the urgent need to engage young peace-builders in promoting peace and frustrating extremism. Adopted on December 9, 2015 it also regards the youth and youth-led organizations as important partners in the global efforts to thwart violent extremism and promote lasting peace.

The resolution comes at a time when about 600 million young people are living in fragile and conflict-affected settings and

are confronted with the challenge of halting the rise of radicalization and violent extremism, especially among young women and men. The resolution gives a boost to the youth-led peace-building and conflict-prevention interventions to build peaceful communities and underpin democratic, inclusive governance.

The resolution urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels and to offer mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict in partnership with young people.

The resolution also responds to the limited opportunities for young people to participate in formal peace processes by calling for the inclusion of youth in peace negotiations and peace-building efforts.

The resolution emphasizes the importance of addressing conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization and violent extremism among youth. It also notes the significant role young women and men can play as positive role models in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Commenting on the adoption of Resolution 2250, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi, said: "This is a major breakthrough in our collective efforts to change the predominantly negative narrative on youth and recognize the significant role of young people in peace-building.

"Youth have for too long been cast away as either the perpetrators of violence or its victims. With this resolution, the Security Council recognizes the important contributions that young people make in countering violent extremism and supporting peace-building efforts around the world."

Helen Clark, head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said: "This resolution recognizes the significant role young people will play in how our world adapts to today's global challenges, including those to peace and security." She added: "With youth comes energy, innovation, and optimism – if there are supportive environments and opportunities."

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, the Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund said: "This resolution recognizes that it is imperative for us to invest in young people to fulfill their potential and help achieve peace and security."

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He called for transforming the words in this “historic” Security Council resolution into concrete actions on the ground. “UNFPA is committed to continue working in partnership with young people, Member States and other partners to achieve this,” Dr. Osotimehin added.

Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support noted: “With the adoption of SCR 2250, the Security Council is making history. The recognition that young people have a positive and constructive role to play in building sustainable peace and preserving international security will mark a shift in the way the world seeks to end violence and build inclusive and peaceful societies.”

Young women and men have always worked tirelessly at building peace and reconciling their communities, he said, and with this resolution their work gets very much the recognition they deserve.

Young people, youth peace-building organizations and civil society organizations have been calling for years on the UN to establish a global policy framework to engage them in building sustainable peace and preventing extremism.

Most recently this call culminated in the Amman Youth Declaration, adopted in Jordan in August with inputs from over 10,000 young peace-builders at the first-ever Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security, outlining the need to leverage institutional support for youth-driven initiatives and programmes.

The significance of youth-driven initiatives was also highlighted at a three-day International Youth Summit on Nuclear Abolition in Hiroshima, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings that razed Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the ground.

Participants in the Summit in August 2015, issued a pledge stating: "We, the Generation of Change, invite you to join us as we raise our collective voice to call for action; we refuse to stand by while nuclear weapons continue to threaten our lives and future generations. Join us, take action and create change!"

As the Generation of Change, they vowed to:

- Continue to educate and empower ourselves in order to better spread this awareness amongst our peers;
- Recognize that diversity in this work is important and work to educate ourselves on how gender impacts disarmament;
- Take action, raise our voices and pursue nuclear abolition in our communities and our countries;
- Share our knowledge about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the experiences of hibakushas and survivors of nuclear weapons tests; and
- Encourage others to join the nuclear abolition movement and establish a strong unity among all nuclear abolition campaigners.
- Call upon every State to start negotiations on an international treaty for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Call on our elected representatives to adopt national legislation prohibiting and criminalizing the manufacture, investment in, testing, deployment, threat or use of nuclear weapons.

The pledge was issued at a wider public forum joined by 250 participants at which summit cochairs Rick Wayman of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) and Anna Ikeda of Soka Gakkai International (SGI) presented the Youth Pledge to Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Alhendawi urged, "Let's be the generation that makes peace possible. This youth summit is sending a strong message to the world, that the youth are for peace and for a nuclear-free-world, and the world must listen."

Responding to the adoption of Resolution 2250, Gwendolyn S. Myers, head of a youth-led NGO involved in peace-building efforts in Liberia, noted: “A UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security legitimizes the meaningful involvement of young people in peace and security issues and will accelerate the peace consolidation programmes particularly in Liberia, Africa and other parts of the world.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 11 December 2015]

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A Turkish Recluse Bridges the Western and Muslim Worlds

By Fabíola Ortiz



Photo: By Courtesy of Fethullah Gülen

PENNSYLVANIA - A free global and interconnected citizenship might be the pathway to foster a non-violent and peaceful culture within societies. This is the main objective of a grassroots movement that advocates enhancing education, promoting universal values, interfaith dialogue and democracy.

A Turkish Muslim scholar Fethullah Gülen is the inspiration behind the movement called “Hizmet” (‘service’ in Turkish). Seen as a moderate Muslim, he emphasizes the need for interfaith dialogue, educational projects as an emancipatory tool of society to live freely and fairly, and the idea that science and religion can go hand in hand.

Over the five decades, the movement grew in Turkey and spread over 100 countries through the Turkish diaspora around the world. It is estimated that around 10 to 15% of the Turkish population is somehow engaged in this movement that has no centralized bureaucracy.

Often being compared with Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, the old Muslim cleric Gülen lives isolated in a self-imposed exile in the inland mountains of the United States but has recently been targeted, his sympathizers persecuted and arrested by local government in his homeland. Rarely seen in public and with a poor and fragile health, Gülen, estimated to be around 77, prefers to live as a recluse away from the political unrest in the Middle East.

“Hizmet is a blend of spiritual message, rationality logic, science, democracy, arts, social service that is open to all humanity. If I could define Mr Gülen, I’d say he is a religious person, a preacher and a social advocate. His focus has always been on education. He believes that the social problems we face in our societies are rooted in the mind-set,” Alp Aslandogan told IDN. He is the president of the NGO Alliance for Shared Values, who usually speaks on behalf of the cleric.

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Experts say that this moderate approach of Islam is an antidote to help preventing radicalization of the Islam. The voluntary nature of the movement is part of the set of principles cultivated by its sympathizers as well as its non-hierarchical structure.

Hizmet's message is one of tolerance, respect, democracy, freedom of speech, interfaith centers to create bridges between the Muslim and non-Muslim world, Aslandogan said..

"He encourages people to build schools, hospitals, charitable institutions and professional associations to serve humanity. His philosophy is that every human being has a mission of spiritual development and do social service to become a better citizen without expecting anyone to convert."

Gülen recently declared publicly that terrorism is a cancer not representing Islam. He was the first Muslim scholar to condemn the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. "Hocaefendi" – meaning 'respected teacher' in Turkish as he is usually referred to – criticizes the political, religious and ideological use of Islam to justify terrorist acts.

"These extremists and violent groups claim an Islam identity and use Islamic slogans but have nothing to do with the spirit of Islam. They are instrumentalising, de-contextualising and using Islam as a vehicle in the service of an extremist ideology," declared Aslandogan.

Hizmet participants say Gülen's ideas are being unfairly chased by the current Turkish government and personally targeted by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan – Gülen was one time his ally. The cleric has now turned against Erdogan, who is accusing the scholar of creating a parallel State and a political conspiracy to destabilize the religious and conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by the Turkish President.

In Aslandogan's opinion, everything changed after the third election of Erdogan as a Prime Minister in 2011 and three years later when he became the Turkish Head of State. Gülen supported the candidacy of Erdogan, who promised democratic reforms, improving the human rights record and starting the negotiations to join the European Union.

"Suddenly he made the U-turn from the original democratic standards and began being authoritarian. Erdogan is now promoting the idea of an executive presidency that would give him immense powers but no accountability."

Suffering poor health and under treatment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, the scholar tries to keep a routine of prayers, studies and teachings with his 25 students of Islam's theology.

"People all over the world come to visit him and receive his advice. He is a very humble person, but looks tired and physically ill. He is still a big inspiration for me," Ihsan Yilmaz told IDN. He is president of the think tank Istanbul Institute and a personal friend of Gülen.

Yilmaz usually visits his friend in the retreat center in Pennsylvania four times a year. "He is very upset because there are many people affiliated to the movement who are in prison and is now advising people from the Hizmet to leave the country. There is no rule of law in Turkey anymore," he regretted.

It has been a month now that Yilmaz decided to follow his friend's advice. He fled to the United Kingdom after receiving a series of threats to his life in Istanbul and personal charges levelled by President Erdogan.

"What Hizmet is doing is to run away to safer and democratic countries and try to help Turkey from outside. There is a witch-hunt against the movement. It will take some time for Turkey to live democracy again," says Yilmaz.

The biggest concern for the old cleric is that Islam is linked to terrorist connections, admits Osman Şimşek, Gülen's personal assistant and bookkeeper.

"This is a religion of peace, tolerance and non-violence. This is what he stands for. The movement did not agree with the political status in Turkey. His health is deteriorating, but he continues teaching students." [IDN-InDepthNews – 04 December 2015]

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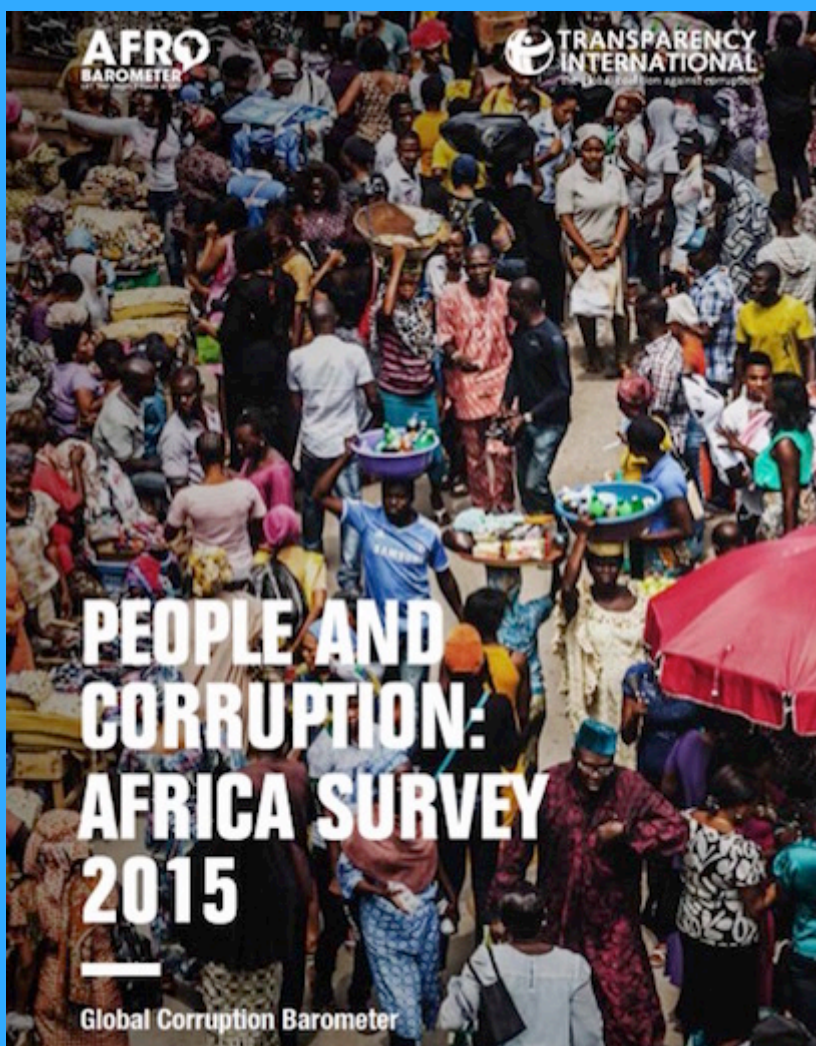
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Bribing One's Way to Basic Necessities of Life in Africa

By Jutta Wolf

BERLIN - A man raped a nine-year old girl who was on her way to school and infected her with HIV. The Zimbabwean police initially arrested the attacker, but then released him in secret. The reason: he paid bribe.



This case is by no means an exception. The police and private sector have regularly been rated as highly corrupt, says [Transparency International](#) in a report entitled [People and Corruption: Africa Survey 2015](#), adding: “we hear stories like this every day . . . In many countries you can pay off police officers to ignore any crime, however horrific and devastating – it’s just a matter of price.”

In fact, says the report, bribery affects more than one-in-five Africans. “Shockingly, we estimate that nearly 75 million people have paid a bribe in the past year – some of these to escape punishment by the police or courts, but many also forced to pay to get access to the basic services that they desperately need.”

For this latest African edition of the Global Corruption Barometer, Transparency International partnered with the Afrobarometer, which spoke to 43,143 respondents across 28 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa between March 2014 and September 2015 to ask them about their experiences and perceptions of corruption in their country.

“A majority of Africans perceive corruption to be on the rise and think that their government is failing in its efforts to fight corruption; and many also feel disempowered as regards to taking action against corruption. In Sierra Leone, Nigeria,

Liberia and Ghana citizens are the most negative about the scale of corruption in their country,” notes the report.

However, the results also highlight that there are a small number of countries in the region that are seen as doing quite well in addressing the scourge of corruption – where only a few people have to pay bribes or where citizens feel that they can contribute to stopping corruption.

According to the report, citizens in Botswana, Lesotho, Senegal and Burkina Faso tend to have the most positive views compared with citizens from other countries in the region.

The main finding of the report is that there is a clear disparity between a few strong performing countries in regard to anti-corruption and the many weak performers on anti-corruption across the continent.

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Transparency International perceives in this finding both a hopeful message, that addressing corruption is indeed possible, as well as a disappointing message, as most African countries have failed to make headway in stemming the tide of corruption.

The report sums up its main findings as follows:

1. The majority of Africans (58%) say that corruption has increased over the past year. This is particularly the case in South Africa where more than four-in-five citizens (83%) say they have seen corruption rise recently.
2. There is no government, which is rated positively on its anti-corruption efforts by a clear majority of its citizens. On the contrary, 18 out of 28 governments are seen as fully failing to address corruption by a large majority.
3. The survey asked how much corruption there was in 10 key institutions and groups in society. Across the region, the police and business executives are seen to have the highest levels of corruption. While the police have regularly been rated as highly corrupt, the strongly negative assessment of business executives is new compared to previous Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) survey rounds.
4. Twenty-two per cent of people that have come into contact with a public service in the past 12 months in Sub-Saharan Africa have paid a bribe, but the situation is worst in Liberia where nearly seven-in-ten paid a bribe. Across the continent, poor people are twice as likely as rich people to have paid a bribe, and in urban areas they are even more likely to pay bribes.
5. Out of six key public services, people who come into contact with the police and the courts are the most likely to have paid a bribe. This is consistent with previous Transparency International surveys and highlights the lack of progress made in addressing bribery in these two institutions, which are crucial for citizen security and the rule of law.
6. People in the region are divided as to whether ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption – just over half of people think that they can (53 per cent), while 38 per cent think they cannot. Reporting incidences when they occur, or saying no when asked to pay a bribe, are seen as the most effective things people can do. However, only roughly one-in-ten people who paid a bribe actually reported it.
7. Despite this, turning back corruption is possible. There are a few countries in which citizens see low levels of corruption in their public institutions and see corruption as on the wane in their own country. The views of citizens in Botswana, Lesotho, Senegal and Burkina Faso are particularly favourable.

As corruption can be a major hindrance for development and economic growth, and as it weakens people's trust in government and the accountability of public institutions, the report calls on governments to act against the corruption, which exists in their country by resorting to concerted measures.

These include strengthening and enforcing legislation on corrupt business people and anti-money laundering to curb the high volume of illicit flows from the continent. This could address the negative perception of business if those profiting are held to account.

Governments are asked to establish right to information and whistle-blower protection legislation to facilitate the role of civil society in making public institutions more transparent, accountable and corruption-free.

Transparency International wants governments to show a sustained and deep commitment to acting on police corruption at all levels by promoting reforms that combine punitive measures with structural changes over the short- and medium-term. Cracking down on petty bribery has direct impact on the most vulnerable in society.

Also the African Union and its members, emphasizes Africa Survey, should provide the political will and financing needed to implement the review mechanism established for its anti-corruption convention.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 01 December 2015]

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http://www.fostering-globalcitizenship.net/documents/Education_for_Global_Citizenship_Project_Report_2014-2015.pdf

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