Human Rights Cities
Civic Engagement for Societal Development

Stephen P. Marks and Kathleen A. Modrowski
with Walther Lichem

Preface: Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Foreword: Shulamith Koenig

UN-HABITAT

ISBN 978-0-9731134-6-4
Human Rights Cities
Civic Engagement for Societal Development

Stephen P. Marks and Kathleen A. Modrowski
with Walther Lichem

Preface: Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Foreword: Shulamith Koenig

UN-HABITAT
PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LEARNING
“The city… is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community.”

L. Mumford
# CONTENTS

**PREFACE**  
DR. ANNA KAJUMULO TIBAIJUKA  
7

**FOREWORD**  
SHULAMITH KOENIG  
9

**INTRODUCTION**  
STEPHEN P. MARKS & KATHLEEN A. MODROWSKI  
17

**CHAPTER 1**  
THE URBAN CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL AGENDA  
21

**CHAPTER 2**  
WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES?  
39

**CHAPTER 3**  
NATIONAL EXPERIENCES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES  
51

**CHAPTER 4**  
THE WAY FORWARD  
145

**NOTES**  
153

**INDEX**  
157

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**  
164
This publication is an outstanding document demonstrating on how learning about human rights as a way of life at the community level can lead people to play a pivotal role in citizen’s owning sustainable and meaningful urban development.

I want to express my thanks to Prof. Marks and Prof. Modrowski as well as Ambassador Lichem who authored this book and to Shulamith Koenig who has initiated the Human Rights Cities Program, together they have been driving force in this program. In particular, I would like to congratulate those authors who provided the lively descriptions of their human rights cities in the various countries and regions of the world. They have described very well how their local activities have made human rights cities a living example of how the concept has improved the lives and dignity of many people and communities.

The approach pursued by the human rights cities initiative is complementary to UN-HABITAT’s strategy for sustainable urban development, which lays emphasis on the need for inclusionary urban governance to achieve this. I note with satisfaction that in the general overview chapter several UN-HABITAT flagship
reports are cited extensively and that many other UN sources are referenced. It indicates how the UN system’s work as a whole is key to addressing sustainable urbanization and development.

The Habitat Agenda, adopted in Istanbul 1996, is a key source document which reflects insight the conviction that progress in sustainable urban development and shelter for all can only be achieved through broad-based partnerships guided by the holistic human rights framework. The Habitat Agenda identified a whole range of partners, which include local authorities, women, youth, parliamentarians, the private sector and civil society, whose contributions are essential to people being empowered to participate in the decision that determines their lives. It is important to note that the Habitat Agenda, which is an inclusive document drafted by governments and civil society has 29 explicit references on human rights as well as 19 references on civil society.

This book cites the Secretary General of the United Nations who states that “it is necessary to broaden partnerships between all stakeholders, such as the civil society and the private sector.” However, the benefits of partnerships in reducing urban poverty are not as great as they could be because of a narrow focus on pilot and demonstration projects. Reaching large numbers of people can only be achieved through effective broad-based partnerships at the global, national and local level. The full participation of the private sector, which normally provides 80 percent of the required financial resources for urban development, is a prerequisite. It is my view that the United Nations is uniquely equipped to be a catalyst for creating the partnerships necessary for the success of a human rights-based approach and has demonstrated this capacity ever since its inception.

The Human Rights Cities Program ventures to demonstrate the creation of such viable and practical partnerships worldwide.
FOREWORD

SHULAMITH KOENIG

Recipient of the 2003 United Nations Human Rights Award
Founding President of PDHRE,
People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning

IN YOUR HANDS – The realization of a dream

We welcome you to join us in a voyage founded on a vision, and a promise. It is a journey to advance Human Rights Cities as a vision of the future of humanity in which communities learn about human rights as a way of life and generate innovative and exciting social and economic transformation.

A city is a microcosm of the world, where the multiple issues and formidable concerns of humanity emerge painfully and restlessly, calling out for sustainable solutions through meaningful and positive change. Sixty years ago all nations defined a powerful vision of a holistic human rights framework as a response to the challenge of freedom from fear and freedom from want. This overarching framework offers communities a moral, political and legal support system for women, men, youth and children, wherever they are and whatever their culture, religion, history or identities, to determine their own futures. Moving from humiliation to belonging in their community in dignity with others…participating in the decision that determines their lives in equality and without discrimination…moving from charity to dignity.
Indeed what a marvelous promise that answers succinctly hopes and expectations of thousand of years—a dream that must be realized is now in your hands!

The Human Rights Cities initiative involves the formation of local communities-of-learning. These are municipal spaces where citizens learn about human rights as relevant to their daily lives and concerns. They embark on highly motivated voyages, led by local groups and organizations concerned with economic and social justice, and plan, reconstruct and advance their goals step-by-step, guided by the wisdom, norms and standards of the holistic human rights framework.

Eleven years ago this audacious idea took shape in Rosario, Argentina, through the initiative of Susana Chariotti, with whom I had shared the idea at an international conference. A few weeks later she called me with great enthusiasm, telling me that Rosario was about to become the first Human Rights City in the world. I flew form New York to Rosario to join in a meeting in the Mayor’s office, where 120 representatives of local NGOs and community groups joined in signing a declaration. I will never forget the representatives of the Toba community—a local indigenous group of 100,000 in a community of one million—a woman and a man signing on to a dream in a city they had never really felt part of. With enormous contentment and after many months of hard work, Susana sent me a message saying: “Shula, you dream and I have to work very hard.” Indeed, Rosario and other cities that have since made similar commitments to vigorous statements of values and to action plans for human rights learning have required the dynamic energies of the most committed and active members of the community.

Their achievements, as detailed in these pages, clearly demonstrate that dialogue and learning about human rights have had a significant place in their lives. Our organization, PDHRE, the Peoples Movement for Human Rights Learning, has been honored to walk the first steps of this journey with them for the
last 20 years.

I am humbled to have been present as these cities, villages, or communities embarked on their own paths to collective human rights dialogue and learning. They have created a practical model for true citizenship where every inhabitant—rich or poor, powerful or oppressed—learns and recognizes the importance of respecting, protecting and promoting all human rights of all, striving to breathe and live human rights in every waking moment and in every impossible dream.

PDHRE was founded in 1989 as an international service organization with a deep belief in the power of human rights learning for communities to achieve economic and social justice. We have worked directly and indirectly with networks of affiliates and partners in over 60 countries around the world to develop and advance the learning about human rights as way of life. We facilitated programs that enabled women and men to re-imagine their lives and discover their own power to define the destiny of their community. Participating in the planning of their future, the human rights about which they learn provide them with the principles with which to pursue their hopes. As a result of internalizing the praxis of human rights communities and assuming social responsibility, communities are constantly being revitalized by actions that create wider spaces, choices and possibilities for meaningful change.

Imagine living in a society where all citizens have made a pledge to overcome fear and impoverishment, to build a society that provides human security, access to food, clean water, housing, education, healthcare and work at livable wages, and to share available resources with all citizens—not as a gift, but as a realization of human rights. That is what Human Rights Cities do by providing an energetic space that demonstrates that living in such a society is possible!

We live in a world where a multitude of organizations work to solve the enormous problems humanity is facing, one project at the time. In 20 years of accumulating rich experiences, we
are convinced of the practical value of a holistic human rights framework for the betterment of the lives of women and men at the community level. Forming into a Steering Committee, they develop learning programs throughout the city. In the process they develop critical thinking with a gender perspective of broad issues of poverty, patriarchy, and power, as well as a systemic analysis not only of symptoms, but more importantly of causes of their lack of clean water, education, food and employment. These are issues that can be solved if the decisions made by communities are guided by a holistic human rights framework.

Fifty percent of the world’s population is under twenty-five years old and many of these young people, often uneducated and unemployed, have joined the two billion people living in cities to find their future. Tragically, many young women and children are being trafficked to the cities. The world is on the move and the movement is towards urban spaces. The reasons for this vast migration are many—wars and conflict, climate change, economic gain, the promise of education, and in general the hope for a better life. These overwhelming challenges call for an inclusive, holistic yet practical plan devised by engaging both citizens and local authorities, vertically and horizontally, to act with transparency and accountability to make a visible difference in citizens’ lives. Basing such a plan on a human rights framework builds on humanity’s historic memories, narratives, aspirations and hopes; it aims at a future in which human rights will be guaranteed for all without discrimination of any kind, such as race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, origin, property, or birth.

The following pages demonstrate that human rights provide a powerful tool for action towards genuine societal development. We have no other option but to develop ways and means for people across the globe to learn human rights and use them to challenge impoverishment and deprivation that undermine the future of humanity. Human Rights Cities draw on the comprehensive human rights instruments by enabling all citizens to participate as
equals in the decision-making processes affecting their lives.

We are inspired by the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that, “a necessitous man [or woman] is not a free man [or woman],” and by those of Nelson Mandela who said, “we face the urgent task of deepening the culture of human rights.” He also said, “However good the policies of the government are, nothing will come of them without the active participation of each and every one of us.”

But let us face it, most people around the world do not know of the existence of international human rights, even though they were proclaimed by the United Nations in 1948, “for all peoples and all nations.” People know traffic regulations that enable us to move safely towards our chosen destinations as socially responsible and free human beings, but they do not know the rules of human rights that allow us to lead lives in society as socially responsible and free human beings.

Make no mistake about it: for many millions of our brothers and sisters the enormous potential of all to live a life they value is shattered by the vicious cycle of humiliation, which forces people to exchange their equality for survival. When women and men internalize human rights as their own, hidden capacities come and throw light on the path toward freedom from injustice.

The acquired knowledge informs actions to reach to what is offered to humanity in the inclusive human rights agenda. Having become aware of the structures of injustice, people find meaning and relevance in the two International Covenants (one on economic, social and cultural rights, the other on civil and political rights) and in the Conventions on race, torture, discrimination against women, and rights of children, migrants and persons with disabilities, to name subject areas of the main UN human rights treaties. These and more have been ratified by most countries of the world, which thereby promise to modify their laws and practices in order to give effect to the obligations they have accepted. Yet, the general public in the North or South remains to a large extent
The people of a Human Rights City, through their groups and neighborhoods representatives, create a vibrant new space of living in mutual recognition, dignity and freedom. They move from “shame and blame” to realize the promise of democracy. Indeed we have no other alternative but for human rights to become a universal support system for maintaining and sustaining sanity, collaboration and cooperation in difficult urban environments.

As part of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations General Assembly declared, at the initiative of Benin, that 2009 will be the “International Year of Human Rights Leaning.” (Resolution: A/RES/62/171) The resolution further states:
…Every woman, man and child, in order to realize their full human potential, must be made aware of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms…[and] human rights learning should serve to transform the holistic vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into a way of life…

The General Assembly decided to devote the International Year of Human Rights Learning, “to activities to broaden and deepen human rights learning…on the basis of the principles of universality…constructive international dialogue and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural…”

Human Rights Cities offer a structure for locally run investigation, evaluation and analysis of what is needed to prevent violations and promote realization of human rights. Each member of the community becomes a mentor and monitor as they move relationships, laws, policies and resources from the vertical to the horizontal with respect and trust. They develop a new vision of the world.

Inspired by what people have done so far, PDHRE continues to facilitate the creation of new Human Rights Cities, which now can emulate existing ones. This book tells their stories. We do so with much pride and expectation that these cities will multiply around the world. We nurture the hope that every country in the world will have at least one human rights city to serve both as a magnet and a radiating beacon, a space where communities advance learning about human rights as a way of life, celebrating the full and vibrant dimensions of their society guided by the holistic human rights framework, their legacy to humanity in the 21st century.

We all must assume the responsibility to replicate these experiences and make these communities a living reality. We have no other option.
To send you on the road let us look back to Rosario and the change in the lives of the Toba indigenous community:

As part of learning about the Millennium Development Goals and mapping the human rights in their community, youth living in the slums decided—even though hesitantly and believing that it was useless—to obtain a meeting with the Mayor. They wanted to request the replacement of the many shuttered and broken windows in their school. The meeting was granted and within two days all windows were replaced. These young people realized their human right to be educated in an environment that recognizes their dignity and protects their human right to good health. They received a gift of trust and respect. The students became aware that they could make a difference. They have become mentors and monitors in their now changing community.

Another short story…

In the process of learning about human rights, representatives of the Toba people, inspired by the UDHR, wrote a ten point document to articulate their quest for dignity, trust and respect in the community. After long deliberation they came up with the first point: “It is our wish to be able to go to buy what we need in the new shopping mall in Rosario without being looked at as thieves.” The pain and the hope that filtered through these few words expressed their desire to live like the other inhabitants of the city. Truly they saw human rights as a way of life—one to be lived in dignity and non-discrimination—infusing all aspects both great and small.

We have no other option!
The Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum on November 3-7, 2008, brings together in Nanjing representatives of all governments, of multilateral institutions and civil society to grapple with the problems affecting people living in cities and not enjoying the core value to which Millennium Development Goal 7 aspires in its target 11, namely, security of residential tenure among the urban poor. The efforts of the international system are not likely to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the target date of 2020. The prognosis of 1.5 billion slum dwellers by 2020 unless significant programs are implemented to improve access to water, sanitation, secure tenure and adequate housing is daunting and calls for innovative strategies.

This publication reviews one strategy that addresses both a broader and a narrower dimension of urban poverty. The Human Rights Cities Program is not directed toward securing legal title as a means of protecting the urban poor from market eviction and gentrification or to catalyze investment in low-income housing. It is rather a broader strategy of empowering inhabitants of communities to find collectively the ways and means of ensuring
respect for their human rights, including the right to adequate housing, component elements of which are security of tenure, access to basic urban services, transport and mobility, financial services and credit, women’s empowerment, urban citizenship, income and livelihoods. It is thus a broader strategy than securing legal tenure.

This Program encourages local communities to take charge of their own future by understanding their needs and the causes of the various forms of deprivation from which they suffer and acting on that understanding. Where a vibrant civil society and responsive local government exist, human rights communities complement and reinforce their efforts to tackle poverty and social ills. The added value of the Human Rights Cities Program in such a context is to channel those efforts around national and international commitment to human rights. Where local government is ineffective, corrupt, or non-existent and few opportunities are available to mobilize beyond the family and clan, a human rights cities initiative is a vehicle for raising awareness and transforming that awareness into action for social change.

Traditional strategies of aid and financing development have done little to stem the tide of “urbanization of poverty” and “feminization” of urban poverty. Recent crises in Kenya and Zimbabwe have underscored the limitations and sometimes exacerbating effect of relying on the political opposition—legitimate though it may be—to build on local resolve to challenge the economic, political, and social forces that push 100 million people into slum conditions. Human Rights Cities certainly are no panacea; they serve to reinforce a more systematic effort to provide local solutions to urban problems, including the growth of slums, impediment to gender equality in rights to property and inheritance, social, economic and political exclusion in cities, and hindering access of the urban poor to livelihoods. Change will occur when slum dwellers can exercise true power to advance slum upgrading, gender equality, social inclusion and urban
The difference between the particular strategy of Human Rights Cities and other approaches to community empowerment is the focus on a holistic understanding of how housing rights relate to the entire panoply of human rights and how citizen empowerment provides both an alternative to fatalism and a set of skills for making the legal and administrative systems to work for rather than against the urban poor. Among the outcomes of such a strategy is the application of the instruments available internationally and nationally to enforce housing rights.

At a time when UN-HABITAT’s Strategy for the Implementation of the MDG 7, Target 11, is highlighting best practices and good policies to advance housing rights and security of tenure; rental housing appropriate for the urban poor; gender equality; urban social inclusion; urban poverty reduction and urban livelihoods, in sum, practices and policies that are pro-poor, inclusive and gender-sensitive, the experience of Human Rights Cities is worth examining, not as the simple solution to the complex problems of urban poverty but as a small scale set of initiatives that show promise in grounding these practices and policies in community action.

Walther Lichem, former Austrian Ambassador to Canada and member of the PDHRE Board of Directors, wrote the first chapter, on “The Urban Context of the Global Agenda.” He places human rights cities in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and international concern over the political, economic, and social dimensions of urban poverty. He draws on the insights of a long career of international diplomacy during which he has been at the center of UN and European institutional measures to address priority issues and has come away deeply committed to the Human Rights Cities project as a strategy for addressing societal realities.

In the second chapter, we lay out the approach and methods of the Human Rights Cities initiative, what it is, and how it relates
to the broader objectives of human rights education and learning. We also outline the steps that are taken to establish and sustain a Human Rights City.

Giving voice to key players in the creation of Human Rights Cities across the globe, the third chapter contextualizes the human rights in two cities in Latin America, two in Europe, fifteen in Africa and two in North America. Actors in the establishment and running of human rights cities provided the description of each of these experiences. The following persons are the primary voices behind the descriptions of their human rights cities:

**Ghana** - Raymond Atuguba, Tuinese E. Amuzu

**Kenya** – Rose Nyawira

**Mali** – Mohamed El Moktar Mahamar

**Austria** – Wolfgang Benedek

**Canada** – Satya Das, Joy Fraser, Renée Vaugeois

**United States** – Jean-Louis Peta Ikamabana

**Argentina** - Susana Chariotti

**Brazil** – Carlos Alberto Silveira Netto Soares

Hundreds of their fellow citizens have made Human Rights Cities a living reality through their imagination, courage, and commitment to bettering their own condition through the of civic engagement. We are convinced that their examples offer hope to the hundreds of millions who only know despair in the urban environment and to those who are sensitized to re-imagining the urban environment in the spirit of dignity and greater freedom for all.
We live in a time when the priorities facing the international community have shaped a new global agenda based on the interrelatedness of a wide range of sectoral challenges, which can no longer be understood and addressed in isolation. To deal holistically with the full range of these interrelated issues requires not only conceptual breadth but also institutional capacities beyond the reach of traditionally fragmented responsibilities and capacities of governments and international institutions, to say nothing of local-level institutions, whether municipal, village or neighborhood. This chapter outlines the salient features of the global agenda as they relate to the specific challenges facing urban development and conclude with a discussion of the significance of human rights as a strategy for advancing an integral approach to this agenda.

Two forces pulling in different directions have characterized the evolution of the international agenda, one accentuating transnational interactions and the other focusing on non-state actors and individual citizens. As transactions cross borders, human beings emerge simultaneously as victims of processes
beyond their control, as perpetrators of wrongs against fellow citizens and other persons far away, and as holders of rights and bearers of responsibilities. These multiple roles are reflected in three key ideas that define the global agenda—at least as reflected in agreed priorities of the United Nations, namely, human rights, human development and human security. A recent policy innovation with institutional ramifications is the Responsibility to Protect,¹ which arguably places human sovereignty even above state sovereignty. While protecting people against abuses by their own state, this concept also recognizes individual criminal responsibility, including before the International Criminal Court. These innovations in addressing global issues also relate to urban development, as will be discussed below.

This “dialectic interdependence of the local and global dimensions of economic, political and cultural processes” is called “globalization.”² Global issues require a plurilevel approaches to governance, not only at global and national but also at local levels. The challenge is not only to create new capacities for multilevel interventions but also new structures of cooperation and role definition at the various levels of governance. Each level of governance, including the participation of citizens and of communities through local democratic processes, bears a degree of responsibility for component elements of the global agenda, defined primarily as peace and security, economic and social development, environmental sustainability, societal cohesion, and good governance. Cities can mediate the reciprocal relationship between globalization on the one hand and economic and human development on the other. The potential of the local, urban level in addressing the issues of this global agenda is being ever more recognized in the national and in the international policy framework, since it is at that level that relational attitudes among persons and communities are worked out and inter-generational responsibilities for sustainable development protective of the environmental and natural resources endowment are shared.
Urban growth

The 2007 Revision of the World Urbanization Prospects predicted an increase in the world’s population until 2050 by 2.5 billion, passing from 6.7 billion to 9.2 billion.\(^3\) The population living in urban areas, however, is expected to grow by 3.1 billion, passing from 3.3 billion in 2007 to 6.4 billion in 2050. Already in 2008 the majority of the world’s population is living in urban areas clearly making cities and urban communities a key element in addressing our Global Agenda. In many countries population growth accounts for 60 percent or more of urban expansion. The share of urban population will grow significantly in developing countries reaching by 2050 an average of 67 percent of the total population. Sustainable urbanization has become a prime objective of our agenda and the implication of population growth for economic, social, security, sustainability and societal issues will increasingly have to be addressed in the urban context.

Economic development

Since the Middle Ages, the development of cities has been closely linked with economic, social, societal and cultural development. Urbanization and economic progress have been mutually reinforcing.\(^4\) Today, cities both bear the brunt of economic globalization and constitute the primary settings for economic development. Foreign direct investment and industries in information and communication technology are concentrated in the cities, as is manufacturing and the establishment of industrial parks. Economic development at the urban level vastly increases the revenues and financial resources of local governments and generates gains in productivity and competitiveness.

Data from developing countries show that the development of urban settlements can account for a considerable share in the growth of national income. In all regions, cities generate a disproportionate share of gross domestic product (GDP) and provide huge opportunities for investment and employment.
Urban-based economic activities account for up to 55 percent of GDP in low-income countries, 73 percent in middle-income countries and for up to 85 percent in high-income countries.\(^5\) These opportunities have to be seen in the context of globalization where the enhanced linkages of urban settings with the global market put cities in the very center of economic development.

**Urbanization of poverty**

According to the report on *The State of the World’s Cities 2006/2007* there will be 1.4 billion persons living in slums by 2020.\(^6\) Poverty, in its multiple dimensions of slums and hunger, sanitation and health, education and employment, is increasingly a problem facing cities. Although today most of the world’s poor live rural areas, by 2035 cities will become the predominant sites of poverty and in urbanized developing countries there are already twice as many poor in urban than in rural areas. This is to be understood as one of the most challenging problems facing the world today.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) defined, as a follow-up to the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, the shared priorities of governments and of the UN system in addressing poverty through global partnerships and social development. Most of the MDGs require action at the local, including urban level, whether the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and, as targets in the context of achieving environmental sustainability, halving the proportion of the people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.\(^7\)

To take one example, the risk and prevalence of HIV/AIDS is very much enhanced in urban settings. At the same time the opportunities for reducing the pandemic are greater in cities than in rural areas. Sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis,
which increases the acquisition and transmission of HIV/AIDS, are also more common in urban areas. Urban poor, like the rural poor, die young due to the consumption of contaminated water and food. Pneumonia and diarrhea kill each year more than 2 million children in developing countries.

Education assumes a critical role in the overall responses to development and globalization. In slum areas there are often not enough primary schools. Globally 113 million children have not been enrolled in school and 130 million young have grown up illiterate. Cities, therefore, can and should offer new and broader opportunities for education.

Environmental issues

The UN global environmental agenda focuses both on the impact of global change on local quality of air, water, and biodiversity, as well as the global impacts of local action. Indeed, urban settlements often exacerbate air and water pollution, climate change, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, water resources management and water supply, land use including the issue of polluted industrial sites and natural disasters.

The “urban footprint” stretches far beyond city boundaries. Urban settlements influence and are affected by broader environmental developments. Urban pollution provides the greatest proportion of carbon dioxide emissions. Higher sea levels induced by global warming will affect urban concentrations at or near coastlines with disastrous consequences.

Natural disasters, which have more severe effects in the urban context due to the sheer concentration of people and infrastructure, have been on the increase. Over the past two and a half decades disasters worldwide increased from 428 to 707 per annum. The poor are particularly affected by natural disasters because their buildings and roads crumble and fall in the wake of major tremors, landslides and floods. Today 75 percent of the world’s
population lives in areas that were affected at least once by an
earthquake, a tropical cyclone, floods or droughts. In developing
countries natural disasters cause on average seven times more
losses of life than in industrialized countries. Understanding the
particular urban vulnerability by natural disasters is a first step
toward developing mitigation strategies, improve the resilience
and reduce the vulnerabilities of urban settlements.

Societal challenges

The greatest challenge to urban development, as a salient
component of the 21st century global agenda, is the sharp
increase in population, combined with social complexity, resulting
in the destabilization of social institutions and potentially societal
collapse. Progress in urban development is dependant on societal
dynamics, which in turn are affected by measures to protect human
rights, advance democratization, and preserve values and culture
through participatory governance and acknowledgment of plural
identity of urban societies. As noted in the Human Development
Report 2004, devoted to the theme of “cultural liberty in today’s
diverse world,”

From disaffected indigenous groups across Latin
America, to unhappy minorities in Africa and Asia, to
new immigrants across the developed world, failing
to address the grievances of marginalized groups
does not just create injustice. It builds real problems
for the future: unemployed, disaffected youth, angry
with the status quo and demanding change, often
violently.

An example in Salzburg, a relatively small provincial town
of 150,000 inhabitants, which is today the home to 148 different
nationalities, including migrants with different ethnic, cultural,
linguistic, and religious backgrounds. The limited capacity for
otherness, that is for societal inclusion and for the affirmation of
plurality, in many urban communities, however, has fragmented societies, resulting in socially differentiated groups benefiting from radically different levels of education, health services and infrastructure.

The security agenda and its growing privatization in response to these developments reflect the disintegration affecting many societies. Organized crime, especially trafficking in narcotic drugs and in children and women, as well as new forms of slavery and forced prostitution feed on discrimination and humiliation and the failure of social institutions to provide for inclusion, integration and societal cohesion. These ills are exacerbated by the failure to ensure the rule of law and consequential segregation, exclusion, confrontation and vengeance.

**Societal development**

In the context of urban development it is important to distinguish the term “societal” from the term “social.” While “social” refers to the various dimensions of the productive capacities of the human being and of communities (health, age, education, standard of living, employment, hunger, etc.), “societal” refers to the relational capacities of a citizen and of a community (capacity for plurality, acceptance and affirmation of the value of otherness, relativization of one’s own identity, values and visions, commitment to identify and implement the common good, etc.). “Societal” ultimately refers also to the understanding of one’s own human dignity and human rights and implicitly the recognition of the human rights and dignity of the other.

“Societal” includes, most importantly, the capacity for otherness and for a plurality of identities, the ability to relativize one’s own position and identity and the ability to move into public space, interacting democratically with others in the definition and implementation of the common good. “Societal” refers to the capacity of the human being for living in dignity with others as well as the capacity for change/development and for a vision of
the future.

Societal capacities in different societies have so far largely been seen as a given and considered to be essentially internal and hence excluded from international discourse and policies. However, many of the recent crises and related development failures in different regions and especially in urban areas suggest an increasingly urgent need to address the societal dimension from a development perspective. This means that societal capacities are to be included in economic and social development, in approaching environmental sustainability and in relation to conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building efforts. Concrete action is required to assure comprehensive learning, socialization and education processes which capacitate a society for peaceful, inclusive convivencia in equity and justice. Societal development, in terms of today’s world, is the vehicle by which the notion of world citizenship und thus the demand for equality among the peoples can be realized.

Societal development no doubt is a long-term process, with a certain inter-generational dimension. There is also a need to look at societal development as a multi-faceted, participatory program, which will require the activation of all social and governmental structures at local, national, regional and global levels.

Societal development must be rooted in local cultural traditions and be understood in its necessarily comprehensive, all-inclusive, multi-level, long-term nature and eventually find appropriate institutional recognition in local, national, regional and global governance processes of the United Nations.

Citizens and societies acquire societal capacities, behavioral patterns and values by processes of socialization, by education and by learning. A development approach to societal capacities has to focus on these processes keeping in mind the need for rooting socialization, education and learning in the cultural values and traditions of each society. It is to be noted that all cultures, faiths and historical traditions offer ample ground on which to build locally
defined processes of capacity building for human dignity, identity plurality and societal inclusion. A UNESCO multi-cultural, multi-religious international committee of personalities found already in the late 1940s that there are human rights commonalities among cultures, values that are of such fundamental moral nature in our cultures that they can be called “human rights.”

The “social” and the “societal” dimensions of our peace and security agendas as well as of the development potential of a given society are, of course, closely interrelated yet need different approaches in the context of comprehensive development processes. The question has been asked as to what extent economic capacities of a society would also be included in the concept of societal development.

**Peace and security**

For the last half century the traditional peace and security agenda has shifted from wars among states across state borders to intra-societal violence and insecurity. Today more than 90 percent of wars and conflicts occur within national boundaries with 95 percent of the victims being civilians not belonging to armed forces. State security has given way to the idea of human security. The processes of urbanization have posed new security challenges, which are exacerbated in failed and fragile governmental structures and states.

Urban crime and violence do not exist in a vacuum. They are realities that emerge from social, economic and societal conditions that accentuate urban fragmentation. Criminal activity, such as trafficking in small arms and narcotics, are related to the processes of societal disintegration and urban insecurity. The emergence of private security services and the retreat of wealthy communities behind walls and barbed wire are responses to this insecurity and deepen segregation and exclusion, of which they are also the symbolic representation.

Among the sources of urban insecurity, terrorist acts have a
concentrated yet devastating impact. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 caused $33-36 billion of damages in infrastructure, buildings, jobs and other assets in the city of New York.\textsuperscript{12} The harm of these attacks to the world economy beyond New York and Washington, D.C., has been inestimable.

Conflicts and violence, including terrorism and organized crime are threatening not only the societal cohesion within countries but the very existence and functioning of failing states and governments. Such violence and challenges to societal cohesion are experienced in countries of all regions. However, their impact is particularly damaging for the development potential of the poorer countries striving to improve the economic and social conditions of their societies. Societal disintegration is to be considered a major factor contributing to poverty and lack of development.

The processes of societal fragmentation and disintegration have multiple effects on human security. They may lead to a militarization of gangs, of police, militias and other armed groups. Failures of state structures affect human security of citizens and enhance the disintegration of societies. Corruption and fraud enhance the growth of organized crime. Violence and crime have been on the rise in many cities. Excessive population growth in cities also contributes to civil conflict. Cities with annual growth rates greater than four percent were twice more likely to experience civil conflict than those cities where urban growth has been more paced.

Societal fragmentation is often also associated with a differentiation of human security-related public services. Inadequate urban water supply and sanitation, sewage treatment and health services in the poorer quarters of cities may enhance the risk of infection and related losses of life. An important factor contributing to urban crime and violence is societal neglect rather than the condition of being poor. Crime flourishes also where policing, judicial and civil society systems have not yet developed or have broken down through corrupt or weak governance.\textsuperscript{13}
Crime and the “gating” of society

Rapid and often chaotic urbanization has been identified as one of the main causes of reduced urban safety and security worldwide. According to UN-HABITAT\textsuperscript{14} crime rates in the world have increased between 1980 and 2000 from 2,300 to over 3,000 crimes per 100,000 people. While crime rates fell in North America and Western Europe over the past two decades, the police recorded in 2001 almost 50 million property and violent crimes in 34 industrialized countries. UN-HABITAT further notes that during the first five years of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century 60 percent of urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime. Murder and burglaries occur primarily in urban areas. The report also underlines the significance of urban poverty and slums in the context of daily urban risk and vulnerability to crime and violence.

As a response to this development the richer sectors of urban societies have tended to surround settlement areas with walls, barbed wire and provide these spaces with private security services. According to UN-HABITAT the number of private security guards has increased by 150 percent since 1997. This “gating” of the well-off population underscores however the divisions existing in many cities, impeding even further communication and reflecting the lack of cross-identification among the increasingly different and divided sectors of the urban population. While the well-off get “gated” there are as many as 100 million street children, a number expected to rise even further as urbanization advances. The increased privatization of security and public space is an indication of the loss of confidence in the ability of the relevant authorities to cope with the growing levels of crime and violence. The “gating” of societies is a clear indicator of the failure of societal development.

Combating crime requires other essential elements of societal development: the rule of law and freedom from corruption. Organized crime is often linked to corruption. Drugs, arms and
human trafficking are among the principal activities of organized crime. The lack of effective legal process not only fosters the operations of organized crime, but also stifles effective participation of civil society in urban governance processes.

The challenges to societal cohesion and inclusion

The process of urbanization has been closely linked to processes of up-rooting, losses of rural identities, cultures and communities. Traditional single-identity societies of sameness, where the basic elements of identity, such as ethnic background, religious beliefs, language and cultural traditions, are shared among the members of the community, are being replaced by societies of a wide diversity of different identities. These pluri-identity societies need capacities for otherness, considering the other, different identities, beliefs, and cultures not as a threat but as an asset, moving beyond the old concept of tolerance.

Rapid urbanization, however, can exacerbate acculturation tensions and conflicts. Migrants from rural areas, foreign workers, and refugees in urban settings are often spatially segregated without an affirmation of their being and identity. Ethnic groups of migrants in some cases have tended to be self-segregating in urban spaces creating ethnic enclaves. Such migration, in particular when it involves culturally different populations, can lead to humiliation and exclusion, feelings of rejection, or denial of human dignity, all of which can foster crime and violence.

Very often urbanization unleashes new patterns of social relations, such as when patriarchy and expectations of obedience among migrants clash with the host society’s horizontal relations of equality, democratic partnership and sharing. Adaptation of migrants to horizontalization of social relations requires, however, new skills and capacities of solidarity and community-building rather than blind obedience to authority.

Urban governance needs citizens who are willing and able to move into public space and to participate in the definition and
implementation of the common good. Communities in the urban context would therefore have to be increasingly defined by an affirmation of values, of belonging, of solidarity and of a shared vision of the common future. This transition into urban societal horizontality and participation, however, needs a new approach to developing and securing human dignity.

The horizontalized market society in the globalized economy is essentially a competitive society where the “loser” is often left with the feeling of exclusion and discrimination. These attitudes of not belonging are not only directed against the local “winners” but towards the increasingly globalized market economy as a whole and towards its actors. The distance between the wealthy and the poor sectors of our societies has been growing dramatically with multiple implications. The disparity between the poor and the rich, the losers and the winners of our economy and our society are particularly articulated in the urban setting, defining urban space, education, employment, health, and wellbeing.

These new societal dimensions of urban development need enhanced attention in view of the fact that societal disintegration and fragmentation has now been recognized as a basic element impeding economic and social development, and in the failures of achieving a sustainable use of natural resources. Societal failures prevent the attainment of a violence- and crime-free society.

We have to recognize that development, as a process of change towards “larger freedom” needs policies and programs of societal inclusion and cohesion, affirming plurality of identities, developing the capacity for otherness and for the common good among all urban inhabitants. These capacities are of particular significance in the context of coping with the consequences or mitigation of natural disasters increasingly affecting urban communities and in addressing the effects of climate change on urban safety.
“Public space” and participatory governance

Governance, different from government, which is a vertically structured process of norm setting and norm-implementation at different levels, is a horizontal process of partnership in “public space.” “Public space” is defined as that abstract space of a society in which the common good is defined and implemented. It is the key element of participatory governance processes in which state and non-state partners cooperate to achieve the realization of shared visions, through cooperation and partnership in defining and achieving the common good.

Societal capacity for “public space” is fundamental for democratic governance. The capacity for public space is part of the horizontalization to be achieved in societal development towards democracy. Command and obedience societies, military or ideological dictatorships know no “public space.” The undemocratic head of government decides about the common good. Citizens are not invited to cooperate. Usually their only task has been to obey.

Cities provide the perfect setting for developing capacities for participatory democracy. They contain both constitutional public power and space for decision-making of importance to the society as well as the personal proximity to the decision-maker. Societies in transition from vertical structures of command and obedience do need societal development for governance building among the non-state structures for partnership in city governance.

Effective urban governance has to be based on the participation and contribution of different non-state partners including civil society, the private sector and academia. In order to overcome the societal fragmentation cities will also benefit from the participation of ethnic and religious communities and the poor sectors of the city. At the same time linkages to the national government and to international programs and objectives will be valuable, keeping in mind the local affectedness of global change and the local responsibility for global development and peace.
Such encompassing, holistic approach to urban governance will succeed in enhancing human security, reduce crime and violence and reduce the physical divisions of the various societal fractions by way gating and exclusion. At the same time economic development will be facilitated while social development will be recognized in its fundamental importance for economic and societal well being and security. An urban society liberated of its fragmentation will suffer less from the inter-sectoral or inter-generational externalization of costs. Democratic governance will lead towards capacity for sustainability.

The effectiveness of democratic governance will also depend on the values, sense of responsibility and accountability of public officials and civil servants. Freedom from corruption is both a reflection of the societal development achieved in a city and of the public structures' sense of responsibility vis-à-vis society.
The human rights dimensions of urban development

The 2006 World Urban Forum pointed to the need for a more comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to urban development, including social, economic and environmental dimensions, in line with sustainable development. Echoing the Human Development Report, the Forum alluded to the human rights dimensions of gender and age sensitive approaches to urban development and the interrelatedness of human development, human rights and human security. In his Report to the 2005 Summit on the implementation of the outcome of the Millennium Summit the UN Secretary-General articulated very clearly the interrelatedness of the development and security agendas, identifying “human rights for all” as the very lynch pin of an increasingly interrelated global agenda. Development and security are mutually dependent and both will flourish in “larger freedom” with human rights and democracy as the linking elements ultimately defining both agenda areas.

This interdependence has implications at the urban level. The Monterrey International Conference on the State of Safety in the World’s Cities underlined that safety in cities is a complex issue and recommended a, “comprehensive approach to urban safety that addresses issues such as inequality, marginalization and poverty.” At the same time it has become clear that societies which disintegrate and suffer under crime, violence and a absence of the rule of law are not suitable for investments and economic development with as a consequence impact on the social development agenda. Corrupt governance has its environmental costs, which in turn hamper economic development and urban safety.

If the societal dimension of our urban development agenda is to be seen as a lynch pin in the achievement of our objectives with regard to economic and social development, cultural development, environmental sustainability and our combating crime, corruption, and intra-societal violence we may well have to ask ourselves
how the defining position of human rights is to be addressed in the urban settlements and communities

Human rights values have moved center stage in the definition of societal capacities of citizens, societal cohesion and solidarity and the sense of a shared destiny. In fact, the human rights agenda is acquiring a new horizontality in its societal dimension. The traditional legal quality of human rights as defining the relation between state and citizen is being increasingly complemented by human rights as the defining element for intra-societal relations between people and between communities. The achievements of the women’s movement supported by international policies and legal instruments provides a recent example for how human rights development can have a concrete impact on the quality of relations between human beings.
Human rights education, learning and socialization are key strategies for achieving societal development. They provide each human being with the ability to understand his/her human dignity and hence the dignity of the other. An effective culture of human rights becomes the defining quality of a community, making it inclusive and providing it with a sense of shared purpose and future. The enhanced empowerment of people through human rights brings a new capacity and commitment of sharing the public space and for becoming a partner of the government in processes of governance.

Human rights education as an element of educational programs provides awareness about dignity and equality with others in dignity. However, knowledge alone may settle into mere abstraction.

Learning processes translate knowledge into understanding. Human rights learning facilitates the movement of individuals and communities to becoming self-asserted actors. Human rights learning aims at enhancing knowledge, developing critical understanding, promoting values clarification, bringing about attitudinal changes, building solidarity and changing behaviors.

Human rights as a public commitment has to enter the shared public space. Monuments, street names, public holidays need to reflect better a human rights based societal culture and contribute jointly with other public and private structures to a socialization into human rights related values, capacities and behaviors.

Human rights education, learning and socialization are to create a culture of human rights, a human rights related “way of life.” As such it will provide the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of every society or social group. It will encompass lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems and beliefs. A human rights based culture will provide the direction for societal development. The key objective is to live in dignity.
CHAPTER 2
WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES?

The city, as one finds it in history, is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community. It is the place where the diffused rays of many separate beams of life fall into focus, with gains in both social effectiveness and significance. The city is the form and symbol of an integrated social relationship: it is the seat of the temple, the market, the hall of justice, the academy of learning. Here in the city the goods of civilization are multiplied and manifolded; here is where human experience is transformed into viable signs, symbols, patterns of conduct, systems of order. Here is where the issues of civilization are focused: here too, ritual passes on occasion into the active drama of a fully differentiated and self-conscious society.¹⁹ (Lewis Mumford)

Human Rights Cities are community-based initiatives, locally conceived and directed by local groups around the world, which combine participation, empowerment and social change with
international solidarity based on agreed principles of human rights education and sustainable development. To understand the phenomenon of Human Rights Cities, this chapter will recall the commitment of the international community to this understanding of human rights education and learning, the origin of the movement for human rights cities, the experience, the objectives and expected results of the program, and its relation to the urban condition. The next chapter will present the voices of those who have transformed the concept into daily practice in their communities.

The Commitment of the international community to human rights and human rights education and learning

In the Millennium Declaration of 2000, heads of state and government pledged that they, “will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.” Toward this end, they resolved to take specific measure relating to full protection and promotion of all human rights in all countries, to democracy, to combating violence against women, to protecting rights of minorities, migrants, migrant workers and their families, to eliminating acts of racism and xenophobia, to allowing genuine participation by citizens, and to ensuring freedom of the media and the right of the public to have access to information.

The UN Secretary General, in his Road Map Toward the Implementation of the Millennium Declaration, placed human rights, “at the centre of peace, security and development programmes” and added, “it is necessary to broaden partnerships between all stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector.” The Human Rights Cities project reflects a similar commitment to human rights as a participatory strategy engaging civil society in building communities that resolve issues of development at the local level through human rights learning. In most settings in the
developing world, the starting point is an awareness of the hardship that globalization brings in an increasingly interdependent world, which generates, along with unprecedented growth, severe and increasing inequalities, massive numbers of displaced persons, genocidal wars fueled by ethnic conflicts, large scale human trafficking, numerous domestic conflicts generating humanitarian disasters, proliferation of weapons, terrorism, urban collapse and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. These threats to human development and human rights are not being solved by resolutions adopted in New York or Geneva or by charity from foreign donors. Support from the international community for local implementation of human rights is only useful to the extent that it complements action by communities to alter the power structures responsible for the social injustice they endure.

The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), proclaimed in 1994 by the General Assembly, defined human rights education as, “more than the provision of information” and declared that it, “should constitute a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels in development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.” Government acceptance of human rights education is further reflected in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which was adopted on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That Declaration covers human rights training and education, including the duty to facilitate human rights education at all levels of schooling, and in particular in the training of lawyers, law enforcement officials, members of armed forces, and public officials. The Declaration recalls various human rights treaties establishing the duty of States parties to adopt measures to promote human rights through teaching, education, and training; to ensure the widespread dissemination of information about national and international human rights laws; to report to UN treaty bodies; and to encourage states to support
the establishment of independent human rights institutions, such as human rights commissions and ombudspersons.

This understanding of human rights education was recently reinforced by the declaration of the year commencing on 10 December 2008 as the International Year of Human Rights Learning. The resolution calls on the UN, “to increase its efforts to promote a human rights culture worldwide through education and learning.” How is this human rights culture to be created and fostered? The Peoples Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE), among other civil society initiatives, has endeavored for more than a decade to work with local communities to answer that question.

**Transformative nature of human rights learning**

The most salient feature of this mode of human rights education (HRE) is the concept and practice of a transformative pedagogy of human rights, which holds the potential for altering the power structure behind most forms of oppression and repression. Indeed, if people everywhere commit to building a political culture based on the right and responsibility of everyone to respect, ensure, and fulfill human rights for all, the space for abuse of public trust, violence against the physical and mental integrity of others, and exploitation of the vulnerable will contract. The concept of transformative learning is a well-known concept in educational theory akin to the “deep approach” to learning or active learning according to which the learner reaches, “a personal understanding of the material presented… [and] has to interact critically with the content, relating it to previous knowledge and experience, as well as examining evidence and evaluating the logical steps by which conclusion have been reached.” It challenges the “surface approach” or the traditional teacher-centered approach. As noted in a seminal work on the application of the deep approach by Harvard Business School, “the most eloquent critiques of the teacher-centered approach date back to such master vintners
as John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Jean Piaget, and Carl Rogers. Their concerns are as timely today as they were when they first appeared.”

Human rights education, applying traditional and active teaching approaches, is promoted by NGOs such as Human Rights Education Associates,29 and has been adopted in part by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights30 and by the World Health Organization in the area of reproductive health and rights.31

The approach focused more on a transformative pedagogy of “human rights learning” is promoted by such groups as PDHRE, the People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning, which has published studies on human rights learning activities in a wide range of settings.32 PDHRE actively promoted the 1994 General Assembly Resolution that launched the Decade for Human Rights Education and worked with various delegations on the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 62/171, on the International Year of Human Rights Learning in 2009. While this pedagogy is increasingly
practiced in school settings, the basic precepts of human rights learning give content to the participation concept in development. In practical terms, participatory learning as a development strategy focuses on non-formal human rights learning in which the human rights educator’s role is that of “facilitator” rather than “teacher.” This approach is particularly appropriate to human rights as it involves analysis of power relations, especially those that limit the realization of human rights in the context of local communities. More specifically, human rights learning engages the learners in understanding their own situation, relating the values of human rights to that understanding, and designing and implementing strategies to alter the situation in ways that enhance human rights realization.

Educators would explain that this approach to learning involves multiple pedagogical objectives, insofar as it seeks to enhance knowledge, develop critical understanding, clarify values, change attitudes, promote solidarity and alter behavior or practice. When all six are met, the most important goal can be achieved: empowerment, which Richard Claude defines as “a process through which people and/or communities increase their control or mastery over their own lives and the decisions that affect their lives.” A constant concern of the human rights educator is that the learners, through the process of identification and analysis of issues, become aware of their right to know their rights and especially their right to claim them. It is in this sense that we refer to human rights education as “transforming beggars into claimants,” that is, shifting from development as charity to development as the realization of capabilities. It is therefore essential that human rights learning activities apply “participatory methodologies” to provide an experiential foundation for learning. The learning process, according to this methodology, is not memorization of information communicated by the instructor, but an experience through which learners acquire understanding by engaging in understanding issues, analyzing processes and
action for social change.

The applications of this approach can take many forms, from small-group community task forces to the creation of Human Rights Cities or communities. The concept of human rights communities, as promoted by PDHRE, is based on the idea of members of a community accepting human rights obligations in all aspects of community life, whether in the family, school, market, cultural activity, law enforcement, in sum, as Lewis Mumford put it, “where the diffused rays of many separate beams of life fall into focus.”35 The most forceful examples of human rights essential to community life relate to respect for the rights of women and children as defined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) regardless of contrary traditional practices. In sum, human rights principles apply to all the contexts of social life and Human Rights Cities are communities that constantly expand and perfect the applications of these principles.

Together with local human rights and social justice organizations, educators, and local authorities, PDHRE has developed methodologies and pedagogies for creating Human Rights Cities in which human rights provide practical guidelines for urban development within a human rights framework.

Origin and definition of Human Rights Cities

A Human Rights City is a community, all of whose members—from ordinary citizens and community activists to policy-makers and local officials—pursue a community-wide dialogue and launch actions to improve the life and security of women, men and children based on human rights norms and standards. The process requires mobilizing people’s awareness of their rights to influence laws, policies, resource allocation and relationships in ways that effectively realize political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights. The human rights framework offers the basis for
an analysis of institutions and policies, while applying principles of accountability, transparency, reciprocity, participation, gender equality and continuous education.

The Human Rights Cities initiative, as developed for more than a decade by the PDHRE network around the world, is based on the premise that, for international human rights norms and standards to be effective, citizens of all countries need to learn and understand human rights as a framework for sustainable development of their communities.

In the cities, in-depth learning about human rights and action for their application can be a tool for social and economic development. Strategies and methodologies are designed for implementation by a variety of actors, including governing bodies, law enforcement agencies, public sector employees, religious groups, NGOs, and community groups in the city, principally those concerned with gender issues, children, poverty, education, food, housing, healthcare, work at livable wages, environment and conflict resolution.

The Human Rights Cities present a unique response to the critical issues facing urban areas around the world. Solutions to the complex problems resulting from climate change, population density, human migration, violent conflict, environmental degradation, and a globalized economy must be addressed at the local, national and international levels. The appeal of human rights for purposeful action at these levels lies in the acceptance of human rights as a common language expressing universally accepted moral principles, capable of being adapted to each local context. All governments have accepted that everyone is entitled to a “social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this [Universal] Declaration can be fully realized.”36

The Human Rights Cities Program is built on the premise that the “social order” to which the Declaration refers results from decisions taken at the grassroots level and reverberates from the local to the “international order” through changes at a broader
policy level affecting relations among communities and villages, provincial, and national authorities and eventually among states. Action taken by a community is more than local activism to the extent that it addresses the systemic causes of injustice and provides a roadmap for constructing a just social order.

With the end of the Cold War, it has become clear to most thinkers and governments that neither free market solutions nor socialist planning--neither of which in fact exists in any pure form--can salvage humanity from the problems mentioned above. The single moral and legal framework that reconciles and challenges State-centric and individualist worldviews is provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the norms and standards built upon it.

**Process of establishing and developing Human Rights Cities**

Human Rights Cities are a work in progress, being the direct expression of the dynamic process of human rights learning itself, as described above. Each of the Human Rights Cities has developed in a unique way that is a reflection of the specific social, economic, historical and cultural dimensions of the community. The cities generally follow a five-step process of establishment and development modeled on practices of participatory community-based research and critical pedagogy:

1. **Establish a Steering Committee.** Each City sets up a body, usually called a Steering Committee, representing the main sectors of society. The Committee functions democratically and independent of municipal authorities, although in many cases elected and appointed officials constitute a constructive and valuable component of the Committee

2. **Draft a plan of action.** The Steering Committee then develops specific programs for various audiences. The plan includes the examination, with a gender perspective, of laws, policies, resource
allocation and power relations that prevail in the city. Its strategies and methodologies are designed to have governing bodies, law enforcement agencies, public sector employees, religious groups, NGOs and community groups work on such issues as women, children, workers, indigenous peoples, poverty, education, food, water, housing, healthcare, environment and conflict resolution. The plan of action links the priorities of the community to learning and reflecting about human rights as significant to the decision-making process. This effort includes developing curricula, workshops, training of trainers, research and development of written and visual educational materials, and other media. Implicit in this process is the systemic analysis of challenges facing the city in realizing human rights and the linkages of those challenges to broader national and global issues.
3. **Implement learning activities and other action.** For that purpose, the Steering Committee and as many sub-committees as are necessary, create a vertical and horizontal progressive learning process. Step-by-step, neighborhoods, schools, political, economic and social institutions, and NGOs, examine the human rights framework and relate it to their traditional beliefs, collective memory and aspirations with regard to environmental, economic and social justice issues and concerns. As agents of change they learn to identify, mentor, monitor and document their needs and engage in one of the most important action in the city: developing an alternative participatory budget. Training and other activities take place in schools, homes, community centers and through sports activities, the transactions of daily business, churches and other places of worship, workplaces, marketplaces, and in the practice of customs, traditions and artistic creation. Learning results in action that engages the community in social and economic transformation.

4. **Evaluate the work of the Human Rights City.** The Steering Committee is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of the learning activities. The evaluation process is ideally carried out at all levels of the community. Such evaluation enhances the understanding of the linkages and complexity of social dynamics and can leverage expectations for well being in the community. Members of the Steering Committee can take responsibility to design and apply the monitoring and evaluation tool or they can use tools provided by funders as part of the reporting obligations. In both cases identify areas where improvements can be made.

5. **Publicize and expand the effort.** As positive results are obtained and documented, many Human Right Cities have been able to publicize their experience throughout the country and assist other communities in adapting the model to their own settings. They share resources with the emerging new cities and
help them consolidate plans to move through the above steps. The process of sharing experiences among Human Rights Cities in different parts of the world is done through virtual networking, seminars and existing global networks focused on women, the environment, and other issues.

All five components of the program share the common objective of contributing to a process of societal development based on the change of attitudes of citizens, officials and organizations, guided by human rights. A critical component of the plan of action phase is what is called a “mapping exercise,” during which the participants develop their own assessment of power relations, often symbolized by the geographical location of clinics, religious structures, municipal offices, military and police barracks, proximity of transportation and schools, and similar elements of the spatial configuration of the community, which is often the stimulus for participants assessing themselves the obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights. Through this mapping exercise, they can better design a plan of action that will address and hopefully transform power relations in ways that are conducive to the realization of human rights.

It is in this sense that we describe Human Rights Cities as a strategy of urban development through civic engagement. The long-term goal is that social actors across the spectrum reach a consensus on human rights as a framework for societal development, with respect for cultural diversity. The approach and results of each of these steps varies from one social context to the next. It is therefore the lived experience that defines what Human Rights Cities are and is the subject of the next chapter.
What we learned about human rights allowed us to reduce misunderstandings among ourselves. Before, we married women, and looked at them as slaves. Now we understand, we each have roles in the family. Women now understand they are equal, and men agree with it. (Man from Human Rights City of Kati, Mali)

We want human rights to be discussed in the newspapers, radio and television to motivate people to take actions for human rights for all the people in the city. (Women from Human Rights City of Rosario, Argentina)
The experience of PDHRE

PDHRE, the implementing agency of the Human Rights Cities Program, has organized or facilitated seminars, workshops and training-of-trainers programs and projects in human rights education for social and economic transformation since 1989, working in more than 60 countries. PDHRE’s network is continuously training community leaders in human rights principles and activities and raising their awareness to gender and other issues so that they can mobilize their communities and improve living conditions through action. PDHRE has associates and partners in Africa, South Asia, Asia Pacific, Latin America and Europe engaged in training based on human rights norms and principles adapted to the specific cultural and social contexts in which they operate. PDHRE is engaged in building capacity both through the training of trainers and through community organizing to achieve sustainability and long-term impact. Trainees are carefully selected after a selection committee develops specific profiles to meet the needs and through outreach to local NGOs who submit their candidates.

However, PDHRE acts as no more than a facilitator. The full responsibility for planning and running Human Rights Cities rests with the local communities. Anticipating the more detailed discussion of the experience of Human Rights Cities worldwide, we will illustrate the degree of local ownership of the process with the cases of Argentina, Ghana, and Mali.

The first was Rosario, Argentina, which has been a Human Rights City since June 30, 1997. Since the people of Rosario proclaimed theirs a Human Rights City, they have expanded learning and action in accordance with their growing needs. In 1998 the range of participating local institutions and organizations was enlarged. It adopted an ambitious action plan, including a Court on the Violation of Girls’ Human Rights, a Training Seminar on Girls’ Human Rights, the publication and diffusion of the book Boys and Girls’ Human Rights, the shooting of three short
films on boys and girls’ human rights, human rights training of the police and a report on the ill-treatment and persecution of transvestites and prostitutes. In 1999 financial support from the Ford Foundation made it possible to continue with the cooperation of 12 organizations and individuals who constituted a Coordinating Council of the Human Rights City. That year’s activities included a Congress on Human Rights Education for teachers, a Seminar on City Security and Human Rights, and a Children’s Contest to paraphrase the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 50 schools of the city (1,000 children attended the final ceremony). In 2000, the main activities included contributing a chapter to the Shadow Report submitted to the Human Rights Committee on Argentina’s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Training Workshops in the Toba community of Rosario, and a traveling cinema supported by the Inter-American Development Bank. In 2001, examples of activities expanded to a participatory budget for the City Council, a seminar with the participation of 60 principals of the Teachers’ Training Colleges of the province of Santa Fe, a series of movie debates on women’s human rights co-organized with grassroots NGOs, unions, and community organizations and a project with the participation of the Toba community. On December 10, 2001, human rights organizations, legislators and teachers’ union representatives (AMSAFE) lobbied successfully for the enforcement of a provincial law that establishes human rights education as a compulsory school subject.

Another example is the Bongo District in Ghana in 2008 where community human rights activists, women’s organizations and religious leaders united their advocacy efforts to ban the dehumanizing practice of traditional widow’s rights that obliges the woman to be stripped naked in public. Along with the abolition of these rites are programs for equal distribution of inheritance land and greater access to education for women and girls.
Project identification in the case of each Human Rights City grew out of intensive planning meetings of the Steering Committee and processes with stakeholders in different combinations to identify needs and set indicators of progress, which depend on the development environment. These have included NGO activists and community leaders, human rights activists, labor representatives, women’s and children’s groups, indigenous groups, the academic and religious communities, educators, local authorities both in their political and executive capacities, government agencies involved in development of the specific city, and PDHRE as a partner throughout the process, with UNDP assisting in the design of the various projects.

A third example is Mali, where Mali-PDHRE, UNDP Mali, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Malian National Commission for UNESCO, the Canadian Embassy, and the Ministry of Justice worked with other human rights focal points to design the program. The Human Rights City of Kati established a working committee of 32 people chosen from among 200 originally selected by members of the community. In Ghana, stakeholders included Chiefs and Queen mother, members of Parliament, men’s, women’s, youths and community groups. In other instances stakeholders met with representatives of other UN agencies or bilateral donors.

Human rights learning and action develop concurrently in the Human Rights Cities. Two elements stand out as strong determinants in the scope of action: the strength and commitment of the parenting organization (usually translated into the composition of the Steering Committee) and the degree to which the Human Rights City is supported financially or though the will of its citizens. Financial support can mean a large grant from a bilateral donor or the allocation of an office space in the municipality—in other words, moral support must be matched by material support.
Representative Case Studies of HR Cities

For more than a decade the initiative to make human rights learning the foundational core of societal development has been implemented in disparate urban centers and with varying results. An examination of the formation and history of Human Rights Cities in Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America will record some of the achievements as well as the challenges these fledgling cities still face.

A. Human Rights Cities in Africa

More than in any other region Africa has seen the flourishing of Human Rights Cities. Although one could be tempted to group all the cities into a single category this would be a mistake. While certain similarities exist among the critical issues encountered in each city, the local and national histories, culture and external condition conditions, such as climate change and environmental sustainability, not to mention the history of conflict – both internal and external- have made categorization of these fifteen African Human Rights Cities impossible.

1. Ghana

The Legal Resources Centre (LRC), a respected Ghanaian non-governmental organization with a strong human rights mission, provided the leadership for the creation of Human Rights Cities in Ghana. The mission of the LRC is to build human rights capacity for groups and individuals with a view to helping expand the frontiers of democratic development in Ghana within the framework of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Inherently embedded in the core mission of the LRC is the deployment and utilization of essential skills of Research, Advocacy and Advisory Services (RAAS), and bridging the gap between grassroots democratic and governance institutions and their counterparts at the national level. This approach proved to be an excellent fit with the model and mission of the Human Rights Cities movement. All activities carried out by the LRC fall under either of the two
main programs, Human Rights Cities (HRCs) and RAAS, which are complementary.

The existing Human Rights Cities, Nima, Maamobi and Newtown and Bongo and Walewale, are all in communities where LCR had established offices. They are located in vastly different settings, Nima, Maamobi and Newtown are urban communities in Accra, while Bongo and Walewale are located in the upper east and northern regions of the country close to the border with Burkina Faso.

Nima, Maamobi and Newtown

**Historical Background of the Human Rights Cities**

Nima, Maamobi and Newtown are neighboring communities located within the urban center of Accra. These communities are urban slums. They are mainly settler neighborhoods historically providing temporary accommodation for small-scale merchants from other parts of West Africa and Africa as a whole. Most dwellers in these communities were veterans from World War II. As the number of people seeking accommodation in these areas increased, some people eventually settled and made these areas their homes. Nima, Maamobi and Newtown have all the characteristics of urban slums. The communities are heavily congested with little or no planning for social amenities. There is a varied group of ethnic and religious populations in these communities.

The potential of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown as a Human Rights City became compelling shortly after the LRC began work there in 1998. Relying somewhat on its researchers' bias, they chose Nima, Maamobi and Newtown as one of the communities to work towards implementation of its programs for the realization of the human rights, particularly the economic, social and cultural rights of the inhabitants of the area. Clearly, the LRC’s choice of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown was informed by the fact that these
areas are recorded in national statistics as among the poorest neighborhoods in Ghana.

The normal struggles (absence of potable drinking water, irregular supply of electricity, high insecurity, absence of places of convenience, sanitation problems, high crime rates and so forth) in the daily lives of the people of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown provided ample evidence that there was a lack of human rights knowledge (substantive and processes) within these communities.

**Developing the Human Rights City**

After an initial building of stakeholder confidence in the processes that it intended to use in its work with the communities, the LRC began public human rights education on topical issues as identified by a combined team of young lawyers, social scientists and community members. LCR convened a Community Leaders Forum in 1999-2000. This group was converted into a steering committee when the HRC was declared in 2001. Several stakeholders have been involved of the processes leading to the establishment of the Nima, Maamobi and Newtown HRCs. Some of these actors included chiefs, women groups, youth groups, civil servants within the community, lawyers and human rights activists, interns working with LRC, LRC staff, ethnic leaders, police and army officers, representatives from associations of persons with disability, and school authorities.

The HRC works through a Steering Committee, which is not as effective as could have been. The weakness of the steering committee is due to the difficulty of its members to commit their time, especially over the long-term, to the program. It does, nevertheless, effectively apply participatory approaches to problem solving. The LRC's interventions in these communities led to the use of formal and informal structures for the resolution of many of the problems of the communities.
The critical issues in Nima, Maamobi and Newtown

The critical human rights issues within the Nima, Maamobi and Newtown HRCs cover practically the whole gamut of the international human rights norms. They include civil and political rights violations with police brutalities as a key concern for the community. The human rights violations also cover economic, social and cultural rights such as access to justice, titling, and housing rights of the people of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown. There are further concerns of sanitation, the right to health, and reproductive rights issues for women. Issues concerning the right to education, particularly at the basic level, are also of concern to these communities as there is limited number of public schools in these areas with the result that as poor as the majority of the population is, they are forced to send their wards to private schools.

New Ideas and Innovations in Nima, Maamobi and Newtown

Some of the innovative ideas include using the community-based organizations within these cities as the medium by which change must come or be achieved. The LCR used the strategy of directly soliciting community-based organizations (CBOs) to join in with citizen engagement programs. The main organization that joined in the Nima, Maamobi are the Federation of Youth Clubs (FYC), Muslim Family Counseling Services, Red Cross Mothers’ Club of Nima and Mamobi and Gender Action Unit.

Through extensive training and sensitization these community organizations now directly engage with government functionaries in the pursuit of their interests. An example is the way in which the organizations met with police and local officials to stop police brutality directed in particular towards young men and boys. This had been an ongoing concern and joint meetings gave the ordinary person opportunities to contribute to shape the development agenda of their communities. Having gathered the information and formulating a strategy makes it easier for people to go to
authorities. Acting as a community gives them strength and using the human rights framework creates a powerful purpose.

Collective problem solving involves having the people identify the problems, prioritize their needs and lay out the strategies. In principle this allows the community to sustain an action and build upon it. There is still room for improvement because LCR is often called upon to intervene.

The ability of community members to identify human rights violations and seek redress signifies progress as in the case of police relations in the community. As a result there is an improved relation between community leadership and several other important stakeholders such as the Police and other informal security operatives.

Use of formal and informal structures for dispute resolution is one of the strengths of the program. Rather than go directly to the court system, the people in the community use less formal means for information gathering, such as, conversation with people who are directly and indirectly concerned with the problem. Once they
have enough information they rely on negotiation, mediation and arbitration; only relying on court action as a last resort.

**Future Plans–Nima, Maamobi and Newtown**

The future of Human Rights City in Nima and Maamobi communities is bright but has a lot of challenges in terms of dealing with the youth provided the right and adequate resources will be available.

Citizens-government engagement process interlinks with issues of human rights and the formation of a Human Rights City. It is therefore prudent that people are given more training and develop greater sensitivity to human rights concepts.

The LRC being the institution that initiated the course of human rights city in these communities provides space and other logistics at the disposal of the program for both administrative and activity purposes. The offices are open to the community and create a space that legitimizes the existence of HRC. In addition the contact with diverse people including lawyers, students, community leaders and ordinary citizens promotes dialogue and knowledge sharing.

**Bongo and Walewale**

The Bongo and Walewale communities in the Upper East and Northern regions of Ghana have incidents of poverty and other elements similar to the Nima, Maamobi and Newtown communities. The idea of forming these HRCs came as a result of demands from these communities for services from the LRC to meet their developmental and poverty reduction issues. The role of the LRC was to play a facilitator role as opposed to running the show for the community. LRC’s intent was to keep alive the desire of the community and all stakeholders to make a declaration of their communities as human rights cities. The LRC conducted knowledge sharing sessions on human rights as it relates to development within the communities.
The unique characteristics of these cities are the high level of commitment to the idea of forming an HRC and preparedness to undertake HR training. It is noteworthy that about 60 to 70 percent of the people in these communities are illiterates and hold very fast to the practice of their cultural rites. Some of these cultural practices are dehumanizing. An example is the widowhood rites practice in the Bongo community which involves stripping women naked and taking riverside baths in the presence of all community members including the widow’s own children. In Walewale, there were complaints of child abuse and neglect by fathers, especially for the upkeep of their children.

The Bongo/Walewale Human Rights Cities commenced in May 2005 by the LRC following the Nima, Maamobi and Newtown model. The LRC conducted research in these areas on local knowledge of human rights and good governance issues. It became necessary to establish the HRC in these communities because human rights learning was almost non-existent. There were also considerations of the alarming levels of poverty in these communities.

The commencement of the HRC followed a series of meetings and trainings on human rights learning. In particular, in 2003 and 2004, the LRC facilitated a series of human rights education workshops in Bongo and Walewale. These training sessions involved the introduction of new concepts, which helped the participants to identify the problems affecting them in the community and to indicate the agency responsible for fixing the problem and how these problems manifest themselves in the community. The LRC believes in collective participation of the participants to help resolve their problems rather than seeing the LRC as coming to resolve those problems.

These initiatives were taken within the context of the mandate of the LRC to build human rights capacities for groups and individuals in most of the deprived communities in Ghana. Within the context of the LRC Strategic Plan, the LRC envisions
conducting a nationwide education and sensitization program on human rights principles and the practical benefits of living by them on a daily basis.

As in the case of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown, the affairs of the Bongo and Walewale HRCs are managed by steering committees comprising stakeholders from traditional authorities, and identifiable local groups. These organizations include in Walewale the Human Rights City and Neighbour in Need Foundation. In Bongo they are Gowrie United Front for Development and the Bongo Human Rights City.

The HRCs work hand in hand with the local government structures including the District Assembly, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as other institutions like the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE).

**The critical issues in the HR City–Bongo and Walewale**

The critical issues for the Bongo and Walewale HRC do not vary greatly from those of Nima, Maamobi and Newtown. Specific examples of these issues are the high rate of child abuses, violation of women’s rights through some cultural practices such as widowhood rites. Other specific areas of concern include the right to education for the boy child, particularly because these boys are used as shepherds, farmhands. There are also health related concerns. Populations in the thousands of people have only one doctor to attend to anyone. Other concerns included bad cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriages, widowhood rites, deprivation of women from inheritance, and refusal of men to allow women to own property.

**New Ideas and Innovation**

The Human Rights City established an Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre (ADR) in these communities to provide a medium for an amicable resolution of problems. This center
along with massive education on human rights in the community is changing the way the way ordinary citizens see themselves and interact with local authorities. The LRC, in collaboration with management of the Human Rights City, has established a Human Rights City Office to educate and inform the people. One notable achievement in Bongo is the abolishing of the degrading cultural practice of widowhood rites. It is now unlawful for widows to be subjected to traditional widows rites Bongo District. Activist from the human rights city, LCR and other human rights organizations advocated for the abolition of these rights.

As another example of civic engagement in the Human Rights City, take the issue of public health, which had long been ignored by the government administration in Bongo. The Bongo Human Rights City was determined to make the National Health Insurance Scheme (NIHS) pro-poor, and planned to educate the community, encourage de-politicized popular support, and increase the effectiveness of channels of communication. They succeeded in gaining all their objectives, which led to mass registration of people above the elderly and young children for health insurance.
General Outlook for the Human Rights Cities in Ghana

The public interest activities and litigation, which take place within the human rights cities naturally, generate a lot of interest in members of the public. Some of the issues are generated by persons who have attended programs organized by the LRC.

Practice in the human rights cities illustrates that working towards the realization of human rights means working towards achieving human dignity for all manner of people irrespective of their gender, nationality, race, social status and so forth. It also means working towards achieving the aims of those who drafted the International Covenants and other major human rights treaties, which codified the norms as contained in the soft law provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Human Rights Cities initiative, as developed by the PDHRE network around the world, is based on the premise that for international human rights norms and standards to be effective citizens of all countries must understand human rights as a framework for sustainable development of their communities. This approach has been particularly useful in Ghana in fostering civic engagement to move society toward dignity for all people.

2. Kenya

Background

Korogocho is a low-income informal settlement (commonly known as an urban slum), which is located on government land. It has been in existence since 1952. However, according to the government, the people are settled there illegally. Korogocho is divided into nine villages, which are inhabited by people from across Kenyan society. There is a significant presence of Luo, Kikuyu, Borana and Somali ethnic groups, all of whom have diverse cultural practices.

As Korogocho is the third largest slum in Kenya with a population of over 100,000 residents it is considered one of
the most densely populated areas in East Nairobi. Poor living conditions are almost universally prevalent and have taken a toll on most people. HIV/AIDS is a major problem as it is throughout Kenya. Many children are orphaned or living in a household where the adult is stricken with the disease. Malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases resulting from lack of proper sanitation or clean water are common and can attribute for the high rate of infant and child mortality.

People suffer immeasurable burden ranging from impoverishment to inequalities in relation to human rights. Civic participation in decision-making has been negligible. The youth, who form the greatest population, live in a lot of insolvency as they are poor, illiterate, and unemployed, affected by crime, substance abuse and so on. Further, they are faced with a multitude of stereotypes that deny them the opportunity and support to articulate their issues and implement them.

Experiences and previous studies conducted in Korogocho indicate that ignorance and lack of knowledge contribute greatly
to the human rights violations. The most common are police harassment, domestic violence, child abuse, lack of education, malnutrition, lack of proper shelter and sanitation, maternal health issues, personal security, participation and decision making.

Mobilizing the Community

The Miss Koch Initiative was founded in 2001 as a renaissance movement of the Korogocho youth. It was established by the youth of Korogocho who came together to respond to violations of girl and women’s rights that were then rife in the area then. Since its inception Miss Koch has evolved from the search of the girls’ emancipation to the fundamental transformation of the entire Korogocho community and is registered as a self-help group under the Ministry of Social Services. The organization is widely supported in the community having as its vision, “To create a society that respects and promotes wholesome development of its male and female members.” The organization is dedicated to improving education, developing and empowering girls, raising community awareness of the rights of girls, creating opportunities for social and economic development of the community and developing AIDS awareness programs.

It was on this background that Miss Koch introduced the Human Rights City program after having learned of it from the director of the PDHRE-Human Rights Cities in Ghana. The realization that ignorance of their own human rights was one of the greatest impediments to social and economic development moved Miss Koch in the direction of becoming a Human Rights City. A first step was taken by contacting community leaders and heads of organizations and associations to participate in a two-day workshop in May 2006 that introduced human rights learning and provided the direction for the Human Rights City. These community leaders were designated to become human rights educators throughout the community.
Developing the Human Rights City

Following the May workshop a steering committee was formed that brought together elders, community leaders of all ages, representatives from local organizations and religious organizations. The committee and the community were united in their belief that “knowledge is power.” They realized that more resources were available than reached the community and that the powerful human resources in the community itself had never been tapped into adequately. Therefore, spreading knowledge of human rights – especially the social and economic elements – and building the capacity of people in the community to cooperate with one another regardless of ethnicity, status or age, to create partnerships with international NGOs and government agencies, learn to analyze and plan projects effectively and present compelling arguments for their needs were actions that could be undertaken by the Miss Koch-Human Rights City. By using the existing programs already developed by Miss Koch and reframing them in a human rights context, the new program would have greater unity, a wider community involvement and could easily reach out to other communities in Kenya through the common language (and issues) imbued by human rights.

Community Learning Forums were instituted to have people learn about their human rights in all nine neighborhoods. Teaching and learning through theatre, music and dance were widely used. A community radio, Koch fm, had become an exciting presence in Korogocho and now began broadcasting programs about human rights and the Human Rights City. The radio station and the office of Miss Koch- HRC are adjacent to a vast open space known as the Community Centre. This is also the site of the community-build and operated health clinic, the chief’s office, the police building and the community building. The open space is the heart of the community. Periodically women come here to perform their traditional tribal dances and display
their handicrafts. Young people hold dances and competitions here. These events are recent and speak of a new-found pride in traditions the many migrants brought from home. It is also a way of entertaining a dialogue across generations. The street lights, a rarity in Korogocho, illuminate the night and benefit public safety, especially for women and girls.

While robberies and rape still occur the previously high frequency of these acts has been somewhat curtailed through the formation of street security guards. Young, unemployed youth often broke into the rickety shacks or accosted people on the streets at night. Many of these youth have been enlisted into a corps of guards whose role is to protect the community.

The inhabitants regularly pay into a fund and a small amount is given to each guard along with an identifying tee-shirt. Besides improving security, this practice gives the youth a positive status in the community.

Many such accomplishments are underway and show the vitality of the people as they refuse to accept the dominant
stereotypes. The image of Korogocho and in many ways the prevailing reality, is one of poverty and danger. Taxis refuse to enter the community. One instance in which this fear compounds the danger to the community occurs in the case of women giving birth. Most often women facing a difficult delivery or who are infected with HIV/AIDS cannot reach a hospital because there simply is no way out.

**Progress and Accomplishments**

Human rights training tended to focus on the themes that intersected with principle concerns and programs begun in the community by Miss Koch. These programs gave form, in effect, to actions that could be described as social and economic transformation. Several examples will illustrate how the community programs were related to social and economic human rights and to good governance.

Understanding the broad scope of fulfillment of the human right to health and then acting upon this knowledge is a priority. As previously mentioned there is a significant rate of people suffering from AIDS. Many are widows themselves or single parents who were heads of households. Donor organizations provide food—although not enough for daily nourishment—but getting the food from the distribution area to the household is difficult if not impossible when a person is too sick to walk a distance. In addition the AIDS medication if taken without food has serious side effects. Realizing the problem, a committee of women and girls was formed to assure the food distribution and to see that it was cooked, that the dependents in the family were fed and that water was brought to the house.

No permanent medical institution existed in Korogocho that offered daily service. With sporadic assistance from international NGOs and other organizations the people themselves built a small clinic that offered AIDS testing, emergency care first aid, and medication for common illnesses, such as, malaria, dysentery, and
dehydration. Several people from the community were trained to give first aid and dispense medications. The steering committee has written several grant proposals for specific education in the right to health coupled with a request for a qualified nurse to be on site several days a week. The post–election conflict scuttled these plans for the immediate. Simply receiving the funds and resources was seen as unsustainable without the complement of human rights training. As one community activist put it, “If we get something that is nice but we will not understand that this is our human right and we will not know that we must make sure that we will always have what is our right. Some people think that what other people have and they do not have is by luck; they don’t know that it is for everyone.”

Water scarcity is big problem in the community. Tanks of potable water must be brought into the community. Locally elected officials had control of the water distribution, which was free, however, the water arrived irregularly and the distribution was never equal. People took for granted the corrupt and inefficient service of water distribution until Miss Koch –Human Rights City members investigated the system and realized that they had the right to the water and that arbitrary distribution was not the way it was intended to work. Once they understood their rights people took control of contacting the water providers and distributing it throughout the community. They charged each user a nominal fee to guarantee that those in charge would carry out their duties correctly and would not be tempted by bribes or selling water at a market rate.

Violence committed against women and girls and the status of widows, women and girls in Korogocho has remained an important issue. This was one of the prime motives for the creation of Miss Koch and it has not been ignored in human rights training. In fact, the rights of women are a cross-cutting theme and one that is strongly affirmed by the many women and girls who participate in the activities of the programs.
Although Korogocho is an informal settlement, residents hold elections and have representatives who have political and administrative relations with government and municipal offices in Nairobi. In anticipation of the December 2007 elections, community activists created a human rights report card that scored the candidates on the basis of their human rights record. They also held a voter awareness campaign to encourage people to vote and to convince them that by voting they could influence policy. Engaging the voters in the process of critically assessing the merits of the candidates – presidential and other- rather than voting along ethnic and regional lines, was their goal.

Interrupted Plans

Preceding the 2007 elections, teams from the Human Rights City were active in getting people to understand the meaning of the right to vote and publishing human rights “report cards” of the candidates. When the violence erupted it seemed miraculous that Korogocho was spared the deaths and destruction suffered in the neighboring slums. The people in Korogocho acted in
solidarity with one another regardless of ethnic origins. Only two of the eight villages of Korogocho were affected by the violence and the attacks came from outsiders. People from the Human Rights City played a positive role: They participated in the peace dialogue and facilitated strategic sessions for building peace and preventing further violence. Young people performed street theater promoting respect for human rights and their community radio, Koch fm, kept broadcasting a peace message and collected donations for people who fled to Korogocho and the camps to escape the violence in the neighboring slums. Now the entire community is engaged in trauma healing and trying to find ways to maintain their community.

**Aftermath and Rebuilding**

The future of the Human Rights City is very important. Poverty is worse than it has ever been and people are afraid to go out to look for work and food. The Human Rights City headquarters has moved into temporary offices after the former office was destroyed during the violence. The Committee has made plans to begin human rights training in a more decentralized way. Since normal daily routines are still uncertain they are planning to introduce Human Rights Cafés, which are training sessions run by a facilitator where people congregate during the day. For example, sessions can be held for those who shine shoes where they are located, and adapted to other groups who do not have free time and are not stable. The lack of resources is preventing an immediate start of this project.

Yet, despite the dire situation, the people of the community approached Rose Nyawira, head facilitator of the Human Rights City and insisting that they restart the activities, “This is a noble idea, it will never die. People will come and go BUT the idea is here to stay, it is part of our life now and it will remain with us.” Rose insists, “People in Korogocho have taken up the idea of the Human Rights City and they will keep it alive.”
3. Rwanda

Background

Fabien Kanyangusho Karamira, a consultant in Ministry of Justice in Rwanda, was impressed by the developments taking place in the Human Rights Cities that he witnessed during training programs held in Mali. Others shared Karamira’s idea that bringing human rights learning to all people in the community was quite simply the only way to draw upon the existing resources to restore the tattered social fabric that remained following the genocide. Tutsi people experienced genocide atrocities. 4256 people were killed in the catholic church of Musha; many others were massacred in their homes and places where they took refuge. The Genocide Memorial Site contains countless remains of genocide remainders. Today there are 50,875 survivors of genocide in Musha administrative sector.

Rwanda had nearly recovered its pre-1994 economic capacity by 2005, but this has not been the case in Musha. The mines are no longer exploited for cassiterite, coltan, and gold, although some miners still go down to the mines despite the grave risks. The local population has been thrown into deep poverty living mainly on agriculture. Added to the extreme poverty other consequences of the violent upheaval include an elevated rate of illiteracy, violence against women and children, child labor and prostitution, inadequate healthcare and discrimination. This last problem was especially significant as it included some of the most vulnerable groups, such as, orphans, widows, pygmies or Batwa people, the mentally and physically handicapped, people with HIV/AIDS and people whose family members had been involved in the genocide.

The founding nucleus of the first Human Rights City in Rwanda, registered their organization, People’s Movement for Human Rights Education in Rwanda (MPEDH/RWANDA°), and began to build on those attributes that would enable Musha
to become a Human Rights City. Musha, located due east of Kigali, is easily accessible by road and has an infrastructure that can handle communication and outreach. Local authorities are supportive of the Human Rights City initiative as is the local population. Most importantly the founding members are driven by a great deal of determination and dedication to make the program work for the people of Musha. The Musha Human Rights City project was officially launched on October 29, 2007, presided by the Representative of the Mayor of Rwamagana District, the vice Mayor in charge of economics affairs. Local authorities see in the Human Rights City of Musha a important support for the policy of good governance, a principle to which Rwanda is committed. That is why the authorities are committed to support the project. The President of the steering committee is the counselor of Musha sector.

**Building the Human Rights City**

The first step and one that required careful thought and planning was to bring together representative of the entire Musha population. The genocide and its consequences, was the veil that enveloped all considerations. Imagine the will it took to bring together genocide survivors and relatives and children of those who carried out the genocide. Or to open a dialogue between the police, who had little tolerance for children, and youth left to care for their own welfare and these children who were left to
fend for themselves by any means. All strata of society—farmers, women, religious leaders, local authorities, police and civil society organizations needed—to define their work and common goals. All these people needed to see themselves as part of the Human Rights City. Through discussion and meetings in the extended group and in their communities they identified the key problems listed above.

They concluded that social integration was a first step towards moving forward to build a human rights community. This meant bringing into the steering committee the people who were marginalized, among these; people living with HIV/AIDS, orphans, widows, people with disabilities, those who escaped the genocide and pygmies (Batwa people).

Eliminating discrimination against women is a high priority. Although the political will supports promotion of woman in Rwanda, and has taken policy steps to assure this, such as imposing a quota of 30 percent to women in posts of decision makers, offering access to education and encouraging NGO mobilization in favor of women’s rights, Rwandan woman still face a number of serious problems. Most of them live in extreme poverty. Certain traditional values hinder women’s participation in development due to the lack of motivation in family planning, use of traditional agro-pastoral methods, food habits leading to malnutrition, and refusal to send girls to school. Women do not have access to preventive medical care and are victims of gender-based violence.

Children have endured great hardship in Musha. So many children, mainly genocide orphans, are heads of households in Musha that their situation is among the most urgent. Allowing these children (and all children) access to education is not only a current need but one that will have an big impact on the future life of the community.

Normally, the primary school education is guaranteed to every child. However, several factors hinder the progressive realization of “education for all”. Obviously orphans receive little
encouragement to go to school and their main job is looking after their own and their brothers’ and sisters’ survival. They cannot pay for materials or fees. Poor parents as well are unable to pay some supplementary fees designed for motivating teachers; children’s work is considered as a source of income for very poor households like those of widows.

Poverty is a national challenge that Rwandans face. According to official statistics, 65 percent of Rwandan people live below poverty line. Poverty is very high in rural areas like Musha where the only source of incomes is agriculture, which cannot generate enough income to ensure the life of peasants. Even if they do cultivate the land it is never enough and traditional farming methods are often inefficient. In Musha as everywhere in the country, access to land is the main source of conflicts. Vulnerable groups, among them, widows and genocide orphans, the very aged people supporting families, handicapped people are in need of particular attention.

Once the priorities were identified the next step was to examine the laws that protected these groups from a human
Human rights perspective, including: the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, and laws related to poverty reduction, children, women, gender-based violence and national policies towards education, work, gender and health. This is an ongoing activity and one that increases its relevance as it translates into action.

Human rights learning in the community goes hand in hand with the drive towards building a coherent, unified and caring society. While any categorization by ethnicity, region or race is strictly forbidden in Rwanda, there remains the need for understanding the human rights of various groups who are discriminated against and for those who have particular needs because of their identity. Therefore, community training in the human rights of women, children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and freedom of religion was carried out. In addition programs emphasizing the advances made through the national process of unity and reconciliation—ongoing since 1999—were incorporated into the Human Rights City along with training in conflict resolution and mediation. A warning system of potential conflicts was set up to sensitize the members of the community to any threatening symptoms. In designing learning activities and action plans the steering committee has taken advantage of existing programs in order to unify efforts. This is especially important in view of the lack of material resources that is a persistent problem.

Accomplishments and Innovations

The Human Rights City Program has been enthusiastically received and support by Musha’s inhabitants and by local authorities. Inclusion of a broad, representative part of the population has allowed for involvement in learning and activities that otherwise were more restrictive. The fact that people from different social groups (ordinary citizens, local authorities, policemen, soldiers, members of different religions, etc.) discuss human rights for the development of Musha, is building hope for the whole community. The community must now show that human
rights are not a utopian idea but a reality.

The model of using a human rights framework for community development makes a great deal of sense. By offering various groups the opportunity to have an honest dialogue about the need that each group and each person has for achieving their human rights has led to a better understanding of tensions in the community and the circumstances that could spark a conflict. Where conflict or potential conflict is identified timely mediation is now available. Seeing that the most vulnerable groups have human rights and learning that it is the duty of the community to protect and restore these rights has put the need for work, schools, food and healthcare into another perspective. The connection between realization of human rights in Musha and the role of good governance has been made through dialogue and mapping exercises. These ideas that are essential to understanding the way human rights can work in the community are innovative and have led to heightened expectations on the part of Musha’s citizens.

**Challenges to Change**

Now that human rights are seen as something tangible and within the reach and expectations of everyone in the community, people also must face some limitations. Conditions of extreme poverty make it difficult to have people’s basic needs—food, work, education and healthcare—fulfilled. Consideration of problems including greater access to land, rights of succession and the great number of thefts are all quite urgent.

Violence against women and children remains high. This includes domestic violence as well as physical and sexual violence that occurs outside the home.

And then, the underlying conflicts that are tied to the genocide are still present. Often these tensions are unspoken and, in some cases, unrecognized or incorrectly identified. Trust needs to be restored between those who escaped the genocide and families
who have relatives who took part in the crimes of the genocide. Many people still feel a need for vengeance.

The continuation of human rights violations in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Kenya have a destabilizing effect on Rwanda and this in turn filters down to Musha. Rwanda shares the boundaries with these countries. Political unrest and insurrection in those countries spill over into Rwanda. Traffic flow among the countries is nearly impossible to control. In addition, Rwanda being a landlocked country depends on Kenya for many of its imports. The traffic of people across connecting borders, the existence of the same ethnic groups in Rwanda, Burundi and in the DRC make that the human rights violations mutually contagious.

Citizens have learned that they can and ought to participate in finding solutions for conditions that prevent them from fully realizing their human rights. However, political and administrative local authorities are wary that the process will infringe on their own power. There is also some discouragement on the part of ordinary people that they will ever be able to address the injustices when they are committed by government officials.

While these obstacles are serious, recognizing their existence is a positive step. Now that men and women in Musha know their human rights and are strengthening their ability to take action they are less likely to become discouraged.

**Actions being taken in Musha**

Through the human rights learning programs people in the city have come to see the importance of birth registration. Being recognized and counted as a citizen in Rwanda is connected to many advantages linked to basic human rights, such as, education, healthcare and protection of a child’s rights. The displacement of the population because of the genocide, the great number of orphans living without relatives or living with distant relations who ignore the details of a child’s life, and children born to parents who
were not married or children born as a result of sexual violence are among the reasons for a high number of children who have no form of legal registration. The Human Rights City is carrying out a program creating awareness among adults and children on the need for legally registering births. In addition, the action plan they submitted to local authorities highlights support for genocide orphans and children heading households, including payment of school fees, food, clothing, etc. The local authorities are supporting the initiative. Members of the Musha committee have put together a similar proposal inclusive of all communities in Rwanda. It is a good example of the way that a human rights city initiative can spread to neighboring communities.

Another project on palliative care for people sick with HIV/AIDS and aged people without family support is in the works. Even if the mentality about HIV/AIDS has known a tremendous evolution in Rwanda, there is still prejudice concerning the disease. People infected with HIV/AIDS are discriminated by those who refuse to share food, allow their children to play with those who are infected with HIV or have sick family members, and consider victims to be sexual delinquents. Women in particular bear this burden as they have a higher infection rate than men (3.6 percent against 2.3 percent).

The steering committee of the human rights city has built on the efforts of the Rwandan Government’s unity and national reconciliation program. These programs, along with the Gacaca jurisdiction, have helped restore dialogue among genocide survivors and families whose members were complicit in the genocide. One deliberate step in this direction was the inclusion of genocide survivors and families members of jailed génocidaires as strategic actors in the creation of the human rights city. The aim of this inclusiveness was reconciliation of different national components in accordance with Government policy.

The first initiative of the project was bringing together the different social representative groups to sit around a table to
exchange ideas on how human rights as a way to self development, could be applied to Musha. The next step will consist of planning community actions. One of the actions was training in human rights and conflict resolution. At the end of the training the group put in place, a committee in charge of prevention and conflicts management in Musha.

Community action in the Human Rights City of Musha has been limited; however, the inclusiveness of the program is in itself a positive outcome and opens the way for cooperation among all people. Medium or long-term progress can only be made when everyone is aware of human rights issues and everyone is involved in the dialogue. Without the support of local officials it would be very difficult to move forward, but that is not the case. The Human Rights City is, at present, perceived as a link in the national process of reconciliation and development.

4. Mali

History and Background

Mali is among the poorest countries in the world with 64 percent living below the national poverty line, rising to more than 73 percent of the country’s rural population. It ranks 173 out of 177 on the Human Development Index. UN-HABITAT estimates that 31 percent of the population lives in cities with a 93 percent slum to urban population rate. Several successive draughts, a generally arid climate with greater than one half of the land desert or semi-desert along with high birth and infant mortality rates, a high rate of preventable infectious disease are among the challenges that need to be addressed.

While education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of seven and 16, the literacy rate is still less than 50 percent of the population. Twelve percent of women are literate and 27 percent of men. Health, education, income disparity and employment are strong indicators of Mali’s poverty. Despite this portrait, which mirrors problems facing many
African countries, commentators both inside and outside the country have recognized the strength of Mali’s social capital and associative life. While there are regional variations, Malians, as a group, have a strong sense of belonging and long history of consensus building to solve problems. Adherence to local NGOs, associations, unions, cultural associations, and similar civil society organizations and the social coherence of families and lineages supported by reinforcing customs constitute vehicles for people to make their voices heard.

In 1997 Adama Samassekou, then the Minister of Basic Education, invited PDHRE to discuss launching a national program on human rights education. Samassekou met Shulamith Koenig at a UNESCO conference in Hamburg, Germany, and was impressed by PDHRE’s approach to learning, inspired by the theory developed by Paulo Freire in the 1960s. Freire, a Brazilian philosopher and educator believed that the educator and the learner must enter into a dialogical and democratic relationship in order to make social change the goal of learning—change that corresponded to the needs and vision of the oppressed, thus bringing into focus an analysis of the power relations in society. Samassekou recognized that the approach to human rights learning at the heart of PDHRE’s work was a process of societal development focusing on social and economic change. He was attracted to the way PDHRE expanded on the Freirian concept to make human rights central in the process of analyzing critical issues facing the community.

At the invitation of Samassekou, two PDHRE members held a series of open discussions in Bamako in 1997. These meetings brought together a widely representative and vocal audience eager to learn more about human rights and apply them to their daily lives. By 2000, under Samassekou’s leadership, a group of women and men created a chapter of PDHRE, “PDHRE–Mali,” with the goal of making Mali a human rights country. This founding organization included educators and professionals in the fields
of women’s rights, economics, history, law and the media. Each was involved in a civil society organization and held professional positions at established institutions, such as the University of Bamako, government ministries, information services and the private sector. All were united by an ardent desire to work toward the realization of human rights throughout the country. Some of the people had lived through the transition from the French colonial regime to independence in 1960. All had witnessed the toppling of the twenty-year dictatorship of Moussa Traoré led by Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré (known as “ATT” and elected president of Mali in 2002 and 2007). The coup was the culmination of a long struggle carried on by students, unions and political and civil groups. In 1992, Alpha Oumar Konaré was elected president of the Third Republic of Mali, an event that brought with it great promise and the flourishing of civil society through local NGOs, community radio stations and general civic engagement. In this atmosphere, the very expression “human rights” was a powerful symbol, even though the concept was only loosely understood.

**Kati, the First Human Rights City in Africa**

Individual members of PDHRE-Mali took the lead in developing the Human Rights Cities, in contrast to the first Human Rights City, Rosario, where the initiative was based on strong NGOs. Members of PDHRE in Bamako met frequently to develop a concept of the Human Rights City that corresponded to local conditions and culture. The designation they adopted was “Communauté consensuelle des droits humains” (“Consensual Human Rights Community” (CHRC), a terminology designed to underscore the participatory and democratic approach. Although Mali remains a largely rural
country, the capital, Bamako, is the fastest growing city in Africa with a population of over 1,640,000. The idea of making Bamako a Human Rights City was considered but then rejected in light of its unmanageable size and complexity.

Kati, 15 kilometers from Bamako and a thriving market center with a military garrison appeared more suitable as its population was approximately 40,000. Several of the key members of PDHRE-Mali were from or lived in Kati. Among Kati’s advantages as a potential consensual human rights city were the presence of a well-developed civil society and coexistence of multiple religions, combined with the encouragement of social action by the local municipal administration. In addition, several community leaders had been trained in community organizing, human rights and participatory community action. A progressive community school based on popular education was successful in engaging the community on local issues and the military garrison and central market offered an influx of newcomers in the town, who could spread the word about human rights to their home communities.

Of course, many of the social problems related to poverty, discrimination, health, education and employment experienced throughout Mali were present in varying degrees in Kati, thus giving ample room for human rights-based problem-solving. Members of PDHRE-Mali began sensitizing local NGOs, associations, youth clubs, schools, unions and public administrators to positive potential for social and economic development inherent in the process of human rights learning.

The mayor and local administrators were strong supporters of the consensual Human Rights City. Representatives from the various neighborhoods of Kati along with leaders from representative organizations, civil society, unions, associations, and other institutions participated in a dialogue on human rights in the community. During these sessions PDHRE-Mali described the process of founding a steering committee and drafting a charter. Kati was officially declared a Human Rights City on
December 9, 2000. To underscore the importance of the event, Her Excellency, Mrs. Adame Ba Konaré, wife of the President, along with the Ministers of Justice, Education, Labor, Youth and Women attended the dedication ceremony.

**Developing the Consensual Human Rights City**

The first task was to assemble the Kati Steering Committee. PDHRE insisted, and insists generally that all Human Rights Cities have a ratio of 50 percent women and 50 percent men on the committee in order to set an example of non-discrimination and allows a broader human rights perspective than would be the case in a male dominated committee. The first meeting gathered representatives from local NGOs concerned with women’s rights, children, youth, teachers, police, the judiciary, teachers, students, religious leaders, health care, the military and municipal representatives, who formed a steering committee.

The Steering Committee chose Kadiatou Keita, one of its members, to be the chair. That the majority elected a woman to head the group became a problem, especially among the traditional and religious leaders who voiced their strong objections. If the Human Rights City was to live up to its consensus-building goals and if any substantive work was to be done in Kati, this group could not be alienated. A solution was found by creating a Committee of Wise Men and appointing the high-ranking men to this group where their wisdom and honor would be respected as consultants to the steering committee.

While the launching of the CHRC in December 2000 captured the attention of Kati’s inhabitants, maintaining the
momentum became the real challenge. Kati is divided into distinct neighborhoods, which became the organizing base for human rights learning. A diverse corps of facilitators, many of whom had worked as trainers in popular education at the Institute for Popular Education in Kati, carried out evening sessions on human rights in each of the neighborhoods. By focusing on issues identified by the local population discussions led to planning direct community action based on human rights.

The community radio picked up on the human rights ideas that resonated throughout the community. A weekly program had reporters gather and record questions about human rights from neighborhoods residents. During the live broadcast, invited specialists would respond to these questions. The personalization of human rights issues in the community raised awareness as it underscored the relevance of human rights. This weekly radio program has continued to have a permanent place in the life of Kati. In December 2006, the radio held a contest to highlight knowledge of human rights. The shows were interactive with listeners winning prizes. The programs were a big success and motivated the community audience to gain specific knowledge about their human rights. Of course, human rights learning involves more than learning facts in order to respond to questions but the radio shows were effective in generating interest in the human rights needs of the community.

**Mapping Human Rights Issues in Kati**

In 2002 a team consisting of members of the Kati Steering Committee, a UNDP observer, a professor of human rights from Harvard and a member of the education project team from PDHRE came to Kati for a two-day seminar. The purpose was to launch popular human rights learning in the neighborhoods and with the citizens of Kati develop a model for identifying the urgent issues in the community. After a briefing and discussion on the implications of social, economic and cultural human rights, approximately
seventy people representing the various neighborhoods broke into groups to map the geographical space and the institutions that were key to solving problems in the community.

The group presentation of findings was in itself a powerful testament to the ability of local groups to identify their problems, correctly analyze the causes (and not merely the symptoms) and relate these to principles of human rights. For example, most reports cited the location of the animal market and abattoir and unrefrigerated meat storage as being a serious violation to the right to health. This led to discussion of the need for greater municipal regulation of the food supply and health standards and the fact that the right to health included guarantees for clean food, water and proper sanitation and accountability to deliver these goods to the population.

Using the same mapping process, women participants identified an issue that should have been evident but was not: while many women gave birth in their homes, especially in nearby villages, cases of difficult births came to the local hospital, where the maternity ward was located up a flight of stairs and therefore inaccessible! The men had ignored this inconvenient and potentially dangerous building plan. All persons agreed to investigate ways of changing the set-up as the discussion grew into a more general observation that policies and practices regarding women’s health, especially reproductive health were most often made by people who were not directly affected. The exercise brought out the need for better education for men and women about physical and mental suffering of women, which should not be treated as an inevitable condition of their gender.

Through identifying challenges to the realization of human rights, the mapping exercise initiated a dialogue among inhabitants of Kati and local administrators. This dialogue and the subsequent action plan launched a process of capacity building of ordinary citizens, local NGOs and government agents, all of whom acquired new knowledge, skills and networking behaviors. No less
important in the process was the introduction of the human rights language. The human rights framework permitted the integration of multiple perspectives into problem solving and planning.

Neighborhood groups have continued to be central in the strategic plan of the Consensual Human Rights City. On September 7-9, 2006, members of the “Neighborhood Human Rights Education Committees” held a workshop to train a group of human rights educators in charge of the promotion and enhancement of human rights learning and understanding at the grassroots level. The workshop focuses on learning about human rights through the dynamics of rights and duties of the citizens in their city. This meeting was followed by a social mobilization and information campaign on human rights for social transformation through a change in behaviors and practices in all 14 neighborhoods of Kati. During the campaign, Kati residents were encouraged to identify human rights violations occurring in each neighborhood and helped in finding local solutions to them.

Training and action were not limited to the neighborhoods. Several meetings and workshops took place to engage municipal representatives of Kati’s City Hall, administrative agents, and representatives of civil society organizations in human rights learning. Training workshops for 30 to 60 neighborhood trainers, civil society organizations, local administers and guests from human rights cities in other regions of Mali and West Africa have been organized on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and on the relation of these treaties to human security and strategic planning.

The Kati-Human Rights Consensual City program plans, monitors and expands these activities through regular meetings of the “General Assembly of the Strategic Actors,” the “Operational Bureau,” and the “Orientation and Coordination Committee.”
The representative character of these entities reinforces the involvement in and commitment to the program by a wide range of social actors.

**Effecting Societal Change**

A human rights clinic was established in the town and operated on market days. Kati’s market draws people from a wide radius of the thirty-seven villages and towns that are part of the administrative sector, *Cercle de Kati*, who come to buy and sell produce, attend the livestock market, visit the two hospitals and carry out administrative business. The clinic, which is open to all, began as a designated locality where people could bring questions about human rights and engage in conflict mediation based on human rights principles. Issues, such as inheritance rights—guaranteed to all by the law of the land but skewed by custom and traditional practices—and equal rights of women, including widows, are among the issues brought to the clinic. In many of these cases the local Imam and other religious and traditional leaders are brought in to support a claim for human rights and justice.

One day a young man, hesitant in his approach, entered the clinic. Now a teen, he had never been recognized by his biological father. Throughout his life he had been marginalized by this fact and he suffered greatly from the perceived rejection. He knew who his father was and had seen him often. He explained to the human rights mediator how painfully he felt the injustice. The mediator offered to go with the young man to his father’s house that same day. The mediator introduced herself at the doorway to the father and then the young man intervened, saying, “I am your son.” The mediator observed that when standing side-by-side the two resembled each other as identical “drops of water.” Embarrassed, the father did not want the issue of paternity to upset his household and tried to offer his son money but was refused. The boy said, “I want you to recognize me and know what
you have denied me each day of my life and how you have made my mother suffer.” All this happened outside the doorway but the formal recognition took place as the father signed the paternity papers at the municipal hall. Father and son were never reconciled but the boy gained his dignity. He later told the mediator, “I came to you because I wanted a witness when I killed my father. I had a knife with me…but when I told him who he was [to me] I was satisfied and now I can walk with dignity. I don’t need him to care for me. He is not a good man. I have all I need.”

Incidents such as these along with the introduction of human rights concepts into the community are putting into another perspective long-held practices as citizens recognize the need to change traditions that are harmful to the full development of their society. To emphasize the links between traditional practices and human rights, PDHRE-Mali and the Faculty of Letters, Languages, Arts and Social Sciences (FLASH) at the University of Bamako received a UNESCO grant to study attitudes in local culture towards human rights and peace. Part of the study, carried out in all eight districts of Mali, examined the strength of traditional instructions for moral and communal behavior. Many of the stories, sayings and local histories are vibrantly present in the culture. These stories, and adages are used as natural bridges to human rights concepts during training workshops and in support of changes in attitude and actions that chart the way towards greater inclusiveness and nondiscrimination in the community.

**Going Forward, Reaching Out**

The example of Kati as a Consensual Human Rights City has had a continuing effect on the local and surrounding communities. As previously mentioned, market day brings people from the surrounding villages in contact with activities in the CHRC. In 2002 a core group of human rights learning facilitators, trained under the sponsorship of the *Institut d’Education Populaire* (IEP), a member of the PDHRE executive committee, spent four months
running human rights training in the surrounding villages. The training sessions were received with enthusiasm but the program could not be continued once the grant ran out because covering even the modest expenses of the trainers was not possible for the community to absorb in a such a poor country like Mali. Although many people are willing to devote time to these initiatives few have the luxury of sacrificing any moment from employment that sustains a family, be it manual labor, gardening or selling in the market. A reality that must be acknowledged is that resources are scarce and transportation limited. Even kerosene for lighting the lamps for an evening meeting in a rural locale must entail some sacrifice.

Despite these contingencies, the Consensual Human Rights Cities Movement in Mali has grown substantially. To date there are nine CHRCs, beginning with Kati in 2000 followed chronologically by Timbuktu, Kayes, Sikasso, Konna, Gao, Bara Sara and the 5th District of Bamako. In each city, civil society has taken the initiative to request that PDHRE and the CHRC movement
facilitate their development. In most instances the municipal administrators have been supportive although the role of head of the steering committee can only be held by someone from an organization representing civil society to avoid the politicizing the movement. Though each city is working according to their means and capacity, it is worth noting that Timbuktu, Gao and Kita have remarkably strong participation and development.

All three cities owe their strength in part to the fact that leadership was assumed by an influential local NGO that was able to lend material support and some funds to the development of the CHRC. Another advantage was having a corps of local volunteers who were already committed to working in the community so it was not necessary to recruit and explain to newcomers how their volunteer efforts were good for the community. Often people would like to work for the Human Rights City and go to training sessions but the demands of daily life are too overwhelming to add one more responsibility.

The steering committees in these cities were able to begin activities as soon as they integrated the holistic human rights framework into their perspective. Timbuktu’s first activity was a self-study on the state of human rights made in 2004. Part of the information campaign on human rights in Timbuktu was the introduction of billboards, which informed and motivated the entire community. All cities have followed a consistent pattern of forming a steering committee that as closely as possible has gender balance. Next comes the task of organizing neighborhood training workshops and giving seminars on specific human rights, such as those reaffirmed in CEDAW or CRC. The CHRCs establish and reinforce mutual bond by sharing staff for training of trainers and by holding exchanges with other CHRCs in Mali.

One advantage—and indeed a necessity—for having so many Human Rights Cities is the fact that Mali has eleven official languages. French is the official language but it is far from being universally spoken and understood. Training materials have to be
translated in local languages and, given Mali’s strong oral tradition and low levels of literacy, learning requires audio tools in local languages. With training of facilitators held at numerous locations in the district—several languages may be commonly used in a single district—this problem can be lessened.

The connections created by adherence to a political party or trade union are more constrained that those that emerge through a network of Human Rights Cities throughout the country, which is conducive to building solidarity around a broader range of themes that the political or union agenda. It has been the goal of PDHRE-Mali to have a Human Rights City in each of the eight administrative districts by the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This would be a step in the direction of realizing the original dream of making Mali a human rights country.

B. Human Rights Cities in Europe

Austria is the only country in Europe so far to have a fully developed Human Rights City in cooperation with PDHRE. Indeed, Graz was the first such city. The second Human Rights City, Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is in a early stage of development. The concept of human rights is integrated in many of Europe’s parliamentary systems and its principles are strongly reflected in the policies of the Council of Europe and the European Union. This does not necessarily mean that these principles have been integrated into the consciousness of ordinary citizens, who are often beneficiaries of a full-fledged human rights regime without comprehending the richness and scope of this birthright. Population movements, environmental changes and armed conflicts place stress on the stability of this region, making it increasingly important that ordinary citizens know their human rights and act within the framework of these principles.
1. Austria

History and Background

The role and the suffering of the city mark the local history and culture of Graz during the two world wars, which remain alive in the collective memory. Thousands of prisoners were detained in the proximity of the city and died of epidemic diseases or from the harsh conditions in the First and Second World Wars. At the beginning of the Second World War Graz was a particular stronghold of Nazi-ideology. Although less numerous than in Vienna, Jews had long been counted among the local population of Graz. During the Middle Ages a thriving Jewish ghetto existed. The small Jewish population (approximately 2000 in 1938) was driven out by the Nazi so that by 1940 Graz was declared Judenrein or free of Jews. Religious intolerance was not aimed only against the Jews. In the 16th century, when a majority of the nobility and population converted to Lutheran Protestantism, their Catholic Habsburg rulers gave them the choice to reconvert to Catholicism or to leave, thus bringing the country back to Catholicism. Only in 1781 was freedom of religion restored. Perhaps this background of intolerance has led to the development of a critical tradition towards authorities in Graz in the post-war era, which emerged strongly in the 1970s as civic movements with citizens requesting participation in the city government decision-making. From this developed a strong civil society engagement and impact in local politics.

The city of Graz is quite unique with a relatively strong right-wing political element, an engaged civil society, and an avant-garde in the field of culture. Graz is a university town with the effect that of its 250,000 inhabitants more than 40,000 are students. It also has a large, long-standing population of retirees. As an important European economic center there is a great deal of movement in the population and a solid middle class. Under the social-democrat mayor operating in coalition with the Peoples’
Party, many social and cultural initiatives were supported, which culminated in the year 2003, when Graz became the Cultural Capital of Europe, a European Union-sponsored distinction. Since the victorious Peoples’ Party has formed a coalition with the Green Party in 2008 human rights have gained exceptionally high standing. The human rights city of Graz was able to build on these traditions.

**Development of the Human Rights City**

The initiative for Graz to become a Human Rights City germinated at a seminar on human security, human rights and human development organized for the Human Security Network at the European Training and European Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) in Graz in 2000. Shulamith Koenig, Founder-Director of PDHRE, proposed that Graz become the first European Human Rights City. Later that year, in speech at the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, announced that Graz would become a Human Rights
City. This announcement accelerated efforts at the city level, leading to the inauguration of Graz as a Human Rights City by unanimous decision of the City Council on 8th February 2001.

Graz was already fertile terrain for such an initiative thanks to a number of existing human rights activities promoted by the Mayor, Alfred Stingl, and the Counselor for Cultural Affairs, Helmut Strobl, who represented the two main political parties, the Social-Democrat and the People’s Party. Various activities in the social and cultural fields earned Graz the title of the “most refugee-friendly city of Austria.” However, this reputation has been somewhat marred by anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant slogans pronounced by right-wing political parties during the municipal elections in January 2008.

Evidence of the desire of Graz’s citizens to heal past wounds and move towards social inclusion was seen in the re-building and re-opening of the Graz Synagogue which was destroyed during Reichskristallnacht on November 9, 1938 by a pro-Nazi mob. Graz now has a reputation as a place for inter-religious dialogue. Meetings, such as, the Second European Ecumenical Assembly
in 1997, the Buddhist *Kalachakra* in 2002, and the first meeting of European imams in 2004, have sustained this reputation. A vibrant civil society active in various fields of human rights thrives here as well.

The European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) in Graz, which opened in 2000 and in cooperation with the University of Graz, has done much to stimulate awareness of human rights through research and training programs in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Graz is a university town with the effect that from its about 250,000 inhabitants more than 40,000 are students.

The Human Rights City initiative was well received from the start because it had real potential of being put to practice. The mayor, his partners, and also civil society were keen to introduce the socially innovative human rights city during the millennium of 2000. The political parties represented in the city council at that time were less polarized than now, which allowed them to reach unanimity on the basic decision to start a Human Rights City.

Development of the Human Rights City of Graz was undertaken following the model suggested by PDHRE. Accordingly, a steering committee consisting of more than twenty people representing various organizations and institutions was formed. Three working groups were set up in order to map the situation with regard to civil and political, economics and social as well as cultural rights. They completed a study on the human rights situation in Graz in May 2002 and translated it into a problem index and an action program with a staggered scheme of priorities. The result was the identification of six principle areas of concern: needs of women, of children and youth, of persons with disabilities, of migrants, of the elderly and of socially disadvantaged people. This analysis and the related action program were widely disseminated and became reference points for further work. The whole process, in which more than 100 people took part, was coordinated by the ETC Graz. However, the action program was never formally adopted
by the city council, because of delays and the election of a new city council in the end of 2002. After 2002 the Steering Committee did not continue in its original form. A change in the political climate and lack of support on the part of the city government created a period of less “official” sponsorship. However activities within the human rights city continued to be carried out by organizations like ETC and other civil society groups. After a long wait the city reacted to the original request to set up a visible and active human rights body and in April 2007, the Human Rights Council was established, which is functioning as a steering committee.

Critical Issues in Graz

The Human Rights City of Graz today is facing two major problems: (i) the integration of the new minorities and (ii) the needs of children and youth, the older generation and people with special needs. The rise of populist parties in Austria, some of which managed to win seats in the Graz city parliament on the basis of xenophobic and islamophobic slogans, has precipitated the need to deal with Islamic phobia and right wing extremism.

The city has institutions for dealing with freedom and equality in the expression of religious belief and opinion. Other important challenges pertain to discrimination due to sexual orientation, age, disability as well as gender and ethnic origin in the workplace and the access to goods and services such as health, education, housing and others for which there are also federal laws based on European regulations. In 2006, a new unit was established in the mayor’s office dealing with issues of integration, which presently is being strengthened. Issues of homophobia and sexual orientation will also become more prominent with regard to assuring non-discrimination in the future. The Human Rights Council’s program of activities will deal with many of these issues. Non-discrimination and homophobia are high on their agenda.
Accomplishments

The Human Rights Council was confirmed as a permanent institution. It will implement projects on its own initiative with the support of the city of Graz. The 25 members include representatives of all the political parties, except the two right-wing parties (although one of them may still be invited). The Council also represents institutions and civil society in a good mix of people who are mainly acting in their personal capacity and have been nominated and appointed by the mayor based on the proposal of an independent group. The Council reviewed city regulations with regard to anti-discrimination activities in the field of procurement. Accordingly, companies who want to do business with the city of Graz must demonstrate that they follow non-discriminatory policies. With regard to integration, laws and policies are currently under review in order to make them more conducive to integration.

A number of new and innovative ideas and practices have been developed since Graz became a Human Rights City in 2001. However, not all of them have been implemented so far. For example the proposal to secure funds for civil society organizations regularly active in the field of human rights is awaiting action. Yet, as is often the case, once the concept of “human rights” became identified with the city, organizations began to act in accordance with these principles and peoples’ awareness and knowledge of human rights advanced in many ways.

During the celebrations that took place when Graz was named an EU Cultural Capital, ETC contributed a project on the “Culture of Human Rights” by holding numerous participatory activities focused on human rights. A “Human Rights Walk” was designed through the city center, leading people to various places that are connected with human rights violations or injustices in the past or good practice in human rights. Places of interest visited on the Walk include the old Jewish ghetto, as well as places associated
with the restoration of Catholicism in Graz, when the city was predominantly Protestant. And then, at a later time, the trail comes to a place that evokes the tolerance law, which allowed the Protestants to have their church again. The dark days of the Nazi regime are also recalled in the Human Rights Walk when participants come to the beautifully restored Jewish Synagogue on the site where the old one had been destroyed.

A major event that united many of these activities was a conference in Graz on human rights at the local level. PDHRE activists from Human Rights Cities in South America, Asia, Africa and North America who shared their experiences with the Graz participants. Another example was the decision of the winner of the human rights prize of the province of Styria to use the prize money to create a human rights trail along one of the most popular walking and jogging courses in the proximity of the city. On 30 plaques the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are now displayed on existing lampposts. Accordingly, walkers and joggers using the trail are reminded of each of the Declaration’s articles as they go by.

Another positive example of the way human rights enter local consciousness was the declaration of Graz against the death penalty in 2005. This was in response to several executions in California, where Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was born in Graz, is governor. Protests from civil society and several political parties in Graz resulted in removal his name from the main sports stadium in Graz. The media, political parties and NGOs often refer to Graz’s human rights stance on controversial debates and the people of this Human Rights City could not uphold as a hero someone who made such
flagrant use of the death penalty—a direct human rights violation as defined in Europe.

The human rights city and in particular, the European Training Center (ETC) through its training programs, has had an important role in supporting other human rights cities through the organization of human rights learning seminars and workshops. ETC-sponsored summer schools on human security and human rights since 2003 to which people from human rights cities in Africa and Latin America were invited and exchanged experiences with their Graz counterparts. The possibility of dialogue and exchange is a powerful tool for unification of people around human rights.

In 2007, the mayor of Graz approved a request initiated by ETC to lend financial support to the activities of the developing Human Rights City of Bihać in Bosnia-Herzegovina. ETC in Graz invited Members of the Bihać steering committee to a human rights learning seminar sponsored by the municipality of Graz. This kind of support and solidarity among human rights human rights cities has the potential to develop even further.

**Future Outlook**

The elections of the Graz city parliament in January 2008 resulted in a new coalition of the Peoples’ Party (conservative) with the Green Party. These parties established a coalition and concluded agreements containing a number of objectives supportive of the Human Rights City, such as support for the greater integration of migrants, who make up for some 14 percent of the population of Graz. These groups face many human rights-related problems especially relating to housing, education, and employment. These issues will become a priority and a specific anti-discrimination unit is to be established in order to deal with these problems. Migrants are coming to Graz either as asylum seekers or through regular economic migration. Groups encountering the most difficulty are from African countries and Turkey, while most of the other groups have fewer problems.
Human rights issues are being dealt with by the “Migration Council,” which brings together the various ethnic migrant groups and their organizations together with the city of Graz and NGOs. Together they collaborate on a number of projects in the field of refugee assistance and integration. Besides acting as an advisory service, the main focus of these combined organizations is on non-discrimination, in particular with regard to public housing and access to social services.

As mentioned previously, in the recent past Graz has gained a special profile for inter-religious meetings, examples being the sponsorship of the first foreign meeting of the European imams and for the world meeting of the Buddhists. Therefore, efforts of the right wing parties to polarize people around xenophobia and Islamophobia have been convincingly countered by other political forces.

In the schools of Graz, an organization called “Youth Against Violence and Racism,” has become quite active. Young people throughout the province of Styria are discovering venues to promote positive social change through human rights.

The success of Graz as a human rights city is due in part to the support from the elected government to the Human Rights City and to human rights issues in general, and in part to the increased public awareness of human rights reinforced by the creation of institutions like the Human Rights Council.

2. Bosnia-Herzegovina

Background

The three-year siege of Bihać ended in 1995 several months before the end of the Bosnian War on November 21, 1995. The war left many buildings in this historic city destroyed, the infrastructure greatly damaged and the population displaced and traumatized. The city, like much of Bosnia, had for centuries supported a population composed mainly of Muslims, Orthodox, Christians and some Jews. Today the population of over 100,000 is largely
Muslim and many newcomers, ethnic Bosniaks, have come from other parts of the country and Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia. The war has left the country in a state of transition as it attempts to readjust its economy, government, police and role in the region with the goal of entering the European Union perhaps 10 years off. Bihać, as the center of the Una-Sana Canton is experiencing the discomfort of fitting into a different reality even as the wounds of the war and genocide have not yet healed.

In 2006, Iskra Tabakovic, a resident of Bihać, and president of Novi Put, a local NGO, attended a Human Rights seminar in Sarajevo organized by ETC from Graz. There she learned about the human rights cities and the Graz experience. She enthusiastically embraced the idea and approached Nejra Rakovic, director of an organization for women’s rights, Glaszene. Together they organized an intensive workshop in Bihać in August and invited human rights educators from PDHRE in New York to give the training as a start for making Bihać a human rights city.

**Developing the Human Rights City**

The visit from PDHRE facilitators and the intensive workshop allowed members of the organizations to develop their ideas of how Bihać could proceed in becoming a human rights city. The diversity of the organizations represented at the workshop mirrored many of the major concerns in the city. These included: women’s organizations, teachers’ union, youth organizations, hospital workers, people with disabilities, children’s rights advocates, war veterans, police employees, the Roma minority, jurists, university professors and urban planners. Although the mayor’s office did not send
an official representative as had been requested, several participants worked for the municipality.

The workshop broke up into interest groups to work on a preliminary human rights mapping of the city. As human rights were perceived in this community as guarantees of political and civil rights only, much of the discussion focused on the place and local significance of economic, social and cultural rights. Groups began to see that human rights were interconnected and mutually supportive rather reflecting competing interests. For example representatives from the Roma community spoke of the way their people had been traditionally marginalized and denied access to schools, housing and even public space. This exclusion, in turn, had an impact on jobs, participation in decision-making and the inevitable condemnation to a life of poverty. Other participants expressed their appreciation for having the opportunity to learn first-hand from Roma people how they see their own lives in Bihać. Although the Roma have a long history and place in the town, that history was constructed by others to affirm the negative aspects of the Roma. If the workshop only served as an opening in this dialogue it would have been well worth the time and effort.
Among the other urgent problems in the community openly discussed in the workshops were violence against women and children, domestic violence, workplace discrimination, young people’s access to education and jobs, healthcare, tolerance for religious beliefs and participation in the political system. Many people were disabled as a result of the war and, therefore, the concerns of people with disabilities are prominent. These issues became the points in the agenda that would be taken up by the future steering committee.

Throughout the year the Steering Committee met regularly. However, internal strife threatened to disrupt the progress of the fledgling organization when one of the original coordinators left the organization along with a number of participants. Bihać is a relatively small community so any discord among leaders easily reverberates throughout civil society organizations in which they are active. The committee maintained close contact with the PDHRE office in New York as they worked through their internal tensions and furthered a human rights learning program in Bihać.

The Committee held a number of training workshops, one in Ruzicka, near Bihać where there is a large Roma minority. The Roma representatives on the Steering Committee strongly favored this training as a way of improving community relations. They also launched training sessions in the schools in Ruzicka and Bihać on minority rights as human rights. Another successful event was a community forum on religious tolerance. The committee was anxious to bring up difficult subjects for public debate because in this way they could frame the discussion in human rights terms rather than cataloguing the violations. The group felt that their day-long initiative to celebrate International Human Rights Day was a breakthrough in building community awareness. Many young people were attracted to the work of the steering committee and the idea of a Human Rights City. On the 10th of December they were mobilized on their jobs, in the streets
and in the schools to distribute information about human rights, lead impromptu discussions, organize classroom activities that gave the message that human rights was part of daily life. They collected numerous signatures adhering to the human rights city while in the evening guest speakers led a panel discussion on human rights. On December 10 many local people learned about the human rights city.

**Achievements and Challenges**

The organizing committee of the Human Rights City is young and energetic. Several local organizations have taken a leading role in sponsoring the movement. They work with limited resources and make the most of the expertise at hand by enlisting professors from the university and from as far away as Sarajevo. As far as the committee is concerned there is no turning back from their course even though they have been limited by lack of funding. They have accomplished a great deal by initiating community forums on local human rights issues and by engaging in difficult
issues such as religion, discrimination and the human rights of women and children.

The pace of the committee’s work has been slow because of the care they are taking to ensure that the group and their objectives remain truly democratic and that no element is excluded and no one engages in political partisanship. This latter issue has been strongly debated in the committee because some members felt it would be appropriate to support a particular political party or a candidate for local office.

The Human Rights City movement has not received the support of the municipality. The group tries to maintain a delicate balance in order not to appear antagonistic or in competition with the mayor’s office as they remain open to all political parties. They are hoping in the future to see stronger collaboration and support from the municipality.

The Human Rights City of Graz has been very supportive and in particular ETC, the sponsoring NGO in Graz. Graz has agreed to sponsor a training workshop in Graz for members of the Bihać steering committee. The Honorary Consul of Graz to Bihać now meets frequently with the steering committee and serves as an informal liaison between the two cities. The mayor of Graz has invited the Mayor of Bihać to visit Graz at the time of the training.

Everyone involved is working as a volunteer. They use their free time, vacations and family time to energize the movement. For this reason the plan to extend human rights learning throughout the community has not remained consistent. This said, the committee continues to meet and to promote those activities that they are able to manage. Support from outside sources and recognition by the municipality would allow the people to realize their plan of action designed to make all people in Bihać, including newcomers and minorities, aware of their human rights and work to fulfill them.
C. Human Rights Cities Latin America

1. Argentina

**Background**

Rosario is the first Human Rights City, established in 1997. With over a million inhabitants, it is second only to Buenos Aires in economic and social importance. Located on the Paraná River, Rosario serves as Argentina’s transportation and industrial center. Economic and social upheavals have marked the history of the city as they have the entire country. During the repressive military dictatorship that lasted from 1976 to 1983 hundreds of Rosario’s citizens were “disappeared.” From this struggle grew many human rights organizations claiming respect for civil and political rights. Some of these original organizations including, *Madres de plaza de Mayo*, *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, *Asamblea de Derechos Humanos*, and *Movimiento Ecuménico de Derechos Humanos* began during the dictatorship and have continued functioning to this day. The experience of the struggle against the dictatorship and the use of human rights as an organizing tool and a vehicle for claiming justice are central to understanding the development of Rosario as a Human Rights City.

In addition to the terrible moral and physical suffering imposed by the military dictatorship, the economy was severely damaged. Subsequent governments allowed the industrial sector to stagnate and neoliberal economic practices threw the economy into disarray until the end of the 1990s. Throughout the post-dictatorship period many factories closed down and thousand of workers were left unemployed. This fact, along with the constant migration of very poor people from other provinces, turned the city into the “capital of unemployment” as it was called in 1995, when unemployment reached 21 percent. Urban violence was a common response to the economic crisis throughout Argentina. Street demonstrations and violence were met by the government
with repressive practices—a legacy of the dictatorship. Besides the woeful economic situation and—perhaps even more critical—the dictatorship had establish a pattern of social relationships that tore apart the social fabric; governance lacked civil participation, the absence of transparency was a given, individuality replaced solidarity and violence permeated all power relations.

The most recent economic crisis came to a head on December 20, 2001 when the peso, pegged to the dollar, slid to an unprecedented low point. As a result, the president, Fernando de la Rúa, was forced from office and economic measures that corresponded more in favor of national interests were implemented. Thanks to its own initiative and a more favorable economic context, Rosario along with the rest of the country has seen an upturn since 2002.

Over the past decade the unemployment rate has been considerably decreased. Despite this slow but progressive recovery, Rosario has about 430,000 people below the poverty line and 170,000 below the indigent line. This situation has set the scene for many human rights violations. Internal migration of people, especially from the impoverished rural areas and the northern states has given rise to the villa miseria or shanty towns that have become part of the permanent city landscape. The Qom-Toba people, an aboriginal group that migrated from the border region near Paraguay, are especially subject to social exclusion and violation of their basic human rights.

Human Rights History

With the arrival of democracy in 1983 the Argentinean State ratified the main human rights treaties and in 1994, with the constitutional reform, the most important covenants were integrated to the National Constitution. Nine treaties and two declarations became part of the Constitution. Argentina was (and still is) the only country in Latin America that gives human rights covenants and treaties such a high level of importance and potential for
implementation. Human rights are protected by the Constitution through the *amparo* action, which is designed to protect the constitutional rights of the citizens and safeguard the integrity of the constitution by providing constitutional remedies against state laws that violate the rights protected by the Constitution. Although the process is quick and very effective, millions of people continue to ignore this possibility and its tremendous potential for change.

During the 1980s and 1990s, numerous organizations were created and other social movements appeared, each with a mission of protecting or claiming human rights, including women’s rights, the right to sexual diversity, indigenous peoples’ rights, environmental rights, and housing rights. These are just some of the movements that broadened the human rights scope, revealing new terrain and claiming visibility and inclusion.

During and directly following the period of military dictatorship, the focus was on civil and political human rights. However, civil society became increasingly aware of the possibility of using the human rights framework to claim fulfillment of economic, social and cultural rights, which rights had been eroded by the effect of neoliberal policies implemented by the dictatorship and not easily severed.

*Public Offices for Human Rights*

At the same time, the state began taking measures to guarantee, protect and promote human rights through the progressive creation of democratic institutions at the municipal, provincial and national levels. Some examples include the Office of the Ombudsman, the Women’s Council, shelters for victims of sexual violence, Human Rights Secretaries, an Office of Consumers Affairs, and the like.

With a history of opposition to dictatorship and authoritarian government, the members of human rights and other civil society organizations needed to develop new skills and strategies to initiate a dialogue with these new state institutions. Most membership human rights organizations grew out of opposition
to the state. In most cases opposition entailed great risks and the political discourse of the organizations was one of critique and confrontation. From this perspective, engaging in dialogue with the state could be seen as treason to progressive positions or to human rights. Creating new strategies, new ways of thinking and acting, designing and drafting proposals, initiating legal reforms, conceiving of plans and ideas for convincing decision-makers, politicians and parliamentarians to subscribe to new programs or policies, were a challenge for many social movements in the transition to democracy.

The city of Rosario and activists in the human rights movement had to learn a difficult lesson about how to advance human rights locally, where formal remedies are not always available. The perception of some municipal officials is that the human rights system belongs to the international arena, without any direct connection to local reality. They see human rights as only civil and political rights and placing obligations only on the national government. This situation created another challenge: how to
address these misconceptions and introduce, in all human rights learning programs, some axial points, such as identifying the obligations of each sector of society. Indeed, the idea of non-state obligations proved to be a powerful concept because it had been incorporated into the national law of Argentina.

The Human Right City of Rosario emerged out of a felt need for a deeper understanding of the duties and obligations related to human rights and on the premise that human rights cannot be exercised if they are not known. There are three major implications of that premise. The first is that public officials at the municipal level should know that human rights treaties create obligations for the state, not only at the national level, but also at provincial and municipal levels. Moreover, at all these levels, including the municipal, it is not only the functionaries from the executive branch who are obliged to fulfill human rights obligations but also those from the legislative and judicial branches. The second implication is that civil society, including the private sector (corporations, enterprises, the media), should be aware of its obligations under human rights treaties and codes of conduct should be designed accordingly. The third is that human rights should be known both by the potential victims of violations and by agents of the state, mainly the police, the army and other potential violators.

The ways and means of translating those implications into a strategy to integrate human rights into the national consciousness had to be set in the particular historical, social and economic context of Argentina’s recent development. Such was the challenge that led to the creation of the Human Rights City in Rosario.

Creating the Human Rights City

The Institute for Gender, Law and Development (INSGENAR) had been working in Rosario since 1994, trying to link the human rights agenda with the women’s rights agenda. Leaders in the organization saw the need to strengthen the links between all human rights with other social movement organizations in order
to promote a holistic approach to human rights, create a network of local organizations and increase the impact of the work. INSGENAR has been affiliated with PDHRE since its creation when the Latin American organization grew out of the encounter with PDHRE during the New York preparatory conference for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. Since 1995 INSIGENAR is the headquarters of PDHRE in Latin America.

On July 30, 1997, in a public ceremony INSGENAR invited governmental and non-governmental organizations to sign a Declaration in which they committed to a joint initiative that would make Rosario the first Human Rights City. More than thirty-five organizations and institutions, including human rights organizations, indigenous peoples groups, sexual diversity groups, academic bodies, development associations, and women’s groups, gathered in the auditorium of the City Hall to sign the commitment, in the presence of the Mayor of Rosario, Hermes Binner; the Director of the Women’s Sector, Rosa Acosta; and the founding director of PDHRE Shulamith Koenig.

Although the committed organizations were among the most respected and active ones in the city, it took them one year to move from the first commitment to the organization of the Steering Committee for the Human Rights City. Out of the original thirty-five organizations that signed the Act, only thirteen currently belong to the Steering Committee that has assumed the responsibility of guiding and implementing the development process. INSGENAR continues to be the driver of the initiative.

**The Steering Committee**

Creating the Steering Committee was a delicate affair because the diversity of interests represented in the Human Rights City made it necessary for participants to see beyond their own interest groups and to be willing to work through issues by consensus. The present Steering Committee of the Human Rights City consists of governmental and non-governmental organizations,
three academic institutions (two Human Rights Centers at the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Political Sciences, and the Paulo Freire Institute of the Faculty of Law), the Police Academy, the provincial Human Rights Secretary, the Municipal Human Rights Secretary, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Qom-Toba community representatives, the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights (MEDH), the Institute for Gender, Law and Development (INSGENAR), the Rosario Chapter of the Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CLADEM) and the Women’s Department of the Association of Architects. All are truly active participants on the Steering Committee.

Currently there are many organizations that would like to be on the Steering Committee. The Committee and its member organizations are well respected and being part of a coalition strengthens the member organizations. Each addition of new members needs the approval of the entire group in order not to upset the synergy that has taken so long to establish. The main tensions are between governmental and non-governmental organizations for example between the Police and human rights organizations. Change in representatives to the Steering Committee presents another challenge because it takes a lot of time to bring an individual up to speed on the history of the City and the work of the Committee. Perhaps the most critical aspect is the blending of personalities.

The Steering Committee meets regularly to debate and discuss its interventions and activities. While working together to develop the concept of the Human Rights City, all participants—and by extension all the organizations - begin to share a common language and a shared human rights framework, notwithstanding the plurality of ideas, varied backgrounds and divergence of views, all of which enriches the way the human rights language and framework are used.

Common to all is the goal to promote, through human rights learning, respect for the rights of every inhabitant of the city,
regardless of age, social and economic situation, ethnic origin, religion or any other condition. It is a challenge to successfully enable the groups from different social sectors to debate, reach a consensus and commit themselves to building the foundation for a true human rights culture in the daily life of Rosario and to contribute to a process of cultural change based on the modification of attitudes. Enacting change in representation and the dynamics of governance that will reflect the city’s demographics requires igniting the will of Rosario’s inhabitants, government officials and organizations.

Although inclusion of new members presents challenges, the actual membership on the Steering Committee is open and is growing as new actors are incorporated, always on the basis of well-considered and productive agreements.

**A human rights culture in an urban environment**

The Human Rights City promotes human rights in the urban space by fostering a human rights culture and by training educators, who in turn spread human rights learning throughout their communities. The urban space is a microcosm of all the elements—cultural, historical, social, economic and political—that exist within the country and also within the world. Conflicts and tensions are common to the urban landscape. These areas of conflict and the way that they are resolved become the entry points for creating a human rights culture because they permit the dynamic reinterpretation of life and reframing of critical issues within a human rights framework. The Rosario Steering Committee organized several debates to discuss urgent problems that arose within the urban environment, such as whether or not there should be a designated “red light districts” (*zona rosa*). In the southern district of the city transvestites, gays and prostitutes were present and soliciting, which led to several serious conflicts. Some residents wanted to rid the area of these groups. Although Argentina allows prostitution, people were afraid their property
value would decrease and therefore advocated for the creation of a *zona rosa*. The media carried news of the conflict every day. The strongest opponents to the move were women and transvestites who argued that the measure was discriminatory. The issue was brought up in the Steering Committee where, after much discussion among all members, including police and religious organizations, the human rights framework was invoked, in particular, the principle of nondiscrimination. The Committee produced a document that advocated against displacement and exclusionary measures. The document was sent to the government ministers who agreed with the human rights position and the zone was never created.

The Steering Committee designed a Plan of Action that includes strategic initiatives in several important sectors. These programs and action plans are reflect the breadth of concerns of the constituents’ representation.

Training and capacity building has been an ongoing program in the Human Rights City. The Committee organizes annually a series of two-month long seminars for teachers, security forces, health care workers, magistrates, professionals, children, artists, the media, and grassroots organizations. These programs, while still limited, assure that most sectors controlled in some way by the municipal government have an understanding of human rights and that the human rights approach has become anchored in the operations of the city. The programs have become self-sustaining in many cases. For example, as a result of the initial training program the Police Academy has now incorporated human rights as part of their regular curriculum.

The Committee discovered that holding competitions for primary and secondary school students is an excellent way to engage their interest and have them claim ownership of human rights. Young people were asked to recreate the human rights treaties, rewriting them in their own words; or through creative expression - painting, sculpture, music, videos, and poetry. So
far students have expressed in their own way the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and three treaties, including, CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Hundreds of schools promoted the contests in public spaces throughout the city. The formal education system has a powerful multiplying effect and therefore figures prominently in the plan of action.

Early on it became apparent to the Steering Committee that environmental concerns were key to making and maintaining Rosario as a livable city. Key issues, including, potable water, drainage, forestation, recycling, establishing kitchen gardens and reclaiming abandoned public space, became the subject of another contest. This time neighborhoods teams were asked to submit plans for transforming the local environment. The winning team received funding to implement their plan. This contest promoted communication and cooperation in the community. It required people to discuss what they meant by a healthy environment, identify problems in the local community, find
solutions and finally implement the proposal. In some cases this was the first time people had organized alliances and established priorities regarding their needs and identified where they required government assistance and what they themselves could do. The contest itself established ties of solidarity among neighbors as they learned how human rights created lines of communication between local citizens and their government.

Poverty has long been a cause for exclusion from the community. Not only are the poor denied material and economic means, but they are also denied knowledge and connections to sources of power. Among the poorest in Rosario are the people living in the indigenous communities. Building citizenship has meant breaking down these barriers. To this end the Human Rights City developed a strategy to provide the children and adolescents from the indigenous communities with the training and the opportunity to engage policy makers and public officials. Through interviews, a dialogue was established between the young boys and girls to discuss their needs with decision makers and public officials.

Women from slum areas are implementing the practice of participatory monitoring. For example, they took measures to monitor Article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) dealing with the right to health. Through monitoring freedom from torture or cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment under the Convention Against Torture (CAT), a team sponsored by the Steering Committee worked with women in the slum communities and revealed violations of these rights. Using participatory research methods, they found that the women who came to the sexual and reproductive health facilities were subject to serious violations. Three hundred women participated in writing a human rights report denouncing these abuses, which was published and disseminated by the media. A member of the Steering Committee called on the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate; as a result, the Ombudsman Office ordered the
Minister of Health to train all health workers in human rights, non-discrimination and gender equality. Further, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine made health and human rights a requirement in the curriculum, and an Observatory on Gender, Health and Human Rights was created, which is sustained by two members of the Steering Committee. Perhaps one of the most significant lessons learned was that women understood that health services should treat them with respect and consideration and that proper healthcare is not charity but their human right.

**Forming a Corps of Human Rights Educators**

The training of human rights educators is the responsibility of the Latin American Program for Human Rights Learning in the Urban Space, which began operating in Rosario in 2004. It brings together women and men chosen from people who are leaders in the processes of cultural change in their own communities. Its first activity was the International Seminar on Human Rights held in Rosario in July 2004. The participating young women and men from fourteen countries in the region formed a network of human rights educators after the seminar. This Program sustains a web page where information and training materials and documents are published and activities related to the subject are regularly announced: http://www.infoderechos.org/.

The Program operates on the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and responds to the urgent need to create a culture based on the knowledge, enjoyment and respect of the principles and values of human rights, conceived from a gender perspective. Making discrimination visible and changing the way people think about it is the prerequisite to combating it. It considers that basic needs should not be dependent on charity from the state but they must be conceived and defined as human rights. People should be transformed from “beneficiaries” of charity to “holders of rights.” This change should permeate language, conceptions, policies and programs not only
of public officials but also members of financial institutions, the media and the private sector. This is what is meant by creating a culture of human rights in Rosario and this is the challenge being assumed by human rights educators.

The Human Right City of Rosario has taken inspiration from the Portuguese sociologist Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, specifically his thoughts on nondiscrimination and identity. De Sousa argued that we have the right to be equal when our differences make us inferior and we have the right to be different when our equality erases our character. Hence, the Human Right City of Rosario promotes equality that reproduces the differences and a difference that does not produce, breed or reproduce inequalities.

**Summing Up the Achievements**

Positive results and changes in the Rosario community are now becoming evident after many years of continuous hard work. Carrying out the human rights learning programs with the police has resulted in the diminishing the number of deaths due to “trigger-happy” people; the incorporation of human rights in
the permanent curriculum at the Police Academy; the immediate institutional response to sexual harassment cases, and some changes in attitudes towards human rights defenders.

The Qom-Toba indigenous community, who prior to human rights learning, relied on other civil society organizations to speak for them, is now a member of the Steering Committee and can directly voice all its concerns about the discrimination this community suffers as native people who have migrated from the north of the country.

After some years of calling for an office of human rights within the state, Rosario now has the Office of Secretary of Human Rights as a part of the municipal administration.

Hundreds of students, teachers, police agents, health agents and people in general, have been trained in human rights.
The percentage of cases of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment to women in sexual and reproductive health services has diminished considerably after installing the Observatory on Gender, Health and Human Rights as a monitoring tool. No longer are there cases of torture, such as, medical abortion without anesthesia.

The main challenges facing the Human Rights City today are to create security in public spaces and to foster the principle of nondiscrimination.

The Human Right City of Rosario is more than a program. It is a shared dream, a hope, a challenge, a deeply-held conviction and firm commitment. Rosario has become a model for other Human Rights Cities and in particular in Latin America. Through replication of the model and, in some instances, through direct support, Rosario is furthering similar initiatives in Porto Allegre, Brazil, and in several cities in Chile, Colombia and Bolivia.

2. Brazil

Background

Of all the places where the Human Rights Cities have taken root, Porto Alegre, in the province of Rio Grande do Sul, would appear to have the most favorable conditions. With a population of over four million, it is one of the most economically vibrant and progressive cities in Brazil. In the 19th century as independence movements were spreading throughout Latin America, Rio Grande do Sul, declared itself an independent republican state. Although their enterprise was defeated ten years later, the principles of singularity and independence are embedded in the region’s cultural identity.

Built at the confluence of five rivers, Porto Alegre developed into a transportation and
manufacturing hub. Successive waves of European migration, the first being Portuguese in the 18th century, followed in the 19th century by Polish, Italian and German, have had a significant influence on the city. The German migrants, arriving from a rapidly industrializing Europe, instilled in the workforce an enduring labor tradition.

The Portuguese were deeply engaged in the African slave trade. The African slaves they brought to America intermarried with Amerindians. Their descendents now constitute approximately 17 percent of the local population and are subject to various forms of discrimination.

The NGO community is very active and has been instrumental in developing the concept of the World Social Forum (WSF), which has been hosted four times in Porto Alegre. These organizations have a long history of human rights advocacy and value human rights education. Their influence on local government is not negligible.

The labor ideology has helped define citizen expectations and government action. The local government has often been cited as a model of participatory democracy. Participatory municipal budgets were initiated in Porto Alegre in 1989 as a process by which people throughout the city meet to discuss and recommend the allocations for public works and services. Although some scholars and critics note that nothing compels the government to implement these recommendations, the model remains, as a work in progress, has tremendous potential for citizen participation.

*Developing the Human Rights City*

Introduction of the Human Rights City model to Porto Alegre occurred as the result of a meeting between the director of Themis, a local feminist organization and the initiator of the human rights city of Rosario, Argentina, also parented by a feminist organization there—INSIGNAR. Witnessing the positive results in Rosario, Themis leaders took on the task of creating the movement in
Porto Alegre. The feminist perspective was broadened when the Steering Committee was created. Today core members include organizations concerned with access of prisoners to the justice system, a youth organization, a collective of Black workers, as well as several individuals, such as, teachers, psychologists, and religious and labor organizers. At the time of the dedication of Porto Alegre as a Human Rights City in November of 2004, the municipality gave it its full support. However, shortly thereafter the administration and the political majority changed. Along with the change in government came a decline in interest in and support of the project. Not a great deal happened the following year.

In 2006, the Steering Committee was reenergized and organized a series of meetings with the community representative, activists and representatives of political parties. They determined that the most critical issues facing the community were racial and gender discrimination, domestic violence committed against, women, children and elders, and police violence. The lack of parliamentary representation of women, Black and Indigenous people was felt to be a major obstacle to realizing human rights. Equality and non-discrimination are protected by law but getting these laws recognized and acted upon by the general public will take much more in-depth human rights education. For example, most people accept that newspaper advertisements for work in hotels and other commercial places list among the requirements that the “Candidate must have technical skills, be punctual and have a good appearance…” This last criterion is read by all as meaning “Blacks need not apply.” The committee felt there would be no justice until the discriminated groups had their own parliamentary representatives and this would come about through solidarity among other NGOs who integrated human rights into their work.

The Steering Committee held human rights training sessions and informational meetings in the various communities and constituencies of the city. The crowning event was a day-long
learning celebration, the *Mostra*, held in the central market. Many of the local human rights organizations participated by disseminating information that illustrated the ways in which human rights was an essential part of daily life. Following the human rights celebration, the Committee held more than twelve information and learning sessions around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were successful because people were able to make the connection between human rights and some of their own neighborhood problems – water, security, clean air, access to healthcare and jobs. They also began discussing concrete action they could take.

**Challenges**

After the success of the *Mostra* and MDG meetings, the Steering Committee decided to sponsor an essay contest on human rights to engage young people. The city first agreed to sponsor the event but never came through with funding. The lack of a municipal partner had been a constant problem ever since the labor party left municipal office in 2005. The Steering Committee did not have time to create a strong base outside the local administration. It had been counting on some form of funding and allocation of space in which to enlarge Steering Committee membership and hold events. Participating NGOs began to lose faith in the Human Rights City program because it did not receive funds. Most social enterprises offered something more concrete, such as, feeding children or teaching people a skill. Human rights learning seemed too abstract and difficult to identify concrete results that could be actually seen. The Steering Committee had difficulty convincing
funding sources that changing the way people act and think about themselves is as important as building a playground because human rights give people the energy to build that playground and find their own resources.

In addition, when the director of Themis left office, the new director was not in favor of continuing to assume the central sponsorship of the Human Rights City. Without a permanent space for general administration, a base of operations, and a meeting space, the director of the Steering Committee had to spend much of his time on obtaining minimal funds and and solving logistical problems. As a result the outreach effort, such as training facilitators and holding community-based human rights workshops came to a near halt. Although organizational meetings were held that brought together NGOs, none of the organizations could spare the people and time that was needed to carry a project or a campaign through to completion.

The Porto Alegre Human Rights City participated in the World Conference on Development of Cities held in Porto Alegre in 2008 along with representatives of Human Rights Cities in Chile, Argentina and the United States. The success of the workshops and interventions and the renewed interest from city municipalities throughout Brazil and other Latin American countries gave the steering committee a real boost. They felt that the program is too important to lay fallow and so began another round of organizing meetings, appeals for funding and updating programs. One lesson stands out: the Human Rights City concept is an important and labor-intensive effort. It cannot run without the engagement of influential NGOs and without funding. The municipality is a vital source of funding in the Porto Alegre because private donors are not likely to fund the program unless it can be shown that the municipality is willingness to do so.
Reaching Out Further in Latin America

The strength of the model established in Rosario and the respect accorded to that Human Rights City may be seen in the growing number of requests made by other cities in Latin America to learn about the program. Cities in Chile, Colombia and Bolivia have expressed a strong interest in becoming part of the Human Rights Cities initiative. The only impediment to further and more rapid expansion is the lack of funds. PDHRE and the Human Rights Cities have taken care to emphasize that becoming a Human Rights City means making a considerable commitment to community organizing, training, preparation of materials and carrying out a plan of action. This requires building a dedicated steering committee of volunteers and securing minimal resources—something not all cities are able to provide.

D. Human Rights Cities in North American

Creating Human Rights Cities in the Northern Hemisphere of the Americas has been more difficult that in other regions for several reasons. First, human rights, as a concept and a practical tool for mobilizing citizens at the local and national levels, does not resonate as it does elsewhere. In the relatively affluent counties of Canada and the United States, human rights are viewed as primarily civil and political rights. Only recently have civil society organization begun seeing economic, social and cultural needs in terms of human rights. One long-standing exception is the way that Native Americans and First Peoples upon receiving little satisfaction through local government channels took their claims to human rights formula at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. Another is the civil rights movement against segregation in the U.S., which gave prominence to issues of housing, education and work. Another reason for the seeming lack of interest in human rights is that the constitutional guarantees of rights and elaborate opportunities for judicial and administrative enforcement of rights is not often couched in the human rights language used
internationally, which tends to be seen as referring to standards for judging violations of human rights occurring abroad.

1. Canada

History and Background

The Human Rights City in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is the first sustained Human Rights City in North America that has endured. A previous attempt to make Iowa City and Memphis Human Rights Cities failed because of lack of funds and leadership.

The fact that Edmonton is a large city of over one million in the metropolitan area and the capital of Alberta Province offers as many challenges as it does advantages. Located in an oil-rich region with a flourishing petrochemical industry and a growing high tech job market, Edmonton is a focal point for internal and external migration. The once blighted core neighborhoods of the inner city are being restored and rings of suburban communities are expanding as the population grows with new workers and people seeking every sort of economic and educational opportunity.

Edmonton has a significant population of aboriginal Canadians and is an immigrant-built city. It is replete with benevolent organizations and NGOs and has a strong links with many different parts of the world, both on an individual and institutional levels. Volunteer participation is among the highest in the developed world, and there is a great deal of emphasis placed on learning and education. Edmonton is an educational center, hosting, in addition to the University of Alberta, seven other post-secondary institutions.

There is an overarching recognition that Edmonton has been a populated settlement for at least 12,000 years; the still-unresolved dynamic between original culture and settler culture continues to create inequity, as settler culture imposes norms that arise from a diversity of cultural milieu, while original residents struggle to flourish as strangers in their own land. Early settlers
engaged in the systemic deracination of First Nations, removing land, identity, dignity and the very foundation of sentience by wrenching children away from their families and brutalizing them in residential missionary schools. A five-year national Truth and Reconciliation Commission just has been launched to resolve the ongoing disparity between original Canadians and settlers. Canada’s national narrative describes “two founding nations” of the settler culture, British and French. In the 2006 census, less than eight percent of Edmontonians identified themselves as pure British or French; 92 percent of the metro population of 1.1 million reported other or mixed origins. There is a realization—reflected in school curricula—that pluralism, inclusion, and the strength of diverse origins are the defining characteristics of the Province of Alberta.

Indeed, the immigrant and aboriginal presence, plus the global outlook, cosmopolitanism and sophistication of the populace, all make the Human Rights City framework a natural and organic endeavor.

**Developing Edmonton as a Human Rights City**

The Human Rights City concept was brought to Edmonton by Walther Lichem, Austrian Ambassador to Canada and member of the PDHRE Board of Directors, when he spoke at a human rights conference in Edmonton in September 2002. There he introduced the concept to a large audience asking if they wanted to pursue a Human Rights City. In reply he received a standing ovation. The following year Lichem, visiting professor at the University of Alberta, energetically drove the concept forward. Soon thereafter, in April 2, 2003, the initiative to make Edmonton a Human Rights City took off, facilitated by the John Humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights (JHC). The first step, Phase I, was to identify areas of concern most keenly felt by the inhabitants of Edmonton. The issues cited in a feasibility study included poverty and exclusion experienced by marginalized groups, continued
use and perception of ethnic and racial stereotypes and the need for greater understanding and empathy to be exercised by the population of Edmonton as a whole.

Phase II aimed at developing a process for human rights learning and action. An Executive Committee was appointed to guide the process. A series of focus groups were held to tap into the needs and ideas of citizens as to how the Human Rights City ought to function. Findings based on these encounters provided the basis for the action plan. The main suggestions from participants in the focus groups identified four main areas of need: (i) building and improving partnerships so that groups and organizations could enhance communication and cooperation around human rights issues; (ii) spreading human rights learning throughout the community and among organizations so that all citizens would know human rights and would become actively engaged in the human rights city; (iii) providing the opportunity and the space for those citizens who are marginalized and often “voiceless” to have their say in the planning and advocacy role in the HR City and, finally, (iv) providing physical and virtual space that will be the Human Rights City center and will testify to Edmonton’s commitment to the program.

The action plan emphasized the need for continuous research in Edmonton, including community-based research that would entail transformative human rights learning (a process of changing attitudes and behaviors as greater awareness and empathy developed among inhabitants). Strengthening and building networks among organizations, groups and neighborhoods would foster mutual support and solidarity. Lastly, the action plan dealt with the need for continuous human rights education. As situations changed in Edmonton, new entry points for learning would be created. This was seen as the dynamic process of learning and dialogue.

To complement the outcomes of the focus groups and text-based research, the Executive Committee posted an on-line
survey, The Human Rights City Survey, in spring 2006. Community organizations, the media networks and stakeholder lists marketed the survey. There was no illusion that this was a statistically accurate reflection of the opinions of Edmonton’s population but it provided a good starting point. For one thing, the 190 survey responses reached out to those not included in the focus groups and, secondly, people were able to express themselves in a way that perhaps they could not do publicly.

Confronting the Challenges to Human Rights

Despite the thriving economy in Edmonton and Alberta, the findings of the initial research and mapping showed that particular groups were systematically excluded from social and economic resources available to others in the community. Aboriginal residents suffer the most prominent discrimination in several interconnected areas that, by all evidence, constitutes a denial of their human rights. The people of the First Nation have less access to good education, jobs, adequate housing, appropriate medical care, are subject to abuse by police and formal and non-formal authorities and perceive themselves to be on the lowest rung of social hierarchies. In addition, aboriginal women and children suffer from domestic violence three times more than non-Aboriginals. Many historically Aboriginal people have been denied their culture and adequate measures of compensation and restoration have not yet been enacted. One stark example has been the forced attendance at residential schools, operated predominantly by religious organizations. Aboriginal children were sent by force away from their parents and cultural community, often placed in foster homes and denied knowledge of their language and customs in the name of social integration (although the schools were segregated) that made them doubly marginalized. These schools of the 19th and 20th centuries were disbanded only in the late 1970s and Aboriginals received the right to vote only in 1962. One step forward was the symbolic apology pronounced
by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on June 11, 2008, for the grave injustice and suffering brought on by the system. The year 2008 also marked the beginning of a five year Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine these and other abuses. One survey respondent, speaking about access to housing, expressed the legacy of discrimination, racism and bullying in these terms:

Still when applying for housing I get a sense of something not right. They do not say that you are not getting the place but I know they are discriminating still because of my heritage. I get really upset and feel like giving up because others do not like me because I am Aboriginal.

Immigrants and visible minorities also suffer from discriminatory practices. Individuals who arrive with limited education or who are of Arab or Muslim origins suffer from racial profiling. Those less educated see themselves as relegated to a permanent underclass because lack of education leads to the most menial jobs setting the cycle for poor access to other needs, including the human rights to housing, decent work, education, food and healthcare. People of Arab and Muslim identity experience similar denials of human rights. One noted, “as ethnic profiling takes a stronger part in our security procedures, so will the effect trickle into employment decisions and otherwise common social settings.”

Women in immigrant communities felt they were discriminated based on gender as well as race.

Women, children, the aged, and people with disabilities, as well as the groups already mentioned, experienced discrimination based on gender. Women sex workers were of special concern because they are most often seen as perpetrators rather than victims and they are marginalized because of the nature of their work and because they are women.

People with disabilities—mental and physical—felt they were particularly disadvantaged. The alienating stereotypes that their
disabilities evoked in general and the assumed and real limitations of physical and mental capabilities were one set of issues. The cost of disabilities was a further impediment to well being. In particular, the survey noted the need for architects and city planners to integrate the human rights of people with disabilities into their planning.

Among the other groups that were identified as being integrated into the action plan were youth and children at risk, the gay community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer-LGBTQ), seniors and homeless persons. The survey also mentioned numerous instances of unnecessary force by the police services, who treated suspects with verbal and, at times, physical abuse.

Edmonton has for years been recognized for its dynamic, engaged population. Dozens of organizations pursue different aspects of human rights, often separately, seldom collectively, and often unaware of one another’s efforts. Creating the “basket” of the human rights initiatives gives these many endeavors a common space to find one another, know one another, build synergy and cooperation, partnerships and collaboration, and define and pursue common goals within the holistic human rights framework. Extending human rights education to all the stakeholders allows them to understand that they have been working for the realization of human rights all along and places their actions and programs in a larger holistic perspective. The mapping exercises also allowed the local government and civil society organizations to see which groups were underrepresented and voiceless. For example, defining as human rights issues the concerns of groups, such as sex workers and youth at risk, gave legitimacy to their claims and moved social action from charity to dignity.

**Actions Taken and Progress Made**

Because human rights principles are constitutionally and societally entrenched there is an initial attraction to the violations
model. Through the Human Rights City, people are now able to approach these principles differently by looking at specific issues through a holistic human rights lens that focuses more on realization than on denunciation or correcting only symptoms. Homelessness, for instance, is now seen as more a matter of capacity building and empowerment through relevant institutions than merely building shelters to keep people warm in winter. Education, job training, access to food, and similar services are gaining recognition as human rights, and, when these necessities are treated as human rights, they become the concern of everyone. Approaching these issues in terms of realizing human rights engages those most affected in finding solutions, including at the policy level. The mapping exercises, report on the findings and recommendations have been disseminated to all the relevant institutions. More than 100 local organizations were involved in the exercises, which contributed to the human rights learning of their leaders.

City government, political parties, and community institutions continue to be fully engaged in and informed about Human Rights City activities. They recognize the Human Rights City as an organic project that should not be owned by any one group. The Human Rights City annual reports are well received and taken into consideration a part of the planning by these entities.

The Edmonton Human Rights City and the John Humphrey Center have undertaken a number of activities aimed at enhancing human rights learning. Two human rights facilitators’ training programs were held in 2007 and 2008. The second, held in April 2008 brought together practitioners from many diverse agencies and institutions, public and private, with the understanding that upon completing the 24 modules of the PDHRE program they agreed to become trainers within their own organizations. These seminars grounded community-based facilitators in the holistic human rights approach. The training seminars represent the most intensive learning activity of the Human Rights City project.
The related collaboration with other community organizations fosters human rights across a broad spectrum of civil society in Edmonton. These collaborative activities include organizing on 10 December International Human Rights Day events with Aboriginal organizations, the LGBTQ community, youth at risk and people with disabilities. Stories from these communities were highlighted at events marking human rights awareness at the City Art Gallery. Other events focused on the human rights perspective relating to racial discrimination and housing rights. An annual Human Rights City award was launched to honor outstanding contributions to human rights.

In August 2007 the United Nations Global Youth Assembly was held in Edmonton. The Human Rights City sponsored events focused on building a human rights community and Shulamith Koenig, founder-executive director of PDHRE, gave the keynote address to youth. The Human Rights City places a great deal of emphasis on bringing together young people. Many of the program ideas come from young people, who are steadily taking ownership of the project.

Cooperation with schools and universities has been an important part of the outreach and learning strategy. The Human Rights City promotes distribution of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) throughout the city schools. It works with teachers to include human rights in class curricula and with universities to promote the integration of human rights into research, at the universities, such as the project with students at the University of Alberta Community Service Learning Project, who mapped “Prostitution in Edmonton” as a community issue.

Various activities engaging media and “branding” the Human Rights Cities project have been undertaken on a regular basis since 2006, such as interviews with audio, visual and print media. The Human Rights City sponsored a design competition for design students at Grant MacEwan College to develop an identity for The Human Rights City Edmonton Project. The website domain
http://www.humanrightscity.ca/ is registered and being constantly developed.

Representatives of the Steering Committee of Edmonton Human Rights City have been invited to national and international events at which they presented the work being done in Edmonton. The outreach has included events in the United States, South Africa, Austria and China.

The guiding principle behind the action plan is to integrate human rights consciousness and human rights awareness in all activities of the city. Rather than create yet another organization, the members of the Edmonton project and the John Humphrey Center see their role as fostering the evolution of the way the city is envisaged and the way people act so that human rights seeps into every aspect of planning, decision-making and all the vital concerns of the city.
Lessons Learned

In the summary of the most recent report filed by the John Humphrey Center, the authors wrote:

The Human Rights City Edmonton Project is an ambitious initiative that we have realized takes time to embed itself into the community. One of the biggest challenges of the project is the pressure to have fast outcomes in the community, which may not be to the benefit of the project or the communities we serve…the project needs to be understood as something that is long term…We have learned that to ensure we do not duplicate or overlap other programs or projects, or to ensure that all communities are included in the process, requires time and effort.

The authors go on to identify their most important accomplishments. The first is having established a core group of leaders in the Executive Committee and in the Steering Committee, who understand and believe in the project. Next they cite the successful training of trainers program that has had an excellent “ripple effect” in the community. The Youth Leadership Program is cited for engaging for the first time a group of young people who will focus on community issues as the basis for understanding and acting to further human rights. “Ultimately,” they explain, “the project works to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a living reality at the community level.”

2. United States

Several previous attempts had been made to establish human rights cities in the United States. Despite the public will and support of civil society these were not sustained. Currently Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Atlanta, Georgia, and Oakland, California, are seriously exploring ways that they too can join the movement. It was not until the program
was brought to the District of Columbia (D.C.) that a solid program could be implanted.

**Background**

Washington, D.C., is a city of great contrast and disparity. As the federal governmental center and an international hub it has a weekday population in excess of one million, of which less than half are permanent residents are counted. Of those permanently residing in the District over 50 percent are African-American. A unique situation and one that greatly disturbs residents is that they are without representation at the level of the federal government. Because the area is under direct control of the federal government, residents are not allowed to elect a senator and have a non-voting delegate in the Hours of Representatives. In other words the residents of the District lack a voting representative. Unemployment is lower than the national average while crime and violent crime are high, placing Washington 7th among larger US cities. The public school system is in disarray with an increasing number of students electing to attend public charter schools that operate autonomously but are paid for from publicly funded school vouchers. They are allowed to operate as long as students show a certain level of achievement. Against this background, PDHRE – Human Rights Cities Program was offered a challenge by an international foundation to make Washington, D.C., a human rights city, starting with youth involvement. In 2007 educators from PDHRE began meeting with educators, community leaders, social justice and youth organizations and youth within or outside the school system.

**A Developing Human Rights City**

The human rights city program in Washington is still in a formative stage. Several conditions slowed progress. First, this was the only time that the program was not requested by a sponsoring organization or a municipal administration. This meant
that much preliminary work needed to be done to locate suitable
and willing partners, understand the local context and find the
best entry points for working with the youth population. Second,
working with young people was limited by their availability (most
were in school full-time and many held jobs or other activities
after school). PDHRE did not want the training and learning to
be mainstreamed into the school curriculum in which case the
autonomy of the youth to guide the program would be limited and
it would fall into the lack-luster category of being another add-on
to the curriculum.

Many information forums and outreach programs targeting
various communities of the District were carried out during 2007
with several human rights training programs held as voluntary
after-school programs for students aged 15-18. The program
eventually it gained stability and was able to become anchored
in the community after Jean-Louis Peta Ikamabana, a regional
director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC),
an international NGO working on peace and justice worldwide, took charge. AFSC had considerable experience working with young people and a solid reputation globally. People from the community, under PDHRE’s auspices, held informal meeting in schools throughout the District and conducted individual interviews with potential student participants. Many of the young people contacted were active in service learning programs since many schools required or recommended that students become involved in community action as part of their integrated curriculum. However, most had not heard of human rights, did not know what they were or that they were based on universally accepted norms and standards.

A group of thirty-five young people, all residents from various neighborhood and schools in the District of Columbia, were invited to a three-day retreat to discuss human rights education, youth priorities and program planning. The group was introduced to the holistic model of human rights in the context of what the participants considered the most important issues facing young people. From the various suggestions, they selected three key issues on which to work, namely, immigration, education and violence in the streets. They framed these issues in human rights terms and discussed how human rights, including social, economic and cultural rights, were interrelated. All participants had some personal connection with the issues they had chosen. These themes reflected many of the most pressing concerns that affected all D.C. residents and many were related to the growing economic disparity. As elsewhere, those who could afford to do so send their children to private schools, live in safe neighborhoods and are not directly concerned by the constraints facing illegal immigrants. These three themes evolved into the basis for a plan of action. All those who participated and wished to continue working on the program became members of the Youth Steering Committee.
In subsequent meetings the young people began a program of dialogue and information with city commissioners for human rights and education and other local leaders in order to explain their vision of Washington, D.C. as a Human Rights City and to learn what actions could be taken to achieve the goal.

Early on in the project it became evident that an adult committee was needed to support and mentor those on the youth committee. A meeting of local organizations was held and a second committee was formed bringing together leaders in some of the most active social justice, human rights, and university organizations. They set up a parallel agenda to work with the students and the community.

Work within the D.C. Public Schools was approved by the Mayor’s Office, which meant that the Human Rights City initiative was invited to work in the schools. Integrating human rights learning into service activities has great potential as a means of reaching out to young people. There are two advantages to integrating the program into service learning. First is that it is voluntary and therefore participants choose to engage based on their own convictions rather than in response to duties imposed by the educational system. The second advantage is that service learning programs are often student-centered and participatory in design, which coincides with the pedagogy of human rights learning.

**Future Prospects**

Creating the vision of a Human Rights City in Washington, D.C., has broad implications not only for the local community but also for the entire nation. The fact that young people (and the accompanying adults) are realizing that human rights include social, economic and cultural rights is very important in a country where human rights are perceived as essentially civil and political. Bringing together young people to discuss their city and their concerns in human rights terms is fostering cooperation
and dialogue among people from diverse communities. Through developing a youth dialogue across communities in the District and fostering human rights learning, young people and their adult mentors will redefine their roles as urban residents and citizens. This approach will provide a strong model for other cities in the United States.

E. Human Rights Cities around the World

It is worth mentioning that human rights cities were begun in Nagpur, India, and in Abra Province in the Philippines. Nagpur had developed into a vital and active community well supported by the municipality and local NGOs. The focal point of their activities was centered on land reform, women’s rights and inter-religious harmony. The human rights activities have continued in Nagpur through the various organizations and associations although the city chose to no longer be directly involved in the movement.

Abra Province is located in a mountainous region in Northwestern Luzon. The population is largely made up of indigenous people. Action in Abra was directed from Manila with human rights educators visiting the provincial towns several times a year. This distance approach to establishing the city never really succeeded and although some of the training and learning activities were successful, the program was never rooted in local tradition and leadership. The fact that people in Abra did not claim ownership of the Human Rights City was a key factor and one that provided an important lesson that was taken to heart in planning subsequent programs.

A Human Rights City is built upon the desire, drive and creative imagination of its inhabitants. Good intentions from the outside cannot replace the power of a local initiative.

Requests to participate in the Human Rights City movement are numerous. The human rights framework provides a powerful tool that unifies diverse interests under a set of norms that provide an ethical and legal code. Many of the problems facing cities reach
far beyond the urban boundaries and cross regional and national frontiers. People everywhere are aware of the expanded global implications of issues such as migration, climate change, scarcity of resources and the way their consequences are felt at a local level. Human rights are the drivers that enable people to work together to find solutions to these problems. Instead of building walls, human rights learning changes attitudes in ways that open opportunities for the many rather than constraining education for the few. When people learn about Human Rights Cities and see the evidence of their success they too want to enjoy the same possibility. We anticipate that more cities (and countries) will see the value for societal development of encouraging local level engagement in human rights-based social change through Human Rights Cities.
CHAPTER 4
THE WAY FORWARD

The conditions of life for many of the inhabitants of the cities of the 21st century are below any acceptable standard based on the human rights principle of equality in dignity and rights of everyone. They suffer the pressures of armed conflict, ethnic cleansing, criminality, corruption, environmental degradation, unemployment, gender-based discrimination and violence. The most systematic deprivation falls upon slum dwellers, who suffer from one or more of the four deprivations characteristic of slums, namely, lack of improved sanitation, improved water facilities, durable housing and sufficient living area. In 2005, one or more of these conditions affected over one third of the urban population in developing regions, rising to 62 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.39 The extreme poverty and insecurity of the urban dweller call for urgent action by the international community, which set the goal of significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (Target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals). UN-HABITAT, along with governments, multilateral and bilateral institutions for the financing of development, and the private sector, including non-for-profit and philanthropic organizations,
are deploying considerable energies and resources to meet these challenges.

This book argues that directing resources at the problems of urban life might alleviate suffering in some cases but longer-term and sustainable solutions require that the underlying patterns of social injustice be addressed. The Human Rights Cities Program, by empowering people to know and claim their human rights, seeks to do just that. It is certainly not the only program based on civic engagement for societal development but it is showing promise for addressing the problems besetting cities in the developing and developed worlds that result from failure to fulfill human rights obligations. The strategy outlined in the previous chapters is one of civic empowerment through human rights learning based on the experience of locally organized Human Rights Cities.

As noted at the outset, the difference between this particular strategy and other approaches to community empowerment is the transformative potential of human rights learning. Human rights learning, as explained in previous chapters, originates in the knowledge inherent in all human beings of what it means to have a life free from humiliation. This holistic approach combines the philosophy and methodologies of critical pedagogy within the perspective of and reliance on the mobilizing force of the principles proclaimed for all humanity sixty years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The principles reaffirmed in various forms by humankind throughout history were periodically improved as people were able to alter power relations in response to human suffering. The process of human rights learning is the basis for these advances in societal development. The process of human rights learning is instrumental in societal development. It is the means by which the human rights principles are integrated into consciousness, moral decision-making, legislation, and actions of the individual and the community.

Those who have participated in the creation of Human Rights Cities have acquired a skill set and confidence for questioning
those power relations that make deprivation of human rights possible. They use the legal and administrative systems to their advantage and address problems of urban poverty as participants in change rather than victims of fatality or recipients of charity. They develop the ability to analyze problems in terms of deep causes rather than merely treating symptoms. The idea that social and economic injustice is “the way the world is” yields to awareness that people can change their condition by civic engagement for societal development based on human rights.

We have explained now Human Rights Cities take shape through a consultative process facilitated by local human rights activists, often in partnership with local authorities, elected officials and institutions. The Human Rights Cities also benefit from the support of international networks, which assists in methodological and pedagogical matters. Together they help design strategies for local activities, develop curricula, hold workshops and training-of-
trainers sessions, conduct research and develop written and visual educational materials and other media. Outsiders dictate none of these initiatives, since each community must elect to become a Human Rights City through the political will of its own inhabitants. The social and economic change they seek to bring about using a human rights framework has been described here as societal development through human rights learning because of its multi-sector approach and it value for development dynamics and for relations among members of the community and between them and the power structures. However, the spread of these urban spaces of civic empowerment requires that those who facilitate the process be trained and apprenticed in the existing methodologies of successful programs, such as that of the Human Rights Cities. The operating expenses of each City are modest; however, the scaling up of the strategy and the regional and global levels requires resources.

The number of people currently benefiting directly from this strategy numbers in the thousands and indirectly in the hundreds of thousands, if one considers those in the existing Human Rights Cities who are affected by policies and resources allocation revised through the process described in this book. Whatever the estimate of the number of persons currently benefiting from the Human Rights Cities Program, it is miniscule compared to the potential participants in similar programs once the goal of generalizing this approach has been realized. Not only is it of direct value to the 1.2 billion slum dwellers but it also applies to all persons whose right to development is not a priority either in national policy or in international financing of development. But the movement is growing, a ripple effect is occurring, and successful practices are having a catalytic effect nationally and regionally. Evidence of this trend can be found in the numerous requests from cities that neighbor the current Human Rights Cities to become Human Rights Cities themselves.
The success of current and future Human Rights Cities cannot be assured without the political space to question unjust structures through civic engagement. In countries open to such empowerment by virtue of their democratic institutions and recognition of human rights in domestic and international law, the flourishing of Human Rights Cities reinforces the national policy of sustainable development and should be welcomed and supported by government institutions, but left free to experiment and develop, as the examples discussed in Chapter 3 illustrate. Where autocracy and authoritarian government stifles civic empowerment it will be difficult to launch and nurture Human Rights Cities. They will have to emerge through community mobilization in favor of development that is equitable, sustainable, participatory, inclusive and human rights-based and part of a non-violent strategy for social change, one that respects cultural values of the community, while moving at a sustainable pace toward change. Deeply rooted corruption, patriarchy, including gender-based violence, cronyism, incompetence, and discrimination will not be eliminated by resolutions adopted in New York, Geneva, Nairobi, or Nanjing, nor by conditions imposed by international financial institutions on lending or debt rescheduling. It will happen as people learn what human rights are and act to realize them, beginning at the local level.

The experience in places like Argentina and Mali, where people have won hard-fought battles against dictatorship to restore human rights and create a vibrant civil society, has imbedded the commitment to sustaining human rights as the moral framework of societal development. In other societies, especially in developed countries, the urgency of human rights appears less stark and the challenge is more that of removing the obstacles to inclusion and full realization of economic, social and cultural rights. Human Rights Cities have learned that governments may not be assumed to ensure that society evolves in the way that is most conducive to the full realization of human rights; the community must be
constantly vigilant and use the levers of government to keep this vision on track. Human rights learning fosters human rights awareness by developing the capacity of all people to become mentors and monitors of human rights.

The famous quotation of Eleanor Roosevelt, pronounced when the Universal Declaration was adopted in Paris on December 10, 1968, and recited whenever a speaker on the commemoration of this event is at a loss for words, captures the essence of the strategy outlined here, perhaps with a significance that she did not realize at the time:

> Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.
She probably had in mind her own country and its familiar factories, farms and offices, but her insight is exactly what the Human Rights Cities in Rosario, Kati, Musha and all the other sites are all about as well. Her rhetorical appeal to “citizen action” is consonant with the concept of civic engagement for societal development described here for it captures the significance of change occurring in the smallest units of society, the individual’s circle of relations, extended to families, communities, institutions, governments and, in the last analysis, global society.

The limited but promising experience gained so far and briefly summarized in the preceding pages suggests what could be gained by encouraging and facilitating the strategy of Human Rights Cities in the future.
NOTES

6 Id.
21 Id., para. 25.
22 UN Doc. A/56/326, 6 September 2001, para. 82.
24 Id.
25 The Declaration is officially known as the “Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.” See General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.
26 General Assembly Resolution 62/171. International Year of
Human Rights Learning.


30 See, for example, Report of the Secretary-General, Guidelines for national plans of action for human rights education, UN doc. A/52/469/Add.1 (20 October 1997).


33 These goals of HRE were articulated in Richard Claude’s *Methodologies for Human Rights Education*. Available at http://www.pdhre.org/materials/methodologies.html.

34 Id.

35 See supra, note 19.

36 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28.


INDEX

A
Aboriginal people 109, 128, 129, 131. See also First Peoples
See also Indigenous community (ies)
Abra Province, The Philippines 142
Accra. See Ghana
action plan 52, 80, 87, 130, 133, 136
AIDS 24, 25, 65, 66, 69, 73, 75, 80. See also HIV/AIDS
See also orphans
Alberta 128, 129, 131, 135
University of 128, 129, 135
Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre (ADR) in Ghana 62
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Washington, D.C. 139
Amuzu, Tuinese E. 20
Argentina 10, 20, 51, 52, 53, 108, 109, 112, 115, 123, 126, 149
Arnold Schwarzenegger (Graz, Austria) 100
Atuguba, Raymond 20
Austria 20, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 136
Graz Human Rights City 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107

B
Bamako. See Mali
Batwa people (pygmies in Rwanda) 73, 75
Benedek, Wolfgang 20
Bihać. See Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bolivia 122, 127
Bonaventura de Sousa Santos 120
Bongo. See Ghana
Bosnia. See Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bosnia-Herzegovina 93, 101, 102
Bihać Human Rights City 93, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107
Ruzicka 105
Brazil 20, 122, 126
Porto Alegre Human Rights City 122, 123, 124, 126

C
Canada 19, 20, 127, 128, 129
Edmonton Human Rights City 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137
capacity building 29, 87, 116, 134
Chariotti, Susana 10, 20
children 9, 12, 13, 14, 25, 27, 31, 45, 46, 48, 53, 54, 61, 63, 65, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 85, 97, 98, 103, 105, 107, 116, 118, 124, 125, 129, 131, 132, 133, 140.
See also Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
See also violence against children
Chile 122, 126, 127
China 136

civic engagement 20, 50, 63, 64, 83, 146, 147, 149, 151

Claude, Richard 44

Colombia 122, 127

Community Learning Forums 67

community radio 67, 72, 83, 86

Consensual Human Rights City (Mali) 84. See also Mali

Convention Against Torture (CAT) Rosario 118

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 45, 88, 92, 117. See also gender equality See also women

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 45, 88, 92, 117. See also children

crime, criminality 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 57, 65, 138, 145

D

D.C. See Washington, D.C.

Das, Satya 20

democratic governance. See governance
development. See economic and social development See economic development See human development See right to development See social development See societal development

Dewey, John 43

disabilities 13, 75, 77, 97, 103, 105, 132, 133, 135

District, The. See Washington, D.C.

District of Columbia. See Washington, D.C.

E

economic and social development 22, 28, 33, 36

economic development 23, 24, 35, 36, 46, 66, 84

Edmonton. See Canada

education 11, 12, 14, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 33, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 52, 53, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 66, 70, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 98, 101, 105, 117, 123, 124, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 140, 141, 143. See also human right: to education

Eleanor Roosevelt. See Roosevelt, Eleanor

empowerment 18, 19, 38, 39, 44, 134, 146, 148, 149

environmental degradation 46, 145

European Cultural Capital (Graz) 95

European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) Graz 95, 97, 98, 99, 101, 103, 107

European Union (EU) 93, 95, 99, 103

exclusion 18, 27, 29, 32, 33, 35, 104, 109, 118, 129

extreme poverty 24, 73, 75, 78, 145. See also poverty
See also urban poor

F

First Peoples 127. See also Aboriginal people
See also Indigenous community (ies)
Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
See Roosevelt, Franklin Delano
Fraser, Joy 20
Freire, Paolo 82, 114

G
gender equality 18, 19, 46, 119.
See also Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
See also women
genocide (Rwanda) 73
Genocide Memorial Site (Rwanda) 73
Ghana 20, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 60, 61, 64, 66
Accra 56
Bongo 53, 56, 60, 61, 62, 63
Newtown 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62
Nima and Maamobi 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62
Walewale 56, 60, 61, 62
globalization 22, 23, 24, 25, 41
Global Agenda 19, 23
governance 7, 14, 22, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 55, 61, 69, 74, 78, 109, 115
democratic governance 34, 35
participatory governance 26, 34
urban governance 7, 32, 34, 35
Grant MacEwan College 135
Graz, Austria. See Austria

H

HABITAT. See UN-HABITAT
Harper, Stephen 132
HIV/AIDS 24, 25, 65, 69, 73, 75, 80
holistic understanding of human rights 19
human development 22, 36, 41, 95
human right to education 58, 62
to food 78
to health 58, 69, 70, 74, 87, 118
to housing 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 46, 48, 58, 98, 101, 102, 104, 110, 127, 131, 132, 135, 145
to work 131, 132, 134
human rights economic and social justice 10, 11, 49
Human Rights Cities Program 7, 8, 17, 18, 52, 138, 146, 148
human rights city 15, 60, 63, 67, 74, 80, 81, 83, 84, 95, 97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 106, 123, 130, 138
human rights clinic (Kati) 89
Human Rights Council (Graz) 98, 99, 102
human rights education 38, 43
human rights educators 66, 88, 103, 119, 120, 142
human rights framework 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 45, 49, 59, 78, 88, 92, 110, 114, 115, 116, 133,
human rights
human rights framework
(continued) 142, 148
human rights instruments 12
human rights report card
(Korogocho, Kenya) 71
Human Rights Walk (Graz, Austria) 99, 100
Human Rights Council 98, 99, 102
Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) 43
human security 11, 22, 29, 30, 35, 36, 88, 95, 101

I
identity 26, 27, 29, 32, 77, 120, 122, 129, 132, 135
Ikamabana, Jean-Louis Peta 20, 139
Indigenous community (ies) 16, 118, 121. See also Aboriginal people
See also First Peoples
See also Native Americans
Institute for Gender, Law and Development (INSGENAR), Rosario 112, 113, 114
Institut d’Education Populaire (IEP), Kati 90
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 88, 117, 118
International Criminal Court 22
International Year of Human Rights Learning 15, 42
Islamophobia 102

J
Jews (Graz, Austria) 94
John Humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights (JHC) 129

K
Kati. See Mali
Kenya 18, 20, 64, 65, 67, 79
Korogocho Human Rights City 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72
Koenig, Shula 7, 9, 10, 82, 95, 113, 135
Korogocho. See Kenya

L
Legal Resources Center (LCR), Ghana 55, 56, 57, 60, 61, 63, 64
Legal Resources Centre (LRC), Ghana 55
LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) 133, 135
Lichem, Walther 7, 19, 129

M
Mahamar, Mohamed El Moktar 20
Mali 20, 51, 52, 54, 73, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 149
Consensual Human Rights Community (CHRC) 83, 85, 90, 91, 92
Kati 51, 54, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 151
mapping 86
mapping exercise. See mapping Musha Human Rights City 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 151

N

Native Americans 127. See also First Peoples
Nazi (Graz, Austria) 94, 96, 100
Newtown. See Ghana
Nyawira, Rose 20, 72

O

Office of Secretary of Human Rights (Rosario, Argentina) 121
Ombudsman (Rosario, Argentina) 110, 114, 118
orphans 73, 75, 76, 79, 80

P

participatory governance. See governance
participatory methodology (ies) 44
patriarchy 12, 32, 149. See also gender
PDHRE, the Peoples Movement for Human Rights Learning 9, 10, 11, 15, 19, 42, 43, 45, 46, 52, 54, 64, 66, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90, 91, 93, 95, 97, 100, 103, 105, 113, 127, 129, 134, 135, 138, 139, 140
peace 22, 28, 29, 34, 40, 72, 90, 140
People's Movement for Human Rights Education in Rwanda (MPEDH/RWANDA) 73

people with disabilities. See disabilities
Piaget, Jean 43
plan of action 47, 48, 50, 107, 117, 127, 140
Porto Alegre. See Brazil
poverty 8, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 24, 30, 31, 36, 46, 48, 60, 61, 69, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 84, 104, 109, 129, 145, 147. See extreme poverty
See urban poor
prostitutes 53, 115
public space 27, 31, 32, 34, 38, 104, 117

Q

Qom-Toba (in Rosario, Argentina) 109, 114, 121

R

Radio Koch 67, 72. See also Korogocho
Rakovic, Nejra 103
rape 68
Research, Advocacy and Advisory Services (RAAS) in Ghana 55, 56
Rights, Human. See human rights
right to development 40, 148
Rogers, Carl 43
Roma (Bosnia-Herzegovina) 103, 104, 105
Roosevelt, Eleanor 150
Rosario, Argentina 10, 51, 52, 123
Ruzicka 105
Rwanda 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80
Salzburg 26
Samassekou, Adama 82
security 11, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 40, 45, 59, 66, 68, 88, 95, 101, 116, 122, 125, 132. See also human security
sexual violence 78, 80, 110
sex workers 132, 133
slum 17, 18, 24, 25, 64, 81, 118, 145, 148. See also urban poor
social change 14, 18, 39, 45, 82, 102, 143, 149
social development 22, 24, 28, 33, 35, 36
social exclusion 109
social inclusion 18, 19, 96
societal development 27, 28
societal fragmentation 30, 34
South Africa 136
steering committee 12, 47, 49, 54, 57, 85, 86, 98, 105, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 124, 125, 126, 136, 137, 140
sustainable development 22, 36, 40, 46, 64, 149

Tabakovic, Iskra 103
Tibaijuka, Anna Kajumulo 7
Toba 10, 16, 53, 109, 114, 121
training 49, 52, 53, 88, 92, 95, 97, 101, 116
transformative pedagogy 42, 43
Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (Canada) 129, 132

UN-HABITAT 7, 19, 31, 81, 145
UNDP 54, 86
UNESCO 29, 54, 82, 90
UNICEF 54
United Nations 8, 9, 13, 14, 22, 24, 28, 41, 95, 127, 135
Secretary-General of 8
United Nations Global Youth Assembly 135
United States of America 20, 126, 127, 136, 137, 138, 142
Washington, D.C., Human Rights City 30, 138, 141
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 14, 15, 16, 41, 47, 53, 64, 93, 117, 135, 137, 146
urbanization 8, 18, 23, 29, 31, 32
urban governance. See governance
urban poor 17, 18, 19
urban slum. See slum

Vaugeois, Renée 20
violence against children 12, 13, 27, 78, 105
violence against women and girls 53, 68, 69, 70
W

Walewale. See Ghana
Washington, D.C. 30, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142
Washington, D.C., Human Rights City 30, 138, 141
water scarcity 70
Whitehead, Alfred North 43
widowhood rites (Ghana, Kenya) 61, 62, 63
women 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 27, 37, 40, 45, 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 57, 58, 61, 62, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 73, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 85, 87, 89, 97, 103, 105, 107, 110, 112, 113, 116, 118, 119, 122, 124, 131, 132, 142
women’s rights. See gender equality
See violence against women and girls
World Urban Forum 17, 36

Y

Youth Steering Committee (Washington, D.C.) 140

Z

Zimbabwe 18
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Stephen P. Marks is the François-Xavier Bagnoud Professor of Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, where he directs the Program on Human Rights in Development. He also teaches human rights in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. He holds academic degrees from Stanford University, the Universities of Paris, Strasbourg, Besançon and Nice, France, as well as the University of Damascus, Syria. He has also held teaching positions at Columbia University, Princeton University, the University of Phnom Penh Faculty of Law; Cardozo School of Law; the New School for Social Research; Rutgers University School of Law, City University of Hong Kong School of Law and University of Hong Kong Law School. He spent 12 years in the service of the United Nations, working for UNESCO in Paris and in various peacekeeping operations. He is currently chair of the UN High Level Task Force on the Implementation of the Right to Development. His latest publications relate to human reproductive cloning, universal jurisdiction, cultural rights, human rights education, human rights in development, human rights and bioethics, and the war on terrorism. He is a PDHRE Board member.
Kathleen Modrowski is Director of Global Studies at the Global College, Long Island University. She studied in the United States and France where she received an advanced degree in cultural anthropology and ethnology of the Arab world. She carried out fieldwork in Tunisia and France where she focused on sedentarization, circular migration between North Africa and France and the gendered use of space. While in France, she studied photography and documentary film. She was a member of the research unit Geste et Image at the CNRS (the National Center for Scientific Research). Her interest in visual documentation led her to working with communities in Europe and North Africa in participatory filmmaking and photography. In 1987 she joined the faculty of Friends World College, a unique academic program based on an experiential model with a strong social justice curriculum, where she was a professor of cultural anthropology and critical pedagogy. Friends World affiliated with Long Island University in 1991 and subsequently changed its name to the Global College. As Global Studies Director, she developed field-based learning and community service curriculums. She is on the PDHRE Board and is director of its Education Program Committee. Her research includes work on popular human rights education, the right to health and traditional medicine and experiential education.
ABOUT PDHRE

SHULAMITH KOENIG, FOUNDING PRESIDENT

Dear Reader,

The human rights cities are being developed as an “argument” for the imperative of learning about human rights as a way of life at the community level and as relevant to people’s daily lives. Moving from charity to dignity.

We hope you had an inspiring experience going through the pages of this book. You may possibly want to develop a human rights city in your country. We are here to serve. Allow us to tell you who we are and summarize the vision and practical mission of the human rights cities:

Our Mission: PDHRE was founded in 1989 as a non-profit, international service organization with a deep belief in the power of human rights learning for economic and social transformation. PDHRE has worked directly and indirectly with its network of affiliates and partners in over 60 countries around the world to develop and advance the learning about human rights as way of life. It enables women and men to re-imagine their lives and discover their own power to define the destiny of their community. Participating in the planning of their future, the human rights framework provides them with the guideline to pursue their hopes. In pursuing its work in the field, PDHRE is constantly revitalized by actions being taken in the community to create a space for a meaningful change as a result of internalizing the praxis of human rights. Assuming social responsibility, people move away from humiliation to belong in their community in dignity with others.
**Human Rights Cities:** Imagine living in a society where all citizens have made a pledge to build a community based on equality and nondiscrimination; —where all women and men are actively participating in the decisions that affect their daily lives guided by the human rights framework; where people have a holistic vision of human rights to overcome fear and impoverishment, a society that provides human security, access to food, clean water, housing, education, healthcare and work at livable wages, sharing these resources with all citizens—not as a gift, but as a realization of human rights. A Human Rights City is a practical viable model that demonstrates that living in such a society is possible!

We live in a world where a multitude of organizations work to solve the enormous problems humanity is facing one project at the time. PDHRE believing that the holistic, practical human rights framework if known and internalized by women and men at the community level holds the promise for meaningful, positive change. For that purpose PDHRE is facilitating the development of sustainable Human Rights cities around the world. A Human Rights City is where local groups and organizations, those attending to a larger range of social and economic justice issues in the city, join to learn about human rights as relevant to their daily lives. Forming into a Steering Committee they develop learning programs throughout the city, encouraging people to participate in the decision that determine their lives. They develop critical thinking to examine symptoms vs. causes of many issues such as lack of clean water, violence against women, poverty, education, food and employment. These are issues that can be solved if the decisions made by communities are guided by the human rights framework.

PDHRE
People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning
526 West 111th St. Suite 4E,
New York, NY 10025, USA
Tel: 1-212-749-3156  Fax 1-212-666-6325
E mail: pdhre@igc.org
Award winning Website: www.pdhre.org