

Citizenship and the eradication of poverty

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It is a great honour to have the opportunity to address this largely Latin America audience on a subject as human and social development. I am not an inner circle expert in global human and social development. My first interest has been much more nationally and European oriented, more in particular on social work and local social politics to improve and empower communities. For about six years I have been a committed ICSW member and for two years I have been the president of the European region. ICSW represents civil society in its fight for social justice and social quality.

In my speech I will reflect on the stagnation of global human and social development, starting with some facts and figures and some causes of stagnation. From there I will try to give an overview of the transformation process of socio-economic politics in the Western world but disseminated all over the world. The third part of my lecture will deal with the debate on socio-cultural differences, looking for a common ground in the idea of citizenship and community development.

The world of words and intentions

The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in 2000, called upon Governments to put poverty eradication at the centre of economic and social development and to build consensus with all relevant actors on policies and strategies to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by 2015 (UN 2000). This statement is in line with a number of preceding major United Nations conferences and summits, e.g. the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (ICSW 1995).

Extreme Poverty has been defined by the World Bank as living on \$ 1, - a day or less. In 2000 1.3 billion people were believed to live in extreme poverty. As a matter of fact we are lacking accurate data and reliable monitors to be very precise in determining the numbers (ICSW 2006a). What seems to be important is the fact that nearly all nations have agreed on halving extreme poverty. The ultimate goal has been defined in the UN Millennium Declaration as follows: 'Global changes must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice' (UN 2000) or even more pronounced 'We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want' (UN 2000). The words and intentions in the global social development discourse are impressive. But what are so far the results of those intentions and agreements?

Poor Results

According to the Report of the UN Secretary-General some results have been achieved after ten years eradication of poverty (UN 2006a). Between 1990 and 2001 the proportion of people living in extreme poverty declined from 27.9 to 21.3 per cent. This sharp decline, however, is mainly due to the economic achievements of China and hardly related to the global strategies. China is a country with enormous human and financial resources but for decades underused by the communist system but 'opened' by the new leadership of this country. On the other hand, extreme poverty increased in a number of old Soviet states and the Black Sea Area, as well as in some African states and no progress has been booked in South America and the Middle East. Still, about 40% of the world population has an income below \$ 2, - a day. Life expectancy in developing countries has risen by two years all over the world. But in the Russian Federation the life expectancy of men had dropped from 70 years in the mid-1980s to 59 years today, even lower than India (ICSW 2005). As the UNDP 2005 Human Development Report reports: 'On average, people born in a developing country today can anticipate being wealthier, healthier and better educated than their parents' generation.' (UNDP 2005). Progress is only booked in some parts of the world (China, East Asia). The overall figures about poverty, child mortality – 10 million children die before their fifth birthday - HIV/AIDS (3 million died from the virus), hunger and conflicts (estimated 4 million people killed in Congo in the last few years) are still dramatically Most distressing is the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor countries and the gap between the rich and the poor within the countries is widening from year to year (Mkandawire 2005). It has been calculated that about 80 billion US dollars annually would suffice to give all of humanity access to basic education, health services and water. This amount is four times less than what countries of the South pay the North each year to service their debts (Pelizzari 2005). It is quite painful to realize the impact of those figures.

Causes of stagnation

The outcome of the first decade of poverty eradication is meagre; the efforts made by the wealthy States have hardly expanded the decade. Nearly 50% of Western aid for developing countries has been spent on consultants from Western companies and NGOs. USA aid has spent over 70% on American consultants (ActionAid 2006). In other words, Western companies and NGOs and their countries profited highly by the aid. A sharp contrast exists between the language of intentions and conventions and the reality. In the social domain is a strong tradition of keeping up appearances, of great words and promises. In the socio-economic reality we definitely find another world. This masking social language is one of the problems in global politics. Conflicts of interest are masked behind impressive objectives. The lack of will to share welfare and profits is hidden behind the ideology of privatisation and the great words about empowering civil society. It would be helpful if in international discourses the real interests and the real drives were more explicitly discussed and confronted. If not, the problem of poverty eradication will be mainly perceived as a problem of mismanagement, a lack of international coordination and even incompetence of the poor and the poor countries. Social and aid agencies will be blamed for their impotence to implement the goals. The social sector becomes the sector of failures and soft politics and is discouraging its volunteers and professionals. *There's no question about it – this is a very stressful area to work in. I don't think you realize until the end of the day how much it does take out of you. Mainly because it's things you can't control.... I can't control the employment situation, I can't control the cultural pressures that are on young Asian women, I can't do much about it.*

Yet where else can they go? They tell me these things, they give me the problem and I can't solve it. And here's me, brought up and trained to be someone who finds solutions to problems and I can't. Yet most of my satisfaction comes from solving a problem.... (East 2002). According to this grass roots worker somewhere in India, you cannot solve problems if there is a lack of will and a lack of financial resources. For that reason, we should not focus too much on mismanagement only but discuss again and again the political will and the investments needed. Nevertheless, of course we find a range of dubious projects and strategies. The above mentioned 50% investment in Western consultants in Aid programs is one of them. Everyone who goes through the huge list of publications on Aid finds a lot of evidence about a lack of coordination, too many targeted projects for too short time and not embedded in broader programs, the problem of good governance or even worse. Many agencies and states operating in this field are for all interested in their own profile, their own programs, and their own communication.

The great transformation

Since about two decades the Western world is obsessed by the transformation of the Welfare State, often referred to as neo-liberal politics, globalisation and new management strategies. However, as a matter of fact it is a transformation supported by nearly all political mainstreams in the Western world and the international agencies. There is a strong common believe in a number of necessary shifts in socio-economic strategies. Those strategies together can be seen as an impressive social innovation and maybe essential for the further development of Western States. At the same time those strategies can be disastrous for the poor, the developing states and the transition states, in particularly if they are carried out too drastically and too unbalanced. I will now outline the six basic innovations or shifts.

1. From State to Market. The WTO, GATTs, EU, World Bank and IMF fully agree with the shift from state to market, including the privatisation of public services into private services. The last decade social services – including aid services as well – are more pressed to move to the market. In care we find international multinationals and big national industries delivering all kind of care services. Many states are open for tendering for social projects and programs, equally accessible for profit and not for profit. It is a process of economizing the social sector or as Bob Deacon quoted 'Health for all becomes health markets for all' (Deacon 2000). The effects of economizing the social sector are hardly known and hardly investigated. In my feeling the most essential threat is the change of character of the social domain itself. Social relationships and social justice are in this shift interpreted as self interest or as Thatcher said 'there is not such a thing as community'. To believe that social commitment and social justice are mere results of self interests and should be organised by competing market principles is a dramatic misunderstand. Maybe even more dramatic as promoting individualism as collecting private goods to buy in the market. A dramatic direct consequence of privatization is the worsening of the living conditions of the very poor. The UNDP estimates that in parts of Africa the rate of basic education dropped from 79% to 67% and infant mortality increased with 54% between 1980 and 2004 (Pelizzari 2005).

2. From State to Civil Society. According to a range of politicians the State has made too many people dependent on the State, in particularly on social assistance, development aid and social services. All over the world we find a new belief in the power of civil society (Putnam 1993, Etzioni 2001). 'The hands and heads' needed to deal with social problems, with the delivery of care and to support communities should be mainly the hands and heads of the citizens. The State is no longer – or has never been – able to take this responsibility, it is said.

The participative society is a promising one indeed but between the participative society and offering responsibility without resources and power is a thin line. 'Dumping the consequences of the movement of capital on the communities that suffer them is no solution to social, economic and political exclusion' (Craig 2000). The ever willing civil society is a naïve society if it is not discussing the conditions for the empowerment of communities (Craig 2000).

3. From State to the local level. A third transformation is the shift of responsibility from the state to the local municipality. The responsibility for the living and working conditions of its citizens are gradually moving from state to market, from state to civil society and from state to the local authorities. It asks for a new interplay between those actors and if not regulated in the right way we will find an unbalanced power system of rather weak local authorities – in particularly in rural areas – and strong, nearly monopolising, agencies in social services along with a highly fragmented civil society. We need an intelligent multi level approach, adapted to the national, regional and local context and municipalities with adequate financial, human and social resources but that is hardly the case in most developing countries and is frustrating the grass root workers so much.

4. From welfare to workfare. Starting from neo-liberalists but adopted by Third Way social democrats as well, the shift from welfare policies to workfare policies are too find all over the world. Instead on focusing on social assistance and income provisions, all the energy should be focused on getting people into the labour market. The number of people in the labour market seems to be one of the most reliable indicators for a growing economy and level of welfare. Nevertheless, there are two basic problems to deal with. The first one is the lack of labour in many regions in our world. It is quite unfair to relate social assistance to labour acceptance if there is no labour at all. The second problem is that we have to recognise that in each country and each city or village are people who need permanent support because they are too vulnerable to cope with live without this support in income and social services.

5. From a balanced growth to economic growth. In 2000 the European Union based its innovative strategy on three pillars: economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. In particular, the knowledge economy should be the motor of economic growth. A revision of the so called Lisbon Strategy in 2005 stressed however the fact that the EU was too ambitious and should focus on economic growth (EC 2004). Social objectives, like social cohesion, would be the outcome of economic growth. In Europe we have a history of two centuries of economic growth, but I do not believe that our citizens are feeling themselves more comfortable in our world. People are maybe even more strangers in our societies. We have problems with too much individualism, hardening relationships between ethnic groups, inadequate behaviour of many citizens, a growing mistrust in politicians and an increasing divide between the haves and have-nots. The emphasis on work, work, work, learning, learning and on economic growth are neglecting highly needed productive capacities of civil society in care, social education, leisure time, mutual support and empowerment. Stressing economic growth only is discouraging citizenship and civil society. In the EU the European social model based on a balance between economic and social objectives is at stake (ICSW 2006b), as is the case on the global level as well.

6. From universal to contextual. In the rather sophisticated western social systems a certain need to move from universal approaches too more contextual ones is recognisable. Too some extent poverty is not merely an outcome of exclusion by economic mechanisms. It is also partly due to the lack of competencies and a supportive environment of the poor. Instead of

universal regulations, we need to empower and support the poor to escape their situation. However, in the old welfare states we find still a rather strong universal system in re-allocation of incomes, universal access to education, health and social services. Contextual strategies can be very effective if based on basic universal systems. In Eastern European states as in many countries all over the world, a too early shift to contextual strategies, without establishing a reliable universal basic system is a highly risk taking strategy. As a matter of fact a great number of studies are very critical about effectiveness of targeting policies (Mkandawire 2005, 2006). Let me summarize some of the major objections:

1. Targeting creates formidable administrative hurdles because of tendering procedures, monitoring, accountability prescriptions for each separate target and project.
2. Targeting is by definition selective and for that reason missing the unselected.
3. Targeting is a short term policy and not apt for long term processes of implementation and embedding.
4. Targeting is humiliating and stigmatizing. Targeting strategies are mainly based on analysing the context of the poor, leaving out the context and behaviour of the rich and powerful people and countries. The causes of poverty are mainly sought into shortcomings of local communities, developing countries and the poor.
5. Targeting policies ask for 'sophisticated administrative approaches' (Mkandawire 2005) and they definitely are missing in the developing countries. It is targeting in the blind and by that ineffective.
6. The targeting industry creates targeting behaviour among the authorities and the tendering NGO's and private companies. A new world of scoring projects and glamorous presentations and trendy consultants has been established. A new language of output steering, quality standards, choice, efficiency, accountability, transparency, monitoring, measuring suggests that everything is under control and effective.
7. There is a tendency in targeting policies to target the poor directly and not to the communities and regions. By that the targets are maybe feasible but probably not endurable by lack of supportive community and regional strategies.
8. The effect of targeting policies is a piecemeal approach which largely failed in urban policies in the US and Europe because a set of projects or programs cannot create enough mass and sustainability (Castells 1999).

Mkandawire refers to a remarkable conflicting approach in the economic area and the social domain. In economic politics targeting is not done and seen as disturbing the level playing field. In socio-economic politics targeting is the medicine for nearly all problems, in particularly for the eradication of poverty (Mkandawire 2005).

The great transformation or social innovation is impressive and in some respects promising. In the old welfare states it affects a new dynamic in economic and social areas. It has no use to deny this transformation. However, in relation to poverty eradication, social justice and the different phases different regions in the world are in, we need more sophisticated, balanced and contextual strategies. It is very important that the big players in this transformation process acknowledge that this complex social innovation is full of uncertainties and uncertain outcomes and open for revision. It is up to us, to civil society and the social committed actors, to fight for adjustments, more balanced strategies and for much more attention for the effects on the poor. Let me quote Kumi Naidoo, the leader of Civicus, *If humanity could judge itself not on the basis of the success of those that are successful and powerful but on the performance and the place of those that are most vulnerable..*' (World Bank 2003). We do need an open debate on the transformation strategies, their interdependency and consequences but let us be aware of the limits of what is acceptable in a fair debate. Under that condition we should agree with Kofi Anan stressing the need for this debate but avoiding mutual

recrimination between conservative and progressive global movements. The situation is too serious for that (Beurden 2002).

Active citizenship: a common ground?

The great transformation in socio-economic policies causes a lot of uncertainties, in particular regarding its effects on the developing powers of states and communities. Behind and related to the debate on the big changes in social-economic politics we find maybe even a fiercer debate on the values of the global society and globalisation. It is short sighted to restrain global reform debates to the economic and socio-economic strategies. Too some extent the socio-economic debate is even overshadowed by a socio-cultural debate, in Huntington words 'the class of civilisations' (Huntington 1997). In particular after the 11th of September the Western world has developed a great feeling of uneasiness with the Western dominance all over the world, not only in the field of military and economic power but also in the world of values and rights. For sustainable global reforms an intense debate on a common ground in values is quite often the forgotten chapter or forgotten key to better cooperation.

In the western context active citizenship can be seen as a common ground for a value shared framework for social and democratic politics. The model in its application is too much based on prioritizing individualistic elements but basically it has the potential power to be shared even on the global level. Active citizenship is based on three principles:

1. The principle of self responsibility. This principle, rather popular among modern politicians, is based on the idea that people should take care of their own living and working conditions. People are held fully responsible for their own behaviour. They have to fulfil their duties and to behave as responsible citizens. It is not a plea for unbridled individualism but for a conditional individualism, based on human values as dignity, decency and responsibility. However this principle of self responsibility is based on the assumption that people have resources to meet this self responsibility. For that reason this first principle is fully interdependent with the two other principles.

2. The principle of human and social rights. In a number of declarations and conventions human and social rights are endorsed by nearly all states in the world. The social rights refer mainly to the right on access to education, labour, housing, health and a healthy environment and social protection. In the global rights debate we find a growing opposition to the so called 'elitist rights discourse' (Ife, Fiske 2006), seen and felt as a new colonisation strategy of the Western world. At least four objections are made to the 'rights approach'. Firstly, the rights are often claimed and interpreted as personal legal rights to the state. It makes rights to a process of juridicalization and individualization. Secondly, in particular the social rights need to be balanced by clear definition of responsibilities. Social rights are hardly to effect on an individualistic basis if accessible education, health, housing, social protection and labour market system (the big 5) are missing. If not, existing social rights have no ground. Or in other words, if we really are committed to social rights, we need an international solidarity to implement those 'big 5' in the developing countries. Thirdly, we should interpret and implement human and social rights as common goods based on communities and states who are committed to their citizens. It is not in the first place about legal rights but for all it appeals to social commitment and social based policies (Ife, Fiske 2006). Fourthly, the current definitions of rights are too much based on Western values. In particular values based on religion, on spirituality and on communities (families, local communities, and religious communities) are left out of the declarations and conventions (Canda 1998, Erasmus 2000). The question is if social and human rights are adjusted to those critics, are they acceptable all

over the world? Can we find a common ground on this balance concept of citizenship? Or is there still a great divide in values and rights about equality and freedom?

3. The principle of social responsibility. Social responsibility refers to be responsible for the community, for the people around you, for caring and supporting, for social justice. In the Western world this is the least developed principle. In the last two centuries Western societies were very strong in liberty and equality. The ages of emancipation and progress were mainly related to this thriving power of autonomy and equal opportunities. The forgotten issue was the 'fraternity', the commitment to the community, the social dimension in life.

Many developing countries have a long and strong tradition in social responsibility and sometimes less in liberty and equality. This century, our century should become the age of commitment, finding the balance between the three pillars for social and human development. Human kind is always based on the idea of a person in relationship. Along with the socio-economic debate we need this debate on values and citizenship. For human and social development we can not exclude debates on meaning, spirituality, values, dignity and social justice. We need a common ground and certain direction of socio-economic developments based on a shared overall concept of citizenship or humanity.

Community development

I have pledged for a critical evaluation and constructive debate on the great transformation process and the conditions needed to implement this social innovation. Secondly, I emphasized the need for a fair and open debate on active citizenship, in adjusting the rights debate and to be open about the basic values we really should share, this balance between self responsibility, social responsibility and social rights.

Answering the critical analysis of targeting approaches, I am most convinced by human and social development based on strengthening local communities and regions and states. A mere universal approach is too abstract and maybe even too ambitious. It is blaming the poorest countries for a lack of education, health, protection, labour and housing provisions that are not their fault. A targeting selective strategy seems chanceless if communities, regions and states are not empowered and supported in getting the resources they need. The three essential resources are human capital, financial capital and social capital. Human capital is mainly based on education and skills. Financial capital is needed to have a chance in the level playing field of the economic market and social capital is needed to build communities and states. Social capital is the trust in a society, trust in civil society, trust in leaders and authorities, trust in the market. It is based on a common history, a common culture and openness for change and improvement. In particular in social capital civil society plays a key role. Citizens are powerful as we have seen lately in a number of East European States and in South America states as well. Citizen movements have succeeded in ending dictatorship, in enforcing remarkable changes in policies and in strengthening communities and societies. I am impressed by practices and analyses of processes of establishing mutual trust, in recognition that different actors could create social development environments by working together and to overcome stigmatized images and narrow perspectives. In the North South dialogue the dialogue was so often failing because the North was providing and the South receiving. The quality of the North South dialogue should be improved to a cooperative system of mutual learning, mutual developing, and mutual changing conditions on both sides. You can't develop if the problem and development is determined by one of the partners. Social development is by its very definition a mutual process, a person-in-relationship process or a North-South relationship process (Nimako 2002).

Putting community development first we should strengthen the processes of up scaling and out scaling (Craig 2000). Out scaling refers to a gradual expansion of concentration on a specific activity to a community involvement to the whole process of economic and social development. You can't expect poor and deprived areas to jump at once into a complex holistic development process. But you can start with a certain action in creating a stronger environment and from there to scaling out to a range of actions and from there to an integrated community approach (Craig 2000). Maybe sometimes starting with targeting but from there to programming and to an overall community strategy with universal approaches to develop. Up scaling is the other strategy needed and means the link between the community activities and the regional and national ones. An isolated grass roots worker or an isolated community does not have a big chance to afford sustainable human and social development. The community development asks for a similar out scaling process on the regional level, supported by the state as well. As said and written so often before we need multilevel and multi-actors approaches in the perspective of out scaling and up scaling strategies.

ICSW

The International Council on Social Welfare is not a single issue organisation. We are involved right across the socio-economic and socio-cultural domain and debate. We are aiming at a fair, open and constructive debate on overall strategies and concrete practices. ICSW is not trying to blame specific actors as states, international agencies, business or civil society. In particular we are fully aware of the risks of blaming the poor and blaming the developing countries. The debate is much more on comprehensive and multi-actor strategies and of course ICSW has a specific responsibility in involving civil society, believing in its power to create a supportive environment for human and social development. For that reason I will conclude by emphasizing five principles or strategies which are essential in my opinion and fit in the global and European ICSW programs.

1. To invest in and to improve the North South dialogue. For this goal we are supported by the Finnish and Swedish ministries of foreign affairs and we have got a lot of support from NGO's in Africa countries. In particularly we will try to get a dialogue creating a shared knowledge and innovation from both sides.
2. To support the European Social model as a value based approach. We believe that the idea of a Social Europe is different and has to be different from the US social model. Europe should be more pronounced in its own profile and its own belief in establishing social justice within the European Union and on the global level.
3. ICSW has a specific task in giving voice to strengthening civil society, in particular the expertise of grass roots workers and other social experts. They have a lot of knowledge and experience in recognizing and analyzing social problems and social powers and in implementing socio-economic strategies. This expertise is not enough voiced and heard in the political processes. We are missing a more participative policy making, as it is happening these days at this conference.
4. ICSW promotes citizenship based on social responsibility and social rights and on a great belief in the power of people to cope with their own living- and working conditions, provided that basic resources including human, financial and social capital are available and able to be developed.

5. ICSW wants to promote social welfare as a challenging, inspiring, promising and strong domain. The social domain is not a distressful, problematic “no-go” area. On the contrary, it is an exciting world to discover. It is the world of human behaviour and human relationships, the essential background and destiny of the human kind. We need economists, a market, new transformations in the socio-economic domain to strengthen and to support the social and human development and not the other way round.

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