



Editorial

In partnership with children

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The turn of the century invites dreams for a better future. Consequently we start out this first issue of the new millennium with themes that are based on our shared dreams for the future. The four themes we have chosen to explore – the hope that resides in our children (43.1), the commitment to end poverty (43.2), the momentum of people's movements for peace (43.3) and the groundwork of civil society towards social justice (43.4) – all contain the seeds for activities to end poverty, celebrate peace and establish social justice in the 21st century.

In choosing to start with children we go to the heart of our dream for a better future. We see the true implications of negative development when we listen to children voicing their pleas for peace in the midst of today's economic and social poverty and violence that damage their lives, physically and psychologically. In looking at life through children's eyes we are forced to take in the implications of poverty, of conflict and of the failure to achieve social justice. In this sense 43.1 sets the scene for the *Development* issues that follow. The second issue of the year (43.2) sets out the commitments and challenges that the five-year review of the Social Summit has to end poverty and to achieve sustainable development. The issue calls for a strong United Nations system that can respond to globalization in partnership with NGOs. The issue focuses on the long-standing theme of *Development* – the political need for an institutional response to globalization – with even greater urgency given the growing influence of the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the IMF in traditional development agendas. With guest editor Yehudah Paz, 43.3 examines how people's organizations are responding to the crises and wars erupting at the end of this century. The entry point in this difficult terrain will be to chart how people's groups work for peace, often across the very divides on which wars are being fought. The issue will map out people's peace movements around the world in order to highlight aspects of war and conflict often not discussed in the media. To conclude this last volume of the millennium we delve into the world of civil

society in practice – how civil society groups are operating politically and institutionally in new and innovative ways that are moving communities closer to social justice. The issue will be a chance for SID programmes and partners to reflect on the success (and failures) of their strategies. Throughout the volume, *Development* will carry articles on food security with the aim to bring out the political as well as economic reasons for why so many people still do not enjoy the basic right to nutrition.

Development 43.1, 'A Children's Agenda for a New Millennium', has been crafted by many contributors: children themselves, and those in the UN and NGO world who have devoted their lives to protecting and promoting children's needs and, above all, listening to children. In celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), many of the articles emphasize the rights of children to have a direct say in their lives, particularly when they are facing the consequences of brutal social breakdown through war, economic crisis and basic deprivation. The courage of the children in Colombia and the former Republics of Yugoslavia to challenge adults to resolve differences and find peace shines out, as does the almost revolutionary work of organizations such as UNICEF to put into practice child rights.

Along with statements of the children interviewed and quoted, we have for the first time in *Development* printed drawings and photographs to bring home the stark reality of these children and to share with readers their vision of peace and hope.

The articles by the adults devoted to children's rights and lives equally force us to stop and think about how we are treating children and how development practice has to take children's needs into account. What does it mean to give children political space? How do we listen to them and respect their rights and identity? How should our behaviour with very young children change? With

adolescents? With girls and with boys? How should schools respond to changing needs? What new types of institutions can give the security, the love and respect children need for a healthy future? These questions are tackled from examples of what has worked, and from the far-seeing vision the CRC contains.

We find some of the traditional concerns of *Development* rehearsed here: the need to avoid the imposition of inappropriate northern assumptions on other cultural contexts; the contradictions of promises of a better life when the macro-economic environment and social violence prevent even the basic rights of clean water, shelter and food security; the helplessness of vision when the current reality seems so bleak. The myriad of situations covered by the articles show that there can be solutions, but only when the depth of the problem is faced and new approaches free from traditional aid and short term stopgaps are found. As with the effort to make women's needs visible – not as objects of pity but as subjects for change – it is clear that approaching children from a rights perspective forces us to rethink children as subjects of their own development. It is this innovative approach that encompasses psychological, social and cultural concerns as well as economic and political needs that proves the most exciting message of the issue.

The children featured here are the ones on whom we are basing our dreams. It is they who will deliver to their own children our hopes for a fairer world. We will only be able to prepare the ground for them to build that future if we take on the demands of children's rights unsentimentally. The Convention demands that we put into practice a very different type of development right from the start. What these articles make clear is that it is our collective responsibility as adults to work in partnership with children towards finding equity, peace and social justice in the next, their, millennium.