



# Magazine

Indaba-Network Monthly Newsletter

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## Human Rights

This third issue of Indaba-Magazine is focused on Human Rights. The editorial and the main article have been written by Melissa Martins Casagrande and Biorn Maybury-Lewis, who are researchers and members of Indaba-Network.. Biorn's work focuses on social movements of indigenous peoples and rural workers and Melissa specializes in human rights and legal pluralism. They give us some ideas on what we can do when peoples' rights are threatened. **Page 1, 3 and 4**

## Youth Against Mafia



The power of Mafia is based on intimidation and fear. If people dare to resist, the power of Mafia is falling down. Jacopo, an Italian Scout leader tells us the story of the Scout group from Vittoria in Sicily, which stood for their rights against a "godfather". This story shows how young people can make a difference and prepare a better future. **Page 2**

## With Refugee Youth in Eastern Chad



In Eastern Chad, 250.000 refugees from Darfur try to survive with the support of the UNHCR. A Swiss NGO - The Refugee Education Trust - develops educational programmes for young people in refugee camps. Dominique Bénard was involved in providing young people with business skills to respond to their community's needs. **Pages 5 and 6**

## Human Rights: the common sense of Humanity

By Melissa Martins Casagrande



The journey of humanity is punctuated by inventions, co-operations and resistance initiatives as unique and at the same time as similar as human experience can be. Certain books, movies and songs are timeless and universal. No matter who we ask, some stories and protagonists are always mentioned. They are classics! Different opinions about what makes them classics might come up but every time a person hears a song or reads a book that is considered a classic they will associate it with a personal experience or something that hits 'close to home' - regardless of where they are from and what their life story might be.

The scope and value of human rights cannot be compared to books, movies or songs but they are very much alike if we consider the impact they have on every person and their everyday lives. Human rights are the 'common sense' of humanity and shared efforts have been made throughout history to write down what rights are inherent to all humanity and should be respected by everyone, everywhere. There is much debate over human rights' universality and the lack of compliance with the standards established in international declarations. The strength of human rights, however, resides in their *glocality*.

Human rights are usually recognized as law by international organizations or national governments. Their applicability, however, can only be enjoyed and respected locally, even if facilitated by global efforts. Human rights are proclaimed in general terms, so that every local community might interpret them according to their reality and the needs and uniqueness of every person might be acknowledged within them. That's why in some ways human

rights are just like classic books, movies or songs. They are transmitted as the same text, image or melody to everybody but everyone is reminded of something very unique and personal when reading, watching or listening to them.

The same thing happens when different people read and interpret human rights. They can be associated with the most diverse experiences and situations that each person or community faces. Everyone, as a person or a group, has different understandings of what human rights are and what they represent. This also brings different approaches to address the lack of compliance with human rights standards, be it resisting intimidation; seeking and spreading information about human rights violations; and many other creative ways to make our local communities and ultimately the world, a fairer place to live.

# Youth Against Mafia

By Jacopo M. Rovarini



Scout demonstration against Mafia, Vittoria, Sicily

## A Scout Base in Sicily

At first, it does not seem anything special. Just a piece of land in Carnazza, a contrada of the Sicilian countryside. However, it does have a meaning now, thanks to its being a small victory of state and civic spirit over illegality. For the time being, it's only an expanse of brushwood with a couple of old blocks in bad conditions. Very soon, they promise we will witness the realisation of one "of the most beautiful scout bases in Sicily". The subjects are scouts, common scouts as most of you readers are. Reporting the episode, they avoid the emphatic tones of the anti-mafia rhetoric, even though their example is a great and rare lesson of public spirit. So unusual that the director of the commissary's office of Vittoria (Ragusa), sadly drew a comparison: *"If there had been some entrepreneurs instead of a group of scouts there, they would have run away after the visit of the member of the Mafia"*.

## Go Away! leave my House

How comes the Mafia? Well, the base will be built upon a confiscated land, which the municipality has decided to earmark to the local scout group. On the very day this property was about to be entrusted to the scouts, last may, someone tried to alt this important step: the former landlord, Gaetano D'Agosta,

son of a prominent boss emerged within the local clan, "Mammasantissimas." *"Go away! Leave my house – he threatened the scouts – otherwise I will make you pay for it!"*. In addition to this, he blocked the access from the main entrance, to make clear how serious he was, adding that he would retaliate unless they immediately stepped out "his" property.

## Resisting to intimidation

Despite some hesitation (justified...after decades of criminal control over the society, you at least hesitate!), the scouts, their chiefs and their families, plus some local authorities, went on with the ceremony. Within few hours they reported the intimidation to the police: some days later D'Agosta got arrested, accused of attempting extortion. *"We are not and do not want to be heroes"*, reminds Silvana Mangione, chief of Agesci group "Vittoria 1". At the same time she confirms: *"We won't give up the realization of the base, the related works will be started at the beginning of the fall"*. In short, in a region where extortions are a matter of everyday life, these scouts have proved that no intimidation could hamper their project.

They already feel that confiscated land as theirs. Nevertheless, *"[...] the phenomenon has still to be defeated"* – states the attorney of Ragusa, Carmelo Petralia. Against many entrepreneurs who neither file nor denounce the payment of "pizzo" (an illegal "security tax" imposed by the Mafia on most of the commercial activities present on its territory, on which she partially lives on), these scouts have given a clear and immediate answer in order to reaffirm the value of legality». A virtue the scout group "Vittoria 1" has been dealing with for long: *"With the youth, explains Silvana Mangione, we initiated a constructive debate around legality. We teach that abiding by the law makes us free"*.

## Support and solidarity

Support and solidarity have been reaching Vittoria from many, all around

Italy. *"We are planning, says the national president of Agesci, Alberto Fantuzzo, to gather in Vittoria some specific camps where, beyond traditional activities, the issue of legality could be further developed. As educators we do not believe in a single day big event, which will be forgotten soon. Instead, we aim at educating in everyday life"*.

Besides this informal declaration, the National Committee of Agesci issued an official announcement concerning the episode:

*"We desire to express our full solidarity to Agesci group "Vittoria 1" for the intimidation they have faced. [...] The whole Association is really proud of this project and of the people managing it and reaffirms that legality is one of our highest and most important values. Working at the service of youth and families (i.e. the future of our country), we are committed to turn fortunes built on violence and prevarication into places of public utility and growth, where to positive values are experienced. We are grateful for the trust showed by state institutions, which strengthens our efforts in educating young people, especially against Mafia-like behaviours and any type of criminality."*

Anyway, this kind of demonstration is nothing new for Scouting on this troubled island. Again in Sicily, Agesci runs a base held on another confiscated land: *"Volte astuta,"* Fondo Micciulla - Palermo, which periodically becomes the target for organized crime. This resolute attitude is absolutely coherent with the fact to be Scouts and Citizens of the World, and regarding the Mafia, it is exactly what you would expect from one of the major and most active members of the prominent nationwide network "Libera", in which Agesci has been present for years.

We should admit that the road is still long, but, thanks also to these scouts (sentinels who keep their eyes open!), there's definitely room for optimism!

# Human Rights Work: Big Gestures, Small Gestures

By Biorn Maybury-Lewis and Melissa Martins Casagrande



*Anthropologist Bob Bailey studies the Efe, Ituri Forest, Congo*



*Efe man grinds up ingredients for arrow poison*



*Efe camp - Ituri*

## Human Rights Abuse

Most of us follow the news, in its many forms, to learn about what is going on in the world. Daily, we hear of people getting hurt or in trouble. We all know that “human rights” are a major issue and that many are suffering from “human rights abuses”. But it is very easy to get turned off, especially if one is young and trying to get on with one’s own life. The avalanche of news is easily overwhelming, and the tendency is to sigh and turn the page or continue web surfing.

Yet there is much that we can do about the world in which we live. Most important is to first learn. Then, small gestures and modest effort—sometimes individual, sometimes in groups—can make a very big difference

If, for example, you might be somewhat curious about a people struggling for their rights who live on another continent, it is helpful to look them up on the net, get an idea of their history and why they are in a struggle, and then learn what organizations are involved with helping them. Computer savvy people can do this very, very quickly!

## What can we do?

But the problem remains: what can you or I do about a drastic situation facing an often faraway people? Once one has read an introduction to their situation and why they are vulnerable, one can contact organizations via the internet who are working with them and learn more. Then, one can ask those organizations how one might help, either individually or in a group. Such organizations might ask for a contribution! But usually it is not money that helps the most but your

support for the cause of making a certain human rights situation better.

As concerned people inform themselves about a given case, or set of related cases, they might eventually go on to find themselves careers in work related to human rights as lawyers, campaigners, journalists, publicists, web designers, photographers, documentary film makers, professors, politicians, or professionals in development organizations. But whatever we decide to do with our precious time on this planet, the first step is to inform ourselves and think about what we can do.

## An example: the ‘Pygmies’ of Central Africa

Let’s turn to one important case from Africa: the ‘Pygmies’.

The forest foragers of equatorial Central Africa, known sometimes negatively, sometimes without malice, as ‘Pygmies’, are among the world’s indigenous peoples facing the most serious threats to their way of life. Given their vulnerability, if, in the coming years, citizens like us as well as development agencies, international organizations, national governments of Central Africa, and the African community do not do something to help them, they will likely disappear as a distinct kind of human society—as other indigenous peoples have disappeared before them all over the world: a tragedy for them as well as all mankind.

The indigenous peoples of equatorial Central Africa have historically been (and many remain) forager hunter-gatherers, the men hunting with bows and arrows and finding honey, the women gathering forest roots, berries,

and plants. They are largely distinct from their Bantu farming neighbors. They are famous for their short physical stature. They live across equatorial Africa in the countries of Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, with an estimated population between 300,000 and 500,000.

‘Pygmies’ are known for their gentle ways and their remarkable knowledge of the forest. They know about every plant in their territories. They can tell you which one is helpful to heal illness and improve health. They understand the habits of forest creatures from generations of experience hunting and gathering. Their music is world famous. They have complex cultures that are not as competitive as Western cultures. Their societies have no chiefs, bureaucracies, or hierarchies! They are egalitarian. They have organized themselves to maximize cooperation, sharing, and mutual help in order to survive, together, in their dense, challenging forest homeland. Their attitude to one another is a lesson for us all.

## Victims of Development

Yet Central Africa’s ‘Pygmies’ are in crisis. Farms are spreading into their hunting and gathering territories, scaring away or killing game and cutting down the trees. Lumber companies are dramatically pushing this process further. Development projects (dams, electrification, roads) are often built without considering their way of life. ‘Pygmies’ then become the victims of development without benefiting from it, the gains going to farmer communities and large



*Efe mothers, children grooming, nursing - Ituri*

companies operating in their territories. In extreme cases such as in Rwanda, 'Pygmies' have lost almost all of their hunting and gathering lands and ways of making a living and have been reduced to begging.

Making this situation worse is that in eastern Central Africa—especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and southwestern Uganda—some of the world's worst civil wars are smouldering. The 'Pygmies' have been right in the middle of this conflict for almost twenty years, suffering disproportionately.

### Not Organised to Deal with Outsiders

What makes the situation for the 'Pygmies' so difficult is that they are not organized to deal with outsiders who have leaders, bureaucracies, and, sometimes, armies. Their lives depend on the disappearing forest. And everywhere in Central Africa they endure acute levels of discrimination. Neighboring farming societies simply do not respect the 'Pygmies' and their ways. 'Pygmy' groups in the Republic of Congo, for example, have suffered truly extraordinary patterns of discrimination.

From the 'outside' of 'Pygmy' societies, then, discriminatory attitudes along with the expansion of farming, mining, timber extraction, road-building, and warfare are ruining the 'Pygmies' prospects for survival. Meanwhile, their gentle, egalitarian ways—ways of

being that are a lesson us on the outside—are tragically making it a special challenge for the 'Pygmies' to organize themselves, knit their communities together, and struggle for survival. Even where the 'Pygmies' have been most able to resist these internal and external challenges (in parts of the western Central Africa), they have had to profoundly change their way of life to adapt to imposed change from outside.

All of us, regardless of our place of birth or residence, are entitled to certain rights that should be respected by anyone, anywhere. These are known as human rights because they are shared and should be enjoyed by all human beings. They are inherent to all humanity and the rights to life, liberty and dignity form the core of this universal protection. Over time, other rights have been added to the human rights system because they provide fundamental guarantees for people to live with dignity.

### Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Some human rights might not be enjoyed by all humanity but they are intended to ensure that all human beings live with dignity; for example, indigenous peoples' rights. Other rights have entered the system, after great abuses occurred to make sure that they do not happen again; for example, the right not to suffer torture as well as cruel or degrading treatment.

Some human rights are enjoyed individually, others, can only be fulfilled collectively. Peoples like the 'Pygmies' are socio-ethnically distinct from the dominant societies in the countries where they live. They are entitled to specific human rights because their life and dignity as individuals and as collectivities are deeply interconnected with the practice and continuous revitalization of their traditions; legal, social, economic, cultural and political institutions; and, their way of life.

The sad reality is that human rights are not enjoyed by all – and to make matters worse, the less respect is shown to the human rights of persons or peoples, the less empowered they are to seek and enjoy those rights. Because of their utmost relevance, human rights are granted and monitored by local, national, continental and international legal systems.

### Our responsibility

As individuals who are more empowered than many in the world, we have the responsibility to seek creative ways of monitoring and reporting human rights abuses in our local communities or elsewhere in the world: the gesture.

Regarding the 'Pygmies' future, although theirs is clearly a serious and sad situation, they still exist! They are forming organizations despite 'all the good reasons' why they might not. They are also beginning to forge alliances both between formerly separate groups of 'Pygmies' across Central Africa and with other indigenous peoples and citizens around the world (like us).

Those of you who might be interested in learning more and finding out how to help them, either on your own or with a group of concerned people, please contact the Indaba-Network. We would be happy to provide more information and contacts with organizations that are currently assisting Central Africa's 'Pygmy' populations. The Network can also provide suggestions for group work.

Who knows? Perhaps a group with which you are working will develop an effective campaign; or a question that you ask today will lead to a rewarding career tomorrow for you while helping to assist an entire people trying to remain alive in "another world" in Central Africa's rain forests.

#### The authors

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All pictures illustrating this article have been kindly provided by Anthro-Photo File 33 Hurlbut Street, Cambridge, MA, 02138, USA.

# With Young Refugees in Eastern Chad

By Dominique Bénard



*Refugee camp in Eastern Chad*

From October 6th to November 12th, I was in Eastern Chad, near the border of Sudan, at the request of RET - Refugee Education Trust - A Swiss NGO developing educational programmes for young refugees.

## **Darfur: a challenge to Human Rights**

Everybody has heard about the conflict in Darfur<sup>1</sup>, which drew hundred thousands of people to leave Sudan.

Sudan is the largest and one of the most diverse countries in Africa, home to deserts, mountain ranges, swamps and rain forests. It emerged from a two-decade civil war between the mainly Muslim north and the Animist and Christian south, only to see fighting break out in the western region of Darfur in early 2003. The north-south civil war is said to have cost the lives of 1.5 million people. In Darfur, the UN says more than two million people have fled their homes and more than 200,000 have been killed. In July 2008, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno-Ocampo, accused the President of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. The court issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir on 4 March 2009 on counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but ruled that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute him for genocide. The warrant will be delivered to the Sudanese government, which is unlikely to execute it. Al-Bashir

is the first sitting head of state ever indicted by the ICC.

The UNHCR is assisting 250,000 Sudanese refugees in 12 camps in eastern Chad.

## **The situation of young people**

Can you imagine? You are 16 years old and you are living in a refugee camp in the Eastern part of Chad. Several members of your family have been killed in Sudan, You have been obliged to quit your country leaving your house and everything you liked. Now, you are in a new country. Of course, your family receives food and health care from the UNHCR but you cannot quit the refugee camp and you wonder what your future could be. You have no access to secondary school, no access to vocational training and the life is not easy. The environment is quasi a desert, there is a permanent lack of water. Each person has 7 litres of water per day. Despite the presence of Polish "blue helmets" the situation is still unsecured. Bandits are attacking people searching for water or wood and unprotected vehicles on the roads. Sudanese rebels try to recruit children and young people as soldiers.

One of the main objectives of Indaba-Network is to support young people in the difficult process of transition to adulthood. It was clear in my mind that transition to adulthood was a very difficult challenge for young people from Darfur in the refugee camps of Eastern Chad. This is why I accepted the

mission proposed by the Refugee Education Trust.

## **The Refugee Education Trust**

That NGO was created in December 2000 by Ms Sadako Ogata, the former UNHCR High Commissioner, with the aim to contribute to the education of refugee, displaced and returning youth (<http://www.theret.org/>). RET is active in Chad since September 2005. RET is present in the 12 refugee camps in the Eastern part of Chad, with activities focused on Secondary Education through Distance Learning (SEDL), life skills and language courses. The Programme Manager is based in Abeche with various staff members in the field.

My mission was to develop a training programme aimed at helping young refugees, aged from 15 to 25, acquire business skills and start a micro-business. I worked during 5 weeks in the camps of Iridimi and Touloum, near the small city of Iriba and in the camps of Mile and Kounoungo, near the small city of Guereda.

## **Small Business Training Programme**

Creating a small business is probably the only possibility that young people have, in refugee camps, to access to financial autonomy and prepare their transition to adulthood. For many young people making business means doing small traffics or selling some goods imported from Sudan, it is not a sustainable



Polish "Blue Helmets"



Young people during a training session



Young refugees

activity. The ambition of RET is different:

*Finding solutions for the problems of displaced youth is a shared global responsibility... In the situations of displacement, we believe in addressing the root causes of problems and in finding solutions that involve local capacity building and are sustainable, thus empowering the communities, and those we help directly, to actively participate in the decision-making. We believe in teaching youth to become self-reliant through life skills, relevant marketable trades that will foster autonomy, and peaceful conflict resolution. We believe in self-help schools and in a community-based approach engaging parents, teachers and the community in the decisions associated with the education of their youth. The RET's choices of programmes, approaches to education, and implementing partners contribute to durable solutions, sustainable development, voluntary repatriation, reconstruction, and sustainable peace and stability in the affected regions and in the world. We do not believe in perpetuating dependencies.*

The first step was therefore to study the situation of young people in the refugee camps and to identify how they could respond to their communities' problems by starting useful and sustainable income generating activities. A youth survey had been organised in the refugee camps in May 2009, giving me a good basis of knowledge. However, I spend two weeks developing contacts with involved NGOs and visiting the four refugee camps with the RET staff in order to meet young people and community leaders and analyse their needs and expectations.

During a third week, I worked in Abeche with the RET Programme Manager - a very courageous and capable British young woman, Jennie Taylor - to develop a training kit on business skills adapted to youth needs

and to their school level (primary school).

Then I experimented the kit in Ariba with 20 young people, boys and girls, from the camps of Touloum and Iridimi and in Guereda with 43 young people, boys and girls, from the camps of Mile and Kounoungo.

The kit includes five modules<sup>2</sup>: (1) Introduction, Team Building, Analysis of Community's problems and needs, sharing ideas of small businesses; (2) How to organise a small youth cooperative, the four keys to success (shared vision, roles, rules and action plan); (3) Leadership skills; (4) Marketing, costing and pricing, bookkeeping; (5) How to prepare a simple business plan and future plans.

After this experimentation, I revised the kit in order to improve it and to be sure it could be used by RET staff directly in the refugee camps.

### **Young people as agents of innovation and change**

I came back from this very rich experience with a strengthened conviction: to support young people in acquiring new skills and knowledge and enter in the work market, non formal education can be a very useful approach. In many cases, indeed, when working with deprived communities and groups, formal education is not the best solution. You invest a lot of money in building vocational training centres and developing vocational training programmes and you discover, at the end of the day, that young people cannot use the skills they have learnt because of the conditions of the local market. The non formal approach is different: you help young people analyse the problems of their communities, and then develop ideas of activities that could produce sustainable income because they correspond to real local needs. When

young people have a clear vision of what they want to do, then they are receptive and keen to learn business and technical skills they need to start their venture. You can introduce them in a long term process of active learning while they develop their small business or youth cooperative.

Let me give you two concrete examples to illustrate this process. In the refugee camps of Eastern Chad, there is a dramatic lack of fuel for cooking. In this half-desert region, people use firewood to cook their food. They cut trees around the camp and contribute to desertification. Firewood is more and more rare and expensive. This is a big problem for the community and a good opportunity for starting a small cooperative producing and selling effective solar cookers. Another example is the production of vegetables. People need and want to produce their own food instead of being perpetually assisted by the World Food Programme. However, due to the lack of water, it is nearly impossible to produce vegetables. Again this is a big problem for the community and also a good opportunity for starting a small youth cooperative using adapted hydroponic farming techniques.

What I have noted in discussing with community leaders in the refugee camps is the general trend of underrating youth's capabilities. Until the age of thirty and even more, people are not listened and have no say in the decision-making process. So, providing young people with skills and resources to develop innovative solutions to community's problems is probably the best way for helping them in their transition to adulthood.

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