



## Editorial

### On 20/11/2007, The Convention has reached majority!

A cake, 18 joyful candles dancing on a creamy white cover: is it not mouth-watering? Definitely not a plain-looking book for this birthday: **on November 20th 2007**, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has reached majority, in accordance with the definition of article 1 of the Convention (every human being below the age of eighteen years). A symbolical age indeed for this Convention! Numerous events took place all over the world on this November 20th. After the candles are blown out, what can be done to prolong the celebration and leave a track?

The **Office of the High-Commissioner for Human Rights**, deeply involved in the implementation of this Convention since it hosts the Committee on the Rights of the Child (monitoring body of the progress achieved by State Parties in carrying out their obligations in the matter of children's rights), and the **International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IIDE)** with headquarters in Sion and mission to inform and train in Children's Rights, have had the idea to join their efforts to treat the Convention with a book:

### 18 Candles : The Convention on the Rights of the Child reaches Majority

This book is meant as a tribute to the Convention: unlike a scientific book, its ambition is to reach out to the public and **raise awareness** of the existence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two additional Protocols (that make up the second part of the publication). The book **evokes** some of the **important recurrent issues** related to the various rights of children, notably education, health, violence, discrimination and juvenile justice. Next to the lively and fresh drawing of a young Swiss artist working in Paris, **Léopoldine Gorret**, **prestigious writers** have given way to their pen. Among them:

- Ms Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights,
- Ms Yanghee Lee, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,
- Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
- Ms Marta Santos Pais, Director of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence,
- Prof. Jaap E. Doek, Former Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,
- Mr Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights...



Originality of 18 Candles: the most ground-breaking principle of the Convention, (**art. 12**): **listening to the voice of children**. In other words, make them participate. Obviously, this book is directly about them, therefore the participation requirement has been met in including **five articles drafted by children** or children's groups: from **China, Perú, Sierra Leone, Italy** and **Canada**. They are the beating heart of the book, and are illuminated with colourful candles, a way to show that those voices are important to us. A way as well to respond to the questioning of our young Italian author: it is up to grown-ups to listen to children! What is still to be done: to **put it into practice in everyday life!**

*Jean Zermatten*

## 1 - November 20th 2007: The Caravan of the Rights of the Child

The rights of the child, notably participation rights, remain largely unrecognised in Switzerland. To fight this ignorance, IDE, Terre des hommes – child relief and the Cantonal Youth Service have decided to bring about the good word during World Children's Day. A van ornamented with drawings illustrating six themes of the Convention and inspired by the model of the African caravan, drove through our canton and halted at six places to meet the day's heroes – children and adolescents - as well as high-profile sport, art and politics personalities.

Education, leisure, integration of youth living with disabilities or of foreign origin, health and family were the themes discussed passionately during these receptions of the van. Started at 06:45 am in Brig, the caravan achieved its expedition at 21:00 pm in Terre des hommes' La Maison in Massongex. On the way it had visited a Leisure and Culture Centre (ASLEC) in Sierre, IDE in Sion, and an inclusive primary school class in Martigny. Media have followed with the organisers of the day, covering some (or all) themes dealt with.

To view the halts of the Caravan, visit the picture gallery at <http://www.childsrighs.org>.

## 2 - November 20th 2007 Swiss human Rights Book

Mr Jean Zermatten presented the Swiss Human Rights Book Vol. 2, dealing with the Rights of the Child and edited with Ms. Carol Bellamy and Mr Peter G. and Thomas Kirchsclager, during the symposium "Realizing the Rights of the Child" organised by the International Human Rights Forum Lucerne.

See <http://www.childsrighs.org>, 'Trainings - Autres formations et conférences avec la participation de l'IDE'.

## 3 - Fighting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Last June, IDE had announced the launching of the film "Mutilated Women, Never More!" by Mrs Osman Ali Aden and Roussopoulos, produced by the latter. Meant as a didactic tool, this documentary film supports training sessions and awareness-raising activities in social work schools, nurse schools and for would-be teachers. A network to fight genital mutilation was created in Valais, including cantonal services (Integration), and civil society (Centre Suisses-Immigrés, Association Kalkal and IDE). The network is also based on the personal experience of two women concerned by FGM, the filmmakers Ms. Osman and Ms. Ali Aden. Moreover, IDE has been selected to join the federal expert commission in charge of guiding the Members of Parliament in the drafting of an article in the criminal code making FGM a specific crime. At the cantonal level, the Valais network to fight FGM is mobilised to include the obligation to denounce genital cutting, in the future cantonal Law on health.

For more information on IDE Activities and presentations of the film, visit <http://www.childsrighs.org>.

## 4 - Children's Rights in China

The China project has known an encouraging development:

### ZHENGZHOU SEMINAR

A Seminar on Children in Street Situations took place from July 16th to 20th in Zhengzhou, a big Hanan Province industry city. China is seeing the emergence of this social phenomenon: research reveal an estimated 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 of these 'disconnected' children, cut off from mainstream society. The Seminar, organised with UNICEF-China and the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, took place in the National Training Center for Street Children Protection. Ms Paola Riva Gapany and Dr Daniel Stoecklin provided the teaching on international protection tools, with the assistance of two experts, Ms Teresita Silva from the Philippines, and Mr Kamel Siddiqui from Bangladesh.



#### JUVENILE JUSTICE TRAINING

August 27th to 31st 2007: a seven member Chinese delegation of officials, accompanied by Ms. Cheng Xuefeng from UNICEF China attended a Juvenile Justice course at the IDE, completed by visits of institutions (St-Raphaël Institute, Pramont closed facilities, Mediation Office for young offenders and Minors' Brigade in Fribourg).

#### PARTICIPATION TO THE IDE SEMINAR

Moreover, six high-ranking Chinese justice professionals assisted in October to the Sion Seminar on Children in Street Situations (see below point 6 IDE Seminar 2007).

The major event of Olympic Games (Beijing 2008) is the next challenge facing IDE in its China and Children's rights programme.

### 5 - International Sion Seminar: Children in Street Situations. Prevention, Intervention, Rights-based approach Day

From October 16th to 20th 2007, more than 120 participants exchanged in plenary and workshop sessions on the issue of children in street situations. IDE was organizing its yearly Seminar jointly with Terre des hommes - child relief and the Foundation of the International Social Service (SSI). The course director, Ms Irene Rizzini, imparted to an audience coming from 34 countries, the experience of Brazilian NGOs and researchers in dealing with the life trajectories of these children. The child who lives, sleeps or works in the streets is a subject of rights, and must not anymore be called "Streetchild". And the less so since this "definition" encompasses numerous varying scenarios. In this respect, the film by Philippe de Pierpont "Life is a Cards' Game" realized in Burundi and giving glimpses on life trajectories in a longitudinal way, was the key-event of the Seminar opening. A sociological approach (the child-street system) guided the debates, since the two conectors of this approach, Prof. Em. Riccardo Lucchini (Fribourg University) and Dr Daniel Stoecklin, played an active role in this Seminar.

We express our gratitude to Terre des hommes - child relief and SSI for their precious collaboration.

In the process, the IDE team has added one more string to its bow: it offers now filmed interviews of outstanding personalities present in the Seminar: to be viewed and listened to on the website Seminar page.

### 6 - Day of the Sarah Oberson Foundation - November 14th 2007

On November 14th 2007, IDE welcomed more than 120 participants (definitely a record!) during the traditional awareness-raising Day of the Sarah Oberson Foundation on child protection. **Violence against children** was the theme chosen, in order to give a follow-up to the World Study led by Prof. Paulo Pinheiro, UN independent expert. Switzerland participated in this Study by answering a questionnaire handed in on July 31st 2004. However, the results of the Study had little echo among concerned professionals. In order to spread the precious and informative content of this Report, the Foundation Sarah Oberson organised the conference around issues presently under heavy media-coverage: Juvenile Justice, corporal punishment in the family, sexual abuse and pornography on the Internet. To back up the presentations, and to keep in mind that behind any violence a victim is hidden, two exceptional women, victims of rape, gave their personal statement, painful but with apposite outcome: the willpower to fight the worst forms of violence.

<http://www.sarahoberson.org>

### 7 - Miscellaneous

#### COURSE FOR KOREAN STUDENTS

On July 11th 2007, a group of Students from the Republic of Korea, undertaking a Europe Tour of Human Rights, attended an introduction to children's rights at the IDE.

#### ADC YEARLY CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 14TH 2007

"Youth and Development: take this Opportunity Now!" Such was the theme of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (ADC), focussed on Burkina Faso: IDE and SSI hold a stand presenting their West-Africa Project (PAO).

#### IDE TEAM

IDE has welcomed Mr Habib Osmani, age 17. He is undertaking a three-year apprenticeship in commerce. Ms Sabine Bétrisey, involved in events coordination and logistics, has taken another professional way. We thank her sincerely and wish her all the best!

#### HONORIS CAUSA DOCTORATE FOR IDE DIRECTOR

Christmas is drawing near. With the favour of exceptional news: the relentless work of Mr Zermatten has been recognized and rewarded at the highest academic level: he has just been entitled Doctor Honoris Causa by the Fribourg University: the solemn ceremony took place on November 15th 2007. The guiding star has just lit up at the height of children's rights, for all those disarranged by the horrors inflicted upon the smallest ones. Simply follow it ...

#### Merry Christmas & a happy New Year!

*Jean Zermatten, Paola Riva Gapany, Geneviève Lévine,  
Daniel Stoecklin, Elvira Fischer, Alexandra Prince, Habib Osmani,  
Aldo Riva, Ana Gil, Freddy Schumacher and André Karlen*



#### Archives

[IDE News no 16](#)  
(June 2007)

[IDE News no 15](#)  
(Decembre 2006)

[IDE News no 14](#)  
(June 2006)

[IDE News no 13](#)  
(Decembre 2005)

[IDE News no 12](#)  
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