

change. And that actually worked.”

The meeting appealed for the liberation of two journalists from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mbakulu Pambu Diambu, the news director at Matadi TV, arrested in November for “breaching state security”, and Thierry Kyalumba, director of the weekly *Vision*, arrested in January for “disclosing military secrets in wartime”. The appeal also welcomed the release after two weeks in custody of two other journalists arrested on similar charges in March, Modeste Mutinga, chief editor of *Le Potentiel* and André Ipakala, chief editor of *La Référence plus*.

PEOPLE DON'T KNOW

However, public ignorance, as much as political repression, is the cause of the absence of freedom of expression. “Because media hardly exists in developing countries - and where it does it tends to be for profit, serving small elites and shutting out vast quantities of people - FoE work in Southern countries has to involve development and educational work because many people don't know they have a right to freedom of expression and don't



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1947. Pakistan. By Henri Cartier Bresson whose work is featured in this years' album by the NGO, Paris-based Reporters sans frontières to mark World Press Freedom Day

know they have a right to access information from government and even from private sources,” explains Jane Duncan of the Freedom of Expression Institute in South Africa.

Also on the agenda this year, the struggle by South-East Asian media, the NATO bombardment of Serbia, and the concentration of media in the North.

Naturally, the mere mediatization of abuse will not put an end to it. Fifty two journalists and writers were assassinated in 1998, and according to IFEX, 1999

isn't going to be any better. But, an official document noted, “we've seen letter campaigns open up prison doors, lift bans on publications and even save lives.” Moreover, adds Makali, “often we have no support in our own country - it's a kind of weakness - but even the oppressors, our enemies begin to be a little afraid if we have international support.” Especially, as Viktorya Kazlova of Russia's Glasnost Defence Foundation says, “when you are in your local situation doing your work, you are losing

the opportunity to think openly - talking to different people from different countries with different experiences, you find answers to questions that were raised long, long before this meeting. When I go back to my computer and write a letter, I'll be appealing to friends, not in general to the international community.”

Wayne Sharpe, Executive director, IFEX, Toronto, Canada

HABITAT *Local communities in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, come up with solutions to housing problems*

PROTESTS GO WITH PROPOSALS

For 30 years they have lived on a patch of mud next to the discharge of industrial effluents. Surrounded by rubbish, without drinking water or sanitation, these two poor neighbourhoods are home to 48,000 people. The inhabitants of

La Ciénaga de Guachapita and Los Guandules - right in the middle of the city of Santo Domingo - are mostly unemployed or have just arrived from the country, outcasts in the heart of a capital with nearly one million other marginalized people.

Little cabins leaning one against the other (70 % of them in a ruinous state), have five or six people squeezed into 18-24 m². If their inhabitants want to hold meetings or bathe their children they have to take to the street. And what a

street! So muddy it is impassable for cars; only the *motoconchos* (motorbikes which with a luggage rack added serve as taxis) can get through. Some women and children walk several kilometres to get water. Most people work as *chiriperos*, selling shoes one day and coconut, ice cream, home-made cake or fruit juice the next from a cart elegantly installed in the middle of the road. If they manage to scrape together \$100 per month per family,

they can consider themselves fortunate. That is why they all work, whether they be seven or 65 years old. And those who do not do anything are called *vagos*, layabouts..

RESISTANCE

There was no reason to envy the situation of the people living in these neighbourhoods. Hence their surprise when one day the owners of the land, the Vicini family, said they wanted their land back and threatened to evict them. That day, poor and deprived as they were, the local inhabitants successfully resisted, standing together and setting up a Defence Committee for Local Rights (COPADEBA).

With two mottoes, 'Protests go with proposals' and 'Construction with participation', COPADEBA is seeking solutions to social problems in poor neighbourhoods. It opposes illegal evictions and defends inhabitants' rights. In a bid to solve the urban, environmental and social problems of these neighbourhoods it has proposed to construct an 'Alternative housing development' and has been granted NGO status giving it some independence in economic terms and reinforcing determination. It receives aid from the Italian organizations MLAL and MISE-REOR along with UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST) via its research project, "Cities, Environment and Social Relationships between Men and Women."

MOBILISING WOMEN

The idea driving the MOST project was that urban women - particularly those affected by difficult living conditions, changing family structures, and the degradation of the environment - be mobilised and empowered to deal with their problems. There were two major priorities in the

project: to see cities as places of accelerated social transformation, and local and regional management of technological, economic and environmental transformations.

The project began fieldwork in July 1997, with an initial working period of two and a half years. In Santo Domingo, MOST works with the local population to implement 'Plan CIGUA' (Ciénaga-Guandules), an abbreviated combination of the names of the two neighbourhoods concerned.

The aim is to transform the housing and the environment and to make them healthier and more habitable. Plan CIGUA brings the citizens (20 neighbourhood associations of between 15 and 300 people) and the professionals (the architects, the town planners, environmentalists and

diseases (the main cause of infant mortality) came from their water: it looked clear enough to them, so they thought it was safe. The 45% of the land that was covered with garbage has been made habitable. This involved demolishing some of the huts, mainly the ones close to the discharge outlets of waste water. Eighty per cent of this water has now been covered over and the muddy alleyways are being covered with tarmac, improving the neighbourhoods' links with the city.

PLAYING THEIR PART

A dual-purpose children's club supported by the municipality, the Plan CIGUA experts, and mothers who volunteer, provides a day-care service as well as primary education. It charges fees in order to be independent, and teachers

the idea of a park, which the experts thought essential. "A park is for old people," they said. "We would rather have a sports club so that the children do not play baseball among the dustbins."

For two years the MOST programme has also been financing a study of this new housing development and would like to use it as a basis for dealing with similar situations in Latin America. Other equally successful fieldwork for the Cities, Environment and Social Relationships between Men and Women study has been carried out in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria and Romania.

Certainly the experiment in Santo Domingo has shown how the participation of the people concerned, neighbourhood associations, NGOs, the government and international support can transform a poor district without detracting from the dignity of the inhabitants.

Latin American societies can no longer wait for the solution of development to come from outside. As the Alternative Housing Development puts it "neighbourhood rights are also human rights."

*Isabel RAUBER**
with C.L.



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Living differently to live in hope

sociologists) together to work out how best this can be done.

Implementation of the plan began in early 1997, and its effects on the inhabitants' living conditions were quickly realised. Drinking water that used to come through white plastic tubing, strung together somehow or other and trailing through the middle of the "black water" (waste water), is now piped and protected. The people did not realize that parasitic

are often recruited locally. Education is crucial, since the aim is to train the inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods to play their part in the community and change their own living conditions. The new generations seem to have 'got the message' as they are taking up occupations linked to the economy and the social sector.

A community clinic has even been provided, but the local people are not used to it and still keep going to the hospital. They also refused