

Dignity



Issa Harouna (left), National Chairman of IDEA Niger, with Esta Maman, the IDEA Niger women's leader, celebrating World Leprosy Day. *Photo Courtesy of IDEA Niger*

“Dignity is not something others give to you. It is something inherent in each of us. Recognizing the dignity inherent in every human being is the beginning of human rights.”

-- Bernard K. Punikai'a, IDEA's President for Advocacy, 1997-2007

The Canonization of Father Damien De Veuster

“The canonization of Father Damien De Veuster provides an unprecedented opportunity to focus the world’s attention on the modern day realities of leprosy. At the same time, discussing his work with the people of Kalaupapa enables us to promote issues related to justice and human rights that were the cornerstone of his work.”

“Today, 120 years after the death of Father Damien, people around the world affected by leprosy continued to be denied the basic rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including: The right to home; The right to family; The right to work; The right to education; The right to nationality; The right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being; and The right to be free from degrading treatment.”

-- “A Quest for Justice: A Resolution on the Occasion of the Canonization of Father Damien De Veuster by and for Individuals Affected by Leprosy Throughout the World” (Excerpts appear on this page and the next. Full text can be seen at www.idealprosydignity.org)



St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, October 11, 2009. Father Damien's banner can be seen second from the right.



Father Damien's banner hangs on the outside of St. Peter's Basilica in preparation for his canonization. *Photos by Henry Law*

Seeing the Value, Dignity and Inspiration in Each Person

“Discussing Father Damien’s life and work in the context of the human rights issues facing people affected by leprosy today provides an important bridge between the past and the present.”

“Father Damien insisted on justice. He insisted that people should not be deprived of their rights or value as human beings because they had a disease. He saw the value, dignity and inspiration in each person.”

“As we approach the canonization of Father Damien and proceed into the future, we resolve to utilize his legacy fully to promote the basic rights of all individuals, particularly those who have had leprosy.”

-- “Quest for Justice” Resolution



Representatives from ILEP and IDEA read the “Quest for Justice” Resolution in St. Peter’s Square following the Canonization of Father Damien. (Left to right) Andrew Clark, Doug Soutar, Kofi Nyarko, Dr. P.K. Gopal and S.K. Jung. *Photo by Dr. Sunil Deepak*

Signed by IDEA Presidents Dr. P.K. Gopal, S.K. Jung, and Zilda Borges on behalf of IDEA representatives from 23 countries; Signed by René Staeheli, ILEP President, and Douglas Soutar, ILEP General-Secretary, on behalf of ILEP member organizations from 14 countries; Signed by Dr. Francesco Colizzi, President of AIFO, on behalf of AIFO member groups in Italy. The Resolution was also endorsed by Clarence "Boogie" Kahilihiwa, President, Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, and Makia Malo, IDEA Hawaii liaison.

Convention on Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, Istanbul

“Recalling the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations which recognizes the inherent dignity and worth and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world . . .”



Rasime Basegmez, Turkey. IDEA Photo

On October 19-20, 2008, a Convention on Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy was held in Istanbul, Turkey. The Convention was organized by the Istanbul Leprosy Relief Association in partnership with IDEA and Novartis. Some highlights from the Istanbul Convention include the following:

Participation in Public Life

State Parties shall ensure that there will not be any discrimination of people participating at international, national, regional and local events including granting a visa, providing accommodations at hotels and hostels, and using recreational facilities. (Article 14)

Women Affected by Leprosy

State Parties shall recognize the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in guaranteeing the human rights of women affected by leprosy. (Article 17)

Marriage and Divorce

State Parties shall recognize that leprosy should not be an obstacle to marriage; State Parties shall recognize that leprosy cannot be a cause for divorce. (Article 11)

Awareness Raising

State Parties shall promote the recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of people and their contributions to society and where possible support exhibiting their artistic, cultural and scientific talents; Artists, poets, musicians, writers and others should be involved in reaching society. (Article 5)

Discriminatory Language

State Parties shall remove discriminatory language from legislation;

State Parties shall ensure the removal of discriminatory language in teaching materials for medical professionals;

State Parties shall ensure the use of non-discriminatory language in any government publication and will revise existing publications containing such language;

State Parties shall ensure the removal of discriminatory language and photographs from textbooks and stories for preschool and school-age children;

State Parties shall prohibit the use of derogatory language and acts in the media such as press, television, music, electronic media, and cinema;

State Parties shall prohibit the use of discriminatory language in dictionaries and other standard reference materials. (Article 4)



Dr. Ayşe Yüksel , one of the organizers of the Istanbul Convention, gives a copy of the IDEA newsletter to Hüseyin Öztürk. *IDEA Photo*

Housing

State Parties shall recognize the rights of persons not to be discriminated against on the basis of leprosy in their choice of housing or be displaced without providing alternative accommodations.

State Parties shall ensure that members of the older generation who were once forced to live in isolated communities because of leprosy, are able to live out their lives in what has become their home. (Article 9)

Shelter for All – World Leprosy Day, Niger

“We celebrated on February 14th the leprosy day in Niger. The topic was to advocate for the rights for shelter for all . . . This leprosy day was celebrated in all the regions of Niger Republic.”

-- Abdou Yohanna, IDEA Representative, Niger



Abdou Yohanna, IDEA Niger Representative, speaks to the press on Leprosy Day in Niger. *Photo Courtesy of IDEA Niger*



Officials discuss the right to shelter on World Leprosy Day. *Photo Courtesy of IDEA Niger*

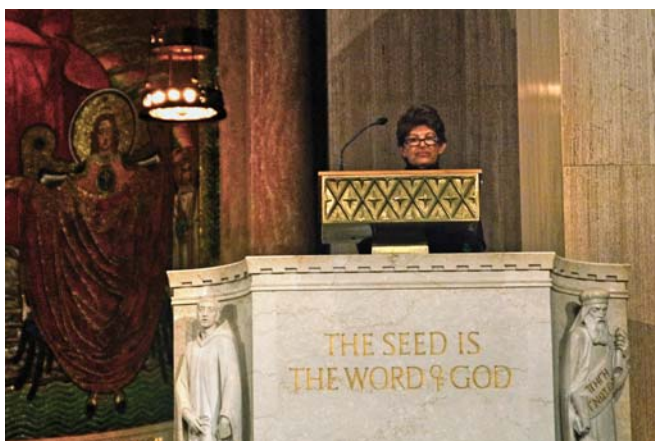
Report by Abdou Yohanna: This year, the World’s Leprosy Day (celebrated in Niger Republic on February 14th) focused on “the right to shelter” due to the challenge that people affected by leprosy are facing wherever they are living in this country. In Maradi Town, two wealthy people built 93 standard houses for people affected by leprosy in 1981. Today, after 30 years, most of the houses need repairs. In Niamey, the Capital city, only 35 out of 212 people affected by leprosy are living in their own houses, which have deteriorated in different ways. Other people are either sleeping on the floor before closed shops, or living in huts where they could be chased out at any moment . . .

In collaboration with the leaders of people affected by leprosy, the government Office for Social Affairs, the National Association of Raoul Follereau, the Leprosy Health Center for SIM Danja, The Leprosy Mission Niger and IDEA Niger, a special day was organized in the field, inside the community of people affected by leprosy in Maradi. All the Regional Directors, National and International Non-Governmental Organizations, wealthy people, and the leaders of other persons with disabilities in Maradi were invited for this meeting. The General Secretary of Maradi’s Government, the four mayors and the representative of the Maradi traditional chief attended this meeting. All the persons went round to discover the houses of the people affected by leprosy that need renovation and/or construction. After this visit, the government promised to contribute some sacks of cement and sand for this project and will continue to advocate on behalf of vulnerable groups. SIM Danja will also provide more assistance in this area through its socio-economic rehabilitation project.

The last activity was a round table discussion organized and funded by IDEA Niger in a private radio station “ANFANI”. The topics were leprosy and the “right to shelter for all.” Joining the IDEA Representative and National Chairman of IDEA at this round table were the government Regional Coordinator for leprosy, the SIM medical doctor, two staff members for SIM Danja and the Regional President for the Raoul Follereau Association.

World Leprosy Day, Washington, D.C., USA

A special Damien Mass was celebrated on World Leprosy Day, January 31, 2010, in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. IDEA's participation was made possible through an invitation by Father William Petrie, SS.CC. and support from Leprosy Relief Canada, The Damien-Dutton Society, and American Leprosy Missions.



Ymelda Beauchamp, reading from I Corinthians. Ymelda and her daughter Adrienne were lectors at the Damien Mass which was televised around the world and estimated to reach 30 million people. Ymelda is a member of IDEA and also a member of the Board of Directors of American Leprosy Missions.

"Here we are, definitively and definitely, together leaping over the gulfs that separate, building hopes, zooming in from the global to the personal -- creating goals and hopes, giving others and ourselves the positive experience of freedom from prejudice."

-- Ymelda Beauchamp, IDEA USA

Freeing ourselves of prejudice,

Take a soar into the wind.

-- Nanahuku Ikuta, Japan



IDEA's Exhibit at the National Shrine on World Leprosy Day in Washington, D.C. included panels entitled "IDEA -- Freeing Ourselves of Prejudice" and a panel with the haiku "Freeing Ourselves of Prejudice" by Nanahuku Ikuta. Photos by Henry Law

To Create a World Full of Hope, Understanding, and Peace

“Through our efforts to eliminate prejudice, to win recognition from society, to request the rights of education, work and livelihood, which are inherent in every human being, we will work to create a world full of hope, understanding, and peace.”

-- Liang Zhao Lun, Handa/IDEA China, 5th International Day of Dignity and Respect, March 11, 2003



(Left to right) Kofi Nyarko, Zilda Borges and Dr. P.K. Gopal, Geneva, Switzerland. IDEA Photo

While in Rome for the Canonization of Father Damien, Board Members from IDEA and AIFO met with Mr. Donato Marra (center), Secretary-General of the Italian Presidency. Kofi Nyarko presented Mr. Marra with a wood carving from Ghana that symbolizes “Unity.”

In January, 2009, discussions were held at the United Nations related to the guidelines being developed on leprosy and human rights. Participants included individuals affected by leprosy from India, Brazil, China, Ghana, Philippines, and Ethiopia. Participants were sponsored by The Nippon Foundation, IDEA, and TLM New Zealand.



(Left to right) Dr. Enrico Pupulin, Zilda Borges, José Ramirez, Jr., Kofi Nyarko, Simona Del Re, Secretary-General Donato Marro, and Prof. Gino Gravina. Photo by Dr. Sunil Deepak

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