

# POLICY DOCUMENT



*Cover illustration: «Colourful Faces», collage work by girls at APSA's Nammane.  
The children at this FORUT supported centre express themselves through art  
and street theatre in their struggle to achieve a better future.*

Gjøvik 2003





*FORUT is the development organisation of the peace and temperance organisations IOGT, Juvente and IOGT Junior. FORUT receives financial support from various sources, the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN organisations and various fund raising campaigns. FORUT undertakes development work in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Senegal. In Norway FORUT operates five reception centres for asylum seekers, commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. Extensive information work towards the Norwegian public is another programme area.*

## Vision

FORUT's vision is a world in peace and without poverty, where all are secured human rights and social justice, and where alcohol and drugs do not prevent people's well being and fulfilment of human potential.

## Mission

FORUT's mission is to fight poverty and to mobilise for a world with more justice and solidarity. We want to enhance the quality of life of the people through their participation in development processes, advocacy and political awareness.

## Fighting poverty

FORUT will contribute to social mobilisation of the poor and oppressed in their struggle for human rights, being instrumental in reforming society to be responsive to these rights and needs. Solidarity means putting respect above pity, struggling together with underprivileged groups. FORUT draws a clear line against gifts or alms, but wishes to participate in the mobilisation and activation of human resources. An important task is organising against unjust, repressive and exploitative structures. We are working for a higher economic standard for the poor, but also for securing their daily lives, increasing their freedom and integrity, strengthening their social rights and contributing to human development.





## Community development

*Hambantota District is one of the poorest in Sri Lanka. The area has suffered from drought and social unrest. In 1993 FORUT introduced the idea of organising people into small groups in order to form village organisations. A decade after our first intervention, we are involved in two project areas working with 5100 members in 600 small groups. This is the organisational platform for a range of activities organised by the people themselves for a better future. Rural development bank (2600 members), preschool (800 children) and youth force (3000 members) are examples of active tools in this. People choose their own activities and approaches for enhancing their problem solving capacity and for fighting oppression in what almost amounts to a social revolution.*

### **Justification:**

The quality of a society can be measured by how well it meets the needs of its members, and especially by how it takes care of its poor. Communities all over the world have a wide variety of ways for dealing with poor and marginalised people, and usually there are some mechanisms for alleviating their burden. However, traditional systems for dealing with this are under pressure and frequently inadequate when faced with a rapidly changing society. Modern public systems for poverty alleviation are often underresourced, inadequately designed or even non-existent. It is also a fact that many communities are bound to traditions that maintain inequality, poverty and exclusion. Furthermore, external circumstances are often overwhelming and dramatic, making it difficult for communities and individuals to adapt. Still it is necessary for the affected communities to adapt and develop the way they function internally as well as externally. FORUT sees its community development work in this context. We try to strengthen local community capacity to meet the essential needs of its members, especially the poor and the marginalised, so that the community as a whole functions on a higher level.

### **Approaches:**

- Build the capacity of local communities to make decisions democratically and in a participatory manner.
- Finding joint solutions to common problems.
- Exercise collective action and solidarity for more effect, internally and externally.
- Use several components (e.g. income generation, preschools, skills training, health, micro-finance) in a single community. The components should support each other, making community development more than the sum of its parts.
- Emphasise participation, contribution and local resource mobilisation to achieve local ownership and sustainable change.
- Be prepared to challenge existing traditions and structures.



## Strengthening civil society

*It is imperative to involve all sections of society in resolving the issues of marginalised groups. Through meaningful interaction the Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) in India seeks to break down the barriers between the urban poor and students in Bangalore City's elite schools and professionals in the corporate sector. Exposure visits are organised for college students and employees of large corporations to the slums and to the families and children living on the streets.*

*In turn they become volunteers, contributing with tutoring children in the slums, helping slum dwellers to obtain public services they are entitled to. Workshops on social responsibilities of the corporate sector and child rights contribute to raise awareness about the urban poor and their living conditions.*

### **Justification:**

FORUT recognises the crucial role that civil society has to play in order to safeguard human rights, social justice and sustainable development. Civil society comprises various non-governmental organisations, informal groups and coalitions. These will influence the public sector as well as the private for the development of society on a local, regional, national and international level.

Formal and informal organisations and groups, working within communities, can be important vehicles for change and the empowerment of people. Civil society organisations, groups and social movements should be independent and democratic.

FORUT believes that the role of civil society is to empower, protect and advocate the rights of deprived and marginalised people. FORUT will engage with civil society to promote human rights, peace, the prevention of alcohol and drug problems and development.

FORUT will promote establishing, mobilising and strengthening civil society organisations. This can be done through direct intervention or through solidarity actions in collaboration with partner organisations.

### **Approaches:**

- Empower and strengthen formal and informal groups and organisations that actively participate in the development of their local community. Assist in establishing groups and organisations when necessary.
- Enabling these groups to be their own advocates and to interact effectively with public institutions and private sector organisations.
- Build capacity for democratic decision making at a local level, and use this platform to encourage people's participation in political processes.
- Empower women, youth and children in their struggle for equal rights and justice, both organisationally – within civil society groups – and in issues pursued by these groups.
- Promote the rights of deprived and marginalised groups when appropriate.



## Children and youth

*Bhima Sangha was the first union for child labourers to be established in Asia, and it has been a model for other unions in India and the region. They fight for their rights as children and as labourers. Bhima Sangha has branches in slums in Bangalore and in rural areas. The members are between 6 and 18 years old.*

*Bhima Sangha was started in 1990 by the organisation The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in cooperation with working children. In the unions the children discuss difficulties of their daily lives at work, at home, at school and in the communities. In a union the children have the opportunity to better articulate and share their difficulties and find ways of dealing with the problems.*

### **Justification:**

Children and youth are capable of taking charge of their own lives. Given the chance, they can be their own spokespeople, driving force and problem-solvers.

Child labour, undernourishment, abuse and regular slavery are concrete realities for millions of children all over the world. Children's rights are often neglected, and their voices are seldom heard when decisions are made, even for issues directly influencing their lives. Children need backing to defend their own interests and rights. They are subject to adult society's care or lack of it, and are often easy targets for various forms of exploitation. Children are particularly badly affected by poverty. Ignorance and lack of faith in one's intrinsic value and potential may cripple the ability to find new solutions. If poverty and exploitation are to be brought to an end, a necessary condition is that these very children acquire the capacity to break the mechanisms that maintain the status quo. They are entitled to relevant education. Education that is poor or of little relevance, can be a contributing factor to children dropping out of school to become child workers or street children. In this respect all institutions in society should acknowledge their responsibility to foster children's development. FORUT should play an advocacy role.

### **Approaches:**

- Empower children and youth living in difficult circumstances to enable them to put forward their own opinions and demands. Advocate children's rights in relation to local authorities and decision-makers. Support organisations that are working to promote child rights in accordance with the UN's Convention for the Rights of the Child.
- FORUT will integrate the concern for children and youth in most activities.
- Secure children's access to preschool and school, particularly for girls, and improve the quality of local education as an integrated element in all local community development.
- Provide vocational or other forms of training for youth in order to give them an alternative to unemployment and poverty.
- Protect and rehabilitate particularly vulnerable children – street children, child prostitutes and refugee children. Beyond the immediate and direct assistance to these children, the objective is to create viable models for public and private institutions and to mobilise these institutions.



## Alcohol and drug use

*Sniffing is a major problem among street children in Kathmandu. FORUT's partner organisation in Nepal, CWIN, has implemented a survey of the use of drugs and discussed it with the children themselves.*

*In its report CWIN states that children mostly sniff with friends and that they have been induced by their peers to start sniffing. It is a cheap form of drugs, but it also paves the way to other drugs. Knowledge about long-term harmful effects is very scarce among the children, but some myths about health damage curb the use.*

*CWIN's field workers experience violence and self-destructive behaviour in the wake of glue sniffing. The police also confirm this.*

### **Justification:**

Most cultures around the world have some tradition for alcohol production and consumption that extend back in time. Many places these traditions are still alive, but today industrial production tends to provide most of the supply. Alcohol carries aspects of value to people around the globe, but such drinks are also a threat to human, social and economic development. Some cultures also have traditional use of other drugs, but the use of illegal substances is a growing problem in the global community.

Women and children often carry the burden of alcohol abuse by men, such as: Domestic violence, broken families, neglected children, loss of family income due to sickness, disregard of work or money spent on booze. In situations of scarcity and meagre resources, alcohol and drugs contribute to maintaining poverty. Social problems, violence, traffic accidents and other harm put additional burdens on countries that struggle with poverty and inadequate health services.

Alcohol and drugs are used to escape from problems and prevent people from developing their potential. Intoxicating substances will often have an oppressive effect for the user or the community. Sometimes the oppression is intentional where alcohol is used to hold certain groups back from their rights, whereas at other times it is an unintended side effect of some people and companies striving for profit. The ill effects can arise from a single bout of drinking or from the long-term effects of alcohol or drug consumption. Health, social and economic effects are all prevalent.

According to WHO and the World Bank, morbidity from alcohol, measured in years of life lost to disability, has a greater impact on health than even malnutrition or poor sanitation. Alcohol's global health impact is on par with unsafe sex and above tobacco in terms of its contribution to the total number of years of life lost to death and disability. Intoxication creates irresponsible and destructive patterns of behaviour and contributes to increased spread of HIV/AIDS.

### **Approaches:**

Based on the above FORUT will develop further a methodological approach to integrate alcohol and drug prevention in all FORUT's development activities and:

- Contribute to building knowledge and designing activities in FORUT's six partner countries so as to reduce the consumption of alcohol and drugs, and thereby reduce human, social and economic costs.
- Contribute to strengthening the counter forces against the use of alcohol and drugs.
- Contribute to mobilising resistance against an expanding alcohol capital.





## Humanitarian assistance

*The decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone caused great suffering. Almost every family in the country was affected in one way or another. Many fled their homes to become internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries. The grave situation led FORUT Sierra Leone to start relief work with internally displaced in and near Freetown. Immediate needs for food, shelter and health were taken care of first. The assistance, however, also had strong community and development elements with focus on avoiding dependency and preparing for the longer term rehabilitation and returnee situation. After the end of the war, the displaced communities returned home to Ribbi and Koya chiefdoms, and FORUT Sierra Leone assisted with agricultural tools, non-food relief items and support to shelter and house repairs.*

### **Justification:**

If disaster or emergency situations occur in areas where FORUT is operational, we have an obligation to provide relief assistance. FORUT's approach will in these instances be participatory and geared towards releasing inherent resources among those affected, with own contribution, responsibility, autonomy and respect as guiding principles. FORUT's efforts must as soon as possible turn towards rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Our role in traditional, delivery-oriented relief should be kept to a minimum.

### **Approaches:**

- Act independently and with neutrality and provide humanitarian assistance on the basis of needs alone, regardless of race, nationality and political or religious standpoints.
- Give priority to sectors such as water, shelter, food, sanitation, health and education.
- Co-ordinate own efforts with other actors for the best utilisation of existing resources.
- Initiate rehabilitation activities at the earliest possible with special emphasis on children, youth and women.
- Undertake reconstruction work with a substantial element of own contribution from those affected.
- Advocate nationally and internationally the rights of refugees and displaced people, especially children and women, whenever appropriate.
- Apply a "Do No Harm" methodology in all activities.





## Refugees and asylum seekers in Norway

*Asylum seekers in reception centres live in close quarters. A whole family might share one room. Single persons are accommodated together, two, three or even four in the same room. The buildings are older boarding houses or hotels of poor standard. Application procedures are slow, and those who stay for years in the centres are worn out. Lillehammer reception centre offers apartments in town to such families. They still belong to the centre, but regain their private life and are more easily integrated in the local community. Other FORUT centres offer the same opportunity.*

### **Justification:**

The unjust distribution of the world's resources results in war, bondage and political, economic and social suppression, especially in countries in the South. Global inequality, internal conflicts and war are the main reasons for people fleeing their native countries to seek refuge in Norway and other countries. The life of refugees and asylum seekers is distinguished by insecurity and fear related to the situation in the country they left as well as to the possibilities for staying in Norway. The sense of loneliness and being a stranger may lead to further uncertainty, frustration and psychological imbalance.

FORUT's engagement as the operator of government reception centres for asylum seekers is based on the conception that refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to and in need of a predictable, safe, meaningful and qualifying life while living in a reception centre. FORUT will contribute to meeting these requirements. The reception centres are run according to government directions and the policy and principles incorporated in FORUT's values and humanitarian basis.

FORUT maintains that all humans have a strong instinct of self-preservation enabling them to care for themselves. Refugees and asylum seekers must not be turned into or regarded as dependent, helpless individuals. FORUT regards them as resourceful people to be treated with respect. Working with them implies that refugees and asylum seekers should be active participants, taking responsibility for making life meaningful while staying at the centre. FORUT's role is to release each person's resources in a process to make life as normal as possible, through information, motivation and organisation.

### **Approaches:**

- Provide (as far as possible) a normal residence for people in an abnormal situation.
- Allow for security and predictability for the asylum seekers within firm structures and routines to empower them to meet with the requirements and expectations of the Norwegian society, while maintaining their own traditions and culture.
- Support the asylum seekers in gaining new or increased trust in other people and public systems and structures, in order to create their own future.
- Give priority to individual skill acquisition and collective participation in centre activities.



## Information and awareness work – development education

*Each year around 900 nursery schools participate in FORUT's campaign for children. In Prestemarka nursery school the children learnt about the everyday life of children in Sri Lanka. They made Sri Lankan food and learnt to dance a Tamil dance. Despite war and poverty, children in Sri Lanka have the same needs as Norwegian children for security, a family, friends and school. Parents and grand parents bought pancakes, chocolate cake and coffee as well as raffle tickets and works of art made by the children. The fund raising gave a result of NOK 5438 for FORUT's projects in Sri Lanka.*

### **Justification:**

The objective for FORUT's information and awareness work (development education) is to enhance people's awareness of poverty and injustice in order to create involvement in and support for FORUT's solidarity work.

Development education is important to trigger change, but also to create acceptance of change. Development education will contribute knowledge and insight about the global challenges we are facing, creating social commitment.

Through development education, FORUT wishes to influence the Norwegian public opinion on development assistance and relevant global issues. Another important issue is to influence public opinion on asylum seekers and other minority groups, in order to facilitate their integration in the Norwegian society. Awareness work has to be started at an early age, and kindergartens and schools are FORUT's main targets in development education.

### **Approaches:**

- Raise the awareness and knowledge about global issues, different cultures, FORUT's project countries, development issues, development co-operation and Norwegian development assistance in general.
- Aim information and communication at decision makers in order to increase the understanding and support for poverty reduction efforts.
- Raise the awareness in Norway about alcohol and drugs as obstacles to development.
- Give voice to poor communities in the South.
- Give voice to refugees in Norway.
- Improve the internal flow of information within the partnership in order to secure a common understanding of FORUT's ideological basis.
- Link fund raising to development education.
- Promote FORUT in Norway.



## Peace and reconciliation

*Two decades of conflict in Sri Lanka has induced deep wounds in people and communities in every part of the island. The cycle of violence must be broken. A deep-rooted distrust in the intentions and sincerity of the opposite party must be overcome. Recognising that people from different communities have been literally cut off from each other for all these years, FORUT invited 200 young Sinhalese and Muslims from the southern part of Sri Lanka to visit Mannar in the North. During two days they met with young Tamils, including LTTE members, for talks on peace and reconciliation mixed with a cultural programme.*

### **Justification:**

FORUT's basis in the IOGT movement implies that working for peace is part of the ideological platform and organisational identity. With FORUT's long experience from conflict-torn areas, we recognise the acute need for peace and reconciliation work. At the same time, we also acknowledge the complexity and depth of such conflicts and the limitations in our capacity to make noticeable impact. FORUT will work to involve competent resource persons if the situation allows for it. FORUT's general approach will be to support meetings and dialogue between people on opposite sides of the conflict lines, to develop a peace and reconciliation culture within our own organisation and to encourage development of the same within our partner organisations. FORUT's specific approach will be to organise interventions that explicitly aim to reduce conflict levels and to train in locally based conflict resolution.

### **Approaches:**

- Uphold a FORUT organisation and staff with competence and understanding of the dynamics of peace and reconciliation work. Encourage the same within partner organisations.
- Arrange intra-communal, cross-conflict meetings and dialogue.
- Arrange workshops in conflict resolution and reconciliation at local levels.
- Support local, national and international networks and initiatives to foster peace.



# Principles

## Partnership

All activities should be guided by the principle of upholding the human dignity of the people and groups who are partners in the process.

- Mutual respect. For a partnership to work it is vital that the relationship is based on mutual respect. This indicates that we will strive to counterbalance the inequalities in a donor-recipient relationship. There should be a partnership where FORUT and the partner organisation are working towards common goals.
- Democracy, transparency and participation. For such a partnership to be healthy it is necessary to have transparency about intentions, modus operandi, organisational structure and priorities and possible alternative agendas. FORUT will establish partnership with organisations based on a participatory and democratic principle.
- Clarity of roles, responsibilities and type of relationship are necessary guidelines to achieve a good working relationship with partners.
- Building networks. FORUT will in addition to its working partners also strive to build a network of other NGOs and agencies with similar interest in development, alcohol and drugs, and other fields.
- Principles for fundraising. FORUT's fundraising towards the public in Norway shall be guided by the principle of upholding the human dignity of the people and groups on whose behalf the funds are being raised. The information messages encapsulated in the fundraising activities should be based on factual knowledge and aimed at promoting tolerance, humanitarianism, open-mindedness, a sense of global responsibility and human rights.





*In The Gambia FORUT aims to provide better living conditions for women, youth and children by giving them access to opportunities and resources in the rural areas where resources are scarce. In the areas of Kerewan and Farafenni on the North Bank FORUT's projects target women. By constructing wells and supporting purchases of electric mills the laborious process of preparing food is simplified and women save time in doing their daily chores. Micro credit through savings and loans and literacy courses present women with opportunities for small scale business and access to information. Health centres and vegetable gardening secure primary health care and food supply and represent security for women, youth and children.*

## Mobilising local resources

A guiding principle in development activities is mobilising local resources, as opposed to a service delivery model.

We believe there is a potential for development everywhere. FORUT wants to be a starting motor, strengthening people's faith in their own power and capabilities. We want to do this in respect of local knowledge.

- Local resources increase the development impact of the intervention and secure sustainability.
- Aid alone does not solve the problems, but starts a process.
- Only the people themselves can genuinely achieve their own liberation and development.
- Recipient responsibility is distinctly different from charity, prevents dependency of aid, creates ownership, has a greater chance for relevant interventions and facilitates adapting to a cultural context.
- Development activities means working as a catalyst by releasing the inherent potential instead of coming in and doing the job.



## Sustainability

FORUT will only initiate new interventions and projects after a thorough analysis of the prospects for sustainability. We will be clear about what kind of sustainability should be achieved, and by which deadlines. In this analysis it is necessary to distinguish between different types and aspects of sustainability:

- Institutional sustainability – FORUT projects should contribute to capacity building and strengthening of the institutions involved.
- Economic and financial sustainability – FORUT should aim at becoming superfluous during the project period.
- Socio-cultural sustainability – FORUT projects should always take the local cultural setting into account, but also challenge it when necessary.
- Environmental sustainability – FORUT projects should not be environmentally harmful.

## Gender awareness and sensitivity

In many cultures and societies there is an imbalance in power sharing and responsibilities between men and women. Women often lack access to decision-making processes, opportunities and resources. The workload within a family is in many cases unevenly distributed. Girls and boys may not be given the same opportunities and are treated unequally.

For the reasons listed above, it is of vital importance that all development initiatives are designed and executed in such a way that discriminating inequalities between the sexes are reduced and not reinforced. FORUT's work should, accordingly, reflect sound gender awareness and be sensitive to gender-related issues that can obstruct or damage the development process.

FORUT will integrate the concern for women in most activities. This implies for example that for each intervention or project the consequences for women will have to be assessed. The assessment will be used to adjust the approach of the intervention.



*At FORUT Senegal's Media Centre in Dakar, young people learn to use information and communication tools, such as film production and computers, to work for change and development in their country. Using participatory methods of research in communities, organising meetings and discussions with people in the suburbs and in rural areas on topics that will contribute to increased knowledge of their economic, social, cultural and political environment are strategies used to train youth. Knowledge and competence are reinvested through communication for social change in general, and to prevent alcohol and drug abuse. Providing an alternative information channel to public broadcasting as well as working together with the authorities is an important role for NGOs in safeguarding democracy and human rights.*

## Human rights

FORUT's vision is a world in peace and without poverty, where all are secured human rights and social justice. We adhere to the idea of human rights as being universal, inalienable and indivisible, founded on the belief that all human beings have a right to human dignity. In this sense the value of human dignity is the basis for all of FORUT's work.

We view the fulfillment of human rights both as a prerequisite for attaining peace and social justice, and as a final goal in itself. FORUT supports and works according to the principles of international conventions and legal frameworks on human rights.

In addition to the Human Rights Convention of 1948 these conventions are for example the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the UN Declaration on the Right to Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These serve to legitimize our work as well as providing us with tools for empowering people. Through information and advocacy we will support civil society in general and vulnerable groups in particular in voicing their demands for human rights.

- Inform and educate about human rights.
- Support civil society in advocating for human rights in relation to authorities and decision makers.
- Be part of networks promoting human rights, on national as well as regional and international levels.
- Promote exchange of information and experience among our partners, especially in working for children's rights, women's rights and the rights of refugees.



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