

PRESENTATION



With the aim of seeking out different perspectives and dealing with subjects of a specialized nature, Conectas Human Rights has been creating partnerships with non-governmental human rights organizations in diverse parts of the world. In this issue of *Sur – International Human Rights Journal*, which is principally focused on access to medicines, a new cooperative partnership was formed with the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association – ABIA.

Founded in 1987, it is the mission of ABIA to promote access to treatment and assistance to persons living with HIV and AIDS. Along these lines, ABIA has been monitoring public policies and developing projects regarding education, prevention, and access to information about HIV/AIDS. ABIA has also been coordinating the Working Group on Intellectual Property of the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples – GTPI – REBRIP, in order to enrich and enlarge the debate over the harmful impacts of the rigid rules regarding intellectual property in the area of access to essential medicines, in addition to contributing to the construction of alternatives to the present model.

This eighth issue of the *Sur Journal* is divided into two parts: the first specifically examines access to medicines, while the second deals with questions that evaluate the present state of human rights in general.

Beginning with the discussion over access to medicines, the main problems related to the often conflicting interaction between human rights and international trade are debated. Those questions deal with the conflict between the human right to health and the protection of pharmaceutical innovations; efforts at making businesses responsible and breaking away from the protective framework initially confined to the sphere of the State; and the developing of the public debate over the political use of judicial power.

In the article by Chaves, Vieira and Reis the system for the protection of intellectual property is discussed, taking as a starting point the situation in Brazil. The relevance of the Brazilian case is based on Brazil's adoption of a policy of universal access to medicines for the treatment of AIDS as well as its recent adoption of a compulsory license for the supply of antiretroviral medicines. The model of universal access and the adoption of a compulsory license represent important benchmarks for the recognition of the preference of human rights over economic interests. The article also presents the main action strategies adopted by a Brazilian group of activists that has had a profound effect on the area. The description of these strategies is important because it enhances the possibility of exchanging experiences with other activist groups in the South.

In the article by Pogge, the author discusses the argument that patents stimulate pharmaceutical innovation. For the author, this system strengthens monopolies and the

concentration of research on the symptoms, and not the causes, of chronic illnesses. At the same time the treatment of specific illnesses of poorer populations is relegated to a secondary position because it is less profitable, thus increasing the rate of avoidable deaths. The author goes beyond simply spelling out the problem. He presents a proposal that would complement the patent system: a Health Impact Fund, financed by governments. This Fund would stimulate the development of new medicines with the promise of re-compensating successful innovators in proportion to the impact of the medicine on the global burden of illness.

The article by Hunt and Khosla deals with the responsibility of pharmaceutical businesses, along with the presentation of normative guidelines for health rights. In this sense, the article written by the Rapporteur of the United Nations on the right to health could be interpreted almost as “soft law”, assisting in the structuring of this right in regard to the access to medicines.

In the last article of this first part of the Journal, which was authored by Contesse and Lovera, the question of access to medicines is analyzed beginning with individual cases that depict the perspective of those that lack access to medicines in Chile. The authors show how the litigation process can be used politically to create a public debate to sensitize the executive and legislative branches of the government to enact new public policies.

In the second part of this issue of the Sur Journal, the following issues are discussed: the justiciability of economic, social, and cultural rights (Cavallaro and Brewer); the growing consolidation of sexual rights as autonomous rights (Mattar); the participatory preparation and adoption of a new international treaty on rights of persons with disabilities (Dhanda); and the challenges that have to be overcome by non-governmental human rights organizations (Abregu).

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Finally, we would like to announce that the next edition of Sur Journal will be a special issue in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The next issue will be published in partnership with the *International Service for Human Rights*.