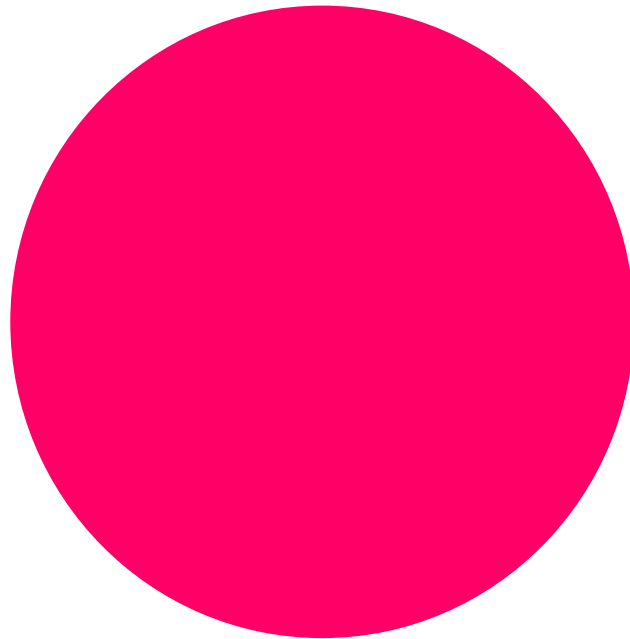


Misean Cara Learning Brief No. 2017/05

# Tangible Rights

Lessons from Misean Cara Human Rights Project  
Evaluations 2015 - 2016



## Introduction

In development circles, one occasionally encounters the notion that human rights are intangible and, consequently, difficult to measure and report on. In the past five years, Misesan Cara has supported over 200 human rights projects to a total value of more than €11.6m. This Learning Brief examines the outputs from evaluations of six human rights projects using Misesan Cara funding, working at local, national and international levels, and identifies instances where having and asserting a right makes a real and tangible difference in the lives of people in developing countries.

## Background

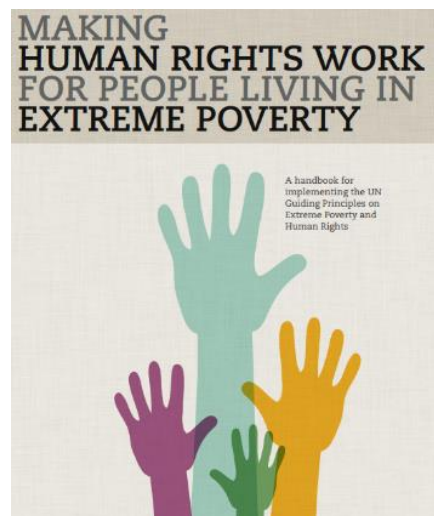
In 2015 and 2016, Misesan Cara commissioned evaluation work on a number of human rights projects which it supports. In 2015, two globally-focussed human rights advocacy projects, based in Geneva and implemented by Franciscans International and Edmund Rice International, underwent effectiveness reviews. The work was done by a team from Coffey International (UK) led by Peter Mayers with in-country assistance from Aoife Murray and Raul Gonzalez. Two projects in Peru, implemented through the Columbans, were the subjects in 2016 of impact evaluations by Brian Pratt and Vanessa Rojas from INTRAC, with assistance from Sandra Rodriguez. Finally, in 2016, Nicole Moran and Lakshmi Raman carried out full evaluations of five women's empowerment projects in India, two of which had a particular human rights focus.

## Global linkages – from the Philippines and Kenya to Switzerland, and back

The implementers of both projects reviewed in 2015, Franciscans International (FI) and Edmund Rice International (ERI), share office space in Geneva and are linked in to a worldwide network of missionary work which informs their advocacy and lobbying activities at the level of the United Nations. FI is linked to more than 100 Franciscan groups in over 50 countries, while ERI has an Advocacy Coordinator in 15 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Through the two projects, the worldwide reach of missionary organisations is contributing to lobbying work at the level of the United Nations. In return, the Geneva offices provide advice and training on how to gather evidence and prepare advocacy interventions from the community level, which ultimately result in

positive change in people's lives. There is also a high degree of networking at the Geneva level. In addition to the arrangement with ERI, FI has established formalised partnerships with the Foundation for Marist Solidarity International, the Franciscan Action Network. Both ERI and FI are members of the NGO Mining Working Group.

*“A key success factor for both [Geneva] projects has been their ability to link with other stakeholders and leverage the power of their respective networks. At the Geneva level, projects have been able to make a range of formal alliances and coalitions to suit a multitude of purposes depending on the nature of the advocacy objective. This has included, for example, lobbying the Permanent Missions of different states to submit recommendations on behalf of these projects as part of a specific Universal Periodic Review submission”.*  
Coffey, 2015



Franciscans International produced the 'Make Human Rights Work' handbook to help their partners take action for human rights. Photo: Franciscans International.

## 1. Mining in the Philippines

Franciscans International is a global network of the Franciscan Family. It evolved out of a desire on the part of the Franciscan order, dating back to the late 1980s, to be more active in advocacy and human rights issues. FI's presence in Geneva dates back to 1989. The evaluation found that FI's work is credited, by external stakeholders, with contributing to the establishment of a resolution to create an internationally binding

instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, Franciscan Sr. Minerva Caampued, who had received training in the human rights of indigenous peoples, was helping the elders of the indigenous Agta community, on the island of Santa Ana in Cagayan, to assert their rights when half of their island was taken over by a reality TV series. Sr. Minerva was also central to the establishment of the Federation of Environmental Advocates in Cagayan (FEAC), a group which campaigned successfully for the cessation of black sand mining in the area and which is now advocating against proposed offshore mining concessions.

## 2. Kenya's Universal Periodic Review

Edmund Rice International established an advocacy presence in Geneva in 2008. It has a particular focus on the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process<sup>2</sup>, but its work has expanded to include treaty body work and special procedures. ERI also delivers training in Geneva to selected members of congregations from its nine target provinces. In Kenya, the Edmund Rice Advocacy Network (ERAN) advocates on a range of issues including child rights, human rights & peacebuilding, and earth rights. Both ERI and ERAN choose advocacy initiatives based on issues identified by the groups and communities with whom they work. ERAN and ERI worked together on the preparation of a submission on the Kenya Universal Periodic Review, and succeeded in having a number of recommendations accepted by the Kenyan Government. At a local level, training provided to ERAN Child Rights Prefects in Nairobi enabled them to identify cases of child abuse in their communities and act on them.

*"a number of recommendations submitted by these projects to Kenya as part of the UPR submission were accepted by the Government of Kenya. The Kenyan Government then forwarded these recommendations to the Kenya Human Rights Commission, which has been assigned powers to implement them."*  
Coffey, 2015



In Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, Nairobi, Kenya, Youth Ambassadors take part in a Youth for Peace soccer tournament organised by the Edmund Rice Advocacy Network (ERAN). ERAN is a faith-based organisation operating in East Africa under the auspices of Misesan Cara member organisation Edmund Rice Development. Photo: ERAN.

## 3. Local Rights – Safe Spaces for Children in Peru

The population of the Peruvian capital, Lima, has just passed the 10 million mark and continues to rise, with migration from rural areas contributing significantly to this growth. Almost 80% of the population of the country is now urbanised, as people seek employment opportunities and better services. Such is the rate of in-migration, however, that service provision has struggled to keep pace, while the expansion of Lima itself has resulted in long commutes from the periphery in to the centres of employment.

Both of the children's rights projects that were the subject of an impact evaluation in 2016 are located in districts in the Cono Norte area of Lima. Many families in the project areas are first-generation migrants to the city, and their children are growing up in a precarious environment. Parents are absent for long periods, commuting to work in the city, leading to children being neglected and exposed to the dangers of abuse. Indeed, one of the projects identified as a key problem the absence of parents and other adults from children's lives. The two projects have evolved over the years to address the needs of children in different ways. Warmi Huasi works in the San Benito area of Carabayllo District, promoting children's rights by empowering children through active citizenship. St. Bernadette's (*Santa Bernardita*) is located in the San Martín de Porres area and provides a broad range of child-centred services. While adopting different operational approaches, both projects start from the same point of placing the rights of the child at the centre of all they do.

<sup>1</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council, June 2014

<sup>2</sup> Introduced in 2008, the UPR is a mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council, whereby the human rights performance of each of the 193

member states are examined periodically. It is the first international human rights mechanism to address all countries and all human rights.

## a. Warmi Huasi

At its inception in 1997, the Columban project Warmi Huasi (“Women’s House” in Quechua) focussed on working with mothers, and particularly with single, working mothers. From 2009 onwards, the focus shifted to children between the ages of six and 12. The activities of the project include a weekend literacy club, weekday homework clubs, family counselling (through home visits) and running a number of small libraries. The core of the project, however, is a Children’s Organisation (independent of Warmi Huasi) set up to represent the interests of children in San Benito. The aim is to give expression to children’s rights at three levels – within the children themselves, within the family unit, and within society in general. The evaluation found that change was evident at all three levels:

- Children interviewed demonstrated an engagement with the notion of children’s rights, and were able to identify three particular rights as of primary importance: the right to have an opinion, the right to play, and the right to an education.
- Change within the family unit is promoted also through the home counselling visits. Children, with increased confidence and the belief they can hold and express an opinion, have contested their parents’ use of physical punishment, while parents have been encouraged to consider alternative sanctions, such as the removal of privileges.
- In the public sphere, the Children’s Organisation has been recognised by the local Municipality, enabling it to engage formally with the authorities in the promotion of its constituents’ interests. One of the areas of lobbying is around the provision of safe public spaces in which children can play.

*“They told us more about our right to free expression, our right to an opinion”*  
Warmi Huasi participant, 14 years old



The children of Warmi Huasi celebrate the International Right to Play Day 2017. Photo: Harry Shier.

## b. Santa Bernardita

The Santa Bernardita project was set by the Columbans in 1996 as a centre providing safe spaces for children whose parents were out working all day, or where childcare services were absent, or where public recreation spaces were unsafe. The original centre, *La Casa del Niño y la Niña*, has grown into a four-storey building providing recreational, educational and therapeutic support. Other services provided by the Santa Bernardita Association evolved in response to needs in the area. *La Casa Hogar*, established in 2004, provides a refuge for children, referred by the state court system, who have been sexually abused; *La Escuelita* (The Little School) was founded in 2007 to cater for children with learning difficulties who were struggling in the formal education system; and a community outreach service seeks to promote children’s rights, initially through the schools in the local area.

The core principle underlying Santa Bernardita’s work is *freedom with responsibility*, encapsulating a rights-based approach aimed at developing a child’s ability to build their own character. The work of each of the different projects is inspired by articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Overall, the project sees its work in terms of inter-generational change and has set itself long-term goals around changing socio-cultural habits in relation to child rearing and treatment.

The evaluation found that children reached by the project were familiar with the concept of children’s rights, and were able to identify as most important the right to play, the right to education and the right to protection.

*The Santa Bernardita approach, from the children’s point of view, can best be summed up as: “We have the right. We take the responsibility. We receive the freedom.”*

## 4. Women’s Empowerment in India

The five projects in India that received full evaluations in 2016 fell into the overall category of women’s empowerment (social, economic and political), with project content having varying degrees of human rights, income generation & livelihoods, health, or education work. Such project content is consistent with the holistic view of the person inherent in the missionary development approach. The two projects

considered for this Learning Brief showed more explicit objectives in relation to human rights, though neither was exclusive in this regard.

*“As a victim of gender discrimination at home, I learnt a lot in this project and I understood the concepts of trafficking and legal mechanisms ... and I realise that no-one should go through such discrimination as I experienced”*  
GSS Staff member, 2016

One project, implemented by the Good Shepherd Sisters, targets rights holders (including women, adolescent girls and child labourers) and duty bearers (including policy-makers, police and government officials) in an effort to highlight and prevent human trafficking. As a result of training delivered by the project, there was an increase, over 2012-13, of 60% in the number of cases of trafficking or abuse being referred to the relevant authorities. Training was also provided to key stakeholders such as the police and the media, which resulted in a higher public profile for the issues of abuse and trafficking, and led to more informed and more proactive action on the part of the police.

The second project, with the Salesian Sisters in Tamil Nadu, works with children, girls and women at risk of exploitation, abuse and the denial of opportunity, especially through early school drop-out, bonded child labour, and early and/or forced marriage. Working through a network of local NGOs, the Sisters run public awareness-raising campaigns in schools, reaching over 23,000 children in five months of 2016. Linking in with the development programme of the local Diocese, the project does further awareness raising with women's self-help groups. The Sisters also operate a shelter for girls in distress, referred to them by the police or social services. Twenty-seven girls were able to avail of the services of this shelter between July and October 2016. The high standing of the Sisters in the local community is of considerable benefit to the project. For example, a local builder gave up an Rs.60m (€830,000) opportunity in order to take up the Sisters' school building project (of far lower value) because he did not like the former's unethical practices and admired the Sisters for their honesty and service-orientation.

*The project can teach a lesson or two in terms of managing relationships with government agencies, local businessmen and NGOs.*  
Moran & Raman, 2016

## Lessons Learned

All the projects described in this Learning Brief are concerned with making rights real in people's lives. In Peru, the projects are giving concrete expression to children's rights in securing safe spaces for children to spend time studying, relaxing or playing. Children themselves are asserting their rights and promoting behavioural and attitudinal change in the family, in the community and at the level of local authorities. The advocacy work of the two projects based in Geneva is informed by the lived reality of poor and marginalised people across the globe. The projects in India honour the right to personal freedom through the prevention of human trafficking and abuse.

All the projects start by recognising the denial of rights, and work for change in that respect. It is clear from the work of the projects that, for transformation in people's lives, advocacy for structural change is essential. This advocacy must be rooted in the reality of marginalised communities but also linked to a sophisticated and professional approach, where the compelling story of an individual is complemented by sound data and statistics.

Points of particular note that were highlighted by the evaluation work include:

- The human rights sphere is not the exclusive preserve of adults. Children can understand the concepts involved, and engage meaningfully in campaigning for their own rights.
- If you work with children, you have to work also with the adults in their lives, so that parents and guardians are able to cope with and further encourage the change in children's behaviour. Cultural, attitudinal and behavioural change are often inter-generational.
- Family visits can also be an effective way of engaging men, who might otherwise opt not to get involved in project initiatives.
- Linked to the foregoing, working with the adults in a child's life means working with both women and men, if change is to be secured and not transitory.
- The evolving nature of the interventions in Peru, in response to changing circumstances and new knowledge in the project areas, testifies to the continuing relevance of the work being done. The willingness to change in response to community feedback about local needs has won confidence and trust.
- Specific and intensive mentoring support to women with the potential for leadership can contribute to collective action and promote political empowerment.

- For successful advocacy and lobbying work, being physically present and able to meet and make connections with potential allies is key.
- Building alliances with project stakeholders, while not compromising the independence of the project, can bring real benefits and results.

Areas where one or other of the projects encountered particular challenges included the following:

- For advocacy-based projects, capturing the process of influence and change from grassroots to policy level, and back, requires time and effort. But a systematic investment in project monitoring & learning will pay dividends when communicating with a project's supporters.
- The success of a project can be over-dependent on the political will of the person in charge of a particular institution with which the project has a working alliance. The departure of such a person can result in a lessening of collaboration.

- When scheduling training, it's important to consider the gender needs of the participant group, so as not to create an unintended barrier to access.

## Projects

The projects were:

- Franciscans International Advocacy Project, Geneva, Switzerland & the Philippines.
- Edmund Rice International Advocacy Project, Geneva, Switzerland & Kenya.
- Warmi Hausi, Columbans, Lima, Peru.
- Santa Bernardita Association, Columbans, Lima, Peru.
- Tackling Trafficking and Exploitation of Vulnerable Women, Good Shepherd Sisters, Andhra Pradesh, India.
- Empowerment of Children, Women and Girls, Salesian Sisters, Tamil Nadu, India.

## About Misesan Cara

Established in 2004, Misesan Cara is an international and Irish faith-based missionary development movement made up of 90 member organisations working in over 50 countries. We work with some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in developing countries. Adopting a human rights focus, we support communities addressing basic needs in the areas of education, health, and livelihoods, as well as advocating for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. At times of humanitarian crisis, the trusted and long-term presence of missionaries in affected communities also allows for rapid, efficient and targeted responses.

Misesan Cara and our members work collectively and individually through the missionary approach to development. This framework is based on five values: respect, justice, commitment, compassion and integrity. Together, these establish the basis for the approach of missionaries to good development practice.

Our Strategy 2017-2021 identifies five goals:

- Uphold the right to quality education
- Uphold the right to better health, clean water and sanitation
- Uphold the right to sustainable livelihoods
- Uphold and advocate for human rights
- Enhance and promote the missionary approach to development.

Further expressing our desire to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, the Strategy will see Misesan Cara bringing a particular focus to bear on targeting five groups: women, children, refugees, displaced people and people with disabilities.

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