

'Eat' democracy

From Page 19

While acknowledging that democracy cannot not be uniform throughout the world, delegates cautioned against poverty being used as an excuse by totalitarian regimes that did not uphold human rights.

A participant from India said democracy would be better understood in that country if people could 'eat' it. There was a need for the poorest and powerless to understand that voting could make a difference and that democracy could deliver tangible benefits.

It was seen as important for those working in African countries to understand that certain traditions were, in fact, intrinsically democratic.

There was also a need to create conceptual links between cultural rights, human rights and democracy. The articulation of democracy should take place at all levels of society, but more so in the workplace, schools, families and institutions where ordinary people interacted.

If people were not reached at these levels, democracy would not succeed. It was suggested that the concept of tolerance would

be better understood if replaced by the word 'acceptance'. Tolerance in some cultures had negative connotations.

Three commissions that ran throughout the conference looked at formal and non-formal education for human rights and democracy, as well as how this education could take place in specific contexts and difficult situations.

It was noted that in most African countries and in some countries of the south, human rights and democracy remained a debate among academics whereas the poor, the powerless and the illiterate needed to be drawn into the debate and process of realising democracy.

It was suggested that specific attention be given to training judges, police and those holding political power in the principles of human rights and democracy.

In many countries women were the first teachers of human rights to children, yet these women were often the victims of human rights abuses themselves and they too needed support.

It was felt that funds should be made available through Unesco and governments for developing human rights and democracy teaching materials.

The commission dealing with education in situations where human rights were endangered recommended that particular attention be paid to vulnerable groups as well as potential and actual violators to prevent abuses and protect the vulnerable. Specific groups which should be assisted included women, children, indigenous peoples, refugees and 'internally disabled' persons (political prisoners, minorities, migrant workers and people with HIV or Aids).

For me the congress confirmed that those in South Africa who are involved in education for democracy and human rights are in step with world trends. The teaching of tolerance or acceptance, democratic behaviour and attitude change, election and voter education are their priorities.

Those of us who participated in the congress were able to introduce South African issues in the discussions. It is far too easy for the world to forget about this country and it is crucial to maintain international links at various levels. One important lesson from the congress is that society is not simply going to become democratic - human rights and democracy will have to be taught.

Lufuno Nevhutalu is a tutor at Idasa's Training Centre for Democracy.

Throughout the country voter education is underway. In some areas materials are already being circulated, elsewhere electoral education campaigns are still being planned. Overarching most efforts is the Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE) to which a range of organisations are affiliated. Here follows a list of some of those organisations.

NATIONAL

IFEE - Pumla Gqirana (011)484-2984, fax (011) 484-2610; **Idasa** - Paul Graham (011)484-3694, Fax 484-2610; **Black Sash** - Sheena Duncan (011)834-8361, Fax 412-1177; **Matla Trust** - Barry Gilder (011)834-5301, Fax 838-1910; **IMPD** - Richard Mkholo (011)837-1393, Fax 339-4832; **Foundation for Democratic Advancement** - Gary Cooney (011)883-3527, Fax 883-3527; **SACC** - Eddie Makue (011)492-1380; Fax 492-1448) **Methodist Church** - Demetris Palos (011)403-4293, Fax 339-3526; **SACBC** - Sean O'Leary (012) 323-6458, Fax 326-6218.

TRANSVAAL

HSRC - Jabu Sindane (011)202-9111, Fax 202-2510; **Imssa** - Vincent Mntambo (011)482-2390, Fax 726-7411; **National**

Development Co-ordinating Committee - Sheila Sisulu (011)834-6865, Fax 834-4955; **Catholic Institute of Education** - Bernie Mullen (011)433-1888, Fax 680-1680; **YWCA** - Joyce Seroke (011) 838-1097, Fax 833-1978; **Foundation for Democratic Advancement** - Wayne Mitchell (011)883-3527, 883-3527; **HAP** - Ntombi Mekgwe (011)337-8716 337-8716; **Idasa Training Centre for Democracy** - Marie-Louise Ström (011)484-3694, Fax 484-2610.

NORTHERN TRANSVAAL
Ecumenical Confessing Fellowship - Zwo Nevhutalu (0159)22804, Fax 23139; **Idasa** - Alice Coetzee (012)342-1476, Fax 433-387; **Centre for Constitutional Analysis** - Bertus de Villiers & Rina du Toit (012)202-9111, Fax 202-2510.

NATAL

Black Sash - Aan Colvin (031)301-9215, Fax 21-0639; **Diakonia** - Ntombifuthi Zondo (031)305-6001; **ICT Resource Centre** - Jane Argall (031)301-8614; **Idasa** - Steven Collins (031)304-8893; **IMPD** - Eric Appelgren (031)304-3863; **Lawyers for Human Rights** - Bess Pillemer (031)307-7022; **Lutheran Church** - Rev Fred von Sintel (031)843-390; **Roman Catholic Church** - Rosemary Cook (031)465-8833; **Roman Catholic Justice & Peace** - Jenny Boyce (031)309-6620; **Sached** - Tshidi Mhlanbo (031)305-6748; **Imssa** - Jerome Ngwenya (031)309-4315; **Community Law Centre** - Jeya Wilson (031)202-7190.

EASTERN TRANSVAAL
Lebombo Catholic Church,

KaNgwane - Sean O'Leary (012)323-6458.

EASTERN CAPE

Eastern Cape Council of Churches - Gift Zokufa (041)57-3029.

WESTERN CAPE

CDS/Cape Town EDF - Michael Weeder (021)959-2151, Fax 959-2317; **Theological Exchange Programme** - Ivan Lloyd (021)696-8347, Fax 696-8349; **Matla Trust** - Ralton Praah (021) 237-857; **Catholic Justice & Peace** - Mike Pothier (021)462-2428.

BORDER

Lawyers for Human Rights - Ntombazana Botha (0431)439168, Fax 439-166.

FREE STATE:

Idasa - Henning Myburgh (051)484-821/2; **Matla Trust** - Thabo Manyone (051)482-483.

Who's who in voter education