Illuminating the paths to a positive future

The Right Livelihood Award

www.rightlivelihood.org
Protecting Environments
Defending Human Rights
Developing Alternatives
Preserving Resources
Fighting Poverty
Holistic Thinking
Supporting Indigenous Peoples
Expressing Solidarity
Forming the Future
Offering Solutions
Projects of Hope
New Delhi, April 17, 2006. It is the 20th day of Medha Patkar’s hunger strike. She is weak, and her blood pressure alarmingly low. But she won’t back down. The Right Livelihood Award Recipient and spokeswoman of the organisation ‘Narmada Bachao Andolan’ will keep on fighting for something that she regards as more important than her own health: the rights and lives of people who are threatened by one of the largest and most controversial dam projects ever – the Narmada dams.

Honouring Courage

The Right Livelihood Award honours people who grow in adversity instead of falling silent. Since 1980, more than 140 such individuals and organisations from over 60 countries have received the Right Livelihood Award or ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’ as it is often called. They work for democracy, peace and justice. They protect nature and save lives – even at the risk of their own. For the Indian villagers, who are still fighting for proper rehabilitation, Medha Patkar is a hero. And for the rest of the world, too: men and women like Medha Patkar and Ken Saro-Wiwa personify our ideals. They represent our highest values and help form our characters. A world without visions and without heroes, who make them come real, is a world without hope. The Right Livelihood Award Laureates are role models, who inspire and encourage us to dare the seemingly impossible.

Oil kills

“The inconveniences which I and the Ogoni suffer, the harassment, arrests, detention, even death itself are a proper price to pay for ending the nightmare of millions of people engulfed by the wasting storms of denigrating poverty on the sea of dehumanization.”

Those were the words of Ken Saro-Wiwa, founder of the Nigerian ‘Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People’ (MOSOP), when he received the Right Livelihood Award in December 1994. The speech was read in his name, because at that time Ken Saro-Wiwa was in jail. Less than one year later, he and eight other members of MOSOP were executed despite international protests. The fight that cost their lives was the Ogoni’s struggle for self-determination and justice, against the destructive consequences of oil production in the Niger Delta. The struggle continues.
Asunción, February 2005. “What the Right Livelihood Award meant to me?” Martín Almada is sitting on the steps to his veranda. Behind him, in his house, there is a showcase. It contains the pincers and other instruments with which he was tortured under the military dictatorship of General Stroessner. In front of him, on the other side of the meadow, sunlight sparkles on the solar cells on his house. “Maybe you should ask: What did the Award mean to my country?”

Martín Almada had been searching for evidence of the torture and state terror under Stroessner’s regime for years, until he finally discovered the so-called ‘Archives of Terror.’ These documents proved the reign of terror in several South-American military dictatorships and played an important role in the case against the Chilean General Pinochet. In 2002, Martín Almada received the Right Livelihood Award for his outstanding courage in bringing torturers to justice, and promoting democracy, human rights and sustainable development. The prize to him strengthened the cause for human rights in Paraguay considerably.

A smile crosses his face. “Stroessner will not return to Paraguay as a free man,” he says. “If he returns, then in chains. This is what the Prize has meant.”

Stroessner never returned to Paraguay. He died in exile in Brazil in 2006, right on the day when Martín Almada opened the ‘Museum of Memory, the Dictatorship and Democracy’ in what was once one of the Stroessner regime’s clandestine torture centres.

Making a Difference

Success for the Right Livelihood Award means winning global attention for the stories of outstanding people who accomplish the extraordinary: developing exemplary answers to the most urgent global challenges. It is a prize for people who walk their talk, who have visions and make them come real against all odds. By protecting such individuals, by providing international recognition and financial support the Right Livelihood Award strengthens their impact – and inspires others to follow their path.
Guerillas, paramilitary, government army – since the 1960s their conflict has brought death and destruction to Colombia, with ordinary people being the main victims. In 1987, after many years of suffering from the violence brought by opposing armed groups, the peasants of the Colombian region of Carare were given four options: side with the military, side with the guerrillas, leave the region or die. But some of them chose a fifth path: They took their fate into their own hands and broke out from the logic of violence by refusing to side with any of the armed groups. Even after their leaders were assassinated, they did not back down and immediately elected new ones. Armed with an unshakeable commitment to non-violence, the ‘Association of Peasant Farm Workers of Carare’ (ATCC) started to rebuild their region.

Catalyzing Change

ATCC have described how, when they previously wanted to visit a ministry as poor farmers, they were stopped before they could even enter the building. After they received the Right Livelihood Award, the minister himself stood waiting on the doorsteps when they came. And this is what the Award is about: opening doors.

“We can change the world for the better. Just the fact that the Right Livelihood Award exists and whom it has honoured, has motivated many people to follow the Recipients’ examples – in their personal environment, regional, national or international. Thus, the Prize has contributed to more sustainability and justice – for humanity, the planet and our fellow creatures.”

Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner
Honorary President, Club of Rome

Redesigning Economics

Today, Egyptian cotton is to a great extent pesticide-free. This is due to the SEKEM initiative, a business model for the 21st century, which was founded by Ibrahim Abouleish to meet educational, cultural and environmental needs. Organic products, herbal remedies, educational programmes, health care, an academy for science and arts – at SEKEM, ecological, social and cultural life go hand in hand with commercial success.
In 2002, Martin Green received the Right Livelihood Award for his dedication and outstanding success in the harnessing of solar energy, the key technological challenge of our age. Since the early 1980s, a time when most people doubted the efficiency of solar cell technology, Martin Green has shown that the challenge of creating a future based on renewable energy can be met. Since then, he has been at the forefront of the development and improvement of photovoltaic technology. It is clear that current energy policies and patterns of energy use are a major cause of global conflict, insecurity and destabilisation of the climate. If it was not for people like Martin Green, who looked and worked ahead while others remained stuck in the past, we would still not know that alternative energy paths are not only possible, but effective, too.

Finding Solutions

The Right to Water ...

... is the right to live. Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke were among the first to realise the risks of water privatisation. They decided to counter the growing corporate control of water by putting the issue onto the agenda of NGOs, governments and people world-wide. Thanks to their work, Uruguay adopted a constitutional amendment by referendum in 2004. It declared access to water and sanitation to be a fundamental human right, and that, in the creation of water policies, social and ecological considerations must take precedence over economic profits. Six years later, in 2010, the UN General Assembly with a majority of 122 states agreed to a resolution declaring the human right to “safe and clean drinking water and sanitation”.

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation honours those who find solutions to today’s most important challenges. It does not believe that technology can cure everything, but holds a more balanced perception of what we need and what works. Right Livelihood means that each person should follow an honest occupation that respects other people and the natural world. It implies responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Thus, the solutions the Right Livelihood Award Foundation honours are not short-term fixes, which pass on the real problems to future generations. The Right Livelihood Award rewards those addressing the roots of a global problem, not just its symptoms. The Foundation’s task is to find people like Martin Green and to spread their knowledge and support their work – for why should we continue living with problems we can solve?
In 2010, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation invited all Prize Recipients to a conference commemorating its 30th anniversary. The conference’s guiding motto was: Changing Course – Reclaiming our Future.

In response to the invitation, some 80 Laureates convened in Bonn, Germany, to share experiences and ideas, and to launch joint initiatives. Professors from Africa, spiritual leaders from Asia, environmentalists, representatives of farmers’ and landless’ movements, entrepreneurs, and human rights activists – during the conference they met with experts, students, and the public. They all shared the same goal: to change course.

Celebrating Diversity

As diverse as the faces of the Award are the projects they stand for. The Laureates work for social justice and human rights, for peace and disarmament, for minority rights, for the protection of the environment and for human development – from cultural and spiritual renewal to science and technology for the benefit of all.

The Right Livelihood Award does not know any categories. In striving to meet the challenges of today’s world, the Prize recognises that the most inspiring and remarkable work often defies any standard classification.

“The Right Livelihood Award aims to help the North find a wisdom to match its science, and the South to find a science to match its ancient wisdom.”

Jakob von Uexkull
Founder and Co-Chair, Right Livelihood Award Foundation

Music against Poverty

When José Antonio Abreu takes up his baton, he does not forget about the world outside the concert halls. It stays right next to him – in the children, the youths who come from Venezuela’s streets and poorest neighbourhoods and find a future in the orchestras Maestro Abreu founded. A vocation far away from the drugs, poverty and crime, which would otherwise be part of their daily lives.

Development work, human rights, poverty alleviation and conflict healing do not normally represent a musician’s successes. But Maestro Abreu is no ordinary musician. He knows that the poor need to overcome cultural as well as material poverty if they are to create lives with new hope, meaning and joy.
The Cessna takes a bend to the right and turns east. Ole von Uexkull looks over his shoulder and onto the brown band of the Xingu river that cuts through the endless green of the Brazilian rain forest. Ole is Executive Director of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation and responsible for researching the candidates proposed for the Award. During the next three days, he will interview the nominee, as well as independent contacts and critics: indigenous people, settlers, journalists, the heads of the local school and healthcare departments. It is only by listening to different views and opinions that a reliable account of a candidate can be built up.

“Thorough research is the basis for our credibility. If we made one mistake in selecting our Recipients, it would not only cause damage to the Foundation but to all Laureates. We cannot rely on nice brochures or impressive titles, or even other awards – we investigate the candidates ourselves, often with personal visits. This is the only way we can be sure that a candidate qualifies for the Right Livelihood Award.”

Ole von Uexkull, Executive Director
Right Livelihood Award Foundation

Proposals for the Award

Neither a ringing name nor money alone makes an award. An award is as good as its recipients. For the Right Livelihood Award the issue is not a person’s position or job title, it is what they have done and seem likely to do in the future. Anyone can be proposed by anyone else for a Right Livelihood Award, irrespective of status, education and origin.

The open proposal process helps the Foundation find out which problems are perceived as most urgent worldwide and to sense new trends and developments.

Over a hundred proposals for individuals and organisations from five continents are annually sent to the Foundation. After careful research by the Foundation’s staff – sometimes in the most remote parts of the planet – the international jury selects the recipients. The jury members come from different regions, professions and fields of expertise. Their composition changes with every year. Recent years’ jurors have included high UN officials, civil society activists, politicians, scientists and former ambassadors.

Science for People

For a professor in physics and director of a high-profile scientific institution the path to awards and honours seems predestined. But Hans-Peter Dürr did not receive the Right Livelihood Award for his research in nuclear physics and on elementary particles, but for his commitment to peace and disarmament and the peaceful uses of high technology. As a quintessential transdisciplinarian, he remains active in many fields: from philosophy and spirituality via the ethics of science to ecology and energy policy.

Hans-Peter Dürr has built bridges between science’s ivory towers and society in order to ensure that our skills and technologies are used for us – not against us.

Holistic Thinking
What is Development?

"Why am I here? Because my people love their land, and without it we are dying. Many years ago, the president of Botswana said we could live on our ancestral land forever. We never needed anyone to tell us that. Of course we can live where God created us! But the next president said we must move and began forcing us away. (...)"

"I say what kind of development is it when the people live shorter lives than before? Our children are beaten in school. Some become prostitutes. They fight because they are bored and get drunk. They are starting to commit suicide. We never saw that before. It hurts to say this. Is this ‘development?’"

Roy Sesana, Botswana
In his acceptance speech 2005

A story of Africa, of desert and the desperate fight of a people for their ancestral land and the right to practise their own culture. But today is no day of despair for Roy Sesana and his organisation ‘First People of the Kalahari.’ It is a day of hope. For the Award, which the Bushmen receive, will help them continue their struggle – in their country’s courts and under the eyes of the world.

The Award Ceremony

Each year in December, the Prize Recipients – usually four – come to Stockholm to receive the Right Livelihood Awards in the Swedish Parliament. The prize money per Laureate is 50,000 € (2011). Often an Honorary Award goes to a person or organisation, whose work the jury wishes to recognise but who is not primarily in need of monetary support.

"I was already quite old, when I received the Prize. This means I had a very long fight behind me. There is also a long fight ahead of me. The Prize came in the midst of this fight."

Uri Avnery, Israel
RLA 2001

Supporting Indigenous Peoples

Stockholm, December 9, 2005. The Second Chamber of the Swedish Parliament is packed. Ambassadors, parliamentarians, journalists and pupils listen silently to the ancient music from the Kalahari. It is a song about a tribe’s ancestors, but today it is filled with a modern appeal to the Government of Botswana: “Let our people stay!”
In 2010, Austrian-born Erwin Kräutler received the Right Livelihood Award for his lifetime of work for the human and environmental rights of indigenous people in Brazil. Dom Erwin is a catholic bishop. He has fought a long battle against the highly controversial Belomonte dam that threatens the life and the livelihoods of people in the Amazon region. His commitment has made him defy powerful economic interests – one of the main reasons why he lives under constant protection. In his work, Dom Erwin often crosses paths with other Right Livelihood Award Laureates in Brazil: with the Pastoral Land Commission, CPT, with the liberation theologian Leonardo Boff and the founder of the World Social Forum, Chico Whitaker, whose petition for a nuclear energy phase-out Kräutler supported.

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation’s main purpose is to bestow an award. But its commitment goes beyond a nice certificate and the transfer of the prize money. The Right Livelihood Award Foundation is dedicated to supporting its Laureates even after the prize ceremony: It works to promote their projects, to protect the Laureates from harm, and connects them with each other so that they can draw strength from their network and mutual exchange.

More than just a prize

To fulfil these objectives, the Foundation invests in communications and press work about the Award Recipients. Every year, media and organisations around the globe report about the Laureates and make their projects of hope known to an increasing number of people. Also, the Laureates gain mutual support, solidarity and inspiration from their Right Livelihood Award network. In recent years, for instance, they have signed joint appeals to national governments to phase out nuclear energy and nuclear weapons or to protect indigenous peoples. Just as important as such practical support is the experience for the Laureates that they are not alone in their fights, but connected with a large group of like-minded people around the world.

Expressing Solidarity
The Right Livelihood College answers the wish of many Laureates not only to have their work publicised but to ensure that their knowledge will live on. The College is meant to build a bridge between universities and Award Recipients, whether they hold an academic title or position or not. The Laureates’ vast experience is a treasure that needs to be preserved and multiplied. It is exactly this task that is at the heart of the Right Livelihood College.

The Right Livelihood College

The College was founded in 2009 at the University of Penang in Malaysia. Soon, other university institutes became additional campuses of the college: the University of Bonn (Germany) with its Center for Development Research, the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (Sweden), and the University of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

The Right Livelihood College campuses are independent but cooperate closely with the global secretariat in Penang and the Right Livelihood Award Foundation in Stockholm. Their various activities aim at research, teaching, participation and outreach. The campuses offer scholarships for PhD students who want to intensively study the work of Right Livelihood Award Recipients; they invite Laureates to give lectures; and organise seminars and days of action.

Pioneers & Multipliers

Anwar Fazal is one of the earliest Recipients of the Right Livelihood Award, and co-founder and director of the Right Livelihood College. After having worked all his life to build civil society movements, especially in the field of consumer rights, he became professor at the University of Penang. About the College he says:

"The Right Livelihood College aims to be five things – a hub, a catalyst, an incubator, a multiplier and an accelerator of links between universities and the work of laureates. An interactive link between academics and activists."
The Right Livelihood Award Foundation

Over 30 years ago, Jakob von Uexkull approached the Nobel Foundation with the suggestion that it should establish two new awards, one for ecology and one relevant to the lives of the poor. He offered to contribute financially but his proposal was turned down. He then decided to set up the Right Livelihood Awards and provided the initial funding. In 1980, the first Right Livelihood Awards were bestowed in a rented hall. Five years later followed the invitation to present them in the Swedish Parliament. During this time, the public began referring to the Award as the “Alternative Nobel Prize”.

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation is a charity registered in Sweden. It is a politically independent platform for visionary, practical solutions to put right global wrongs. The Foundation receives cross-party support from Swedish Parliamentarians who also host the Award Ceremony. The presentation in the Swedish Parliament enhances the impact of the Award and provides the Laureates with important political backing.

In recent years, the Foundation has seen its network grow not only thanks to the Right Livelihood College and its campuses. There is an increasing number of organisations and people in different countries who invite Right Livelihood Award Laureates to conferences, seminars and public events. In Switzerland, for instance, an affiliated Foundation began its work in 2007, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation Switzerland. It organises events with Prize Recipients and fundraises for the Award.

“According to Martin Luther King the great tragedy of today is not only the roar of dictatorship, but also the silence of good people. Since its creation, the Right Livelihood Award has contributed to breaking that silence.”

Raúl Montenegro, Argentina
In his acceptance speech, RLA 2004

The Founder – Jakob von Uexkull

“There are too many possibilities to be a pessimist. Of course, there are also too many crises to be an optimist. I always say, I am a ‘possibilist.’ I see the possibilities to do what the Native Americans call ‘to walk your talk’…”
Board

The Right Livelihood Award Foundation’s course is decided by its board. The six trustees also serve as jury members.

Marianne Andersson,
Former Member of the Swedish Parliament, Sweden.

Paul Ekins,
Professor of Energy and Environment Policy, University College London, UK.

Monika Griefahn,
Co-Chair Former member of the German Parliament, Co-Founder of Greenpeace Germany.

Agneta Johansson,
Deputy Director at International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC), Sweden.

Juliane Kronen,
Strategy consultant and entrepreneur, Germany.

Jakob von Uexkull,
Founder and Co-Chair, Founder of the World Future Council, UK.

For outstanding Vision and Work

“For more than 30 years, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation has honoured personal courage and global commitment. Watching the Foundation grow, helping tie the Award and the solutions it stands for to our society, is both a privilege and a great experience for anyone working for the Foundation. As an activist, I have fought against the goliaths of our world myself. Thus, I take great pleasure in supporting people who share my values and who regard cultural diversity as something to be celebrated rather than a problem.

If the Prize didn’t exist, someone would have to invent it.”

Monika Griefahn
Co-Chair
Right Livelihood Award Foundation

(2011)
Even heroes rarely succeed alone. They need support. People and organisations who back them, like the Right Livelihood Award Foundation does. To be able to do that, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation itself needs support - from its donors.

**Partner and Circle of Friends**

Today, two groups provide the financial basis for the Awards:
- **Our Partners** who have made capital donations to invest in the future of the Award.
- **Our Circle of Friends** who donate regularly and make the ongoing work of the Award possible.

We invite our Partners and Friends to get to know our work and our Laureates close-up. They receive VIP invitations to the Right Livelihood Award Ceremony in the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm and to other events with Laureates. We inform them personally about our work and name them on our website (unless they want to be anonymous).

If you are interested in becoming part of this global network of changemakers, please contact us, and together we will find out how you, too, can get involved.

**Together for the Future**

“Despite all the constraints you may face, all the lack of the good things that many of us look for, dedicating oneself to the common good of society, to the environment, to democratic principles and to peace is itself a great reward. Sometimes it is not recognised, sometimes not pleasant, but there is a personal satisfaction, a feeling that you have lived your life to the full, that you have been a productive, a useful, a valuable member of the greater community of the living.

*It is your future. Take it, work for it, and devote your life to it, so that you, too, may pass a better world to your children.*

Wangari Maathai, Kenya
RLA 1984

**Supporting Projects of Hope**
Donations

In the 1990s, a Swedish lady contacted us asking about an internship at our office. After the internship, she told us that she had wanted to get to know our foundation and that she had now decided to donate a significant amount. Later, she provided the costs for the Award Ceremony for a couple of years. She likes to compare her support to the Right Livelihood Award to a boomerang: “What you give away, comes back to you – in one way or another.”

We are very proud that, time and again, wonderful people put their trust in our work and feel that they can change the world for the better by donating to the Right Livelihood Awards.

Bequests

A bequest is a sensitive and personal matter that needs to be discussed on an individual basis. The Award has had a number of very positive experiences with people who have made provision for it in their wills. For instance, in one case a bond developed between the prospective donor and her family and the Right Livelihood Award Foundation and its Laureates, based on the perception that her decision had the same motivation that drives our Laureates: They do what they do for those who come after them.

If you are considering remembering the Right Livelihood Award Foundation in your will or have any questions about this matter, please contact us. You will find the details of your contact person, Ole von Uexkull, on the back cover of this brochure.