

Message from the chairman



Throughout the year
the association
has continued
to make progress
with its humanitarian aid
work and rapid responses.

In 2004, after a year of transition needed to confirm its new-found financial stability, Handicap International moved forward with renewed impetus to strengthen its presence within the humanitarian space and increase its implication in emergency action.

2004 began, in fact, with our emergency intervention in Bam, Iran, and ended with the tsunami in South Asia. The association also carried out successful interventions in Morocco and Bangladesh.

Whenever there are natural disasters, humanitarian crises or conflicts, it is the most vulnerable who are the first to suffer and, when they survive, they are often the first to be forgotten. Although we have a duty in these situations to help everyone, our organisation's specificity means that we have a duty to ensure that measures adapted to people with disabilities are incorporated into the all relief operations.

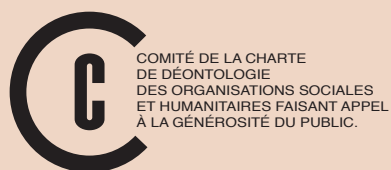
In emergency interventions, Handicap International never forgets the importance of working closely with local partners. At the start of an intervention, this ensures that the actions taken are as effective as possible, and subsequently helps the local population to take over these actions, thus ensuring the sustainability of the aid provided. The effects of this approach are felt even more clearly over the long term in development programmes where the final objective is self-reliance for the people and autonomy for the infrastructures created. Our main concern is always the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

With regard to rights, 2004 witnessed many significant interventions by Handicap International, particularly within the context of the United Nations' Convention on "the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities." However, although considerable progress has been made, we must not lower our guard.

The same goes for our appeals to the international community and mobilisation of civil society with regard to landmines. Over the last two years this fight has been extended to include cluster munitions. We must steadfastly pursue this course of action if we are to have any hope of permanently eradicating these weapons, which cynically ridicule international humanitarian law. To achieve this aim, we need everyone to react.

Finally, as is the case every year, Handicap International gives considerable priority to maintaining its relationship of trust with its donors and all those with whom it comes into contact. This trust has to be based on transparency, exchange, dialogue and the beliefs that we all share.

Jean-Noël Sersiron



Handicap International is a cofounder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, cowinner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Handicap International is an approved member of the "Donner en confiance" ("Giving confidently") Charter Committee.

This committee has two aims:

- to draw up a code of conduct together, and constantly improve it;
- to perform annual checks on organisations' adherence.