

# Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance Education: UNRWA Experience from the Field\*

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**T**HE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES (UNRWA) is an organization that has been providing assistance and services to Palestine refugees since 1950. It is a unique United Nations (UN) agency as it directly runs schools, health centers, relief and social services, infrastructure improvement programs, micro-finance and emergency assistance to approximately five million Palestine refugees who have registered with UNRWA.

UNRWA operates in one of the most fragile regions in the world, with offices in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The impact of conflict on children cannot be overstated across these five Fields of Operations (Fields). In Gaza, under blockade, six-year-old children have lived through three conflicts.<sup>1</sup> Almost 100 percent of UNRWA students in Gaza suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>2</sup> In Syria, Palestine refugees have now been repeatedly displaced due to the on-going conflict there, their access to a range of basic services limited and children are in dire need of psychosocial support. In the West Bank, refugees and especially children face daily challenges as a result of living under occupation. In Lebanon, Palestine refugees' mobility and employment opportunities are restricted. In Jordan and Lebanon the influx of Palestine refugees from Syria has overwhelmed many of the existing camps.

While there are many challenges to ensuring that Palestine refugee children have access to education, UNRWA operates one of the largest school systems in the Middle East, with twenty-three thousand Education Staff reaching half a million Palestine refugee children through 685 schools, nine Vocational Training Centers, and two Educational Science Faculties. Further to long-standing arrangements with host authorities, and for practical educational reasons - in order to ensure that refugees can continue their

\*The views and opinions presented in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

education after leaving UNRWA schools - UNRWA uses the host curriculum and textbooks in its schools.

UNRWA is committed to providing free, quality and equitable education to all Palestine refugee children. To this end, the Agency continually seeks to improve its Education Program and is currently implementing its Education Reform Strategy (2011-2015). As described by UNRWA Director of Education, Dr. Caroline Pontefract, the “UNRWA Education Reform aims to improve the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of the education system. At its heart lies changing classroom practices and the dynamics of the learning process, towards ensuring they address the needs of all children and students.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, UNRWA Education Program’s vision is “to develop the full potential of Palestine Refugees to enable them to be confident, innovative, questioning, thoughtful, tolerant and open-minded, upholding human values and religious tolerance, proud of their Palestinian identity and contributing positively to the development of their society and the global community.”<sup>4</sup>

To achieve this vision, a key component of the Education Program, the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Program, was updated and strengthened in line with the Reform and evolving international standards. The following discusses the HRCRT Program and the achievements emerging from this reform process.

### **Building upon the Existing Human Rights Education Program**

Since 2000, UNRWA has been teaching human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance in its schools, reaching approximately half a million children from Grades 1-10. The Agency has focused its efforts on integrating human rights into existing curriculums, supporting human rights-oriented extra-curricular activities, and promoting concepts of tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution. Additionally, Gaza UNRWA has been offering a standalone human rights curriculum. In 2009, the findings of an Education Program Review highlighted the necessity of defining a unified approach to HRCRT across all five Fields. In response to this need, and in light of the Education Reform, with the continued financial support provided by the United States, UNRWA initiated a process to review its HRCRT education to further strengthen the Program and provide UNRWA-wide coherence.

## **Formulating a Human Rights Education Policy**

In order to achieve coherence in the UNRWA's approach to human rights education in all Fields, it undertook efforts to develop an HRCRT Policy.<sup>5</sup> The process of developing a policy was in line with other aspects of UNRWA Education Reform; including the development of the Inclusive Education Policy and Teacher Policy.

From the onset, the development of the new HRCRT Policy was a participatory process. As an initial step, a scoping mission was undertaken to the Fields in 2011 to conduct interviews with teachers, students, school administrators, Education Specialists, parents, community members, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These interviews reaffirmed that the knowledge and skills related to human rights education were limited and needed to be framed within a coherent approach to teaching and learning. The findings of the scoping mission also indicated that students were interested in learning more about human rights and that teachers were eager to learn more about teaching human rights in the classroom. These findings were particularly encouraging considering the difficult living conditions of many Palestine refugees.

The findings of the scoping mission led to the development of the HRCRT Policy, with the following strategic objectives:

- Build on the human rights principles embedded within the cultural context of Palestine refugees;
- Develop a human rights education environment in UNRWA education facilities that is conducive to promoting a culture of human rights;
- Equip UNRWA students and youths with human rights knowledge and skills in an attempt to influence their attitudes and behaviors in order to contribute positively to their society and the global community.

The Policy builds on UNRWA experience in human rights education but also reflects global developments and international commitments such as the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE, 2005 – ongoing), the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training by the UN General Assembly (adopted in December 2011) and other international agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNRWA also

has a specific mandate from the General Assembly to incorporate the needs and rights of children in its operations in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>6</sup> Article 29 (c) and (d) of the CRC was particularly relevant in framing the HRCRT Policy, and provides that the education of the child should be directed to:

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

Because the Policy was formulated through a participatory process, it commands a high degree of ownership among staff in all Fields. The Policy also takes into account the challenges and different contexts under which the five Fields of UNRWA operate. With regards to operational contexts, there were a number of aspects to consider when developing the HRCRT Policy, namely the diversity of each Field, the use of each host country's curriculum, and different practices and supporting materials for human rights education in schools, either by integrating human rights education into specific subjects such as Arabic Language or Social Studies, or offering stand-alone human rights education classes as in Gaza.

The Policy was finalized in 2012, one year after the scoping mission to the Fields. Much of the Policy's structure is inspired by the WPHRE's framework for successfully integrating human rights education in the school system. The components of the framework are discussed in the next section.

With the new Policy in place, UNRWA staff in each Field conducted awareness-raising workshops for staff, communities, and NGOs on the structure of the new Policy. With the new Policy adopted, the implementation of the revised HRCRT Program was ready to take place.

### **HRCRT Program Good Practices**

The new UNRWA HRCRT Policy enabled it to revise the HRCRT Program to ensure a consistent approach to human rights education in all five Fields.

The development of the Policy along with the key components of the HRCRT Program illustrates a range of good practices in human rights education. These good practices revolve around the importance of participation, the adoption of international standards and practices, concrete and practical teaching materials, an effective and decentralized training of trainers process, and the necessity of integrating monitoring and evaluation tools within existing structures.

For reference, the definition of a “good practice” in human rights education is adopted from *Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice*.<sup>7</sup> A good practice is a “strategy resulting in the successful teaching and learning of human rights values and competencies that could be demonstrated through a learning activity, a methodological tool, an audio-visual resource or a documented programme design intended for the formal education sector.”

## **Grounding the Policy in International Standards**

As mentioned in the previous section, the HRCRT Policy was built on UNRWA experience in teaching human rights as well as global developments including the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE, 2005 – ongoing). In particular, the first phase of the WPHRE, which focused on human rights education in primary and secondary school systems, identified the following components as necessary in successfully implementing human rights education in schools: teaching and learning, teacher preparation and professional development, the learning environment, and monitoring and evaluation. These four components were adopted in the HRCRT Policy, and the next section presents the good practices UNRWA can offer under each component.

### **I. Teaching and Learning**

With respect to teaching and learning, the HRCRT Program was strengthened with a consistent approach thanks to the adoption, as is, of the WPHRE definition of human rights education.

As defined by the WPHRE,<sup>8</sup> human rights education is

education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and minorities;
- The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- The building and maintenance of peace;
- The promotion of people-centered sustainable development and social justice.

Adopting this definition for the HRCRT Policy was a first step towards a coherent approach to teaching and learning. This was followed by reviewing existing human rights education materials, adopting a practical educational approach, promoting teaching methods that encourage student participation, and pre-testing teaching and learning materials.

#### *a. Reviewing Existing Human Rights Education Materials*

In order to improve teaching and learning, HRCRT teaching and learning materials needed to be consistent with the goal of human rights education defined above. This required an evaluation of existing human rights materials used in UNRWA schools. Furthermore, it meant the development or adaptation of existing human rights materials from international good practices.

The review of existing materials used to teach human rights in UNRWA schools was facilitated through a participatory process engaging UNRWA staff, students and parents to evaluate the relevance of existing teaching and learning materials, such as student booklets on human rights that had been used as “enrichment materials” in the classroom, as well as a standalone human rights curriculum in Gaza for Grades 1 to 6. Additionally, UNRWA examined a select number of international sources of human rights education manuals and toolkits for non-formal and formal education settings (see, for example, *Compassito*,<sup>9</sup> *Compass*,<sup>10</sup> and *Play It Fair!*<sup>11</sup>)

Three main conclusions emerged from the review. First, the existing “enrichment materials” were outdated and no longer reflected international practices. Second, the role of the standalone Gaza human rights curriculum in contributing towards teaching life skills and some aspects of human rights, but also in providing a general approach to teaching and learning

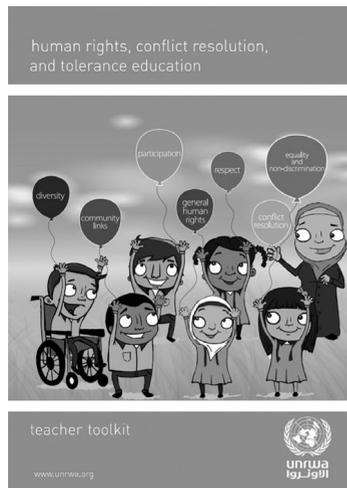
human rights that would apply to all Fields, was recognized. Third, UNRWA needed to develop a resource, in the form of a toolkit for all UNRWA teachers, with the following characteristics:

- Practical, concise and not overly theoretical;
- Provide consistent terminology;
- Easily integrated into the curriculum;
- Manageable for teachers with respect to their workload, also taking into consideration that, as part of the Education Reform, there were other school-based initiatives such as “school-based teacher development” which took time out of a teacher’s schedule;
- With a practical educational approach, promoting critical thinking rather than rote learning, respectful of children’s developmental capacities (content to be adapted for age-specific learning needs);

- Considerate of the culture of Palestine refugees;

- Contain useful tools and activities for integrating human rights education in schools, including planning tools for school management and teachers, and a range of classroom-based activities adapted from international practice.

The results of this review led to the development of a teacher toolkit (the HRCRT Toolkit).<sup>13</sup> The development of the Toolkit (discussed further in the following sections) took place through a participatory process, requiring input, feedback, and validation of its content several times until it was finalized and published.



### *b. A Practical Educational Approach, Learner Competencies and Human Rights Themes*

As discussed in the previous section, the HRCRT Toolkit needed a practical educational approach basic enough for all teachers to integrate into their classroom practices.

The resulting approach, reinforced by international practice, relies on a three-step participatory approach. In the first step, *Experience*, students’



existing knowledge and experience are valued; they are exposed to practical activities, and are encouraged to actively participate in the class. In the second step, *Reflect*, students are encouraged to reflect on their learning experience in order to strengthen and foster links between their learning and their lived experiences. Finally, the third step, *Apply*, enables students to act in concrete ways within the school and their

communities to promote a culture of human rights.

The educational approach is reinforced and guided by learner competencies namely: the fostering of knowledge, development of skills, and molding of attitudes that contribute towards a culture of human rights. The Toolkit structured this around a set of learner competencies set out in the HRCRT Policy. These competencies were adapted from the *Guidelines for Human Rights Education (Secondary Education)*, OSCE and ODHIR (2012).<sup>14</sup>

The educational approach and learner competencies, along with the definition of human rights education mentioned at the start of this section, form the educational underpinnings of the HRCRT Toolkit. Additionally, in order to reinforce the specific learning environments of all Fields, a total of seven themes were identified. These themes were constructed based on results of the scoping mission and finalized as: General human rights, participation, diversity, respect, equality and non-discrimination, conflict resolution, and community links. These themes form the basis of the classroom-based activities included in the Toolkit (discussed in the following section).

### *c. Teaching Methods and Learning Activities to Encourage Student Participation*

The educational approach of the Toolkit is supported by participatory teaching methods adapted from a range of international practices (see, for example, *Compass*<sup>15</sup> and Richard Pierre Claude's *Methodologies for Human Rights Education*<sup>16</sup>). While the scoping mission revealed many teachers indicated a level of familiarity with these teaching methods, they highlighted the

importance of consolidating these teaching methods in one resource. Some of the methods described in the Toolkit include: group work, brainstorming, debates, role play, participatory theater, and art. Examples of using the method in the classroom are provided along with the description of each method.

These methods are also present in forty child-friendly classroom activities presented in the Toolkit. The activities were adapted in large part from a wide range of human rights education activities from international practices. The activities were all structured in the same manner: identifying a main theme, a suggested grade level and time, specific learning objectives, a sequence of steps, a means of evaluating the activity through large group discussion, and suggestions for follow-up actions. All activities reflected the educational approach (presented in the previous section) and were modified and revised mainly through pre-testing and a revision process as presented in the next section.

#### *d. Pre-Testing and Revising New Educational Material*

In order to strengthen the teaching and learning of HRCRT, the structure and contents of the HRCRT Toolkit underwent a series of testing and revisions in terms of content, language, structure, and design. A first draft

##### **From the Classroom:**

During the evaluation of the pre-testing phase, one teacher said this about a “classroom agreement” activity in which students identified their own classroom rules for working together:

*“Before trying out this activity, I thought it would result in chaos. But then after I did it with my students, I saw they were more cooperative when they were setting the rules themselves and there was increased participation.”*  
Teacher from Nablus, West Bank

in English was translated into Arabic for pre-testing in schools in the West Bank and Gaza. These Fields were selected due to their representation of two distinct structures supporting human rights education in UNRWA schools.

In the West Bank, teachers were using enrichment materials, including specialized booklets and story-books, since the start of the HRCRT Program in 2000. In Gaza, some teachers had been using enrichment materials but also included stand-alone human rights curriculum in

place for Grades 1-6. The latter is delivered in a “human rights class”, one class period per week.

To take part in the pre-testing, teachers participated in a two-day initial training workshop introducing the Toolkit. Teachers who took part in the pre-testing were encouraged to practice a reasonable number of HRCRT Toolkit activities within a two-month time period. After their initial training, teachers from the same school discussed which activities they would practice and evaluate with their students. All teachers trained implemented these Toolkit activities in their classrooms for two months. After this period, the teachers met again for an evaluation workshop, during which they provided feedback and suggestions for improving the Toolkit. Suggestions were categorized according to structure, content, and language. Regarding structure, feedback called mainly for simpler planning tools and shorter activities. On content, feedback called for less theory, more teaching methods, and more guidance on integrating human rights education into different subjects. For language, some concepts required further simplification and some terminology in Arabic needed to be revised in order to take into consideration the language’s nuances.

These suggestions and others were identified through evaluation forms provided to teachers implementing the activities in class. Each school submitted a compilation of all evaluation forms which recorded the views of both teachers and students practicing HRCRT Toolkit activities. The feedback was then analyzed and contributed towards the finalization of the Toolkit. As the Toolkit was nearing completion, another workshop was organized with key UNRWA staff from all Fields in order to provide additional feedback on the Toolkit. During the workshop, participants were provided with a colored version of the Arabic Toolkit that contained illustrations. Their feedback identified the importance of reflecting diversity in the illustrations of children (for example, representing children with different skin tones as well as children with and without special needs). Equally important was to illustrate children in typical UNRWA uniforms and other characters (such as parents and teachers) in traditional Palestinian dress. Feedback was also provided on content, design, the actions and gestures represented by children in the illustrations, and language. Following the workshop, a committee was established within UNRWA to review the Arabic translation of the entire Toolkit. This was especially important as Arabic is a rich language

and there can be various terminologies with similar meanings which was highlighted during the pre-testing phase.

In the end, the Toolkit contained:

- Direct quotes from teachers who practiced some of the activities;
- A section on participatory teaching methods;
- Question and answer boxes throughout the first (theoretical)

part of the Toolkit that provided a quick reference;

- Four planning tools: Planning Tool 1 is for initial training on the Toolkit, Planning Tool 2 is a baseline of the human rights environment of the school, Planning Tool 3 is on planning for the HRCRT Program at the school level, and Planning Tool 4 is for teachers to integrate human rights into existing lessons, such as

### **The Toolkit Main Sections:**

#### **Part 1. A General Guide to Teaching Human Rights**

1. A culture of human rights in UNRWA schools
2. Human rights
3. Human rights education

#### **Part 2. HRCRT in Schools**

1. Human rights themes in the Toolkit
  2. The educational approach of the Toolkit
  3. Planning for HRCRT in schools
  4. Realizing HRCRT in schools (includes Classroom Activities)
  5. Evaluating the HRCRT Program
- Appendices

a social science class;

- Tables structured by Grade and Term listing forty activities based on the Toolkit's seven themes;
- Simple language versions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At the time of publication, there was relatively little information and guidance for teachers on evaluating the HRCRT Toolkit. The main focus of evaluation is the end of each activity, during which the teacher asks students what they enjoyed (or did not) about the activity, how it relates to human rights, and how they can apply their learning in a practical way in the school and the community. Because the HRCRT Program is part of the education system within UNRWA, any evaluation of the program was best considered

by fitting within the Education Program's indicators as opposed to a stand-alone evaluation of HRCRT Program. The tools used to monitor and evaluate (M&E) the HRCRT Program were developed in line with this broader education system (see the section below on monitoring and evaluation tools for more information).

## II. On-going Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The second component of the HRCRT Policy is “on-going teacher preparation and professional development,” which complements the “teaching and learning component” described in the previous section. Once the HRCRT Toolkit was finalized, the next steps were to provide teachers with their own Toolkit and training on how to use it. Planning to train approximately twenty-three thousand Education Staff required input from all UNRWA Fields and education staff at the headquarters. The process for training teachers is described below, along with additional measures put in place for continuous capacity building.

### *a. Training of Trainers (ToT) Process*

Based on the pre-testing of the Toolkit and additional consultations with UNRWA staff in all Fields, a training process was developed to enable all UNRWA teachers to receive training on the Toolkit within two years. The process involved the following steps:

- Training of Trainers (ToT) was provided to School Principals and Education Specialists in all Fields (in June 2013). Each training was two days long;
- In all, approximately two hundred School Principals and Education Specialists were trained as “HRCRT trainers;”
- As part of their training, the HRCRT trainers received a training guide that offered different training options: one-day training, half-day training, and four short training sessions. These options were offered to provide flexibility based on input from trainers indicating that the time to train teachers, School Principals, and Education Specialists was limited owing to their workloads. The training option used most often was the one-day training;
- Once the HRCRT trainers completed their training, each Field determined a process and timeline for training its staff. The HRCRT

trainers provided training to other School Principals and Education Specialists, who then went on to train teachers. The trainers were paired up as teams, to strengthen the delivery of the training.

All trainings of the HRCRT trainers—and later other Education Staff—were grounded with practical outcomes in mind. The training workshops:

- Emphasized the importance of understanding the educational approach, the learner competencies, and the Toolkit themes;
- Focused on practicing as many Toolkit activities as possible;
- Enabled all teachers in the schools to collaborate on planning for the integration of HRCRT;
- Demonstrated how teachers can use the Toolkit to develop HRCRT learner competencies.

### ***b. Additional Capacity Building Support***

While the ToT approach is practical and efficient, there is a risk in any ToT of losing the quality of the initial trainings by the time the training reaches the last group of trainees. In order to mitigate this risk the following additional steps were taken to supplement training workshops.

**1. *Supplementary training video:*** UNRWA produced a practical supplementary training video to mitigate the issue of ToT and allow teachers to see the educational approach of the Toolkit firsthand. The video demonstrates various teaching methods, planning tools to integrate HRCRT in any subject, and how to implement the HRCRT activities. It includes interviews with students, teachers, and School Principals who have implemented the Toolkit. As such, the video provides all Education Staff with an opportunity to see good practices and refresh their trainings at convenient times for them. To address the issue of poor or intermittent Internet access at homes and schools, each school was provided with training DVDs.

**2. *HRCRT Bulletin:*** The Bulletin supports teacher preparation by providing an update on the HRCRT Program and facilitating sharing of experiences and good practices across UNRWA's five Fields of Operation. It is distributed by email on a bi-monthly basis to all UNRWA Education staff, with the aim of sharing information, tools, reports, news and tips on human rights education.

The Bulletin supports the implementation of the HRCRT Policy by providing teachers with news and ideas, and offering a constant reminder re-

garding the necessary steps for the successful implementation of the Toolkit. For example, in one issue a “Trainer’s Checklist” was provided to support School Principals and Education Specialists in preparing for HRCRT training workshops. Ideas and reminders on how to carry out Toolkit activities in the classroom are shared with teachers. In every issue of the Bulletin a “Featured Toolkit Activity” is presented. For example, “Activity 33: Our Ideal Candidate” was presented in the August 2014 Issue, to be implemented at the beginning of the school year to support students in electing a candidate for the School Parliaments.

The Bulletin captures success stories from the teaching staff from all Fields; this sharing of experiences with other Fields motivates and engages teachers and increases ownership of the Program.

**3. *Top-up trainings for HRCRT trainers:*** In order to ensure regular professional development of HRCRT trainers, one-day “top-up” trainings were provided on a yearly basis. During these trainings, trainers had the opportunity to share their successes and challenges in undertaking their training and the implementation of the HRCRT Program in general. These trainings also enabled trainers to provide feedback and suggestions to improve the Program. The trainings were an opportunity to provide trainers with revised and additional tools to implement, monitor and evaluate the Program. The training of all education staff (around 23,000 people) by HRCRT trainers approximately took two and a half years.

**4. *School based top-up training led by School Principals:*** To date, most teachers have received the initial training on the use of the Toolkit, but as is the case with any program, regular in-service capacity building and sharing of experiences, successes and challenges are essential in ensuring sustainability. Guidelines were prepared for School Principals to lead top-up trainings for teachers, to take place approximately a year and a half after the initial trainings, in order to review the Toolkit’s educational approach, monitoring and evaluation tools to review outcomes at school level, and allow teachers to share experiences and challenges.

During the top-up training planned for 2015, teachers will be encouraged to adapt Toolkit activities, develop new activities that reflect the seven Toolkit themes, and provide examples of integrating human rights in different subjects. This enables greater ownership of the Toolkit and Program by teachers. Headquarters facilitates this process through the provision of guidelines for the top-up trainings which include templates for the development of new Toolkit activities.

**5. Top-up training for Education Specialists:** As part of the capacity building of teachers, the role of Education Specialists is to provide regular support and coaching to teachers through school visits. Therefore, UNRWA headquarters is in the process of developing top-up training in order to support the role of Education Specialists in supervision, quality assurance, and monitoring the Program through regular school visits. This includes, for example, an updated classroom observation tool to be used by Education Specialists.

### **III. Strengthening a Rights-Based Learning Environment**

In addition to teaching about human rights in the classroom, UNRWA pays great attention to the learning environment as it affects all those involved in the teaching and learning process. To this end, UNRWA looks both at the school environment and the links with the community.

#### ***a. School Environment and School Parliament***

UNRWA's human rights education approach considers not only what goes on in the classroom but also student participation in school life and the overall environment within the school. UNRWA acknowledges that teaching and learning needs to take place in an environment where students and teachers are respected, violence and bullying is not tolerated, and the school environment is healthy and provides safety for both the physical and psychosocial well-being of children. In order to have school practices respectful of human rights, UNRWA put a number of systems in place including strengthening the UNRWA regulatory framework's zero tolerance for violence against children, a number of activities and initiatives to reduce bullying in school, a school-level agreement or code of conduct to promote respect and dignity which is facilitated by the HRCRT Toolkit Planning Tools 2 and 3.<sup>17</sup>

One of the good practices UNRWA has adopted to improve school environment and to promote a culture of human rights is the School Parliaments. Many were formed at the start of the HRCRT Program in 2000, and all UNRWA schools now have one in place. School Parliaments consist of elected members from the student body who represent their peers so that children's voices are heard and they practice their right to participation.<sup>18</sup>

As such, School Parliaments have played a significant role in ensuring student participation in activities and decisions regarding the school en-

vironment. Members of School Parliament act as mediators between students if conflicts arise and act as the voice of students when interacting with school administration. They are also leading students in the creation of human rights themed activities, from raising awareness around human rights to doing projects that allow students to learn about their communities and help address problems both in their schools and communities. These activities allow all students to practically apply what they learn through human rights education. They become young leaders and active participants of their communities promoting a culture of human rights in their school environment and beyond.

With over seven hundred UNRWA schools, the diversity, quality, and amount of activities each School Parliament undertakes varied considerably. With the advent of the HRCRT Policy, UNRWA decided to ensure a consistent approach to focusing School Parliament activities. A first step was to suggest that each newly elected School Parliament develop and share with UNRWA headquarters its plans for the year. To guide School Parliaments in this process, a template for work plan and budget plan was developed and School Parliaments were asked to fill these out after meeting and discussing with the students. They were also provided with very brief guidelines and examples on how to frame their activities along the lines of the seven HRCRT Toolkit themes.

A second initiative towards ensuring a consistent agency-wide approach to School Parliaments was to develop a guide on “good practices.” All schools were invited to share their examples of good practices; the results of which are in the process of being compiled and will be presented in a School Parliament Good Practices Booklet. This encourages information sharing and learning as the Booklet will present different practices from schools and will provide further tips and guidance on how to conduct activities to promote a culture of human rights in UNRWA schools and communities.

### *b. Links with the Community*

In addition to the school environment, UNRWA also acknowledges the important role of the community environment and making links between school and the community to promote a culture of human rights. Community and family life play a big role in molding the attitudes and values of children. When what is taught and practiced in schools about human rights is contrary to practices and behaviors at home, a “school-home

divide” occurs. The “right to participation” aptly illustrates this divide. In UNRWA schools children are taught about their right to participate and practice this right, particularly since the Education Reform started. When students go home and continue expressing their opinions, some parenting styles or traditional attitudes that value the opinion of elders more than of children, might cause tensions within the family. In order to address this school-home divide and to ensure parents and community are informed about and involved in their children’s education, it is important to conduct awareness-raising activities targeting the community. Awareness-raising activities with parents enable a respectful environment in which they appreciate their children’s ability to participate in school and at home as a positive means of enjoying their rights. HRCRT learner competencies, especially the attainment of human rights attitudes, values and skills, can only be fully realized if parents and communities are involved. To this end UNRWA put in place the following good practices:

"We parents were not fully aware of most of these rights. It was very informative and an important experience to learn about these rights. The celebration today was very special... We saw how our children were discussing their rights as mature and empowered people."

*Parent during Human Rights Day,  
Ramallah, West Bank*

**Open Day on International Human Rights Day:** On December 10 2014, International Human Rights Day, parents and communities were invited to UNRWA schools to learn about human rights and UNRWA’s approach to teaching HRCRT. They experienced a sample collection of HRCRT Toolkit activities firsthand and participated in activities, each one facilitated by one student and one teacher. In order to facilitate this process, UNRWA headquarters provided the schools with guidelines that included the goal, suggested approach and activities for the Open Day.

This Open Day helped increase the understanding of HRCRT among the community and deconstructed a lot of misconceptions regarding human rights education. Human interest stories and a photo collage with quotes from students, parents and teachers on the impact of this day can be found on UNRWA website.<sup>19</sup>

**Awareness raising animated video targeting the community:** Awareness-raising animation videos are currently being produced to illus-

trate the practical application of human rights education in schools. Three episodes were developed, each demonstrating how students take action after participating in HRCRT Toolkit activities on issues such as bullying, women's rights, and supporting the community. These episodes will be screened on UNRWA satellite TV and YouTube channel to reach out to the community and communicate the HRCRT messages. This will allow the parents and the community to increase their understanding of the goals of human rights education, and attempt to address any disconnect between what their children learn at schools about HRCRT and actual practices at the community level.

**Parent-Teacher Associations:** All UNRWA schools have Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) that further support school's link with the community. In line with the HRCRT Policy and the Education Reform, PTAs are also currently being strengthened to lead on human rights education activities targeting the community. To this end the HRCRT Program staff in headquarters is currently developing guidelines for PTAs to conduct regular meetings and agree on a work plan on how they will contribute to HRCRT and human rights education in their communities.

#### **IV. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The impact of the HRCRT Program on changing students' and teachers' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills is measured through a range of qualitative and quantitative instruments. In addition, a Perceptual Survey explores the perceptions of students, teachers, School Principals and UNRWA Field staff, on the prevalence of an HRCRT culture and practices at school level. This survey looks at perceptions with regards to school violence, bullying, respect, participation, School Parliament activities, discrimination and conflict resolution.

The Perceptual Survey was first conducted in 2013 (in all Fields except West Bank due to an industrial action) to identify the indicator baselines.

The first part of this section looks at the current tools to measure results with a focus on activity and output levels, the second part discusses the results of the Perceptual Survey which identified the indicator baselines and will be repeated after the implementation of the HRCRT Toolkit in all schools.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Tools to Measure Results

At the output and activity levels, the following tools are used to monitor and assess the progress of program implementation:

### 1. A Monthly Activity Monitoring Tool

This tool was developed to monitor Education Reform activities on a monthly basis. For the HRCRT component, the tool is used to record:

a. The number of staff trained: 17,884 Education staff trained on HRCRT Toolkit from 2013 until the end of 2014.

b. The number of schools completing the HRCRT Toolkit Planning Tools: three hundred fifty-five schools completed the HRCRT Toolkit Planning Tools and moved on to implementation at school level by the end of 2013-2014 school year (the Planning Tools are described in this paper under the “Teaching and Learning” section). These Planning

“We may not be able to achieve living in a safe environment, but at least we will make the classroom and the school environment safe. At least we can achieve that through these activities.”

*Teacher, Gaza*

Tools are used by school management as well as UNRWA headquarters to assess where schools are and if they are on track with the agreed plan.

c. The number of School Parliaments that completed the School Parliament Activity Planning and Monitoring template: six hundred forty-eight School Parliaments completed their action plans on HRCRT activities during the 2013-2014 school year. UNRWA headquarters regularly collects and analyzes activity plans from School Parliaments to make sure the plans are in line with the goal of the HRCRT Policy and the guidelines developed.

d. Reflections from the Chiefs of the Education Programs<sup>20</sup> in each field: Under this section, the Chiefs report progress and challenges in implementing the Program, their most important observations from field/school-level implementation, and any external circumstances that affect the operationalization of the implementation plan. This narrative section also offers success stories as observed by Chiefs during their school visits.

The quantitative and qualitative information collected through the Activity Monitoring Tool is synthesized by the HRCRT staff at UNRWA headquarters and used to offer support to the Fields where needed.

## 2. Training evaluation surveys to assess HRCRT training

After each training, teachers fill out post-training surveys, which contain approximately fifteen statements related to the quality of the training by facilitators and their perceived ability to integrate HRCRT into their work. The surveys illustrate that overall the trainings equipped teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to implement the HRCRT Policy. In all, 78.82 percent of teachers responded positively to statements in post-training surveys.

93.75 percent of participants stated they strongly agree or agree with the statement: “I can better teach about human rights after this training.”

Teachers also expressed a strong understanding of the link between the subject they teach and HRCRT with a combined agreement (strongly agree or agree) level of 88.7 percent. This result is particularly important given the fact that not all subject teachers were previously involved in teaching HRCRT. This therefore suggests that the training is successful in transmitting the relevance of an integrated approach to human rights education, whereby it is integrated throughout the entire curriculum.

In the evaluation results, teachers’ motivation and commitment to teaching HRCRT also came out as very strong. 93 percent of teachers agreed with the statement “I am committed to create a rights-based environment in my classroom”. Similarly, 93.1 percent stated that “it is important for students to acquire human rights knowledge, skills and values.” The teachers’ commitment to HRCRT is commendable especially given the on-going conflicts in and surrounding the countries where UNRWA operates. While some teachers at the beginning of their training posed the question “how can I teach human rights when my own rights are not respected?,” after their training they appreciated the value of human rights education and how it can contribute towards positive change. To support this, concrete success stories such as students bringing clean water to their neighborhood or assisting NGOs in the community to help people with disabilities, illustrating their empowerment through HRCRT education were shared with teachers during their training.

While the overall training results are positive, there is room for improvement in two areas. First, 30.9 percent of teachers trained stated that they did not understand the educational approach of the Toolkit which starts from students’ experiences (as opposed to teachers imparting knowledge), allows students to reflect and participate, and finally apply what they

learn. Classroom observations also confirmed that some teachers were not yet able to adapt to the Toolkit's educational approach. Observations also revealed that this is related to holding on to the traditional approach to teaching where the teacher is perceived as the "expert" and students are passive recipients in the learning process. Moving towards transformative pedagogy where students are actively participating and the teacher is acting as a "facilitator" takes time. To address this, UNRWA provides continuous capacity building that is discussed earlier in this paper. The second area where the results were weaker was the ability of the facilitators to teach about HRCRT. 30.7 percent of trainees did not agree that "the facilitator was knowledgeable and well prepared". This is due to the use of Training of Trainers (ToT) approach which at times does not allow a consistent level of facilitators. This issue and how UNRWA addressed this through the provision of supplementary trainings and multi-media materials are discussed earlier in this article.

### **3. Focus group discussions and classroom observations**

After more than a year of putting into practice the HRCRT Toolkit, a number of teachers, School Principals, and students were interviewed in focus group discussions in the West Bank and Gaza. The results indicated that, above all, teachers and students identified a marked increase in participation of the students, a greater respect towards each other and ease at resolving conflicts, a greater appreciation of what human rights mean to them, and a growing interest in sharing their learning with the community.<sup>21</sup>

Classroom observations were also conducted to provide insight into the progress that teachers have made in understanding, planning, and implementing Toolkit activities. It was observed that while teachers have made significant progress in using participatory techniques offered by the Toolkit, some teachers faced challenges in fully adopting the educational approach as discussed above.

#### *Perceptual Survey*

The Perceptual Survey is an evaluation tool that was developed to explore the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, School Principals and UNRWA Field staff, on the prevalence of an HRCRT culture in UNRWA schools.<sup>22</sup> The "prevalence" is reflected through score values, which are expressed in numbers ranging from 0 to 3.

The Perceptual Survey reached all relevant stakeholders and was administered to a total of 27,126 people. The Perceptual Survey is a human-rights based methodology to evaluate the changes in the Program. By asking the very beneficiaries and stakeholders, it values their experiences and opinions. However it is costly and takes time.

The first survey was conducted before the implementation of the HRCRT Toolkit, therefore offering the baseline for evaluation. The Agency-

Response	Indicator
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	0
<b>Disagree</b>	1
<b>Agree</b>	2
<b>Strongly agree</b>	3

*Scoring system*

wide baseline score for the HRCRT indicator represents the weighted average of Field specific scores, which are calculated as the average of twelve HRCRT related statements that correspond to HRCRT learner competencies. Each statement was given a score ranging from 0 to 3, the latter score being associated to

the most positive response in regards to the prevalence of HRCRT culture. These HRCRT statements included in the Perceptual Survey are shown below with the corresponding mean combined score for each statement (by all respondents). These twelve statements reflect the essential elements of an HRCRT culture and are in line with the seven themes of the Toolkit: equality and non-discrimination, diversity, respect, peaceful conflict resolution, participation, community links, and general human rights.

The baseline results of Perceptual Survey showed some strong indication of the presence of a culture of human rights in UNRWA schools. The responses to question 49 (Q49), which asked whether boys and girls should have equal rights, are particularly evocative with a mean of 2.48 among all respondents and 2.41 among students. The overall result actually represents the highest scoring single item of the entire survey which had a grand total of seventy-six items looking at different areas of the Education Reform. There was also a noticeable trend within the responses to Q49 showing that scoring got higher proportionally to the rise in grade levels. This may suggest that students' perception that boys and girls should have equal rights improves as they progress through the UNRWA education system.

The second question which had the highest score among students was related to conflict resolution. The indicator mean of 2.25 among students illustrates that the vast majority of students agreed that they talk rather than

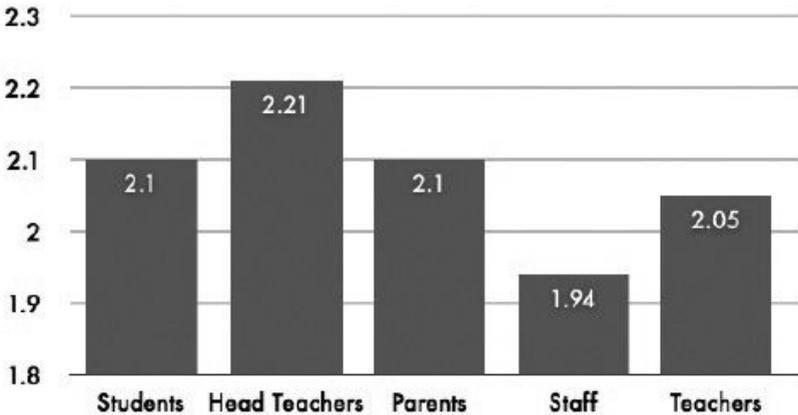
Question	Mean	SD
49	Girls and boys should have equal rights	2.48 .80
35	I vote in the school parliament elections	2.30 .87
46	To solve arguments, I talk rather than fight	2.25 .86
37	I am respected by my classmates	2.24 .84
47	I take part in activities to help the local community (e.g. keeping my community clean, helping elderly people)	2.20 .91
20	At school, I am involved in activities that celebrate the Palestinian heritage and culture	2.18 .90
39	My teachers discuss human rights in their lessons	2.16 .87
44A	Bullying is a problem in girls' schools (Staff only)	2.12 .61
48	I help decide upon our classroom agreement/ code of conduct	2.08 .89
44	At school, I am repeatedly hit or mocked (- data inverted)	2.07 1.02
41	I participate in activities organized by the school parliament	2.01 .94
43	At school, I am often left out of activities (- data inverted)	1.61 1.02
52	I avoid other children if they are different from me (- data inverted)	1.61 1.05
<b>HRCRT SUBSCALE MEAN</b>		<b>2.09 .46</b>

fight to solve arguments (Q46). The next three questions with the highest means followed each other closely and focused on voting in school (Q35), involvement in celebrations of Palestinian heritage (Q20) and feeling respected by classmates (Q37). The items scored respectively with the means of 2.31, 2.31 and 2.30 by students (and overall means of 2.3, 2.18, and 2.24 by all respondents). One can therefore observe that the students' responses are suggestive of a culture of human rights within schools.

The Perceptual Survey also highlights areas of improvement for the Program. Indeed some results suggest, even though HRCRT culture and practices are prevalent on a large scale, there is a high degree of variance in "individual" experiences. It is worth noting that three questions related to bullying, violence, and exclusion have considerably higher standard deviation than all other items. The highest deviation of 1.05 is associated with Q52 "I avoid other children if they are different from me" and Q43 "at school, I am often left out of activities" and Q44 "at school, I am repeatedly hit or mocked" both have a standard deviation of 1.02. The statements' overall means (by all respondents) were respectively 1.61, 1.61 and 2.07 though when solely looking at the students' responses the means are lower: 1.52, 1.58 and 2.06.

This shows that while bullying, violence, and exclusion are not widely spread, they remain a significant issue for a substantial number of students.<sup>23</sup> This will be addressed through the HRCRT Toolkit with its following themes: diversity, equality and non-discrimination, non-violent conflict resolution, as well as through the development of an Agency-wide Child Protection Framework that is currently being developed.

The graph below shows the mean comparison of HRCRT scores (for all HRCRT statements) for each category of respondents:



As can be seen from the graph, perceptions of students and parents were the same. This may be a result of successful community links built between UNRWA schools and parents through the Parents Teacher Associations that exist in each UNRWA school.

The HRCRT component of the Perceptual Survey will be repeated at the end of 2016-2017 school year to review and evaluate the changes that are expected to take place after the implementation of the HRCRT Policy and Toolkit in all schools.

## Conclusion

Despite the challenging environment and impact of a protracted crisis, UNRWA has successfully run a Human Rights Education Program to empower Palestine refugee students with human rights knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors in line with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNRWA's mandate from the United Nations General Assembly. Key to strengthening the Program was the development of a Policy that aligned UNRWA's approach with international standards and best practices and ensured a strategic and consistent approach to HRCRT in all five Fields across the Middle East. With the HRCRT Policy and the development of tools to

support its implementation, UNRWA was able to improve teaching and learning, teacher preparation and development, school environment, and monitoring and evaluation of the Program.

Looking at the development of a human rights education policy to its implementation at school level, UNRWA can offer lessons learned that can be applicable to other organizations and ministries of education. The table below summarizes these lessons learned.

### Lessons Learned

Program area		Lessons Learned
Policy and Program development and implementation	On policy	While strengthening existing Human Rights Education Programs or developing new ones international human rights standards, treaties and conventions should be carefully examined as this process increases effectiveness and quality of program.
	On developing the content of the program	When developing materials, international good practices should be used while adapting and tailoring them to the specific context as this makes the program relevant and acceptable by target audience.
	On identifying key themes that shape the foundation of the program	Focusing the HRCRT Program on themes identified by stakeholders enables a consistent approach that is relevant for beneficiaries and also enables a stronger relationship between parents, the community, and the school.
Teaching and Learning	On participation	Regular participation of stakeholders in the development of educational human rights materials for teachers ensures that materials are responsive to teachers' needs, school contexts, and targeted towards the learner competencies of students. This requires development of feedback mechanisms and tools to facilitate regular participation, feedback, suggestions, and pre-testing of educational human rights materials.
	On empowering students	Child-friendly activities and School Parliament initiatives enables students to practically apply what they learn. Focus group discussions and observations revealed that such activities develop and strengthen the self-esteem, dignity, and ability to participate for many students.

Professional Development of Teachers	On decentralizing training	Having an effective decentralized process for training of trainers is feasible if trainers are equipped with guides and provided with regular coaching.
	On continuous capacity building	Training should be supported by continuous capacity building and support provided to teachers. This includes supplementary training tools, multi-media and newsletters to keep teachers engaged.
	On teachers working closely with school management	School-level planning tools foster cooperation between school administration and teachers to ensure a consistent approach to teaching, as well as to ensure coordination of activities conducted and human rights education taught at different grade levels.
Monitoring and Evaluation	On monitoring and evaluating	Teachers should be equipped with monitoring and evaluation tools. Monitoring and evaluation should not be seen as a tool to "assess" but a tool to "learn and review."  To provide efficiency, simple monitoring tools that integrate into existing monitoring and evaluation processes within the organization should be used.
Learning Environment	On a rights-based school environment	School Parliaments should be empowered with guidance and support since they play a key role to support a culture of human rights.  Human rights education's potential will not be reached unless the community is involved. The school/home divide could be addressed through Parent Teacher Associations, Open Days, and awareness-raising activities for the community.

In this case study, we have presented good practices in developing an HRCRT Policy and the steps for its successful implementation. While it has only been two years since the training on the new HRCRT Toolkit began, focus group discussions and classroom observations are demonstrating that progress was made in creating a classroom and school environment that further enables students to advocate for their rights and the rights of others. After finalizing the training of all teachers and conducting another Perceptual Survey, we will be able to compare the results with our baseline survey to further evaluate results. As such, the HRCRT Policy has enabled UNRWA to strengthen the HRCRT Program to be more results-based, integrated within the Education Reform, and promote a culture of human rights within UNRWA schools, a fragile region, and beyond.

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