

The Pune Declaration on Education for Human Rights in Asia and the Pacific

ADOPTED BY THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ON EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
PUNE, INDIA, 3-6 FEBRUARY 1999

The participants of the Asia and Pacific Regional Conference on Education for Human Rights, organized in Pune, India, by the World Peace Centre of MAEER's MIT (Pune), National Human Rights Commission of India, and the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO, at the initiative and with the support of UNESCO to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), discussed the status of education for human rights and the obstacles and special needs for its promotion in the region.

The Conference notes that the Asia and Pacific region

- is characterized by significant social, political and cultural diversity and varying levels of economic development;
- suffers in large parts from extreme poverty and illiteracy;
- is experiencing the adverse impact of globalization processes, especially in the economic and cultural fields, in many cases detrimental to human rights;
- suffers from the prevalence of different societal maladies such as child labor, sexual exploitation of women and children, gender inequality, contemporary forms of slavery, discrimination of persons belonging to national or ethnic or religious or linguistic minority groups, exclusion based on social status, deprived and disadvantaged communities, and other grounds which seriously impede the promotion of human rights;
- is disturbed by the sufferings of innocent people as a result of acts of terrorism, armed conflicts and abuse of power;

- is experiencing serious degradation of the environment affecting the quality of life of the people and threatening the very survival of humanity.

The Conference reaffirms that education is a basic right and an essential precondition for the implementation of all human rights for all.

Further, the participants of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference feel that a comprehensive, integrated and holistic approach is called for, to popularize education for human rights from school level to graduate and post-graduate levels. A similar effort is also called for to bring about attitudinal changes to accept the value of human rights education as an important component of self-development. This ultimately results in creating the awareness rights from the childhood. Elementary education shall be free and compulsory. Education shall be directed, in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the full development of human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights. It should enable the society to address civil, so-

cial, political, economic, and cultural problems preventing enjoyment of human rights, to improve the quality of life of the people, and to resolve conflicts through peaceful means.

The conference notes the efforts of the inter-governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), national human rights institutions, educational community, and other segments of the civil society to promote education for human rights.

The conference is concerned that only very few states in the region have adopted national plans in conformity with the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

The conference further notes that, though no formal regional mechanism has been set up in the Asia and Pacific to address human rights issues, other regional arrangements exist through the association and joint efforts of national human rights institutions as well as NGOs for the promotion of human rights education at the regional level.

Further, the conference reaffirms all human rights—civil, social, political, economic, cultural—are universal, interrelated, indivisible, and interdependent and should be treated on the same footing and with the same emphasis.

Aims and Objectives

The principal aims of education for human rights are:

- to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- to develop fully the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- to develop attitudes and behavior to promote respect for the rights of others;
- to ensure genuine gender equality and equal opportunities for women in all spheres;
- to promote understanding and tolerance among diverse national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other groups;

- to empower people to participate actively in the life of a free society;
- to promote democracy, development, social justice, communal harmony, solidarity, and friendship among nations;
- to further the activities of the UN system, in particular UNESCO, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UNICEF, aimed at the creation of a culture of peace based upon universal values of human rights, international understanding, tolerance and non-violence.

Contents of Education for Human Rights

Education for human rights should be aimed at full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and for that purpose have regard to the following:

- All human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent, and all are essential for the full development of human personality;
- While regional and national particularities are to be borne in mind, it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, civil, economic, and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms contribute to stability, security and well-being, necessary for socioeconomic development;
- Human rights, democracy, peace, and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing;
- Rights of women and girl-children are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights;
- Human rights education should be aimed at the full and equal participation of women in political, economic, social, and cultural life. Awareness toward prevention of gender-based violence, sexual harass-

ment, and exploitation should be component of education programs;

- Promotion and protection of the rights of the child are a priority and require dissemination of knowledge of relevant standards. Special efforts are needed to eradicate child labor, child prostitution, and child pornography;
- Special attention should be paid to the rights of persons belonging to various vulnerable groups—national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, indigenous people, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrant workers, persons with HIV/AIDS and other health problems, disabled, and the elderly;
- Special attention should be also given to the mobilization of the public opinion against major threats and challenges to human rights such as terrorism, organized crime, corruption, trafficking of human beings for exploitative purposes, drug trafficking, violence, etc.

Education for human rights should be multi-disciplinary and should include the following:

- Knowledge of internationally recognized human rights standards enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international covenants, international conventions, declarations and protocols, and international procedures and mechanism, for human rights protection as well as norms of international humanitarian law;
- Knowledge of national laws and procedures related to human rights;
- Skills necessary for the application of these standards and procedures in everyday life;
- Behavioral patterns based upon vigilance against violations of human rights wherever they occur;
- Knowledge of social realities and impact of globalization process.

Education in and for human rights should also be aimed at the elimination of prejudices

and negative stereotypes which, in many cases, become the source of discrimination, hatred, and violence. These concerns should be reflected in manuals, textbooks, and other educational materials.

Programs for education for human rights should be developed in accordance with the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the UNESCO World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, 1993), and the Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (Paris, 1995).

The conference stresses that education for human rights is, by itself, a human right.

It further underlines that it is the duty of the State to take all necessary measures to ensure the realization of this right.

Educational Methods, Teaching Aids, and Training Programs

Appropriate methodologies and materials for the teaching of human rights should be developed in full conformity with the human rights principles and standards.

Special attention should be given to the elaboration of educational materials suitable for formal and informal settings, and adapted to the needs and demands of various target groups. Such materials should be made available in various national and local languages, in different forms, and in sufficient number. Bearing in mind the special characteristics of the region and prevailing high level of illiteracy, innovative audio-visual programs should be prepared. An effort should also be made to reach the population especially in the remote and rural areas.

Environmental education is an essential part of education for human rights.

Participatory methodology for the teaching of human rights which takes into account the involvement of the target groups in the learning process should be adopted.

Further, special attention should be given to the training of the following:

- trainers who will ensure a multiplier effort in the promotion of human rights education;
- educators and other professionals involved in formal and informal education programs;
- journalists and other media professionals.

Emphasis should be given to the elaboration and dissemination of human rights training programs designed for professionals having special responsibilities related to the protection and implementation of human rights, in particular security, army, police, prison, immigration, and other government personnel and public functionaries at different levels, as well as medical doctors, other health professionals, and scientists engaged in biological research.

Players

The conference is convinced that the achievement of the goals of education for human rights can be ensured only through active cooperation and participation of all those who have the duty and obligation to promote and protect human rights. Parliamentarians and other elected representatives of the people at different levels, organs of state, educational and research institutes, national human rights institutions, NGOs, the mass media and, in fact, every segment of civil society have a very important role to play in promoting education for human rights.

The family is crucial for the education of children in the spirit of human rights.

National human rights institutions, NGOs and their regional associations have a very important role to play in the implementation of national and regional plans and strategies in the field of education for human rights.

Technical assistance and support of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO, and other organiza-

tions and bodies in the UN system have an important role to play in the development and implementation of national plans for education for human rights.

The mass media have a positive and a constructive role to play in the promotion of human rights. It should include dissemination of information on human rights issues, including information on violation of human rights and problems that demand urgent intervention. In addition, they should highlight the successful work and positive experiences accumulated by the governmental and nongovernmental players at national, regional, and international levels.

Private foundations, private enterprises, and associations of business and industry should be encouraged to contribute to the promotion of human rights.

Recommendations

With a view to accelerating the process of promoting education for human rights, the Asia and Pacific Regional Conference on Education for Human Rights adopted the following recommendations:

- I. Appeals to the states in the Asia and Pacific region
 - 1) To provide free and compulsory primary education for all children.
 - 2) To strictly observe the provisions of human rights instruments, and to become parties to human rights treaties if they have not yet done so.
 - 3) To disseminate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights standard-setting instruments as widely as possible in national and local languages.
 - 4) To establish, if they have not already done so, national human rights institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles (1991) and to ensure adequate procedural safeguards for their functioning in a truly independent manner.

- 5) To adopt, if they have not yet done so, National Plans in accordance with the aims of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and take urgent measures for their implementation.
 - 6) To allocate sufficient resources to satisfy the needs related to the promotion of education for human rights.
 - 7) To draw up and implement sensitization and educational programmes for public functionaries in order to ensure respect for human rights for all.
 - 8) To draw up training programmes designed for professionals having special responsibilities related to the promotion and implementation of human rights in particular the army, security forces, police, prison, immigration and other government personnel at different levels, especially in areas of armed conflicts.
 - 9) To ensure that judicial processes are so organized to make them easily accessible, simple and sensitive to human rights concerns.
 - 10) To ensure that ministries of education and educational authorities at various levels accelerate their efforts to formulate appropriate syllabi for the teaching of human rights; to develop teaching aids for various target groups for an easy understanding of human rights; and to evolve and implement training programmes for teachers.
 - 11) To take measures in order to protect human rights activists and human rights defenders in full conformity with the Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms adopted on 10 December 1998, the day of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
 - 12) To create cells for education for human rights which shall be responsible for promoting and consolidating education for human rights. They shall plan the introduction of education for human rights at all stages of school, college, and university curriculums. They shall also elaborate and implement programs for nonformal education for large segments of society who are outside the ambit of formal education. They shall prepare teaching and training materials in the form of books, audio-visual aids, etc. covering the entire spectrum of education for human rights. They shall also promote short-term courses, seminars, workshops, and various other forms of training activities including summer and winter schools. Further, field work and experiential learning in the field of education for human rights shall be encouraged.
- II. Request selected representatives, Parliamentarians, and other elected representatives of the people actively support the promotion and protection of human rights and human rights education through appropriate actions within and outside the legislature.
- III. Urges NGOs working in the area of human rights to contribute to the effective implementation of human rights education programs and national plans of action.
- IV. Invites mass media to increase their contribution to the enhancement of awareness of human rights, sensitization of the general public on violation of human rights and threats to human rights, and formation of public opinion on human rights issues.
- V. Demands national human rights institutions, individually and jointly, through their regional forum in Asia and the Pacific, to support the efforts of governments, academic in-

stitutions, NGOs, and other players for the implementation of the national programs in line with the aims of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

VI. Requests UNESCO Chairs, Associated Schools, Clubs, and Associations in the region, to contribute actively in implementing activities in the field of education for human rights.

VII. Invite United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO, and other agencies and bodies within the UN system, as well as other interested intergovernmental organizations, to provide technical assistance and support in the development and implementation of national programs for education for human rights.

The conference also recommends that in order to have an on-going exchange of experience in the Asia and Pacific region on education for human rights, a regional network with a focal point should be created. It should ensure development and exchange of curriculums, training methodologies, technical support materials, student/faculty exchange programs, field visits, etc.

The conference stresses that human rights in their wake cast equally important responsibilities and duties on all individuals, society, and the state toward everyone. As Mahatma Gandhi, a great humanitarian, a champion of human rights, and a messenger of peace said: "Begin with duties of a man and rights will follow as spring follows winter." Rights and responsibilities go together. This also should form part of education for human rights.