

Human Rights Education in Georgia

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On 31 July 1992, the day it became an official member of the United Nations, Georgia adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Human rights education was needed in the newly independent country.

In September 1992, a presidential decree incorporated human rights education into the curriculum of secondary schools and universities.

The minister of education issued an order on 12 January 1993 to teach in secondary schools subjects on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (4th grade) and UDHR (9th and 11th grades), publish human rights literature, and train teachers in human rights teaching. Unfortunately, the education system was not ready to start human rights education in secondary schools due to two problems: lack of professional teachers of human rights, and lack of human rights literature in the Georgian language. For a few years after the order, the ministry could not find the money to train teachers and translate and develop teachers' manuals and textbooks.

Tbilisi International Human Rights School

The experts of the Georgian Committee Against Torture, with their human rights protection and monitoring experience, established the Tbilisi International Human Rights School (TIHRS) at the end of 1997. They identified an important problem: low-level education on rights and freedoms.

The main goals and objectives of TIHRS are the following:

- Help Georgians increase their knowledge on human rights, which is the basis for protection and realization of rights.
- Publish materials on human rights.

- Identify problems in human rights education and plan to improve the situation.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Georgia supported the idea of TIHRS. OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR) supported TIHRS' first activity—the International Conference on Human Rights Education (December 1997). It was attended by the deputy minister of education, a human rights education expert from the Danish Human Rights Centre, representatives of international organizations, aid organizations, and local human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The conference focused on the importance of human rights education, especially in secondary schools. After the conference, TIHRS and the Ministry of Education agreed to cooperate.

In 1998, TIHRS started its activities in two secondary schools in Tbilisi (#1 Experimental Secondary School and #51 Secondary School). Both have a cooperation agreement with TIHRS. The activities started in the secondary schools in line with the Order of the Ministry of Education and because TIHRS staff have experience in training secondary schoolteachers. The agreements include cooperation in developing human rights education curriculum and teacher training. The schools held two workshops to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UDHR. Both schools became laboratories to test different teaching methodologies.

The third secondary school (Balavari Secondary School) joined the list of TIHRS experimental schools in 2000.

Sixteen teachers were trained under the cooperation agreements. The teachers were introduced to international documents on human rights (UDHR; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC]; and the European Convention on Human Rights); human rights teaching strategies and methodology; organization of workshops on human rights; networking, etc. The teachers wished to use practical activities such as role play and were introduced to the different role plays developed by Amnesty International and Citizenship Foundation. After the training, TIHRS trainers attended the trained teachers' classes and evaluated their activities. The evaluation identified three teachers as needing more training, most as satisfactory, and only two as excellent. TIHRS then arranged a 2-day training for 14 teachers, which mostly included discussions on the problems identified during evaluation and ways to solve them. An evaluation of the second training showed that teachers improved their knowledge and skills.

In the summer of 1998, TIHRS translated and published the first Georgian-language human rights manual for schoolteachers—*First Steps* (an Amnesty International publication)—with OSCE ODIHR financial assistance. Two thousand free copies of the manual were distributed to 70% of secondary schools. Georgia has 4.7 million people and approximately 1,000 secondary schools. After publishing the manual, TIHRS shifted to training schoolteachers to help them deepen their understanding of the manual and its suggested methodologies.

In 1998, TIHRS presented its perspectives and program on human rights education in a conference on Human Rights Education for the New Generation, in Batumi. TIHRS suggested that the Ministry of Education increase the time allotted for human rights subjects in secondary

schools. The order allots only 1 hour per week. TIHRS suggested including human rights subjects in all grades (primary and secondary schools), and integrating human rights issues into humanities subjects such as history and literature instead of holding separate classes. TIHRS also recommended that the Ministry of Education cooperate closely with the Council of Europe on human rights education and, together with council experts and local NGO representatives, develop the human rights education curriculum.

During 1998–1999, TIHRS held a competition titled “How we know our rights” among 41 out of 206 secondary schools in Tbilisi, involving 824 students (4–5 students per team). The competition had two stages: selection of the representative team in each school, then the main competition among all the schools.

In 1998, TIHRS started a program with the colony of the Penitential Department of Georgia. TIHRS representatives visited the Minors Colony, met with imprisoned minors to discuss human rights issues, and delivered human rights literature to the colony library. TIHRS experts also held training activities on human rights for teachers of the Minors Colony secondary school.

During 1999–2000, TIHRS and the Ministry of Education cooperated more actively. The ministry, with financial support of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), recruited three TIHRS experts to train 4th grade teachers of Tbilisi secondary schools, who were holding classes on CRC. In 2 years, 748 secondary schoolteachers were trained. The training was based on the manuals *First Steps* (chapters 1, 2, and 3) and *Children's Rights*, developed by the Ministry of Education. The training aimed to deepen the knowledge of schoolteachers on children's rights, practice different role plays, and discuss the problems concerning teaching of 4th grade students. UNICEF aimed to popularize CRC and help implement it in schools. After the trainings, UNICEF published and disseminated free of charge a number of

books concerning CRC (*CRC is Ten Years Old, Situation of Women and Children's Rights in Georgia—An Analysis*) and established the Children's Rights Centre at the Public Defender's (Georgian Ombudsperson's) Office.

In 2000, TIHRS translated Reebok Foundation's animated film, *Stand Up for Human Rights*, and distributed free of charge a copy each to 200 secondary schools in Tbilisi and nearby territories.

In the same year, TIHRS received from Amnesty International's International Secretariat 150 copies of the Russian version of *First Steps* and disseminated them to 30 Russian, Armenian, and Azeri secondary schools in Georgia.

At the end of 2000, the Centre for the Protection of Constitutional Rights invited two TIHRS experts to give lectures to the prison staff on international standards of imprisonment under the project Assistance to the Penitential Reforms in Georgia. Fifty-five prison staff members were trained during two 3-day training sessions.

In 2001, TIHRS together with two other NGOs (Georgian Committee against Torture and Centre for the Protection of Constitutional Rights) founded the Human Rights Directorate of Caucasus, a coalition of human rights organizations. In cooperation with the Public Defender's (Ombudsperson's) Office of Georgia, United Kingdom (UK) Embassy, and UK's Department for International Development, the coalition implemented Police and Human Rights Program (2001–2002). Three TIHRS experts translated two publications of the Council of Europe's Police and Human Rights Directorate and used the publications to teach undergraduates at the Police Academy of Georgia.

In November-December 2001, TIHRS, with OSCE ODIHR financial support, implemented Strategies and Techniques of Human Rights Education in Secondary Schools in Tbilisi, under which 189 Tbilisi 9th- and 11th-grade human rights schoolteachers were trained by five TIHRS experts using *First Steps*. Together with

the schoolteachers, they trained 21 law students, who, on the basis of the special order of the deputy minister of education, were attached to 21 secondary schools. They held human rights classes for upper-grade students.

Also in the same year, TIHRS helped establish the first children's ombudsperson at the Balavari Secondary School to help students exercise their rights and to prevent or curb children's violence. The children's ombudsperson acts on the basis of students' complaints. If the complaint is true, the children's ombudsperson talks with the person who violated the student's rights and informs the school administration about it. If the case is not solved, the children's ombudsperson can apply for support from the school parliament,¹ which decides how to protect the rights of the student. The children's ombudsperson presents a report to the school parliament at the end of the trimester (every 4 months) on the situation of children's rights, focusing on children's rights violations and identifying future actions.

In April 2002, TIHRS, with financial support from the Open Society—Georgia Foundation (local Soros Foundation), arranged an international conference in Borjomi-Likani on Human Rights Education in Commonwealth Independent States (CIS). Human rights education NGOs from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine participated. The participants signed a joint letter addressed to the CIS ministers of education to recommend the strengthening human rights education. The participants also signed a cooperation agreement to support publication of a bulletin—*Human Rights Education in CIS*. The CIS Human Rights NGOs Network was established and TIHRS elected coordinator NGO.

After the conference, 150 copies of the bulletin's first issue (in Russian) were printed and distributed to the CIS ministries of education, human rights education NGOs, and international organizations. The publication contains presentations of the conference partici-

pants, providing a picture of human rights education in CIS and the activities of participating NGOs.

For 2003, TIHRS prioritizes training of regional secondary schoolteachers and implementation of regional human rights education projects with partner NGOs in CIS, Europe (Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights), and North America (Canadian Human Rights Foundation). Regional Education Department representatives have requested such training. TIHRS is also planning to train young lawyers as future human rights teachers and trainers at the regional (Caucasus) and international (CIS) levels.

Materials

First Steps is a special manual developed for schoolteachers by Amnesty International for Central and Eastern European countries. The manual gives general information on human rights and freedoms and their importance. It answers frequently asked questions on human rights education and describes its methodology and techniques. The manual focuses on identifying the human rights situation in the school and on classroom issues to facilitate planning and development of a human rights education strategy. Teachers are given questionnaires.

Most of the manual is dedicated to examples of lessons, role plays, and case studies for lower- and upper-grade students to make human rights issues more interesting and understandable to students. They are encouraged to participate in the role plays, express their opinion, become involved in different discussions, etc. The manual focuses on UDHR, and CRC, simplifying it.

The manual helps teachers develop workshops on human rights, and establish information networks, which are the basis for joint activities and cooperation. The manual also provides information on aid organizations, human rights education NGOs, human rights education publications, and contact addresses.

Police and Human Rights

Two manuals for teaching human rights were translated and published—*Police and Human Rights* and *How to Facilitate Discussion*, which are used by TIHRS experts in human rights classes at the Police Academy.

Police and Human Rights focuses on international standards of human rights. It consists of theoretical and practical lessons. The theoretical part is dedicated to the international instruments (UN, Council of Europe) and the practical part is based on case studies. The manual explains each article of the European Convention on Human Rights. The lessons are based on the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, giving students a good opportunity to discuss each article, understand the exercise of rights and freedoms, and learn how the international human rights protection mechanisms can help protect the rights of individuals.

How to Facilitate Discussion is for lecturers and was developed to make human rights issues interesting for members of the police. The manual discusses the role of police, police and society, police as law enforcement agency or society protection agency, why human rights protection, different stereotypes, etc. Discussing these themes helps students deepen their understanding of the human rights situation, and solve problems.

Three-step program implementation

TIHRS uses a three-step approach. The first step is identification of the human rights situation in the classroom and school. Four target groups—students, teachers, school administrators, and parents—are involved. Relationships—among students; among teachers; and between teachers and students, teachers and school administrators, students and school administrators, parents and students, parents and teachers, parents and school administrators—are identified. TIHRS uses a questionnaire developed for each target group. A group of psy-

chologists working at TIHRS handles these activities.

The second step is identification of the level of human rights knowledge among the students to help plan educational strategy. TIHRS uses activities such as brainstorming.

The third step is starting human rights education activities, including the following techniques and teaching methods:

- discussions on concrete rights (using situations in students' life);
- human rights review through newspapers and magazines (students monitor local newspapers and magazines for 1 week to identify the violation of rights and freedoms, then report to the class, which discusses the report);
- expression of human rights ideas through drawings (in 20 minutes, teams of 4–5 students draw images representing an article from UDHR or other human rights documents, then present their drawings to other groups, which must identify the right or freedom expressed);
- expression of human rights ideas through cartoons and films;
- role plays;
- moot court; and
- debate.

Current problems encountered

TIHRS faced several human rights education problems:

- teachers' inadequate knowledge on human rights especially in the regions;
- lack of human rights textbooks;
- short human rights classes (only one lesson per week);
- cancellation of the subject by some school administrators;
- too few teachers teaching human rights (usually teachers of mathematics, history, and literature);
- use of lessons mostly as part of mathematics, history, and literature; and

- teaching human rights subjects to only the 4th, 9th, and 11th grades, rather than all grades.

To address these problems, TIHRS is developing a number of projects:

- training of human rights schoolteachers in various regions;
- negotiations with the Ministry of Education in cooperation with international partners (Council of Europe, OSCE ODIHR, UNICEF) to develop textbooks on human rights for 4th, 9th, and 11th grades;
- preparation of the report on the human rights situation, with concrete recommendations to the Ministry of Education, dissemination of the report among international organizations to get their support, and monitoring of implementation of the recommendations; and
- a sociological survey of four target groups (students, teachers, school administration, and parents) to identify the degree of violence against children.

TIHRS concentrates on establishing student parliaments, which will help involve many young people in the protection and promotion of human rights. The Ministry of Education must pay attention to the training of schoolteachers in human rights issues and teaching methodologies, development of new teaching manuals and textbooks, establishment of student parliaments, and cooperation with international organizations and NGOs.

Endnote

1. The school parliament is elected by the students starting from 5th grade. The main function of the school parliament is to adopt laws for the school, elect the executive bodies (minister cabinet) and children's ombudsperson, know how laws are implemented through ministers' reports and children's ombudspersons' reports, develop recommendations for the school administration, negotiate with school administration representatives, etc.