

Human Rights Education in Schools in Central Asia

CHRF CENTRAL ASIAN TEAM

Human rights education is the raison d'être of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation (CHRF). Its vision of human rights and understanding of education are reflected in the way it works. Its programs are based on needs identified with international and Canadian partners and designed for particular target groups such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public officials and human rights educators. Partners seek it for expertise in program content and instructional design. They also seek it for solidarity.

CHRF believes that to have meaningful impact, programs must respond to clearly defined needs and be appropriately targeted. Working closely with partners is therefore essential in defining specific objectives, stakeholders and expected results. In its most successful programs, CHRF works closely with partners in the curriculum development, logistical preparations, facilitation, evaluation and follow-up activities.

CHRF integrates into every aspect of the design, development and delivery of its program the fundamental values in human rights education such as respect, inclusiveness and empathy. It uses participatory methods based on principles of adult experiential learning. Participants and facilitators engage in a process of mutual teaching and learning. The emphasis is on practical application and on the development of strategies for future action.

CHRF programs are designed to strengthen the capacity of participants and their organizations to engage in effective human rights education, monitoring and advocacy. Training sessions and workshops provide participants with the opportunity to reflect upon their own attitudes and experiences, gain new knowledge, develop skills and establish or strengthen their

networks. Follow-up and evaluation are seen as essential elements of the learning process. In a number of its recent projects, the CHRF actively engaged its partners in the development and delivery of follow-up initiatives.

CHRF work principles are summed up as follows:

- Participatory program development and implementation that empowers partners and facilitates mutual learning, support and experience sharing.
- Capacity building of local partners that requires support, both technical and financial, over an extended period of time. There is a need for time and space for learning, and also opportunity to put it into practice.
- Partnerships, essential to CHRF work, also need time to be built and strengthened.

Program Evolution

More than 37 years of work on human rights education gave CHRF a global network of human rights workers and organizations. Started in 1967 as an institution working solely in Canada, CHRF eventually extended its work overseas.

The annual International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTP) of CHRF plays an instrumental role in the development and success of its overseas programs. When IHRTP started in 1980, it was already offered to non-Canadian participants. From early 1990s, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the wave of democratization that swept Eastern Europe, the number of international participants in the IHRTP steadily increased. By 1993, international participants made up more than half of the participants. At present, almost 95% of the participants are people from various countries around the world.

IHRTP facilitated contact with many organizations, which eventually became CHRF partners. New programs overseas were developed in response to needs expressed during the IHRTP or in many cases in response to specific requests from IHRTP participants. Currently, the CHRF has well-developed programs in Africa, Asia and Europe. CHRF has active programs in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia at present.

Historical Context

CHRF started work in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in mid-1990s. A relatively large number of IHRTP participants helped in the development and implementation of two workshops in the region:

- Regional Human Rights Seminar devoted to multiculturalism (May 1995, Bratislava, Slovakia); and
- The Regional Program on Refugees and Migration (November 1996, Moscow, Russia).

CHRF was not able to do follow-up activities due to financial constraints. Nonetheless, these workshops enabled CHRF to gain a better grasp of the evolving human rights issues in CEE/CIS, as well as established relationships with civil society organizations active in

human rights work there. CHRF felt it could make a significant contribution by helping to build the human rights education capacity of the organizations. This led to the development of CHRF's first multi-year program in the region.

NGOs in the region needed knowledge (human rights theory, participatory methodology) and skills (on instructional design and training) necessary for the implementation of effective training programs. In mid-1990s, participatory methodology and interactive training methods were a novelty in the region that historically made use of the expert model (lecture based) in all educational activities, including human rights education. After experiencing the value of participatory education methodology at IHRTP, alumni also wanted to learn how to implement a participatory methodology in their own human rights work.

The goal of CHRF's 1997-2001 Program in CEE/CIS was to strengthen the capacity of selected partner organizations and other institutions working in the field of human rights and democratization through the following objectives:

- To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of NGOs in human rights activities.
- To develop the capacity of NGOs to deliver human rights training.
- To facilitate the development of a sustainable and integrated network of human rights NGOs in CEE/CIS.

The Program consisted of three main components:

1. Participation of human rights activists and educators from CEE/CIS in IHRTP. An average of 25 participants per year took part in the IHRTP, for a total of 75 participants from 23 CEE/CIS countries over the three-year period.
2. Regional Training for Trainers workshops. This component was designed to strengthen the training capacity and in-

structional design skills of selected NGO workers in CEE/CIS. The component consisted of 3-stage Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops.

Subsequently, CHRF and its regional partners (among them IHRTP alumni and participants of the TOT workshops) jointly developed and implemented 5 human rights education workshops, namely:

1. Institution Building for Slovenian NGOs, with the Legal and Information Center for NGOs (16-18 October 1998, Gozd Martuljek, Slovenia)
2. Human Rights Training for Teachers in Kazakhstan, with the Center for Conflict Management (6-10 November 1999, Alatau, Kazakhstan)
3. Training for Human Rights Trainers, with the Center for Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (22-26 November 1999, Tashkent, Uzbekistan)
4. Human Rights Training for Teachers in Uzbekistan, with the Center for Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (6-10 November 2000, Samarkand, Uzbekistan)
5. Human Rights Training for Teachers in Kyrgyzstan, with the Youth Human Rights Group (23-28 February 2001, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan).

However, what the program could not support was follow-up activities for teachers after they returned to their schools.

In implementing this 3-year program, CHRF also solidified its expertise in human rights education programming and strengthened its capacity in managing human rights education programs.

It is important to note that the CHRF's own involvement in the CEE/CIS region evolved during that period. As the countries of Central Europe consolidated their democracies, the CHRF gradually shifted its attention eastward, toward the countries of the former Soviet

Union (FSU), particularly the Central Asian Republics where the need for support appeared to be the greatest.

Central Asian Program

CHRF's program in Central Asia dates back to 1999 when the first teacher training workshops in Kazakhstan were held. These workshops focused on human rights content and principles, and inter-active teaching methods that help teachers effectively teach human rights in the classroom. Other training sessions followed soon after in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Following the successful delivery of teacher training sessions in close collaboration with partners, CHRF developed a 3-year program.

The 3-year program (2001-2004) entitled "Human Rights Education Capacity Building in CEE and Central Asia" was developed by building upon the partnerships established and successes achieved during the previous 3-year program, particularly in Central Asia. The "joint program" initiatives – human rights education workshops for teachers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – were in a sense pilot sessions. The experience clearly indicated the need for continuing focus on teachers in Central Asia as "change agents" who can positively influence the young generation and, through human rights education in schools, instill in them human rights values, attitudes and skills which are essential for the full development of the person.

The ultimate goal of the program was to strengthen the capacity of civil society so that it is better equipped to promote human rights education within the school system, thereby contributing to the emergence of a culture of human rights in the region. The program aims to equip human rights workers with the human rights knowledge, skills and materials they need to effectively promote human rights education in schools in Central Asia, and to enhance regional collaboration among human rights educators in CEE and CA.

The program had two major components:

- Participation of 25 human rights activists and educators from CEE/CA per year in the IHRTP (the representation of CEE/CIS countries in IHRTP has shifted from Central Europe eastward; more participants were coming from Russia, Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia)
- Human Rights Education for Teachers in Central Asia.

The Central Asia component focused primarily on 3 countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but also involved Tajikistan on smaller scale. Participants from Tajikistan attended regional workshops but did not receive any funding or support for local training activities.

Program Approach in Central Asia

As in programs in other parts of the world, CHRF's program approaches in Central Asia are characterized by building knowledge and understanding, accompanied by an emphasis on changing attitudes and values. The training programs are based on an initial assessment of the learner's needs that includes an affirmation of the knowledge they bring to the training. They are rooted in the development of a shared contextual analysis, on which new information and ways of thinking are explored. They include elements of practical and critical planning for the implementation of what is learned and then evaluation, which lead to further planning. CHRF also puts a high value on its partnerships with local organizations, resulting in shared learning, increased local capacity, and the assurance of local ownership of both activities and results. These approaches result in meaningful change among those trained, and the promise of change within their societies.

The CHRF partners in the 1999-2001 joint programs in Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) decided, consid-

ering the context of the region, that their target participants are secondary school teachers. They should be the primary participants because they experienced a great need for human rights education and expressed this need to local NGOs. The first pilot sessions for teachers (1999, 2000 and 2001) were very successful and helped further identify their needs in human rights education. They also resulted in the development of the next multi-year program of CHRF in this region. Many teachers were requesting CHRF partners for additional information on human rights. They specifically underlined the need to learn new methods, techniques and approaches in human rights education. They also identified during the pilot sessions the lack of manuals, reading and other educational materials on human rights education in Russian and local languages.

Similar context, needs, cultures and language of communication (Russian) gave CHRF an opportunity to develop a program for three Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan). Through its previous programs in the region, CHRF established strong partnerships and working contacts in these countries. Exchange of information, experiences, and expertise within the region and the strengthening of regional ties were identified as needs to be targeted in the new multi-year program.

Based on the needs identified in consultation with groups in Central Asia during 1999-2001 period, the specific objectives of the 2001-2005 program are:

- To equip human rights educators with human rights knowledge, skills and materials needed to effectively promote human rights education in schools in Central Asia.
- To enhance regional collaboration among human rights educators in Central Asia and CEE that contributes to the emergence of an informal regional network of human rights educators.

- To make available to NGOs and teachers appropriate human rights education materials in Russian and other local languages.

The approach adopted to achieve these objectives includes:

- Participation in the IHRTP to examine international experiences
- Regional workshops to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences
- National and local teacher training workshops to strengthen the capacity of local human rights educators and teachers in each country
- Selection, adaptation and translation of the appropriate human rights education materials for teachers.

The focus on schools in Central Asia provides an important entry point for reaching youth, who will play a crucial role in determining the future of this potentially volatile region.

Program Implementation

Through the activities of the program, CHRF encouraged international, regional and sub-regional exchange of experiences in human rights education, particularly in the areas of teacher training and development of human rights education materials.

The regional training program involves teacher training workshops in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the formation of national teams of trainers, and regional workshops for members of those teams.

In 2003, a regional consultation also included participants from Tajikistan. Subsequently, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace-Building (UNTOP), a joint teacher training workshop on human rights education was organized in Tajikistan.

During the 3-year period, there were three (3) regional workshops that brought together all team members from three countries

(Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) and a group of three from Tajikistan.

National teams of trainers that were formed at the beginning of the program (about 10 persons per team) received training during regional workshops and each implemented 5 local workshops with an average of 25 teacher-participants per workshop, in their respective countries. As a result, these national teams were equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience in human rights education that enable them to continue their work with teachers, provided that they secure funding for it. To date, more than 100 teachers have received training in each country.

The national teams started as groups of individuals organized by CHRF's local partners in 2002 and ended up to be real, strong and independent teams in 2005.

The members of the national teams use the human rights education knowledge and skills acquired during the regional workshops. They are working with teachers and other target groups, helping them to promote human rights and include human rights education in the school curriculums. For example, the Uzbek Team held training sessions for the police, judges, border guards and journalists. They used the methodology and facilitation skills they learned from the CHRF Program. The national teams built their reputation for effective and professional human rights education work and have been approached by many international organizations to hold their workshops.

The team in Kazakhstan started publishing a bi-monthly bulletin on human rights education for teachers and educators in Russian and Kazakh languages in 2003. This bulletin is also available in their website (www.humanrights.freenet.kz). Through the bulletin and other means of communication they maintain good contact with teachers interested in human rights education throughout Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Team has made a systematic effort to establish closer cooperation with governmental offices in Kazakhstan. It succeeded, for in-

stance, in getting the representatives of the Kazakhstan Ombudsman Office to their sessions. A member of the Kazakh Team, who is working on a Juvenile Justice Project, developed a training manual for the project. The manual was modeled on the CHRF training manual for the regional workshops.

The team in Kyrgyzstan continues to center around a very strong local human rights NGO, Youth Human Rights Group (YHRG). The experience of working together as a team within the CHRF program helped them initiate an informal human rights education division at YHRG.

The Kyrgyz Team contributes to all the human rights education activities initiated by YHRG and in cooperation with international organizations, local NGOs and governmental offices. For example, they finalized the publication of three hardcover books on human rights and human rights education in the Russian language: *Human Rights and Democracy: Compilation of Articles*, *Human Rights: Reading Materials*, and *Collection of Human Rights Documents*. These books have been distributed to all teachers who participated in the workshops held by the Kyrgyz Team in the framework of the CHRF three-year program in Kyrgyzstan. Several sets of these books have been given to national teams in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as to colleagues in Tajikistan.

Several Kyrgyz Team members are engaged in various training activities for teachers, with support from other funders.

In 2002, CHRF opened a regional office (based in Almaty, Kazakshtan) with a Regional Representative to assist in the implementation of the program in Central Asia. This presence increased CHRF's credibility with existing and potential partners and human rights education stakeholders in the region.

Evaluation and Future Plans

Follow-up evaluations reveal that former participants in CHRF programs are continuing

to use the skills and knowledge gained. During the period of the CHRF involvement in CEE and Central Asia, a significant increase in the number of human rights education initiatives was observed. While the need to improve skills and share experiences remains, the proliferation of organizations engaged in education indicates its importance.

During 2001-2005 program in Central Asia, CHRF used various evaluation techniques to validate the needs of the target group of the program and ensure high effectiveness of the program activities. Some of these techniques are:

- Evaluation questionnaires administered by the National Teams at the end of each local session. The analysis of these questionnaires is presented to CHRF in the form of evaluation reports.
- Additional needs assessment surveys conducted both by CHRF and its local partners.
- Questionnaires during the selection of participants for the second-level human rights education workshops held by the national teams.
- Meetings with partners. There were two mid-term evaluation meetings (January 2003 and January 2004) of this kind organized during the program in Central Asia.
- Mission trips of CHRF staff to the Central Asian region. The recent mission trip was undertaken in September 2004. The goals of the mission were to 1) collect information from Program beneficiaries – the national teams of trainers and teachers who participated in the CHRF Program “Human Rights Education for Teachers in Central Asia” – to further assess the effectiveness and outcomes of the 3-year human rights education Program in Central Asia; 2) meet other stakeholders involved in human rights education in Central Asia and establish additional contacts; and 3) further strengthen rela-

tionships between CHRF and its partners, the Central Asia National Teams of Trainers.

In each of the three countries, there were formal meetings with groups of teachers who participated in one or more workshops implemented by the national teams. The teachers were asked to complete a two-page questionnaire (in Russian) and then a roundtable discussion (also in Russian), addressing questions similar to those in the questionnaire, took place.

An evaluation of the program in September 2004 revealed that it resulted in life changes for the teachers involved, a deep commitment to human rights, sharing of knowledge with their colleagues, the implementation of innovative human rights education programs in the classroom, and fundamental change in school governance with the adoption of transparent and participatory approaches.

Teachers who participated in local workshops across Central Asia report that they practice what they learned. They include human rights education in their work in schools.

Most reports from teachers mention the inclusion of human rights in their lesson plans, mini-seminars for their colleagues in schools as well as activities related to the rights of the child during their teacher-parent meetings.

A teacher from Kazakhstan wrote that she produced a manual on how to include human rights in the Russian Language subject. Other teachers report that they organized discussions with students, other teachers, parents and school administration staffmembers.

Teachers use resource materials – books, handouts, *Human Rights Education Bulletin* produced by the Kazakh Team, websites, etc. – in their work in school. They reported that these materials are valuable and were shared with their colleagues in school.

The following quotes are representative of teachers' answers to evaluation questionnaire in general:

“I used all the materials from the workshop to organize school seminars at a high school level, additional lessons, quizzes at a secondary school level, drawing competition at a primary school level. We reformed the self-governance system in our school.”

– *Teacher from Kyrgyzstan*

“Yes, I applied them in regular sessions on legal education for teachers. And then, they used my recommendations and methodological handouts in their lessons. I adapted the materials to the specifics of work at the specialized schools (colonies for minors).”

– *Teacher from Kazakhstan*

“The books I received are used by teachers in their lessons and methodological workshops.”

– *Teacher from Kazakhstan*

“Yes, hand-outs from the first workshop became my everyday guide manual in preparing my lesson plans.”

– *Teacher from Uzbekistan*

The manuals produced by the national teams and used by teachers are modeled on CHRF training manuals produced for the regional workshops under the framework of the program in Central Asia.

Despite all these efforts, there is a growing concern that the democratization process may be stalling in many parts of the region. There is therefore an urgent need to shift the focus of current human rights education efforts in the region from an exclusive focus on knowledge- and skills-building in human rights to an approach that aims to shape human rights values and attitudes which lead to changes in behavior and practice.

CHRF has a track record of successful programming in the region and developing organizational and personal relationships with individuals and local and international organizations working in the field of human rights in

the region. Many IHRTTP alumni from CEE/CIS have indicated a need for advanced-level training of trainers in human rights education. This need was also expressed by international organizations working in the region such as Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and International Helsinki Federation.

In this advanced-level training of trainers program, CHRF will implement lessons learned from the previous programs, putting more emphasis on:

- Developing institutional human rights education capacity rather than capacity of individuals, thus assigning the development of sustainable, quality human rights education program to institutions.
- Carefully selecting partner organizations in the region.
- Providing implementing partners with sufficient financial and technical support to practice what they learn and achieve their own human rights education goals. Each regional partner organization will have an opportunity to implement 4-5 local human rights education sessions for their selected target audience.
- Strengthening partner's accountability for their human rights education work – putting emphasis on program strategies, evaluation and reporting of results achieved.

Although CHRF does not yet have any financial support for the Second Phase of Human Rights Education in Schools under the Central Asia Program, it sees the importance of the project and will raise funds for it. Since this is a unique and effective program, CHRF partners in the region are planning to continue this initiative. CHRF is considered the right organization with the capacity and experience to provide further support to local organizations in their human rights education activities.

Building upon the experience and expertise of CHRF and its partner organizations, a future program in Central Asia will focus on sensitizing and equipping the youth to promote and protect their own rights as well as the rights of others. CHRF plans to work with existing and new partners from civil society and explore partnerships with government agencies with programs engaged in education for youth (e.g., Ministries of Education, Ombudsman offices, etc.). The next phase is planned to expand the work being done in schools to engage with other players and activities that reach out to the youth in Central Asia. The next phase will also include Tajikistan in addition to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Based on the September 2004 program evaluation, the national-level activities will continue in the second phase of the program. They will be tailored to the needs in each country, while the regional component will figure much more prominently.

National activities will include:

- Ongoing teacher training workshops at introductory and advanced levels
- Methodological support in the development of training materials (text books, training manuals)
- The development of communications media (newsletters, websites), and the establishment of resource centers, and
- Pilot Human Rights Schools will be created and implemented, providing spaces for modeling human rights and reflecting the realization of human rights beyond the schoolyard.

In general, the second phase of the program (2005-2007) is expected to result in increased collaboration across societies in the Central Asian region for the realization of human rights, resulting in social change. The aim is to have “human rights atmosphere” more prevalent in schools, families, communities, countries, and the region.