

Asia-Pacific Regional Meetings on Human Rights Education (1995-2007)¹

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For more than a decade, inter-governmental and non-governmental regional workshops and conferences were held in the Asia-Pacific region either focused on human rights education, or human rights education as part of the agenda. They discussed the objectives, contents, problems and the possible ways of improving human rights education programs. These activities are the following:

- Conference-Workshop on Asia-Pacific Human Rights Education for Development (Manila, Philippines, 15 December 1995)
- Workshop on Asia-Pacific Human Rights Education - The Right to Human Rights Education (Sydney, Australia, 25 August 1996)
- International Conference on Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region (Osaka, Japan, 25-27 November 1998)
- “Education for Human Rights in Asia & the Pacific: Asia & Pacific Regional Conference on Education for Human Rights” (Pune, India, 3-6 February 1999)
- Regional Response to the United Nations Decade of Human Rights Education with the Participation of Civil Society (Nepal, November 1999)
- Inter-Sessional Workshop on National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region (Tokyo, Japan, 17-19 January 2000)
- Asian Human Rights Education Trainers’ Colloquium (Chiangmai, Thailand, 1-6 April 2001)
- Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific: Defining Challenges and Strategies (Bangkok, Thailand, 10-12 November 2003)
- Southeast Asia Conference on Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (Medan, Indonesia on 29-30 March 2004)
- Vientiane Action Programme (VAP), 10th ASEAN Summit (Vientiane, Laos on 29 November 2004)
- UNESCAP Workshop on Regional Follow-up to the Fifth Session and Preparation for the Sixth Session of the Ad Hoc Committee on an United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Bangkok, Thailand on 26 to 27 July 2005)
- Regional Conference of Cities for an Inclusive Urban Society (Bangkok, Thailand on 3-4 August 2006)
- Sixth Workshop on the ASEAN Regional Mechanism on Human Rights (Manila, Philippines on 16-17 July 2007)
- ASEAN Charter, 13th ASEAN Summit (Singapore, 18-22 November 2007).

Human rights education has been discussed as a separate topic in the annual inter-govern-

mental “Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian and Pacific Region” since 1999.

The following table is a summary of the discussions in the listed activities, the relevant initiatives that have been undertaken or continuously being undertaken, and possible tasks that can be done.

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
1. Purpose of human rights education		
Human rights education should address existing problems (injustices, discrimination, violence, poverty) facing the vulnerable and marginalized members of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social development agencies - sectoral organizations (farmers, workers, indigenous people, urban poor, etc.) • United Nations (UN) workshops on various issues 	Continue and improve the community- and sector-based human rights education programs
Educate on human rights those who possess power and authority (government personnel, members of the security and military forces, professionals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on human rights education and administration of justice • Workshop for lawyers and law professors • Training for National Human Rights Institutions staff • Country programs of UN agencies 	More human rights education programs for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - private companies - local governments - general public
Ensure access of the vulnerable and marginalized members of society to a human rights-sensitive judicial mechanism	Legal resources groups, child rights groups, women and law groups' programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - human rights training for lawyers - national conferences on administration of justice and human rights 	More human rights education programs for mainstream legal professionals
Empower communities and governments (for governments to deal with international institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social development agencies - sectoral organizations (farmers, workers, indigenous people, urban poor, etc.) • UN inter-governmental workshops on various issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and improve the community- and sector-based human rights education programs • Continue regional inter-governmental workshops on human rights education
Human rights curriculum should cover the rights of all persons forcibly displaced, including refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs on refugees and internally-displaced people (IDPs) by NGOs, and international institutions 	Establish human rights education program for members of border police and security forces, immigration officials, and other government officials
Encourage schools to integrate issues related to racism and discrimination into the curriculum in order to promote awareness within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dowa education - Education for minorities 	
Prevention and positive action: raising awareness, and educating citizens about mutual tolerance, respect of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, peaceful coexistence, human rights and democratic citizenship	Existing public awareness programs and activities of NHRIs, some government agencies, human rights centers, and NGOs	

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
Human rights education is meant to facilitate social transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social development agencies - sectoral organizations (farmers, workers, indigenous people, urban poor, etc.) 	Clarify, through human rights education, how human rights can be realized in practical/realistic manner appropriate to the different types of people
Ratify human rights instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National campaigns on signing and ratification of/accession to human rights instruments • Annual regional inter-governmental workshop declaration on this issue 	
2. Content of human rights education		
Realities in society - people's actual lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relevant programs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social development agencies - sectoral organizations (farmers, workers, indigenous people, urban poor, etc.) 	Development of materials that would strengthen the human rights content of issue- and sector-based educational programs
Holistic understanding of human rights embodied in human rights instruments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate international human rights standards into sectoral/issue-based national programs • Clarify the concept of human rights
Relevant and positive traditions and indigenous cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on human rights education and administration of justice in the Pacific – Pacific culture • Research on cultural values and human rights (HURIGHTS OSAKA) • Religion and human rights dialogue (AHRC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the link (positive and negative) between local cultures and traditions and human rights
Conflict resolution and peace-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APCEIU program on peace and conflict resolution • SAFHR peace study session 	
3. Methodology of human rights education		
Participatory (pedagogy of the oppressed) methodologies	ARRC program on promotion of participatory methodology	Review different perceptions on the meaning of participatory methodology
Different types of participatory methodologies for different types of situations and organizations		Collate and analyze different participatory methodologies used to determine the extent of promotion of human rights
Human rights-sensitive methodologies	Women's rights groups' campaign on gender-sensitive programs and methodologies	

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
4. Strategy to promote human rights education		
Campaign to make human rights education a national agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sectoral, regional consultations on human rights education • National structure on human rights education • National networks and workshops on human rights education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold/continue multi-sectoral, multi-institutional (NGO, GO) consultations in various parts of the country • Establish/strengthen national networks on human rights education
Lobby for the development of national human rights education action plan as envisaged in the UN Decade for Human Rights Education Plan of Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of national action plan on human rights education should be participatory, inclusive, democratic - it should involve different sectors in society - there should be partnership between grassroots communities, NGOs, governments and national human rights institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sectoral, regional consultations on human rights education • National structure on human rights education • National networks and workshops on human rights education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold/continue multi-sectoral, multi-institutional (NGO, GO) consultations in various parts of the country • Establish/strengthen national networks on human rights education
Lobby for adequate financial and technical support for the implementation of the national action plan on human rights education	National networks of human rights educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold/continue multi-sectoral, multi-institutional (NGO, GO) consultations in various parts of the country • Establish/strengthen national networks on human rights education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the mass media to promote human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites devoted to various human rights concerns • Publications, pamphlets on human rights • Mobile theatre program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use community radio programs • Publish materials for general use (such as comics) • Publish human rights issues in popular publications (magazines and newspapers)
Provide training for, as well as technical support to, human rights educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training workshops on teaching/learning methodologies (ARRC) • Workshops on developing human rights teaching/learning materials (ARRC, HURIGHTS OSAKA, APCEIU, APNIEVE) • General human rights courses offered by DTP, Forum Asia, South Asia Forum on Human Rights, Mahidol University, University of Hong Kong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake more training of trainers (national and regional) • Promote undergraduate and graduate programs on human rights, including the involvement of university-based human rights centers
Facilitate information, materials and experience exchange among human rights educators	Regional organizations' information dissemination programs for educators	Establish/strengthen national centers/ focal points for human rights education
Establish regional human rights education center, regional human rights education network	ARRC, APCEIU, APNIEVE, HURIGHTS OSAKA programs on networking and resource database	Establish/strengthen national centers/ focal points for human rights education

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Recommend the establishment or strengthening of, where appropriate, national mechanisms such as national human rights institutions, national coordinating committees, equal opportunity commissions or other equivalent independent and autonomous bodies to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of the Convention [on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities People] and to create awareness about it in all sectors of society	National members of Asia-Pacific Disability Forum (APDF)	Develop human rights education program on the rights of persons with disabilities at national and regional levels
Establish system to protect human rights educators (and human rights activists in general), promote solidarity alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHRC program for human rights workers in general • Action alerts, urgent appeals (AHRC, ACP, SUARAM) 	Establish national support system for human rights educators/workers
Promote space for civil society, protect democratic institutions		Develop supportive government policies on the role of civil society in human rights education
Protect the integrity of human rights education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify concept of human rights education through workshops • Review existing education programs and suggest improvements in human rights content
Evaluate the impact of human rights education	Surveys of human rights awareness of students, general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do baseline surveys on people's perceptions of human rights • Clarify concept of human rights • Establish continuing monitoring system on human rights awareness of the general public
Prevent the monopolization of human rights education by the governments and national human rights institutions	Inter-agency, multi-sectoral projects on human rights education	Maintain/strengthen inter-agency, multi-sectoral network on human rights education
Increase partnership with the private sector to raise awareness on human rights	Campaigns of ECPAT, Asia ACTs on child trafficking; ACHR on housing rights	Develop government policies on government-civil-society partnership on human rights education
Compile and disseminate, in collaboration with OHCHR and UNESCO, as well as relevant national institutions, key documents in regard to the major international and national instruments translated into local languages, and print and/or post these on the Internet, and make them available at easy to access sites.	Websites and materials of human rights centers, NHRIs, government agencies, NGOs	Strengthen existing modes of dissemination of information on human rights

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
<p>Compile and disseminate existing resource materials (stories, mythologies, etc.) teaching appropriate national values in addition to universal ones, such as respect, mutual tolerance and human rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning materials produced by NGOs • UNESCO-OHCHR-funded research on human rights education in the Southeast Asian school systems under the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (2009) • HURIGHTS OSAKA publication on resource training material for South Asia (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more materials that collect local stories, etc. that help make human rights more easy to understand by the general public • Disseminate beyond national borders the existing materials in this regard
<p>Promote among youth, schools and communities initiatives aiming to increase intercultural dialogue and mutual respect through the creation of an “Equality School” Certificate to reward local schools for their work, and a “Mayor’s Prize” awarded regularly to the best local school initiative.</p>	<p>Existing international exchange programs of some schools including those related to Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) of UNESCO</p>	<p>Encourage more schools to adopt international exchange program</p>
<p>Set up municipal libraries and museums as resource rooms for issues related to human rights, cultural diversity, etc.</p>	<p>Existing human rights museums such as Liberty Osaka (Japan), Tuol Sleng (Cambodia), Bantayog ng mga Bayani (Philippines), Peace and Human Rights Museum (Pakistan)</p>	<p>Develop program on how to maximize the use of the human rights museums by the students and the general public</p>
<p>Support the development of teaching materials (textbooks, guides, audiovisual or multimedia documentation, kits) on mutual tolerance, respect of human dignity, peaceful coexistence and intercultural dialogue that can contribute in enhancing the ability of pupils, teachers and trainers to operate in a multiethnic, multicultural and intercultural environment and to deal with the pressures and opportunities of such diversity; and to train in particular, school administrators and teachers.</p>	<p>APCEIU programs and materials on education for international understanding</p>	
<p>Establish regional campaign on human rights education</p>	<p>ARRC , HURIGHTS OSAKA, APNIEVE campaigns/programs</p>	<p>Continue/strengthen inter-agency, multi-sectoral campaign on human rights education (regional and national)</p>
<p>Urge ASEAN to continue to increase its commitment from basic awareness raising to full sustainability of human rights education, and by proposing that ASEAN nations and ASEAN itself adopt a holistic approach to human rights promotion that makes human dignity the central focus of governance and development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Asian project of HURIGHTS OSAKA on human rights lesson plans • UNESCO-OHCHR funded research on human rights education in the Southeast Asian school systems under the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education 	

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
Monitor human rights education	ARRC , HURIGHTS OSAKA programs	Maintain/strengthen inter-agency, multi-sectoral network on human rights education
Develop a regional human rights education curriculum	Southeast Asian project of HURIGHTS OSAKA on human rights lesson plans	Develop more human rights curriculums in other sub-regions
5. Role of United Nations Agencies		
Promote the UN Decade for Human Rights Education as an over-all framework	UN activities in the region on the Decade and human rights education in general	Disseminate more information on the UN activities related to the Decade and the World Programme for Human Rights Education
Organize regional forum for dialogue between governments, NGOs and national human rights institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHCHR regional workshop on national action plan for human rights education (2000, Tokyo) • OHCHR Gulf region workshop on human rights education in schools 	Do more regional activities on human rights education
Establish voluntary fund or other funds for human rights education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tehran Framework” of Regional Cooperation on Human Rights Workshop • Voluntary Fund on Technical Cooperation Programme in the Field of Human Rights • Assisting Communities Together (ACT) of OHCHR • Regional and country funds of other specialized UN agencies on material development, educators training, and other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHCHR report on the follow-up to the Decade submitted to the Commission on Human Rights in 2003 includes suggestion of fund for human rights education • Increase information dissemination on regional and country funds/programs of the UN agencies
Increase funding for human rights education program within the UN	UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE)	Seek more support from governments for WPHRE
Provide support for NGOs and people's organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting Communities Together (ACT) of OHCHR • Country funds of other specialized UN agencies on material development, educators training, policy development and other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHCHR report on the follow-up to the Decade submitted to the Commission on Human Rights in 2003 includes suggestion of fund for human rights education • Increase information dissemination on regional and country funds/programs of the UN agencies
Organize regional meetings that would discuss Asia-Pacific priorities, needs and experiences	Annual regional inter-governmental workshop on human rights	More NGO representation/participation in the annual regional inter-governmental workshop on human rights
Create program to sensitize UN personnel on human rights		Provide information on any program on increasing the human rights awareness of UN staff

Main Contents of Conclusions	Relevant Activities	Suggested Possible Tasks To Do
Develop closer relationship with the Asia-Pacific human rights community including the NGOs and upgrade system of providing information	Annual regional inter-governmental workshop on human rights	More NGO representation/participation in the annual regional inter-governmental workshop on human rights
Request human rights treaty bodies to include human rights education in discussing country reports		Monitor country reports to the treaty bodies; and the subsequent comments from these bodies
Maximize role of special rapporteurs in promoting human rights education	Dialogues with UN special rapporteurs	Emphasize need for special rapporteurs to cite human rights education in their reports
Support the development of national action plans on human rights education and their implementation by providing funds and technical support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHCHR regional workshop on national action plan for human rights education (2000, Tokyo) • UNESCO Pakistan office support for national human rights education action plan • UNDP support for evaluation of the Philippine human rights plan (which mentions human rights education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue lobbying for national human rights education action plan in countries where no such plans exist • Continue support for national action planning on human rights education under the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education
Maximize role of UNESCO Chairs, associated schools project members in promoting human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASP programs in some countries that include human rights • UNESCO Chair activities related to human rights education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request UNESCO to follow-up on the region's UNESCO Chairs, national committees and ASP members to support human rights education • Request national committees for UNICEF to support human rights education

Below is a simple presentation of the human rights education programs that cover Asia and/or Pacific

Non-formal Education System	
ACHR	Housing rights
AHRC	Role of judiciary and religious groups in human rights realization
APWLD	Legal literacy on women's rights
ARRC	Pedagogy, human rights education database
AWORC	Women and Media
CATW-AP	Trafficking and women's rights
Child Rights Asianet	Enforcement of Convention on the Rights of the Child
DTP	Use of United Nations human rights mechanism
Forum Asia	General human rights course
GATTW	Trafficking and women's rights
SAFHR	Human rights and peace

Formal Education System	
Organization	Area of Concern
APCEIU	Teacher training and teaching materials development
APNIEVE	Curriculum development and teaching materials development – tertiary level
HURIGHTS OSAKA	Teacher training and teaching materials development

Full names of institutions listed (in alphabetical order)

- Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU)
- Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA)
- Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education and (APNIEVE)
- Asia-Pacific Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC)
- Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
- Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)
- Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia)
- Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
- Asian Network on the Rights of the Child

- Asian Women’s Resource Exchange (AWORC)
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia-Pacific (CATW-AP)
- Diplomacy Training Program (DTP)
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)
- South Asian Forum on Human Rights (SAFHR)

Endnotes

¹ This is the updated version of the summary of the author that was originally prepared for the workshop entitled “Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific: Defining Challenges and Strategies” (Bangkok, Thailand, 10-12 November 2003).