



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC VOLUME FIFTEEN

HURIGHTS OSAKA

**HUMAN RIGHTS
EDUCATION
IN ASIA-PACIFIC
VOLUME FIFTEEN**

Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific—Volume Fifteen

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Acknowledgment

AS WE WRITE EVERY YEAR since 2010, this publication would never see the light of day without the full support of so many people in different countries in Asia-Pacific and beyond. They believed in the value of this publication. They worked to have articles on human rights promotion and education included in the fifteen annual volumes of this publication.

Aside from the authors, we recognize the contribution of the following people in preparing this volume:

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Thank you so much, Fidel.

Foreword

We are pleased to issue the volume fifteen of “Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific”.

As we may be all aware, we are facing an unprecedented critical time in history in relation to the values that we have espoused after the Second World War, namely democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Outright denial of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy by the second Trump administration has been affecting well-being and human rights of millions of people globally. It also seems as if imperialism and colonialism are back in the twenty-first century.

In the situation where human rights are infringed, ignored and jeopardized, it has been always the case that those who are marginalized and vulnerable have to bear the severest brunt. In order to push back this situation, the value of human rights education can never be emphasized enough.

A wide range of experiences of human rights education covered in this volume sheds light on emerging issues of human rights including global citizenship and human rights awareness and the rights of persons with mental disabilities. Many articles in this volume address different issues and experiences on human rights in Japan.

We earnestly hope that this edition will encourage every reader to aspire to work for a world where human rights are ensured without leaving anyone behind.

ATSUKO MIWA
Director

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Introduction

HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND EDUCATION grows in supportive political, legal, social and cultural environments. In environments that tend to negate the existence of human rights, human rights promotion and education creatively assumes different names and forms. In this case, the essential content remains the same: the value of human rights for everyone.

The debate in Seoul city on an ordinance on student rights illustrates the issue of political perspectives negatively affecting support for human rights.

The Seoul Metropolitan Council enacted the Seoul Student Rights Ordinance in 2012. But questions were raised about it subsequently, as reported in *The Korea Herald*:¹

First introduced in 2012, the Seoul Student Human Rights Ordinance guarantees the dignity, value, freedoms and basic rights of students. Similar ordinances are also in place in Gyeonggi Province, Gwangju, North Jeolla Province, South Chungcheong Province, Incheon and Jeju Island.

Courts have previously recognized the ordinance's legitimacy. In 2018 and 2019, the Seoul District Administrative Court and the Constitutional Court both ruled in favor of retaining the law, acknowledging its role in "limiting discriminatory hate speech, fostering righteous values as a democratic citizen and nurturing human rights perceptions."

The ordinance, however, has become the focal point of a heated ideological clash, with conservatives claiming it excessively protects students, limits teachers' authority and supports sexual minorities in schools.

Controversy intensified after the 2023 suicide death of a teacher at Seoul's Seoi Elementary School ignited calls to better protect teachers, who complained that the ordinance's protections left them open to abuse.

The Seoul Metropolitan Council enacted in 2024 a bill to repeal the 2012 Seoul Student Rights Ordinance. But the Supreme Court of Korea issued an order stopping its implementation. Then in mid-November 2025, a “nearly identical bill” was filed based on “a civilian-initiated bill.” On the other hand, the issue of constitutionality of the 2024 repeal ordinance is still to be determined by the court.²

The National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) through its Chairperson (Ahn Chang-ho) expressed concern over this renewed effort to repeal the ordinance:³

Schools are places where children and adolescents learn human rights sensitivity and attitudes of mutual respect, and where they are guided to grow into responsible citizens of a democratic society. The Student Rights Ordinance can serve as a means to foster rights-respecting schools. Moreover, students’ rights and teachers’ rights are not incompatible. Students’ rights must be maximally protected and respected, and to this end, teachers’ authority in educational activities must also be fully guaranteed.

The NHRCK supports the view that the rights of students are not against the rights of teachers. This issue of recognizing the rights of children has continued in other countries as well.

National and local laws affect the realization of human rights. Legal support for human rights is essential; conversely, laws can restrict or limit human rights. In this latter case, human rights promotion and education would be equally restricted or limited.

This volume presents human rights promotion and education experiences on implementing relevant laws on rights and also at advocating for laws that recognize rights. It likewise presents human rights promotion and education in the form of art (dances and songs), online film collection and film showing, training for specific professions and sectors, local government initiatives, formal education courses and new international education initiative (Global Citizenship Education).

Many of the articles discuss challenges (social, cultural and legal) that could have hindered the programs involved either from starting them or from continuing them after years of implementation.

Two articles from Japan dwell on the importance of religious communities’ support for human rights in view of their role in society not only in

spiritual sense but also in their involvement in education. Two articles (one from Japan and another from Indonesia) discuss the importance of integrating human rights in the study of law in the Faculties of Law to make human rights become an essential component of the practice or use of law in society. In the same manner, the study of law in relation to human rights is necessary to enable people to assert their rights as shown in the programs in India, Nepal and Pakistan, and for journalists in Pakistan to protect their profession in accordance with the law.

An article from Japan provides an example of a focused advocacy on the protection of the rights of people with mental disabilities in relation to medical treatment, and the need for local human rights centers for this purpose. Examples of local government support for human rights education in Japan and South Korea are taken up in three articles. The articles provide concrete examples of activities being undertaken to promote human rights in response to local conditions.

At the Asian level, two articles discuss the value of using films on social issues to promote human rights and the importance of training teachers and education officials on a relatively new idea of Global Citizenship Education which has human rights component.

Finally, an article on documenting experiences in human rights promotion and education points to the richness of the Asia-Pacific region in this field. By stressing the exposure of the realities of human rights promotion and education, valuable lessons to learn and challenges to face are given appropriate space for discussion.

This final volume of the *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* continues the work of HURIGHTS OSAKA on promoting human rights in the region.

JEFFERSON R. PLANTILLA
Editor

Endnotes

¹ Lee Seung-ku, Row resurfaces over conservative-controlled city council's push to scrap student rights ordinance, *The Korea Herald*, www.koreaherald.com/article/10618703.

² Lee, *ibid.* Lee also reported on another bill that affects the education of students:

In late October, another People Power Party council member introduced an amendment allowing private academies in the capital city to operate until midnight. Current rules allow operation from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Ministry of Education also expressed concerns.

“Considering the effects this amendment would have on the right to study, education equity, the bill’s legislative objective to limit study hours and on the private education of Seoul, the 10 p.m. limits should be maintained,” the ministry said.

³ All School Members’ Rights Must Be Protected in Balance, NHRCK Chairperson’s Statement Regarding the Seoul Metropolitan Council’s Move to Repeal the Student Rights Ordinance, www.humanrights.go.kr/eng/board/read?boardManagementNo=7003&boardNo=7611632&searchCategory=&page=1&searchType=&searchWord=&menuLevel=2&menuNo=114.

Sattva: An Educational Approach Towards Global Citizenship and Human Rights Awareness

Rajvi Trivedi

My name is Rajvi, and I was always told to fit into the “normal” category. When I was the only student in my school to opt for the Humanities stream, I was encouraged to switch to science—like everyone else. When I showed a natural inclination towards the performing arts, I was told to focus on academics instead. Apart from my parents, all others were keen on convincing me to study the sciences. This is how the system often functions: students are expected to conform to rigid norms, to perform in the same way, and to follow without questioning.

I was born and raised in Bhavnagar, a small town in Gujarat, India. From an early age, my parents wholeheartedly supported my passion for the arts. I say with pride that they stood by me through every high and low, always respecting my choices and decisions. Growing up in Bhavnagar offered me rich learning experiences, especially in terms of culture and heritage. The city’s deep-rooted artistic legacy gave me a profound understanding of the arts and shaped my creative identity. This nurturing environment played a vital role in making me the strong, ambitious woman I am today—someone who refuses to yield to external or societal pressures, and is determined to carve her own path.

But from a young age, I felt a strong urge to speak up and challenge systems that were unfair and exclusionary. I have always been deeply passionate about education, gender equality, and sustainable development, and I have constantly sought creative and meaningful ways to address these interconnected issues.

As a performing artist, I have integrated dance, storytelling and education in a way that allows me to connect with people, spark dialogue, and shift mindsets—because I believe that changing the way people think and feel is a crucial step in transforming society. For me, education is not just

about content delivery; it is about cultivating compassion, critical thinking, and a deep sense of global responsibility.

I want every student to feel worthy, seen, and valued for who they are—not despite their differences, but because of them. I believe that respecting diversity is fundamental to nurturing inclusive learning spaces where all individuals can thrive.

These beliefs are at the heart of my book, *Beyond the Classroom*, which explores how education can be a powerful tool to develop global citizens who are not only aware of the world's challenges but also empowered to act for a more just and sustainable future.

In response to the limitations of conventional education systems, I founded my own initiative—Sattva: A Space for Lifelong Learning. Sattva is an inclusive, informal learning space where all students are welcomed—regardless of background, age, gender, or socio-economic status. It stands for the belief that education should go beyond marks and ranks, and focus instead on the holistic development of every student.

Sattva's vision is firmly aligned with the principles of Human Rights Education and Global Citizenship Education. We are committed to creating spaces that are inclusive, equitable, and respectful of all forms of diversity. By empowering students with the mindsets, values, and skills they need, Sattva aims to build a generation of individuals who can lead with empathy, engage with global issues, and work towards a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world.

Sattva

Sattva emerged in response to the limitations of the conventional education system. During my PhD in global citizenship education—which I eventually left after two and a half years—I became increasingly aware of how institutions often suppress creativity and discourage independent thinking. This realization led me to create Sattva – A Space for Lifelong Learning, an initiative that reimagines education as a lifelong, holistic journey. It was in February 2023 that we officially began conducting sessions at Sattva. I loved teaching. I used to train teachers while doing PhD. Sattva gave me the space where I could teach without being confined to rigid rules and the four walls of a classroom. At Sattva, we believe learning goes beyond earning degrees or landing jobs; it is about nurturing compassionate, creative, and engaged

individuals. As an informal learning space, we offer transformative, accessible, and joyful learning experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds. Our programs include teacher training, youth engagement, arts-integrated education, Dialogue on Documentaries, and more—each designed to inspire meaningful learning beyond the classroom.



Launch of Sattva with a community of trainee teachers, February 2023

Pedagogy at Sattva

At Sattva, our goal is to transform the learning experience by putting students at the center. In every session or class, I strive to understand students' needs, interests, and learning styles. In a system where a “one-size-fits-all” approach is common, we actively use varied methods and resources to ensure that each student feels seen, heard and valued.

Inclusivity is woven into the smallest details—right from seating choices to teaching methods. Students choose where and how they want to sit—chairs, bean bags, or floor cushions—so they feel comfortable and respected for who they are. Differences are not just accepted—they're celebrated.

At Sattva, freedom of expression is a core value. Unlike traditional classrooms where students are often silenced, our sessions are rooted in dialogue, participation, and reflection. Teachers speak less, while students lead the conversation—contributing to collective learning through discussions, activities, and creative expression. Whether it is through speaking, writing, or drawing, every student has a way to share her/his voice.

We are also committed to nurturing creativity as a powerful form of expression. Our student magazine, *Ripples of Change*, and events like dance and art workshops provide platforms for students to explore global issues

and express their ideas confidently. These opportunities not only foster creativity but also build self-esteem and a sense of agency.

At Sattva, we are creating a democratic, inclusive, and student-driven space—where every student feels empowered to learn, express and grow.

Activities at Sattva

Dialogue on Documentaries - With the support of SIMA Academy, we organize *Dialogue on Documentary* events, where we screen powerful documentaries that highlight pressing global challenges such as injustice, inequality, and the urgent need for sustainable development. Documentaries have a unique ability to do what textbooks often cannot—they stir emotions, provoke thought, and leave a lasting impression. By witnessing real stories from around the world, viewers can gain a deeper understanding of complex human rights issues and the lived experiences of others. Our screenings are followed by dialogues that create space for critical reflection and meaningful conversations. These sessions are especially geared towards young people, aiming to cultivate empathy, global awareness, and a sense of personal agency. We want youth to not only recognize the importance of human rights, but to also feel empowered to act—locally and globally.

A recent example was the screening of “*Little Big Dreams*” with secondary school students in Karnataka, India. This documentary sparked conversations around equality and non-discrimination, helping students



Virtual Screening - Little Big Dreams with High School Students, 4 July 2025.



Dialogue on Documentary, October 2024.

internalize the idea that every human being deserves fair and dignified treatment—regardless of their appearance, background or identity. It underscored a core principle of human rights: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Through these events, we aim to build a generation that is not only informed, but also inspired to stand up for justice, equality and human dignity.

Workshops with Teachers - At Sattva, we firmly believe that teachers are the primary agents of transformation within the education system. As such, it is essential that they receive the support, tools, and training needed to meaningfully integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Human Rights Education (HRE) into their classrooms.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed classroom practices that undermine the dignity of students—such as labelling them with hurtful terms like “stupid” or “idiot,” or implementing rigid rules like the “three-second answer rule,” which limit student voice and discourage participation. These practices not only erode students’ self-esteem but also violate fundamental human rights principles of respect, equality, and inclusion.

GCED begins with recognizing the inherent dignity and potential of every student. Teachers must be equipped to create inclusive, respectful, and student-centered learning environments—spaces where every child feels seen, heard and valued. We ask: Why can’t every classroom be a space where

all students feel a sense of belonging? Why can't learning be relevant and engaging for every child, regardless of background or learning style?

These questions lie at the heart of our teacher training workshops. Our aim is to support educators in understanding their students more deeply and in transforming their classrooms into gateways to the world—spaces where global issues, empathy and justice are not abstract concepts, but living, breathing values.

Our workshops delve into the principles of GCED, explore its relevance in an increasingly interconnected world, and ground it in the philosophies of Indian thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore, who championed holistic, inclusive, and student-centered education. Tagore's vision of education as a means for inner freedom and harmony with others resonates deeply with the goals of GCED and human rights education.

In our workshops, we focus not only on *what* is taught, but also on *how* it is taught. The approach to learning is just as important as the content itself. We guide educators in designing inclusive learning experiences that engage every student, recognizing the diverse needs, backgrounds, and learning styles present in every classroom.

We introduce practical strategies such as structured opening and closing routines, differentiated instruction, and activity-based learning to create a more dynamic and student-centered environment. Techniques like contracting—where teachers and students co-create shared norms and expectations—help foster a sense of ownership, respect, and psychological safety in the classroom.



Teacher Training workshop in a rural area, 24-25 March 2025.

Ultimately, we believe that by nurturing reflective, compassionate, and globally aware educators, we can foster a generation of students who not only understand the world—but are prepared to change it.

Engaging Sessions with Students – At Sattva, we conduct a wide range of interactive sessions—both online and offline—with students across diverse settings. A key focus of our work is reaching students in rural areas, where access to quality, holistic education is often limited. By extending our efforts to these communities, we aim to ensure that GCED is inclusive and accessible to those who need it most.

Our sessions cover a broad spectrum of themes essential to nurturing globally aware and responsible individuals. From media literacy, which helps students critically engage with the information they consume, to social-emotional well-being, which strengthens empathy, resilience, and interpersonal understanding—our programs are designed to develop the competencies central to GCED.

We also integrate arts-based learning to make education more engaging and culturally grounded. Events like Mandala art workshops and dance-based sessions not only foster creativity but also help students connect with their heritage, understand cultural diversity, and appreciate shared human values through expressive forms.



Session with middle school students on the Basics of Theatre.

Through these diverse approaches, we aim to build students' capacities as thoughtful, empathetic, and active global citizens—rooted in their own identity while connected to the world around them.

Dance Education Programs - At Sattva, we believe that art is one of the most powerful and beautiful forms of self-expression—and a vital tool for social change. In our dance education programs, we use movement, rhythm and expression not only to channel energy positively, but also to help students build self-worth, confidence and emotional resilience.

Too often, the arts are dismissed as merely “extra-curricular” activities that are secondary to academic achievement. We challenge this perception. We see the arts as central to learning and to life. They hold immense potential to transform mindsets, challenge stereotypes, and foster empathy—all core components of GCED.

Through our dance and storytelling initiatives, students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, express their identities, and connect with others across boundaries of culture, language and background. These creative practices help nurture more aware, compassionate, and socially responsible citizens, grounded in their own culture yet open to the world.

Video – *Story of a woman*¹ - We are constantly confronted with disturbing news about violence against women—stories that should shake the conscience of any society. One such recent incident deeply affected us and compelled us to respond—not with silence or despair, but with art, solidarity and purpose. We felt a strong need to shift the narrative surrounding women in India—from one of victimhood to one of dignity, equality and strength.

This led to the creation of *The Story of a Woman*—a powerful dance and storytelling piece choreographed and performed by an all-women ensemble. Together, we reflected on our lived experiences, shared our fears and hopes, and began composing a piece that would give voice to what so many women feel but are rarely able to express.

Through this collaborative process, we examined the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination, and also discovered a profound sense of empowerment. Dance became our language of resistance and our tool for healing. As we performed this narrative, we felt free, courageous, and united—as artists and as women.

We proudly shared this performance with our wider community, believing that even a small act can ripple outward and contribute to a broader

movement for women's rights and gender equality, both in India and globally. *The Story of a Woman* ends with a powerful message: that women are no longer silent. They are claiming their rights, demanding equal opportunities, and being seen and heard as equal human beings—as they always should have been.

Through this, we continue to reaffirm our belief that the arts are not just a mirror to society—they are a force that can reshape it.



Stage show - Power of Dance and Storytelling in transforming societies, 4 May 2025.

Students' Reflections

At Sattva, student responses and reflections are at the heart of our work. We believe that understanding students' needs and perspectives is essential. Many of our students come to our sessions with curiosity, having rarely experienced workshops designed specifically with them in mind. They deeply connect with our approach to learning and participate with enthusiasm.

Our dance education programs, in particular, have brought noticeable transformation. Students report feeling more confident, empathetic and empowered. In many parts of India, women still face resistance when pursuing their passion for dance. One of our students, for instance, continues to attend classes despite being unable to share this with her family. Stories like hers inspire us to reach more individuals and help them realize their full potential through art and movement.

Here below are reflections of some students of Sattva.

Shilpi, Bangalore-India

You dance for fitness. I dance for freedom.

Freedom?

Yes — freedom to be me.

Out in the world, we're always playing a role — daughter, sister, wife, mother, employee, customer... something or the other. We live within definitions, inside boxes built from verbs that describe who we are allowed to be. And that's okay. But when I dance, I am no one. I am fluid.

When I dance, I become an emotion — a floating depiction of my thoughts. If I dance alone, I dance to be raw, to return to the truest version of myself. And when I dance with others, I become the embodiment of the emotions in the room — sometimes joyful, sometimes heavy, some days in love, and distant on others. What else would allow me to be this bare, this real — if not art in its purest form?

Dance — especially — is more than movement. It is a memory. Language. Protest. Healing.

It is a mirror for the world we live in. A spark for the world we want to build.

In communities, dance or art becomes a safe and expressive space — where stories are told without judgment, and emotions are held without shame. It gives voice to identities often left in the margins. It invites people to reflect, to listen, to challenge what they've always believed. It allows us to move through trauma, reclaim agency, and rediscover joy.

When people move together, something shifts — inside and around them.

Because real change doesn't begin with instructions. It begins with connection.

And art, in its essence, creates that connection.

For me, dance is a confidant — a sacred space where I can return to myself. When I dance, I connect. It is my rebellion and my return. My movement and my stillness.

Sandra, Bangalore, India

As a child, when I was denied the opportunity to learn classical dance, I felt like my wings were tied. I carried a deep sense of injustice—it was as if the dancer in me had been imprisoned. And that prisoner was hard to keep locked away. There were numerous jailbreaks when I was home alone, listening to peppy

music. I couldn't deny my body its right to movement, no matter how much I tried to suppress it. I knew I had to free this prisoner, or she would affect me in unpredictable, even disruptive ways.

As soon as I became financially independent, I started with "dance fitness." It brought me so much joy, but something was still missing. Turns out, the dancer in me loves Zumba—but she longed to move to the tunes of Indian classical music. I hesitated for a long time but finally convinced myself to sign up for my first Kathak class. Once I got there, my mind and body found a deep sense of belonging.

And when I danced, I felt liberated. Through dance, I've also found a way to share messages of self-liberation, equal opportunity, and empowerment. I believe that true empowerment lies in the freedom to pursue one's passion—and empowered people empower others.



Stage show - Group presenting stories from Indian Mythology from a feminist perspective, 4 May 2025.

Anagha, Bangalore, India

Dance, especially our Indian classical dance form called Kathak, has been a guiding force in my life, shaping not just my artistic expression but also my overall lifestyle and art [Drawing, painting, illustration] have played a transformative role in shaping my lifestyle, offering me a powerful outlet for self-expression, emotional healing, and personal growth. They have become more than just creative practices—they are now essential parts of my daily rhythm, bringing balance, joy, and a deeper connection to myself and the world around me.

I am truly grateful to Rajvi Trivedi, the visionary founder of Sattva, for creating such a beautiful and empowering platform. Her dedication, passion and belief in the power of art and dance

have inspired countless individuals, including myself, to embrace our creative journeys through workshops, narrative dance education and providing me with the opportunity to channel my inner thoughts and ideas into meaningful action.

Sattva has been a meaningful platform in this journey, giving me the opportunity to transform my inner reflections into purposeful action. Through Sattva, I have been able to use Kathak and art as powerful mediums to share my voice, inspire others, and grow both personally and artistically.

Concluding Remarks

At Sattva, we are deeply committed to placing the student at the heart of the learning process. This approach is rooted in the belief that every individual has the right to learn, to be treated with dignity, and to reach their full potential—a fundamental principle of Human Rights Education.

In today's world, it is more important than ever to nurture individuals who feel a true sense of belonging, who can respect diverse perspectives and uphold the rights of others, and who are empowered to take informed, compassionate action for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future. This is the essence of GCED—and the guiding vision behind all our work.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to this mission. As educators, facilitators, and students ourselves, we will continue to grow, adapt and listen—so that we can contribute to building a world that is not only more informed, but also more empathetic and equitable.

We may not have all the answers, but we carry with us a deep intention: to leave this world brighter, fairer, and more humane than we found it.

Endnote

¹ The video is available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYerBYfPhA4>

Advocating for the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities

Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center

The Osaka Center for Mental Health and Human Rights was founded in 1985 by a group of citizens, including people with mental disabilities and their families, medical and welfare professionals and lawyers, with the aim of achieving safer psychiatric care.

The idea of establishing the Center came about following the death of two patients in 1983 at the Houtokukai Utsunomiya Hospital, a psychiatric hospital in Tochigi prefecture, due to assaults by members of the nursing staff.

The Center is a non-profit, non-governmental civil society organization supporting people in psychiatric wards in Osaka through advocacy.

Its goal is to engage in activities to protect the human rights of people with mental disabilities in psychiatric care and in their social life, promote social understanding of people with mental disabilities, and contribute to having a society where people live in peace, regardless of having disability or not.

Hospitals and Mental Health

The number of admissions to psychiatric hospitals in Japan is very high, even by world standards.

The 2024 White Paper on Persons with Disabilities reports the following information:¹

- a. Physically disabled: 4.36 million people with visual, hearing, speech, limb, and internal disabilities; among them, 70,000 people are institutionalized;
- b. People with intellectual disabilities: 1.09 million, of which 130,000 are institutionalized;
- c. People with mental disabilities: 6.15 million, of which 290,000 are hospitalized. These figures include people with Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy, but not those with sleep disorder;

- d. A monthly average of 1.98 million people in FY2023 use outpatient psychiatric care (independent living support medical care).

Together with in-patient care, 2.27 million people will continue to use psychiatric care.

Moreover, nearly half of these admissions are due to involuntary hospitalization. Under the Mental Health and Welfare Act, there are two types of involuntary hospitalization: for medical care and protection with consent of family member and by order of the prefectural governor.

Moreover, the number of cases where in-patients have been physically secluded has increased significantly in recent years, while the number of cases where in-patients have been physically restrained has nearly doubled over the past ten years.

In general, many psychiatric patients, even those who are admitted voluntarily, are placed in closed wards, and their hospitalization is prolonged.

Issues

Psychiatric care in Japan is affected by several issues:²

1. Too many beds and inpatients;
2. Too many involuntary hospitalization;
3. Too many physical restraints, isolation, and restrictions on freedom;
4. Constant stream of abuse and misconduct by staff;
5. Too long hospital stay;
6. Too many medications;
7. Ward staffing standards lower than those of general hospitals; and
8. Lack of community welfare program.

Psychiatric care has been getting worse over the past twenty years especially due to compulsory psychiatric hospitalization. While voluntary hospitalization is the general rule (hospitalization requires patient's consent though not necessarily at the patient's request). However, at the discretion of the designated physician, a 72-hour discharge restriction may be imposed. During this time, the patient may be forced to remain in the hospital for medical protection purposes.

Compulsory hospitalization can be required upon the order of an administrative authority when there is a risk of harm to self or others, which must be based on diagnosis of two designated physicians. There can also be

compulsory hospitalization under the authority of the hospital director, also known as Protective Medical Hospitalization.

When hospitalization is necessary, a diagnosis by one designated physician plus consent from family members, etc. would be needed.

Compulsory hospitalization also occurs under the Medical Observation Act. Under this law, those not found guilty, or with suspended sentence, or whose charges were dismissed may be ordered by the District Court to be compulsorily hospitalized due to mental disorder.

Mission

The Center has adopted the following mission:

1. To listen to the voices of service users: we are committed to advocating for the rights of people in psychiatric wards from their points of view;
2. To open the hospital door: we are transforming psychiatric hospitals to be open to the community; and
3. To change society: we are seeking to promote psychiatry where everyone feels safe.

The Center has the view that even though the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was ratified and the Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was enacted, the current situation in which the rights of people hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals are greatly restricted has not changed. In order to change the current situation, the Center needs the support, participation, and cooperation of many people.

To become a member of the Osaka Center for Mental Health and Human Rights one must satisfy the following: agreement with the purpose of the Center and the will to change the current state of mental health care in Japan.

The activities of the Center continue due to the support of many people and becoming a “psychiatric patient’s advocate” constitutes an important form of support.

Activities

The mission of the Center is translated into the several activities:

1. Listening to the voices of service users: Towards better advocacy.

- Individual consultations

Consultations for people who have been hospitalized in a psychiatric unit or their families are available by phone call or letter.

- Hospital visits

Patients may have had to suppress or give up their wishes during their long hospital stays. Through on-site visits to hospitalized patients, the Center member-volunteers try to help them realize their wishes, including getting a hospital discharge.

Examples of voices of people in psychiatric hospitals:

“I want to leave the hospital.”

“I’m afraid to talk to the hospital staff because they might give me more medication or apply physical restraints.”

Two trained volunteers visit hospitals on request and listen to the in-patients. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, including people affected by mental health issues, their family members, nurses, psychiatric social workers, lawyers, and other citizens.

2. Opening the door: Transforming psychiatric hospitals to become more open to the community.

- Hospital observations

The hospital observations program, which is currently only available in Osaka, started in 2003 and has resulted in one hundred seventy-eight observations at fifty-eight hospitals.

In this program, trained volunteers visit psychiatric hospitals to listen to patients and inspect wards. From 2003, the visits were partially funded under the “Psychiatric Ombudsman” program of the Osaka Prefectural Government. The program was terminated due to austerity measures in 2008. Since 2009, the volunteers have been appointed as “Treatment Environment Supporters” by the Osaka Prefectural Council for the Study of the Treatment Environment of Psychiatric Institutions, which was jointly established by Osaka Prefecture, Osaka City and Sakai City.

The Center plays an important role in the Supporters Scheme, deciding which psychiatric hospitals to visit, arranging visits by trained volunteers

and issuing reports after the observation visits. Two members of the Center are also appointed as members of the Council and attend the bi-monthly council meetings to participate in discussions for achieving a better treatment environment based on the visit reports.

The hospital observation visits led to some of the results such as the following:

- “Beds on the wards can now be fitted with curtains”
- “Public telephones were changed so that they could not be heard by other people, and efforts have been made to protect privacy.”
- “A box has been set up for people to submit their ideas for improving the hospital environment.”
- “Information on social resources and an advice room is now displayed on the wards.”

The Center issues the “Open the door: report of hospital observations” every few years.

3. Changing society: Realizing psychiatric care where everyone feels safe

- System change advocacy

The Center has been calling for a fundamental review of compulsory hospitalization and has been making policy recommendations to create a system that protects the rights of people in psychiatric hospitals.

Based on the Center’s policy proposals, the Osaka Prefectural government decided to establish a psychiatric ombudsman system and subsidized activities during the 2003-2008 period. The Center also proposed the creation of a new system to “support patients’ transition to the community” and this was partially made possible by the 2006 Law for the Independence of Persons with Disabilities.

The Center implements advocacy activities from the perspective of those hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals. The advocacy work is done through meetings, with the help of its volunteers who have taken volunteer training course.

People from various backgrounds, including the clients themselves, their family members, nurses, mental health social workers (MHSWs), and lawyers participate in the meetings.

Furthermore, the Center disseminates information about the consultation service as “voices of in-patients” in psychiatric hospitals in formats that do not reveal the names of individuals or hospitals involved.

Information is disseminated as news in the Center website and social media, content of training materials, etc.

Letting as many people as possible know each of the “voices of in-patients” in psychiatric hospitals will definitely lead to an understanding of the current situation of those staying in those hospitals.

Study Group

The Center established the Rights Advocacy System Study Group as a forum for collective thinking and discussion of issues on mental health care policies, with topics provided by experts with deep knowledge of each issue.

In 2023, the theme of the study was the family system. In 2024, the theme was “Considering reducing hospital beds.” Statistically, Japan has the most psychiatric beds in the world, and unless hospital beds are reduced, no matter how much rights protection is improved, hospitalization will be unavoidable.

On 16 March 2025, the Study Group held its 4th session with the continuation of the theme in 2024. The 4th session featured the presentation by Shoji Sakuragi, President of Tokushima Prefecture Sakuragi Hospital, and Executive Director of the Japanese Association of Psychiatric Hospitals.

Advocates

Shohei Hara, one of the Directors of the Center, wrote in 2023 of the need for “psychiatric patient’s advocates” who can visit hospitals to protect the rights of patients. He saw the need to trigger various reforms in psychiatric medicine by introducing the patients’ advocacy system.³

He defined what “psychiatric patient’s advocates” should do:⁴

The purpose of an advocate is to protect the rights of patients. Then, why is it necessary to protect rights in the context of psychiatric care? First and foremost, it is crucial to clearly recognize the current situation.

In psychiatric hospitals, various human rights restrictions are routinely imposed. Involuntary hospitalization, seclusion, physical restraint, and restrictions on telephone use, visitation,

or going out all constitute limitations of patient rights, even if the requirements and procedures are legally appropriate. Are these truly unavoidable measures, or are they being implemented too readily? In such situations, if there is no supporter on the side of the person subjected to rights restrictions, it is difficult to place limits on these actions.

The importance of the “psychiatric patient’s advocates” can be seen in the following ways:⁵

1. An ally of the patient

On psychiatric wards, staffs have considerable authority. This is because they are in a position to determine matters such as discharge eligibility and behavioral restrictions. Nursing staff on psychiatric wards, unlike those on general wards, tend to place greater emphasis on group-based management. As a result, hospitalized patients are often compelled to follow ward instructions. To correct this imbalance of power, it is necessary for the patient to have “someone on their side.”

2. Empowerment

A vital role of the advocate is to engage with patients as fellow human beings. This is different from legal or regulatory forms of dispute. Simply meeting hospitalized patients and listening to their stories carries significant meaning.

Some hospitalized patients become apathetic or resigned due to prolonged institutionalized living, thinking “there’s nothing I can do,” or they have lost confidence, resulting in diminished awareness of their rights or motivation for discharge. It is an important role of the advocate to encourage such individuals, provide them with knowledge and information, and support them in expressing their own feelings so that they can regain and utilize their inherent strengths.

3. Monitoring of the ward from the outside

An important fact is that the advocate is an outsider to the hospital and physically enters the ward. To accurately understand the ward environment, including therapeutic setting and staff attitudes, it is preferable to go into the ward rather than only meeting in a visiting room. Doing so also allows the presence of the advocate to become visible to other patients. They become familiar to the staff as well, and may even hear about the concerns of the personnel. When an external set of eyes and ears enters a closed facility, it improves transparency within the organization, enables early responses to

minor human rights violations, and helps prevent small issues from escalating into serious ones.

4. Building trust without antagonizing the hospital

It is necessary to hold discussions with the hospital side as needed. While listening to the hospital's perspective, calm and composed exchanges of opinions should be conducted. A certain degree of tension is necessary, but the hospital should not be viewed as an adversary, nor should one adopt an aggressive or confrontational attitude. Doing so makes it more difficult for the hospital to accept the advocate. Except for a minority of difficult administrators, there is likely a shared desire to provide safe medical care and improve the quality of treatment. Improving the human rights situation and therapeutic environment also benefits the hospital.

The Center adopted this idea and started to recruit people who can be "psychiatric patient's advocates."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Center scaled back its activities and temporarily suspended volunteer recruitment. But in May 2024 volunteer recruitment resumed.

Seminars

The Center started to hold seminars in 1998 as part of its advocacy activities. The seminars/forums are held as part of the Center's General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture.

In 1998, a seminar/forum entitled "Human Rights of the Mentally Ill" Lecture Series: 'Who is an Advocate?'" was held on 30 May 1998. Seminars continued to be held in the subsequent years.

On 10 May 2008, the Center held the 9th General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture: "Learning from Chiba Prefecture's Ordinance to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities." The main speaker was Kazuhiro Nozawa, head of the Mainichi Newspaper Evening Edition Editorial Department and Chairperson of the National Hand-in-Hand Inclusion Association Rights Protection Committee.

In the following year, on 16 May 2009, the Center held the 10th General Assembly and Commemorative Lecture: "In Response to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." Toshio Kusunoki, Chairperson of the Osaka Liaison Conference for the Independence and Full Participation of People with Disabilities, gave a lecture.

On 14 November 2009, Seiichi Kitano (Kansai Regional Support Research Organization) gave a lecture in the 24th Anniversary Lecture: “How to Protect the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities.”

The anniversary lectures were supported by the Welfare and Medical Services Corporation. They were held almost every other year as shown in the Annex.

On 25 November 2023, the Center held a seminar on this topic: “To eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals - How to make changes based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Concluding Observations.”

During the 39th Anniversary Symposium held on 9 November 2024, the keynote speech was on the theme “Psychiatric Ombudsman Activities.” Kuroda Kenji, Psychiatrist and Professor in the Faculty of Health and Welfare, Nishikyushu University, gave the keynote speech.

An online seminar series (five sessions in total) was held on 18-23 March 2025 with the theme “Create a Mental Health Human Rights Center in your area!”

On 31 May 2025, the Center held the 2025 Annual General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture with the theme “Considering long-term hospitalization from the stories of those involved.” Tokio Ito, a plaintiff in the psychiatric medical care national compensation lawsuit, and two people with experience of long-term hospitalization were the main speakers.

Content of Seminars/Forums and Other Activities

The seminars/forums held by the Center are aimed at making the medical profession and the public understand that persons with mental disabilities have rights that should be recognized and protected.

The seminars/forums are focused on specific issues including the following:

- rights of persons with mental disabilities
- rights in medical care and procedures
- discrimination against persons with mental disabilities
- voices of in-patients
- rights protection system, and
- rights advocacy.

In order to make people understand the human rights of persons with mental disabilities, the seminars/forums explain the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Act No. 65 of June 26, 2013),⁶ and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).⁷ The bill on eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities was explained in the seminar/forum on 12 November 2011, before its formal enactment in 2013. Takekazu Ikehara, a lawyer and member of the Discrimination Prevention Subcommittee of the Council for the Promotion of Reform of the Disability System gave the presentation of the provisions of the then to-be-enacted law.

In relation to the need to eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals, a seminar/forum was held to discuss how the system in the hospitals could be changed based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The seminar/forum held on 25 November 2023 featured the discussion of concrete measures needed to prevent the occurrence of incident similar to the Takiyama Hospital Incident. The seminar/forum was moderated by Shohei Hara, a Director of the Center, with presentations by the following:

- “What is the Takiyama Hospital Incident? And its Background” by Keisuke Aihara (Lawyer)
- Panel discussion: “What we can do to eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals”
 - Keisuke Aihara (Lawyer involved in the Takiyama Hospital incident)
 - Aiko Hayashi (Lawyer, former member of Third Party Committee on Abuse at Kamide Hospital)
 - Koji Onoue (Vice-chair of the Japan Conference of Disabled Peoples’ International)
 - Jokei Ariga (long-time psychiatric hospital nurse).

Another major issue is on the appropriate mechanism for protecting the human rights of patients with mental disorder while in the hospital. Several seminars/forums were held over the years on this issue.

Seminars/forums held from 2011 till 2020 discussed the “rights protection system” that should be in place. The questions responded to included: What mechanism is appropriate for this purpose? How can the rights protection system be expanded?

In the 2011 seminar/forum, the mechanism for protecting rights in San Francisco city in California, U.S.A. was presented by Reiko Homma (for-

mer Deputy Commissioner of Health, San Francisco). In the seminar/forum (14th General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture) in 2013, a lecture on “Review of medical protective hospitalization: what rights protection should be” was given. In the 15th General Meeting and Symposium in 2014, several speakers discussed

- The necessity of a “rights protection system” by Seiichi Kitano (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NPO Osaka Community Life Support Network)
- The abolition of the guardianship system by Hiroshi Iida (Lawyer and Representative Director of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center)
- The issue of “hospital bed conversion type residential facilities” by Toshio Hasegawa (Kyorin University).

In 2018, Yutaka Mori, a lawyer, first chairperson of the Kyushu Bar Association Federation Mental Health Liaison Council and Executive Director of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations Elderly and Disabled Rights Support Center (Mental Health Welfare PT), gave a lecture in the seminar/forum.

In 2020, the Center co-organized the seminar/forum with the Saitama Prefectural Mental Health Human Rights Center to discuss the expansion of the rights protection activities for those staying in psychiatric hospitals.

The third most discussed topic is advocacy for the human rights of persons with mental disability. The series of discussions on advocacy for the human rights of persons with mental disability started in 2013, during the 28th Anniversary Lecture: “Advocacy for the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities - Considering the Concept of the ‘Advocate System.’” Shunsuke Takagi (former member of the study team of the Center for establishing a new community mental health care system) gave a talk. This was followed by a 2016 lecture forum that included “rights advocacy systems” by several speakers (Hiroshi Takebata, Professor at Yamanashi Gakuin University; Kenichi Nishikawa, Mental Health and Welfare Worker; Satoshi Kaneya, Disability Equivalency Program, Mental Health and Welfare Worker; and Nao Azuma, a lawyer).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, an online lecture was held on the theme: “Human rights advocacy systems in Western psychiatric care: Towards building the human rights advocacy system that should be in place.” Naoko Satake, a Psychiatrist in the National Center of Neurology and

Psychiatry Hospital, gave the talk. The concept of “Psychiatric Advocate” was explained in several presentations in the 2021 seminar/forum.

On 10 – 31 October 2021, an online workshop entitled “Towards expanding advocacy activities for psychiatric in-patients: was held. The workshop had several parts:

- 1st session (October 10th) Theme: “Practices of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center - Aiming for mental health care that people can feel safe with”
Coordinator: Daisuke Hosoi
- 2nd session (October 17th) Theme: “Considering whose reason it is that people cannot be discharged”
Coordinator: Taichi Kadono
- 3rd session (October 31st) Theme: “Listening to the stories of hospitalized people”
Coordinator: Satoshi Kaneya.

In the 2022 meeting of the Advocacy System Study Group, the discussion focused on the perspective of the family of the child with disabilities and also the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Also in 2022, the Center held the Psychiatric Advocate Training Course with topics consisting of the following:

- Human Rights
- The life and environment of hospitalized people
- Mental Health and Human Rights
- Mental health system and current situation
- Who is a psychiatric advocate?

This training course was part of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Science and Research Cooperation Project.

The 37th Anniversary Lecture held in 2022 had the theme: “Reconsidering the Mental Health Review Board and the Act on Prevention of Abuse of Persons with Disabilities.” The 39th Anniversary Lecture held in 2024 focused on “Psychiatric Ombudsman Activities.” In 2025 the 40th Anniversary Lecture featured a plaintiff in the psychiatric medical care national compensation lawsuit, and two people who experienced long-term hospitalization

A forum in 2023 discussed how “To eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals” and how to make changes based on the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities and Concluding Observations of its treaty monitoring body.

In March 2025, the Center organized a series of five webinars on establishing a mental health human rights center in the local areas.

See Annex for more information on the activities of the Center through the years.

Concluding Statement

The Center essentially aims to provide a safe and secure treatment environment for persons with mental disabilities. To be able to achieve this, their human rights must be protected and they as patients must be respected as individuals.

The advocacy work of the Center is directed at shifting the treatment of persons with mental disabilities to medical and welfare services that support community life. There should be more outpatient care, day care, psychological support, home visits, nursing visits, welfare system for persons with disabilities, and collaboration with nursing care institutions instead of confinement to the hospital.

The Center continues to make the public become aware of the issues confronting persons with mental disabilities and the measures needed to ensure the respect, protection and realization of their human rights.

Annex

Date & Year	Event	Speaker
12 November 2011	26th Anniversary Lecture: What is the Act on Prohibition of Discrimination against People with Disabilities?	Takekazu Ikehara (Lawyer, Member of the Discrimination Prevention Subcommittee of the Council for the Promotion of Reform of the Disability System)
3 September 2011	Lecture: The mechanism for protecting rights required in the Comprehensive Welfare Law for People with Disabilities - Learning from San Francisco city's efforts.	Reiko Homma (former Deputy Commissioner of Health, San Francisco city).

11 May 2013	Osaka Prefecture Welfare Fund - 14th General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture: "Review of medical protective hospitalization: what rights protection should be."	Hiroshi Iida, Miyuki Yamamoto, Coordinator: Takeshi Yoshiike (Mental Health and Welfare Worker)
9 November 2013	Osaka Prefecture Welfare Fund - 28th Anniversary Lecture: "Advocacy for the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities - Considering the Concept of the 'Advocate System'."	Shunsuke Takagi (former member of the study team for establishing a new community mental health care system)
10 May 2014	Nippon Foundation Grant Program - 15th General Meeting and Symposium: "What 'rights protection system' is needed now?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The necessity of a "rights protection system" - Seichi Kitano (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the NPO Osaka Community Life Support Network) - On the abolition of the guardianship system - Hiroshi Iida (Lawyer and Representative Director of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center) - On the issue of "hospital bed conversion type residential facilities" - Toshio Hasegawa (Kyorin University)
28 May 2016	Nippon Foundation Grant Program - 17th General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture: Considering the future of "decision support" and "rights advocacy systems" - Towards the realization of the 'rights advocates' we need"	Hiroshi Takebata (Professor at Yamanashi Gakuin University), Kenichi Nishikawa (Mental Health and Welfare Worker), Satoshi Kaneya (Person in the Disability Equivalency Program, Mental Health and Welfare Worker), Nao Azuma (Lawyer)
24 September 2016	Nippon Foundation Grant Program - Change the law, change society: learning from 55 years of experience in mental health in Italy Organized by 180 Matto's Association for Independent Screenings of Basaglia Films and the Osaka Bar Association.	Chair: Kazuo Okuma and Hiroshi Takebata Lecturer: Maria Grazia Giannichetta (Sociologist)

<p>17 November 2018</p>	<p>Nippon Foundation Grant Program – 33rd Anniversary Lecture: Towards expanding protection of rights for those hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals - What we can do now."</p>	<p>Coordinator: Shohei Hara (member of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center Human Rights Protection System Research Group, journalist), Daisuke Hosoi (Director of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center, lawyer), Lecturer: Yutaka Mori (lawyer, first Chairman of the Kyushu Bar Association Federation Mental Health Liaison Council, Executive Director of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations Elderly and Disabled Rights Support Center (Mental Health Welfare).</p>
<p>16 November 2019</p>	<p>Nippon Foundation Grant Program - 34th Anniversary Symposium: Thinking about Japanese psychiatric care from the perspective of foreign systems - Toward building the rights protection system that should be in place."</p>	<p>Coordinators: Takebata Hiroshi and Hosoi Daisuke (Directors of the Center and lawyers) - The efforts of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center and "Draft activity guidelines and business model for psychiatric advocates" - Hara Shohei (Mental Health and Welfare Worker/ Visiting Researcher at Osaka Prefecture University and Ritsumeikan University) —The system of advocates and rights advocacy in the United Kingdom - Hamajima Kyoko (Secretary-General of DPI Japan/Part-time lecturer at Meiji Gakuin University) —The compulsory hospitalization system in France - Comparing it with Japan's compulsory hospitalization system - Ishizaki Manabu (Professor, Faculty of Law, Ryukoku University) —The system of advocates and rights advocacy in California - Takebata Hiroshi (Associate Professor, Faculty of Environmental and Human Studies, University of Hyogo/ Coordinator of the Rights Advocacy System Research Group).</p>
<p>23 February 2020</p>	<p>Nippon Foundation Grant Program - Public lecture: From the activities of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center - Towards expanding rights protection activities for those hospitalized in psychiatric hospitals Co-organized by Saitama Prefectural Mental Health Human Rights Center.</p>	

28 March 2020	Nippon Foundation Grant Program - Online Lecture: Human rights advocacy systems in Western psychiatric care: Towards building the human rights advocacy system that should be in place.	Naoko Satake (Psychiatrist, National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry Hospital)
31 July 2021	Nippon Foundation Grant Program - The Practice and Potential of Psychiatric Advocates: Preventing Abuse and Improving the Quality of Medical Care.	Coordinator: Hiroshi Takebata (Rights Protection System Research Group, University of Hyogo) Towards Institutionalization: Shohei Hara (Journalist and Director of the Center) - From a former hospitalized patient: Using a psychiatric advocate - Participating in visiting activities: Kiyoshi Nakakita (Psychiatric advocate) - From the hospital's perspective: Kiichiro Nagao (Neyakawa Sanatorium) - What is important to us: Miyuki Yamamoto (Vice Director of the Center)
10 – 31 October 2021	Nippon Foundation - Online Workshop: Towards expanding advocacy activities for psychiatric in-patients	- 1st session (October 10th) Theme: "Practices of the Osaka Mental Health Human Rights Center - Aiming for mental health care that people can feel safe with" Coordinator: Daisuke Hosoi - 2nd session (October 17th) Theme: "Considering whose reason it is that people cannot be discharged" Coordinator: Taichi Kadono - 3rd session (October 31st) Theme: "Listening to the stories of hospitalized people" Coordinator: Satoshi Kaneya
4 March - 30 October 2022	Advocacy System Study Group 2022	Coordinator: Hiroshi Takebata (Staff Member, University of Hyogo) Part 1: From the family's perspective (perspective of child, parent, and sibling) Part 2: Taku Shiomitsu (Bukkyo University, former Public Health Center Social Worker) Part 3: Kumiko Okada (Chairperson of Minna Net) Special Edition: About the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Guest Speakers: Toshihiro Azuma and Naoyuki Kirihara

<p>27 March 2022</p>	<p>Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Science and Research Cooperation Project - Psychiatric Advocate Training Course</p>	<p>Topics - Human Rights - The life and environment of hospitalized people - Mental Health and Human Rights - Mental health system and current situation - Who is a psychiatric advocate?</p>
<p>12 November 2022</p>	<p>37th Anniversary Lecture: Reconsidering the Mental Health Review Board and the Act on Prevention of Abuse of Persons with Disabilities</p>	<p>Coordinator: Hiroshi Takebata (Rights Protection System Research Group, University of Hyogo) - Mitsuhide Yahiro (Attorney at Law/Nishishin Joint Law Office) - Summary of the Advocacy System Study Group</p>
<p>25 November 2023</p>	<p>"To eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals" - How to make changes based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Concluding Observations</p>	<p>Coordinator: Shohei Hara (Director) - "What is the Takiyama Hospital Incident? And the Background" by Keisuke Aihara (Lawyer) Panel discussion: "What we can do to eliminate abuse in psychiatric hospitals" - Keisuke Aihara (Lawyer involved in the Takiyama Hospital incident allegations) - Aiko Hayashi (Lawyer, Former member, Third Party Committee on Abuse at Kamide Hospital) - Koji Onoue (Vice-chair of the Japan Conference of Disabled Peoples' International) - Jokei Ariga (long-time psychiatric hospital nurse)</p>
<p>9 November 2024</p>	<p>39th Anniversary Symposium</p>	<p>Keynote Speech: "Psychiatric Ombudsman Activities" Speaker: Kuroda Kenji (Psychiatrist, Professor, Faculty of Health and Welfare, Nishikyushu University) Panel Discussion: Kuroda Kenji - Yamamoto Miyuki (Vice Representative of the Center, Representative of Bochibochi Club) - Inoue Takayuki (Japan Psychiatric Nurses Association Osaka Branch, Head Nurse of the Psychiatric Emergency Ward at Osaka Mental Health Center) Coordinator: Takebata Hiroshi (Professor, Faculty of Environmental and Human Studies, University of Hyogo)</p>
<p>18-23 March 2025</p>	<p>Web seminar series (5 sessions in total)</p>	<p>- Create a Mental Health Human Rights Center in your area!</p>
<p>31 May 2025</p>	<p>Annual General Meeting and Commemorative Lecture 2025</p>	<p>Tokio Ito (plaintiff in the psychiatric medical care national compensation lawsuit), and two people with experience of long-term hospitalization</p>

Endnotes

1 Data taken from the powerpoint presentation of Shohei Hara in the Kagoshima Prefecture Mental Health and Social Worker Association General Meeting Training, 7 June 2025, entitled “Psychiatric Rights Protection and Hospital Visit Support Project.”

2 From the powerpoint presentation of Shohei Hara, *ibid.*

3 原昌平[Shohei Hara], 精神科アドボケイトの制度化と全国展開の道すじ [Roadmap to the Establishment of Psychiatric Patient’s Advocacy System and Nationwide Expansion], 精神神経学雑誌オンラインジャーナル [Psychiatry and Neurology Online Journal], 2023, page 295, <https://journal.jspn.or.jp/jspn/open-pdf/1250040291.pdf>.

4 原昌平[Shohei Hara], *ibid.*

5 原昌平[Shohei Hara], *ibid.*

6 The English translation of the texts of this law is available at Japanese Law Translation, Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/3052/en.

7 “On January 20, 2014, *Japan* deposited the instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” page 4, “*Initial report submitted by Japan under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2016*,” *Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 4 October 2017, www.mofa.go.jp/files/000449713.pdf. The full text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is available in this link: www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities.

Efforts at Eliminating Buraku Discrimination in the Religious Community in Osaka

Daishūren

IN 1979, at the Third Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP III), Rev. Soyuu Machida (President of Sotoshu Shumucho and Board Chairperson of the Japan Buddhist Federation) repeatedly made discriminatory remarks such as “there is no Buraku issue in Japan” and succeeded in having references to the Buraku issue removed from the WCRP III report (The Princeton Declaration of the Third World Assembly).¹

The discriminatory remarks incident prompted five confirmation meetings and denunciation meetings² targeting the religious community. These meetings highlighted the existence of “discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names”³ and “discriminatory publications,” as well as the fact that religious organizations had participated in discriminatory “background check.” This incident exposed the discriminatory tendencies inherent within the religious community and its vulnerability regarding historical and social awareness.

This became the catalyst for the formation in June 1981 of the nationwide “Dōshūren” or Federation of Religions on Dowa Issue, composed of religious organizations addressing Dowa issue (Buraku discrimination issue).

The following year, 1982, saw the establishment of the first prefectural federation, “Daishūren” or Osaka Federation of Religions on Dowa Issue. At its founding, the membership comprised twenty-four religious organizations and three groups, representing approximately 80 percent of Osaka’s religious organizations.

Following is the text of the founding statement presented during the inaugural general meeting held on 30 April 1982:

Founding Statement for the Inaugural General Meeting of Daishūren

The reality of discrimination against Buraku communities within the religious sphere has been starkly exposed amidst frequent discriminatory incidents. This fact serves as proof that discrimination against Buraku communities, rooted in the Edo period (17th to 19th century), has persisted as a structural problem within Japan's religious sphere, becoming institutionalized and perpetuated to this day. It cannot be denied that the majority of religious figures have not merely remained indifferent bystanders regarding the Buraku issue, but have rather been perpetrators who have no sense of guilt towards discrimination.

As stated in the regulations of the Dōshūren, "We recognize that without tackling Dowa issue, grounded in profound reflection and returning to the roots of religious teachings, we can no longer be considered religious figures in Japan." Through the universal human principles of freedom and equality, we must earnestly embrace the ultimate challenge of eliminating discrimination. Each religion must reflect upon its own nature from the very foundation of its faith (heart).

Fortunately, "Dōshūren" was formed, with nearly the entire Japanese religious community joining. It now encompasses fifty seven religious organizations and three federations.

Regardless of denomination, the urgent task is to advance the practice of elimination of Buraku discrimination, by reviewing organizational structures and examining doctrines.

Osaka, in particular, has consistently played a pioneering role in the Buraku liberation movement. Consequently, the religious community based in Osaka bears an exceptionally significant responsibility.

In response to the establishment of Dōshūren, "Daishūren" is hereby established. This federation aims to forge cross-cutting solidarity, transcending denominational boundaries, with the Dowa issue as its focal point.

The Regulations of Daishūren set forth the following provisions in Article 2 "Purpose" and Article 3 "Activities":

(Purpose) Article 2: "Daishūren" aims for religious organizations based in Osaka to return to the roots of their respective teachings and eliminate all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against Buraku people.

(Activities) Article 3: To achieve the purpose stated in the preceding article, "Daishūren" shall undertake the following activities:

- (1) Promoting the framework for member religious organizations' commitment to Dowa issue;
- (2) Conducting study meetings for mutual study and exchanging materials;
- (3) Undertaking other activities deemed necessary for achieving the purpose.

Since then, based on its founding principles, the purpose and activities outlined in its Regulations, Daishūren continued its activities for over forty years up to the present day.

Executive Structure of Daishūren

Regarding the executive structure, the “Chairing by Denomination” system was adopted at the time of establishment of Daishūren, with the chairing denomination assuming the roles of Chair and Secretariat. However, to reduce the burden on any denomination, the Chairing by Denomination system was abolished in 2019, transitioning to a structure separating the roles of Chair and Secretariat.

Concerning activities, the Planning and Training Department of Daishūren formulates the policies, while the Public Relations Department is responsible for editing Daishūren's official journal (*Daishūren*).

As of 2025, the affiliated members comprise of nineteen denominations and 1 organization: Izumo Taisha kyō, Ōmoto kyo, Kōyasan Shingon-shū, Konkōkyō, Jōdo-shū, Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha, Shingon-shū Omuro-ha, Jinja Honchō, Shinshū Otani-ha, Shinshū Kōshō-ha, Shinshū Bukkōji-ha, Nishiyama Jōdo-shū, Sōtōshū, Tenrikyo, United Church of Christ in Japan, Nippon Sei-Ko-Kai (Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan), Nenpōshinkyo Kyōdan, Yūzū Nenbutsu Shū, Wa Shū, and the Shin Shū Ren Dōwa Suishin Renraku Kyōgikai.

Cooperation with Other Organizations

Daishūren shares information with affiliated religious organizations, and receives regular reports on their activities.

It maintains a cooperative framework with the Osaka Prefectural Federation of the Buraku Liberation League through information exchange and personnel communication, aimed at abolishing discrimination against

Buraku people. Its representatives attend meetings of various human rights organizations.

A representative of Daishūren serves as Chairperson of the Osaka Executive Committee for Resolving Dowa Issue and Establishing Human Rights Policies. At its central assembly, the committee assists efforts towards establishing human rights legislation, such as petitioning Diet members for the enactment of comprehensive human rights legislation.

In addition, Daishūren actively encourages its member-organizations to participate in the annual “Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Seminar” held at Mount Kōya by the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, utilizing it as a broad platform for learning about human rights.

Activities of Daishūren

Since establishment, Daishūren positioned “field work,” “Buraku Liberation Study Assembly,” and “Basic Course” as pillars of its activities on anti-discrimination and human rights.

Furthermore, Daishūren implemented projects needed by society, including screenings of human rights-related films, panel exhibitions, campaigns such as the “Movement to Refuse Background Check,” and disaster relief support.

Its approach to awareness-raising is guided by the principles that “while upholding universal ideals that must be passed on, both the movement and its expression must evolve with societal change” and that “training required for religious practitioners involves creating spaces for confessing one’s own discrimination and building communities where such confessions can be heard.”

In recent years, while maintaining focus on returning to the founding principles of Daishūren and addressing the unresolved issue of Buraku discrimination, it also tackled various human rights challenges. This stems from the desire to cultivate a human rights consciousness that does not overlook latent forms of discrimination, extending beyond the issue of Buraku discrimination.

Below is a list of the central initiatives, the “Buraku Liberation Study Assembly” and fieldwork, followed by excerpts introducing their content drawn from all past activities. The titles or designations of lecturers in the

list were those held at the time the lectures were delivered in the study assembly.

Buraku Liberation Study Assemblies

The Buraku Liberation Study Assemblies focus primarily on Buraku discrimination while broadly addressing human rights issues, providing learning opportunities to cultivate human rights awareness. Fieldwork sessions involve guidance and lectures from local researchers and stakeholders, aiming to enable participants to tangibly experience the history of discrimination within the specific locality.

Table 1. Content of assemblies and fieldwork held from 2005 onward

<p>2005 39th activity Lecture - Motohiko Izawa, Writer, 'Why Discrimination Arises' 40th activity Fieldwork - Site associated with the Shibuzome Uprising⁴, Okayama Prefecture</p>
<p>2006 41st activity Lecture - Satoshi Kamata, Reportage Writer, "From Suicide Great Nation to Humanity Small Nation" 42nd activity Lecture and Video showing - Satoshi Yasuda, "The Sayama Case"⁵</p>
<p>2007 43rd activity Lecture - Kazuo Ishikawa, Sachiko Ishikawa, "The Truth of the Sayama Case" 44th activity Fieldwork: Sayama City, Saitama Prefecture: Visiting the Site of the "Sayama Case"</p>
<p>2008 46th activity Fieldwork - National Sanatorium Tamazenshoen, Tokyo, one of the National Hansen's Disease Sanatoriums, and Asakusa area</p>
<p>2009 47th activity Lecture - Hitoshi Okuda (Professor, Kindai University Human Rights Research Institute), 'Discrimination Perceived: Why Avoid Buraku?' 48th activity Fieldwork - Nagano Prefecture: Learning about Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names</p>

2010

49th activity

Lecture - Tamiō Yamanaka (Chairperson, Normalization Association) "Normalization and Buraku Liberation: Aiming for a Society Where We Live Together"

50th activity

Fieldwork - Shiraoui and Noboribetsu, Hokkaido: Learning about the History and Current Situation of the Ainu Indigenous People

2011

51st activity

Lecture - Kenji Nakao (Professor, Osaka Kyoiku University) "Hidden-in Chōri Documents: The People Called "Chōri" (discriminated against people in Edo period)"

52nd activity

Fieldwork - Saika and Negoro regions, Wakayama Prefecture: Learning about the history of the Saika and Negoro regions

2012

53rd activity

Reconstruction support for the "Great East Japan Earthquake": Screening of the documentary video 'Antokino Inochi,'" and Panel Exhibition

54th activity

Fieldwork - Shingū City and Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture: Learning about the "Great Treason Incident" (The government accused a group of socialists and anarchists of treason in 1910–1911)

55th activity

30th Anniversary Commemorative Project for the Formation of Daishūren

Lecture - Kenzo Tomonaga (Board of Directors, Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute), "Learning from the 90-Year Journey of the Declaration of Suiheisha⁶ and Buraku Liberation Movement"

2013

56th activity

Fieldwork - Takahama Town and Obama City, Fukui Prefecture: Nuclear Power Plants and Human Rights

2014

57th activity

Screening of the Documentary video "SAYAMA: Until the Invisible Handcuffs Are Removed"

58th activity

Fieldwork - Chiran Town, Kagoshima Prefecture.; Chiran Peace Museum

59th activity

Screening of Documentary video "The Story of a Butcher's Shop,"

Talk - Shinji Kitade, Owner of Kitade Butcher's Shop

2015

60th activity

Fieldwork- Iiyama City, Nagano Prefecture: Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names

2016

61st activity

Fieldwork - Tsuyama City, Okayama Prefecture: Learning from the 1874 (Meiji 6) Mimasaka Disturbance (In 1871 (Meiji 4), peasants who opposed the Emancipation Edict, which abolished the class system, attacked settlements of the discriminated people.)

2017

62nd activity

Fieldwork - Sujin District, Kyoto City

63rd activity

Participation in the "51st National Assembly for Buraku Liberation Study"

64th activity

Fieldwork - Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture: US military bases issue

2018

65th activity

Fieldwork - Ōkunoshima, Takehara City, Hiroshima Prefecture: Peace Education

2019

66th activity

Fieldwork - Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture: History of the Discriminated against People

2020

67th activity

Fieldwork - Iwashashi District, Wakayama City, Wakayama Prefecture, Kinokawa City: 50 years after Mankichi Saiko, a central figure in the establishment of the Suiheisha, passed away.

2021

68th activity

Ajima Fureai Hall, Tamba-Sasayama City, Hyogo Prefecture: Initiative of the Local Government against the Dissemination of Videos on Buraku Discrimination

2022

69th activity

Fieldwork - Nagasaki City, Nagasaki Prefecture; Gunkan-jima

2023

70th activity

Fieldwork - Tottori City and Kurayoshi City, Tottori Prefecture: Learning from Activities and Observing the Current Situation regarding Buraku Liberation Efforts in Tottori

2024

71st activity

Marugame City, Kagawa Prefecture; Kagawa Human Rights Institute: Screening of video "The Fukuda Village Incident," and Lecture



General Meeting of Daishūren, 20 June 2008.



Worship at the Columbarium, National Sanatorium Tamazenshoen, Tokyo, 11 December 2008.



Learning about Discriminatory Buddhist Posthumous Names in Nagano Prefecture, 18 November 2009.



Worship at Kakazu Tower near Futenma US military base in Okinawa Prefecture, 20 November 2017.



[Basic Human Rights Course] Visit to the Sakai City Human Rights Exchange Center Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum, 14 September 2018.



Group discussion after viewing the video "The Fukuda Village Incident" at the Kagawa Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Awareness Center, 7 November 2024.



[Basic Human Rights Course] Namba and Sennichimae Fieldwork, 18 March 2025.



Program of the 30th Anniversary General Meeting, 2013.

Reflection on the Past Activities

From the activities held till the present, the following are selected initiatives that have particularly close connection to religious objects. Below are reports on the initiatives.

1st Session: On-site Meeting

Date: 18–19 September 1989

Location: Maruko Town, Ogata District, Nagano Prefecture

Lecturer: Yuzuru Kizu

Content: Regarding Discriminatory Buddhist

Posthumous Names

We arrived at the park cemetery, already darkened by rain, after 5:00 PM. Using candlelight, we offered the chrysanthemums we had brought, placed incense before the graves, and touched the discriminatory posthumous names carved into the cemetery.

Among the four hundred thirty-one graves in Maruko Town Park Cemetery, one hundred forty-three bear discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names. We faced the spirits of the gravestones and, through these monuments that had withstood wind and snow, were able to directly grasp the gravity of discriminatory practices against Buraku people with profound sorrow. Various discriminatory characters amounted to as many as two hundred and one characters.

These characters denote the status of “eta” (filth) regardless of sect. They reveal the reality of temples and priests who adhered to the feudal system’s hierarchy and policies for controlling the populace.

The 27th Buraku Liberation Study Assembly

Date: 17–18 November 1998

Location: Kumano Region, Wakayama Prefecture

Lecturer: Yuzuru Kizu

Content: Boundary Stones Found in the Kumano Region

On the first day, we confirmed the boundary stone “Prohibition of Killing Living Beings and Impurity” erected in 1656 (Meireki 2, Edo period) at the “Cockfighting Shrine” in Kii-Tanabe City. Then, we visited Hosshinmon Oji Shrine in Hongu Town along the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage route, where we also observed a similar *Kekkai-seki* (boundary stone used to create a spiritual boundary). We arrived at Fujiya in Kawayu Onsen shortly before 4:00 pm. Upon arrival, Kizu gave a talk entitled “Boundary Stones Found in the Kumano Region.” He explained that while boundary stones inscribed with “Prohibition on Killing Living Beings” are common, particularly around the Kumano Sanzan, if the sole purpose were to prohibit killing within the precincts, a stone inscribed only with “Prohibition on Killing Living Beings” would suffice. He discussed why “filth” or “impurity” is added in boundary stones, addressing the issue of filth or impurity.

On the second day, we visited Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine. There were also boundary stones.

The 33rd Buraku Liberation Research Meeting

Date: 2 October 2001

Venue: National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien, Okayama Prefecture

Lecturer: Kenjiro Ikeuchi

Content: Tour of Nagashima Aiseien, among other activities

With the aim of reviewing the state’s approach to Hansen’s disease and considering the responsibilities incumbent upon us religious practitioners for the restoration of human rights and social reintegration of former patients, we toured the National Sanatorium Nagashima Aiseien in Okayama Prefecture. Ikeuchi spoke, drawing on his own experiences, about the reality

of human rights violations against Hansen's disease patients and their history. We heard these sanatoriums were sanatoriums in name only, functioning as detention centers in reality.

Following the lecture, we observed some materials at the Onshi Memorial Hall evoking life at that time. After strolling through the site, we visited the columbarium and offered a silent prayer of remembrance for the departed Hansen's disease patients.

Recent Activities

Since its establishment, Daishūren has prioritized activities aimed at learning firsthand about the history of discrimination through fieldwork, thereby enhancing human rights awareness. It conducts fieldwork while reflecting on its past, hoping it will provide an opportunity to pause and consider what can be achieved as individual religious practitioners in moving forward. Each year, it holds overnight gatherings to foster interpersonal exchange across denominations and sects, striving for mutual learning and development.

Furthermore, from 2023 onwards, driven by a desire to reaffirm the present by gaining a deeper understanding of local history, fieldwork exploring historically marginalized areas of Osaka has been held. Tomohiro Yoshimura, Visiting Researcher at Osaka Metropolitan University, was invited as a lecturer to deliver the "Basic Course" outlined below. This course is scheduled to continue in future years.

2023

Area: Shinsekai and Tobita district

Participants: Twenty-six

During the classroom session, the study focused on the connection between popular performing arts and "Tennōji Village" as well as the flow from the modern public prostitution system to the abolitionist movement. In the fieldwork, the participants contemplated on the joys and sorrows of those who lived in Sannō and Tobita, learning about the history of discrimination hidden within familiar landscapes.

2024

Area: Dōtonbori and Sennichimae

Participants: Twenty-eight

If Dōtonbori was a space of “celebration” (*Hare*), Sennichimae, with its execution grounds, crematorium, graveyards, and ash mountains, may have been a space of “ritual” (*Ke*), governing the afterlife. Through redevelopment and changing landscapes, amidst a history often overshadowed by glittering reflections, we learned how many people formed communities based on their roles and engagement in work, and how they carried out those activities.

We are also deepening our understanding of recent discriminatory incidents occurring via the internet. This was held as a “Buraku Liberation and Research Meeting.”

2021

Theme: Initiative of the local government against the Dissemination of Videos on Buraku discrimination

Participants: Twenty-one

We studied the case where Tamba Sasayama City sought an injunction before the court against the posting of videos depicting discriminated-against Buraku communities on an internet site, ultimately obtaining a court order to cease the activity. We explored how religious practitioners should respond to the current reality of widespread discrimination on social media platforms.

2023

Theme: Learning from Activities and Observing the Current Situation Regarding Buraku Liberation in Tottori Prefecture

Participants: Seventeen

Following the fieldwork to Ogamo district in Kurayoshi City guided by Shinji Shimoyoshi, Director of the Kurayoshi City Human Rights and Culture Center, we were briefed about “Tottori Loop.”⁷

Shimoyoshi pointed out that “the malicious nature of the discriminatory acts by Tottori Loop group lies not only in the reprinting of the

‘Buraku List,’⁸ but also in publishing ‘Buraku Exploration’ online.” “Buraku Exploration” involved infiltrating Buraku communities in many parts of Japan to take photographs and videos, exposing images of residences, shops, and community centers.

Following the lecture, participants called for action as religious figures towards enacting legislation such as an anti-discrimination law and a human rights remedies law.

Looking Back on the Past

The first issue of *Daishūren* (Daishūren’s journal) featured a contribution by Yuzuru Kizu (then Counsellor, Osaka Prefectural Council for the Promotion of Dowa Projects), entitled “What We Hope for from Daishūren and Religious Leaders.”

Kizu wrote at the onset, “I believe religion exists not for Gods or Buddhas, but for human beings.” Then he wrote as follows:

What should religious figures focus upon? It is humanity. Yet, until now, most religious figures in Japan have largely refused to turn their gaze towards the people. Rather, they have turned their backs, boasting of the prestige of temples and churches, unwilling to observe the lives of the common folk. Not only that, they have prioritized the religious ceremonies and customs of their own sects, existing in a separate world from the people, persistently adopting an attitude that leveraged their privileged status.

In the past, the founders of each religion entered the midst of the people, shared their troubles, suffered and grieved alongside them, sacrificed themselves, and devoted their very lives to the salvation of the people. Yet, at some point, religious figures distanced themselves from the people and lost the ability to see them. Indeed, they ceased to wish to see the people. The crucial question here is how religious figures can cultivate an attitude of engaging with the people and shedding their sense of religious privilege. Unless religious figures change their stance, I believe they cannot truly be called religious figures, nor will they develop the necessary attitude to address the Buraku issue.

Over forty years have passed since this earnest advice was made. The time has changed dramatically. As seen in movements like #MeToo and the

exposure of sexual abuses by Johnny Kitagawa,⁹ human rights awareness appears to have deepened considerably, both globally and domestically.

Daishūren has worked across denominations and sects, engaging in various activities from the perspective of “religious practitioners.”

The outcomes include learning about other religions’ human rights initiatives to enhance its own efforts, and fostering an attitude of mutual learning between organizations. It has fostered a pioneering spirit of embracing good practices. Furthermore, through personal exchanges between denominations, individuals’ perspectives have likely broadened and deepened. It has come to see landscapes that were previously invisible through interaction solely within own denomination, which shares the same doctrine.

However, many challenges remain.

Firstly, while Daishūren began with twenty-four denominations and three groups, membership has now decreased to nineteen denominations and one group. This reflects the broader decline in Japan’s religious sector, but it is also likely a consequence of failing to actively promote Daishūren’s value and the importance of human rights initiatives. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Daishūren has struggled to overcome doctrinal differences between denominations and sects, preventing it from achieving true unity. How can it strengthen solidarity under the banner of the universal value of “human rights” is a significant, weighty challenge requiring considerable time.

Secondly, the activities have become monotonous. With each passing year, there is a growing sense that events have become mere rituals. The faces of participants have also become largely unchanged. While this may be an inevitable fate for any organization, it is imperative that it continuously revisits what constitutes the “original purpose” – as Daishūren’s founding principle stated in its annual policy guidelines.

Furthermore, by tackling diverse human rights issues, the focus of its efforts may be blurring, potentially diluting Daishūren’s *raison d’être*. While broadening its perspective is essential for cultivating human rights awareness, it is desirable to advance its activities through the lens of “religion,” maintaining a firm perspective grounded in the question: Why must we, as religious practitioners, engage with this issue?

Taking Kizu’s earlier advice to heart, it remains a pertinent and pressing critique today. Can each individual religious practitioner see the human being, rather than merely the organization – the religious group, temple,

shrine or church? As religious practitioners, how do we confront “discrimination”? There must be continued questioning on how do we, as individual religious practitioners, stand before the world. It is the hope of Daishūren that it can advance its activities from this point forward.

Endnotes

1 See full text of The Princeton Declaration of the Third World Assembly, 1979, Religions for Peace - Japan, www.wcrp.or.jp/en/wcrp3_1979.html.

2 The Buraku Liberation League’s “Confirmation Meeting” and “Denunciation Meeting” are unique initiatives undertaken in response to the acts of Buraku discrimination.

The Confirmation Meeting is a session where, when discriminatory words, actions, or behavior are alleged, members of the Buraku Liberation League and the parties involved discuss the facts, identify issues, and confirm mutual understanding.

The Denunciation Meeting is a session where the Buraku Liberation League strongly condemns and pursues individuals or organizations alleged to have committed discriminatory acts or made discriminatory remarks, clarifies where responsibility lies, and demands apologies and measures to prevent recurrence.

3 Discriminatory Buddhist posthumous names

Kaimyo, given by a Buddhist priest to the dead, is recorded in a post-memorial register and carved on tombstone. It was discovered that discriminatory names were given to the dead who were of Buraku origins. The names include the character for beast, tumble, ignoble, servant, many kinds of derogatory expressions. While the majority of the names seem to have been given a long time ago, there are some names given in 1940s.

4 The Shibuzome Uprising was a peasant revolt that took place in Okayama Prefecture at late Edo to early Meiji period. Farmers from the Buraku community protested against heavy taxes and government corruption, gathering in large numbers and wearing brown-dyed clothes (called shibuzome), which gave the uprising its name. The revolt was eventually suppressed by government forces.

5 This is also known as the Sayama Incident that took place in 1963 in Sayama city, Saitama prefecture. A high school girl was kidnapped and later found murdered. The police arrested Kazuo Ishikawa, a young man from a Buraku community, and charged him with the crime.

Ishikawa was interrogated for many hours without a lawyer and eventually signed a confession, which he later repudiated for being coerced by police through threats and pressure. Despite the lack of objective evidence and many inconsistencies in the prosecution’s “evidence,” including questionable forensic results, he was convicted and sentenced to death by the Urawa District Court, which was commuted to life imprisonment by the Tokyo High Court (and later affirmed by the Supreme Court).

Over the decades, the Buraku Liberation League, human rights activists, and lawyers have argued that Ishikawa was a victim of Buraku discrimination and unfair trial. He was imprisoned for more than thirty years and released on parole in 1994.

He sought a retrial to prove his innocence; filing three retrial petitions. Ishikawa passed away in March 2025 at the age of 86 due to illness. His death led to the termination of the petition proceedings. His wife, Sachiko, filed a fourth retrial petition with the Tokyo High Court.

6 See the full text of the Suiheisha Declaration in this link: Declaration of Human Rights in Japan, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/1922/04/declaration-of-human-rights-in-japan.html.

7 Tottori Loop is the common name for a group that has published and disseminated online information concerning discrimination against Buraku communities. They have collected lists of “Dowa districts” (discriminated against Buraku communities) and published the location lists and information on related parties on their website.

In response to the announcement in 2016 by the Kawasaki-based publisher Jigen-sha, known as Tottori Loop, that it would publish a book listing the names of 5,367 districts nationwide and subsequently posting the place names on its website, the Buraku Liberation League and two hundred thirty-four individuals from discriminated-against communities, filed a lawsuit seeking an injunction and other remedies.

In June 2023, the Tokyo High Court ruled that “every person possesses the personal interest of not being subjected to unjust discrimination,” citing Article 13 (right to pursue happiness) and Article 14, Paragraph 1 (equality under the law) of the Constitution. It ordered the publisher to cease publication of information concerning thirty-one prefectures and pay a total of 5.5 million yen in damages. In December 2024, the Supreme Court upheld the Tokyo High Court’s ruling.

8 This is one of the directories of the Buraku communities collectively referred to as Buraku Chimei Soukan (部落地名総鑑) that were uncovered in 1975. These directories or lists provided the locations and names of places of discriminated Buraku people across the country. They were purchased by more than two hundred twenty groups, mainly companies, nationwide. Companies purchased them to help them avoid hiring residents of the Dowa district (discriminated Buraku residents).

9 Johnny Kitagawa was the founder of Johnny & Associates, a powerful talent agency in Japan, famous for producing male idol groups. He has been accused of sexually abusing boys, many of them underage, over many decades—starting as early as the 1950s, continuing through to the 2010s.

National Christian Schools Human Rights Education Conference: History and Present Activities

Eriko Yoshida and Sungjeon Lee

THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION CONFERENCE, known as Zenkiri, began with the first “Christian Schools” Liberation Education Exchange Meeting at Yata Liberation School (矢田解放塾)¹ in August 1990. The activity changed names several times - National Seminar for Considering Human Rights Education in Christian Schools (adopted during the third meeting), annual National Christian Schools “Human Rights Seminar” (adopted during the fourth meeting), and finally in 1994, the name National Christian Schools Human Rights Education Conference (Zenkiri) was officially adopted. Zenkiri was also formally established in 1994. Since then, the organization has held thirty-five human rights seminars nationwide, mostly at Christian schools, building up many years of experience.

Faculty, staff and Christians connected to Christian schools have mainly led this conference. Today, Zenkiri is an open organization and works together with anyone interested in human rights education.

Three Streams Leading to Formation and Organization

Three main groups shaped the formation of Zenkiri. The first group was composed of Christian organizations working for Buraku liberation. The second group included Christians focused on issues facing Zainichi (Resident) Koreans in Japan. The third group took part in summer training sessions of the Association of Christian Schools in Japan. All three groups shared the goal of the National Christian Council Japan (NCCJ) of uniting Christians involved in school education around human rights education.

To walk with the Buraku liberation movement, the NCCJ set up a Buraku Liberation Committee, whose members led the first two seminars at Yata

Liberation School. As the movement grew, a group focused on Zainichi Korean education joined in. This connection goes back to the late 1960s, when protests against job discrimination faced by Jong Seok (朴鐘碩君) led to the Hitachi Employment Discrimination Trial (1970-1974).² Zainichi Koreans and Japanese formed the “Association to Support 朴君” to support the legal fight. After winning the case, groups across Japan who wanted Koreans and Japanese to live together formed the Council for Struggle Against Ethnic Discrimination in 1974. At the same time, Japanese educators began to discuss how to support the children of Zainichi Koreans from former colonial Korea who made up about 90 percent of non-Japanese residents then. This led to the creation of the National Research Council on Education of Zainichi Koreans in Japan in 1979.

Some Christians involved in this movement deepened their work through Bible study and sharing teaching practices, and later joined Zenkiri. The third group came from the summer training sessions of the Association of Christian Schools in Japan. While the Association focused on “character education,” a Zainichi Korean teacher pointed out of the need to move from “character” to “human rights,” and groups that agreed to this suggestion joined Zenkiri.

To build a stronger foundation and help the movement grow, a new approach developed over time. Regional blocks were set up across the country, and each block held its own activities. There was also a nationwide human rights seminar every year. Kanto and the areas north of it formed one block, while Chubu, Kansai, Chugoku-Shikoku and the Southwest each had own blocks. Covering Tohoku and Hokkaido has been a continuing challenge. The early seminars mainly offered workshops on Buraku discrimination, Zainichi Korean education, and basic human rights education.

Some Initiatives of Zenkiri

In the 1980s, many private schools did not ask for residential registration certificates when admitting students, unlike public schools. Since Japan officially allows the use of common Japanese names (*tsūshōmei*), most Zainichi Koreans used Japanese-style names to avoid discrimination. As a result, Korean students often became invisible in private schools, and interactions between Korean students and teachers could feel distant. To address this, Zenkiri carried out yearly surveys of Protestant and Catholic private schools to help people understand the real situation of non-Japanese students.

The Ministry of Education required student guidance records to use names from residential registration certificates. Non-Japanese students had to submit documents like foreign registration certificates instead. Zenkiri encouraged private schools to follow the same rules as public schools and added questions about non-Japanese student identification to Zenkiri surveys to raise awareness. Although there were privacy concerns, Zenkiri believed that nationality was not private information. Zenkiri promoted the idea of “calling and stating real names,” a slogan from the National Research Council on Education of Zainichi Koreans in Japan, in private schools too. Japanese teachers and students were asked to use real names for Korean students, while Korean students were encouraged to use their real names instead of common Japanese names.

To enable Zainichi Koreans to value their identity, stand up against discrimination, and live with pride in Japanese society, they must establish an education system rooted in coexistence, one that facilitates the learning of both Japanese and Korean history and culture. This meant preparing textbooks and extra materials, and starting clubs like Korean culture study groups.

These efforts were also used for students from Buraku communities. Zenkiri members helped create teaching materials like “Crown of Thorns” for the NCCJ Buraku Discrimination Issues Committee, and encouraged Christian schools across Japan to buy and use these materials in classes and homeroom activities.

Changes in Global Human Rights Conditions and Human Rights Education

It is important to note that these efforts were supported by progress in Japan’s human rights situation, thanks to both domestic and international civil movements. This included joining international human rights conferences in 1979, campaigning for the ratification of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1982 and to become state-party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1995.

In the 1990s, after the Cold War ended, a new global political and economic system developed. More non-Japanese from different countries settled in Japan, and the Japanese society experienced change as a result. This led the National Research Council on Education of Zainichi Koreans

in Japan to change its name to the National Research Council on Education of Non-Japanese Residents in Japan. In the 1960s, there were about 650,000 Zainichi Koreans from former colonial Korea, but by 2024, this number had dropped to about 430,000, even with new arrivals. Now, Chinese residents are the largest group of settled non-Japanese, with a population of about 870,000. These changes affected schools and created new challenges for Zenkiri in working with non-Japanese students aside from Zainichi Koreans.

In the 21st century, new nationalism grew both in Japan and around the world as a reaction to globalization, creating challenges for Zenkiri. This includes the introduction of the national flag and anthem in schools (Law Regarding the National Flag and National Anthem, 1999³), changes to the Basic Act on Education (2006),⁴ and making moral education a formal subject (2015). In response, Zenkiri made statements at general meetings and organized protests in schools against these government actions. Zenkiri also added peace education as another key focus.

With Christian schools in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Okinawa, Zenkiri discussed different ways of teaching peace, shared educational practices, and reported on peace training at these schools. Zenkiri also took up in its workshops issues like the American military bases in Okinawa and the militarization of Miyako Island.

New Challenges in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, a wider range of human rights issues came to light. Even during the American and French Revolutions, women were treated as second-class citizens and did not have the right to vote at first. After the women's suffrage movement, gender equality and justice in the workplace became important topics. Since many Christian schools are girls' schools, women's empowerment is a major focus. The visibility of transgender people in schools has also increased, and there have been efforts to share information about LGBTQ issues and school uniform policies. The 19th seminar theme, "Are Children's Voices Being Heard?" and the 25th seminar theme, "Listening to the Voices of Those Made Invisible," show that Zenkiri continues to support students with diverse identities and keeps human rights at the center of its work.

Activities of Zenkiri

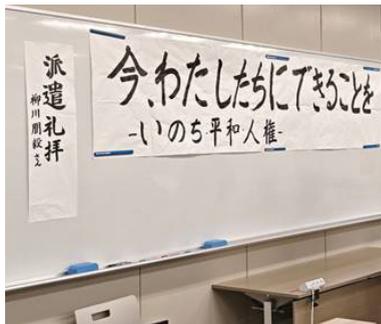
1. Looking Back at Past Seminars Through Their Themes and Locations

Since autumn of 2024, Zenkiri held planning meetings to decide on seminar theme, select speakers, and design workshop sessions. In early 2025, it set up a fifteen-member organizing committee. The committee discussed social conditions, and addressed concerns in respective fields. The committee adopted the theme for 2025, “What I Can Do Now: Life, Peace, and Human Rights.”

Zenkiri held its 35th Human Rights Education Seminar in August 2025 with this theme at Kwansei Gakuin University’s Umeda satellite campus. The convenient location brought together seventy-one participants from across the country.



Opening prayer, 35th National Christian School Human Rights Education Seminar: “What I Can Do Now—Life, Peace, and Human Rights” (Osaka city, 11-12 August 2025).



Closing prayer, 35th National Christian School Human Rights Education Seminar: “What I Can Do Now—Life, Peace, and Human Rights” (Osaka city, 11-12 August 2025).

Taking the time to prepare carefully and discuss thoroughly is a treasure of the Human Rights Education Seminar, a point of pride for Zenkiri.

The following introduces past seminar themes and the distinctive features of the host locations, mainly those held since 2000.

The 13th seminar, “Can You Hear the Children’s Voices?” (2002), the 22nd, “What Keeps Children’s Lives Alive and Connected—Toward the Recovery of Dignity and Freedom” (2011), and the 26th, “Children’s Lives and Human Rights—Educational Issues for Christian Schools” (2015), took place in the Kanto region, including Tokyo and Yokohama. The seminars focused on listening to children’s voices and responding as adults who are shaped by what they hear. It is crucial to have the heart to listen to the “voiceless voices” of children under the pressure of intense academic competition in large cities—especially those children who live within that environment as a minority.

Choosing themes for the Kansai region is sometimes difficult to do. For example, the 18th seminar, “These Are Difficult Times, But Let Us Live Well—Because We Ourselves Are the Ones Who Create the Times” (2007), the 23rd, “Tsure mote iko ka, anjo iko ka—Connecting Experiences, Learning from the Field” (2012), and the 34th, “Nevertheless... Rejoicing, Laughing, and Walking—Life, Peace, and Human Rights” (2024) were held in the cities of Kyoto, Kobe and Osaka. Zenkiri wanted to share creative ideas, using words from Saint Augustine, Peter Frankl, and the Osaka dialect. Still, much discussion had to take place to make decisions, sometimes worrying that the themes might not be meaningful to the teachers as hoped for.

Since Christian schools are found all over Japan, some seminars were held outside the big cities. In 2001, the 12th seminar took place at a Catholic school in Maizuru, a town on the Sea of Japan coast. Its theme was “Toward a School Where Each Individual ‘Lives’—The Possibilities that Human Rights Education Draws Out.” In 2017, the 28th seminar was held in Gunma prefecture with the theme “Let’s Go Meet Today—Now, Knowing, Encountering, Living Together.” Then the 29th seminar was held in Kochi prefecture with the theme “To Create a World Where We Rejoice Together—SAY! ☆WA.” This title was a play on the names of the host schools, “Kyoai” and “Seiwa.” This hopefully reflected the reality that while planning was hard work, people also enjoyed doing it. Sometimes, the host schools involve everyone in the schools in supporting the seminar, and Zenkiri was always very grateful for their help.

One seminar that stands out was the 24th held in 2013 in Sendai, a city affected by the Great East Japan Disaster. The theme was “Disaster and Human Rights—Considering 3.11 from a Human Rights Education Perspective.” Zenkiri arranged a bus tour for everyone to visit the disaster areas. Seeing the remains of a primary school where many lives were lost was shocking. Seminar participants also heard strong and thoughtful views from local residents about the nuclear accident and the government nuclear policy.

Along with lectures on the main theme, the Zenkiri program that receives praise every year is the Bible Study session led by a guest speaker. Through this, participants are exposed to deep scriptural understanding, surprising new interpretations, and readings of the Bible from perspectives such as Feminist Theology and Queer Theology. This not only satisfies intellectual curiosity but also allows participants, as Christians, to experience the freedom and liberation of the spirit, leading them to realize the importance of reading the Bible as a guide for living.

2. Workshops

Each Zenkiri Seminar includes five to eight workshops. The workshops always included discussion on how to address Buraku discrimination, educational issues concerning Zainichi Koreans or non-Japanese residents in Japan, and themes related to war and peace. Furthermore, the commitment to annually organize workshops on gender discrimination and sexual diversity from an early stage is a unique characteristic of the Zenkiri Seminar. Workshops that broadly re-examine the significance of human rights and dignity education, often using formats such as workshops and group discussions, are also popular. Zenkiri sometimes set up workshops that take advantage of the host location’s unique characteristics and consider themes as important such as how to ensure children excluded due to physical disabilities or developmental disorders can receive inclusive education. Workshops focusing on child abuse and suicide offer valuable opportunities to learn from specialized knowledge.

3. Fieldwork

Fieldwork is another source of pride for Zenkiri. Seminar participants have been inspired and informed by learning about the struggles for human rights in various regions, as well as the efforts and challenges involved in preserving the memory of disasters and wars. The scars of war damage,

including the atomic bombings, the traces of forced labor of Koreans under colonial rule, and the sites of isolation and exclusion of people with Hansen's disease are found all across Japan. Visiting these places, often referred to as dark tourism, and listening to guides' accounts leave a profound impression that cannot be gained through classroom learning alone.

4. Adoption and Sending of Statements

The Zenkiri Seminar invites speakers from minority groups to teach about human rights and social issues. Zenkiri believes that it is essential to be exposed to the speaker's personal disclosure, learn what was not known, and then change one's self based on that new knowledge. Furthermore, Zenkiri decided that it must raise its voice in protest against a society that discriminates against minorities and against undemocratic educational settings. The Zenkiri Seminar includes a general council meeting that adopts statements and letters of protest which are sent to the Prime Minister and relevant ministries and government agencies. The specific requests included:

- Allowing teachers to choose textbooks that accurately teach the reality of war;
- Cessation of forced usage of the national flag and national anthem during school ceremonies;
- Elimination of discrimination in educational fees for students of Korean schools;
- Cessation of military buildup in Okinawa.

Organizational Structure

Zenkiri holds national steering committee meetings four to five times a year to share issues and prepare for the Christian Schools Human Rights Education Seminar in August of each year. Deciding on the venue is an important and difficult agenda item. However, Zenkiri has been able to borrow school facilities somewhere each year. After the COVID-19 pandemic, Zenkiri gradually restored its original format while experimenting with hybrid online options, and continued to call for participation from schools and Christian organizations while exploring adaptation to changing times. Many first-time participants join each year, and some of them become repeat participants. Zenkiri operates with support and endorsement from many

education-related organizations, including the Association of Christian Schools. Catholic and Protestant schools collaborate, with steering committee members from both schools. Finances are supported by annual membership fees and donations to the council, enabling committee members from across wide areas of Japan to gather. As an activist organization, while facing various challenges ahead, Zenkiri continues its activities through cooperation and dedication among steering committee members.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the reflections of Eriko Yoshida, a steering committee member of Zenkiri, are most relevant:

I have consistently aimed at bringing concrete actions back to the Christian schools where I work. By thinking of the students who are always in my mind and considering, “I will try this approach for the new semester,” or “I will interact with them with this new awareness,” I have allowed the Zenkiri Seminar to support me in my role as an educator. When we hold up an ideal, difficulties in the current situation become apparent. However, by repeating the mantra, “Hope for the future, courage for the present,” and believing that “It is God who gives the growth,” I have remained involved with this council, aspiring to be a “co-worker with God.”

Endnotes

1 The Yata Kaiho Juku (Yata Liberation School) was a bastion of youth development for secondary school student associations and youth group activities since early 1970s. It hosted events such as the “Junior High School Third Year Camp,” where third-year junior secondary school students lived together with the aim of preparing them to enter senior secondary school.

The Yata Branch of the Buraku Liberation League opened a temporary facility for this school in 1973. The facility was completed in 1980. However, the school closed at the same time that the Osaka Municipal Community Center in Higashisumiyoshi closed in 2014.

2 This is a case filed by Jong Seok Park against Hitachi company for withdrawing its offer of employment because he was Korean and for using supposedly false name (his Japanese alias) in the registration for company employment exam. The Yokohama District Court ruled that using a Japanese name did not constitute falsification. The court decision also explained the discrimination being suffered by resident Koreans in Japan.

Hifumi Okunuki, Forty years after Zainichi labor case victory, is Japan turning back the clock? *The Japan Times*, 21 January 2015, www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/01/21/issues/forty-years-zainichi-labor-case-victory-japan-turning-back-clock/#.VMC1zcbCVco.

3 Cabinet Office, National Flag & National Anthem, www.cao.go.jp/en/flag_anthem.html.

4 Basic Act on Education (Act No. 120 of December 22, 2006), Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/lawandplan/title01/detail01/1373798.htm.

Holistic Training for Journalists in Pakistan

Pakistan Press Foundation

Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) is the preeminent non-governmental organization promoting freedom of expression, media safety and the development of an independent media in Pakistan. For over six decades, PPF has enhanced journalism standards through fellowships, training programs, and capacity-building efforts, supporting women journalists and those from marginalized regions.

PPF was established in 1968 as a non-profit organization and continued working until 1974, when it had to suspend operations due to the political environment then prevailing in the country. It was reactivated in 1992, and has since been involved in assisting the development of independent media in Pakistan by conducting training programs for journalists, carrying out projects in research and documentation, and campaigning to defend and promote freedom of the press.

Over the decades, PPF has trained hundreds of journalists to meet the needs of the media of the time. PPF has strived to ensure that media professionals from all parts of Pakistan and vulnerable groups, including women, are given equal opportunities to enhance their journalism skills.

Over the years, PPF has developed, grown and sustained a vast network of media professionals across the country, which enables it to actively document and investigate attacks on the media and restrictions to free expression. PPF has always been a vocal voice defending the right to free expression and the safety of journalists in Pakistan, including issuing statements and engaging in advocacy efforts. In successive state reviews of Pakistan under the United Nations (UN) mechanisms, PPF's questions on the state of free expression and media safety have been raised by the UN bodies.

PPF's ability to connect varied stakeholders, including local and national media, as well as between unions, editors, and publishers, comes from years of expertise in implementing creative initiatives including the Editors for Safety Network (EFS), a network of top editorial decision-makers from print and electronic media united to promote media safety. The organization's ex-

perience, credibility, and reach enabled PPF to play a pivotal role in enacting the Sindh and national media safety laws.

PPF has long-standing relationships with international media organizations, including membership in the Media Freedom Coalition Consultative Network (MFC-CN), serving as a founding CN co-chair, International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) for which PPF has been elected to the IFEX Council several times, the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) for which PPF has been part of the steering committee, and served on the board of the International Press Institute (IPI).

Pakistan Context

In 2025, journalists and media professionals in Pakistan find themselves in an increasingly restrictive landscape for free expression. Legal challenges through restrictive legislation and cases, overactive regulatory authorities, continued violence against journalists with impunity, and threats to media professionals—the media is working in an environment of intimidation from all fronts.

On the occasion of International World Press Freedom Day 2025, PPF presented the current situation of journalists and media professionals in Pakistan.¹

2025 began with the passage of the much-opposed Pakistan Electronic Crimes Amendment Act 2025 (PECA) in January, which heightened concerns about the legal consequences journalists may face for their reporting, particularly online. Since then, criminal complaints have been registered against media professionals under sections of the amended cybercrime law, including Section 26-A, which pertains to fake or false information and carries punishments of up to three years of imprisonment, fines up to Rs 2 million, or both.

PPF urged the state to view the media as an essential stakeholder while developing policies and laws that impact their work, so that dangerous legislation, such as PECA, the impact of which is unfolding, would not be brought to fruition. Considering the impact on the media of such legislation should not be an afterthought. Despite loud and clear calls of concern, the government has decided to ignore the opposition to the amendments to PECA. Such patterns raise questions about the government's intentions.

In a media environment where broadcast media have been significantly silenced over the years through restrictive regulation and violence against media professionals, the further tightening of screws around expression online spells concern for journalists' ability to report freely without consequences both online and offline. In what has become the norm, the lack of accountability and the role of state bodies—in 2024-25, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), in particular—has set a dangerous pattern of action against media professionals.

At the same time, forms of physical violence, including assault and manhandling as well as arrests, detentions and the issuance of threats to journalists, continued to undermine the safety of media professionals and served as tools to intimidate the media alongside other punitive measures, including the suspension of advertising to media outlets.

PPF has so far (January – April 2025) documented at least thirty-four cases including seven instances of case registration, one defamation notice, three instances of call-up notices by the FIA, two arrests, four detentions, two abductions, at least six instances of assault and two of manhandling, two attacks on property including a raid, three instances of threats including a threat of legal action and threats to family, and two of online harassment.

The arrests of two journalists — *Raftar* CEO Farhan Mallick and Islamabad-based journalist Waheed Murad — in March 2025 exemplified the heavy-handed approach of the FIA. In the case of Mallick, the FIA visited the *Raftar* office without notice, and following his appearance at an FIA office in response to a verbal summon, he was arrested.

Just days after Mallick's arrest, Islamabad-based journalist, associated with *Urdu News*, Waheed Murad, was picked up from his home and had a criminal complaint registered against him by the FIA.

On World Press Freedom Day, PPF drew attention to the alarming patterns of intimidation being documented through legislation, legal cases, violence, and threats.

PPF expressed concern over the lack of accountability and clarity in actions taken by state bodies such as the FIA, with details often being revealed in the aftermath of an incident. Such actions help maintain an environment of fear and uncertainty among the media, even beyond the individual journalists impacted. PPF urged authorities to ensure that media professionals are not targeted for their work and that due process is followed.

In addition to these, punitive measures including restrictions on advertising to certain media outlets have also been documented. The suspension of advertisements to *Dawn*, the leading English newspaper, which issued a public response defending its editorial policy, and the Ministry of Information's stoppage of advertisements to *Daily Sahafat*, highlight the underhanded methods used to financially cripple media outlets.

The precedent for the alarming patterns observed this year appeared to have been set in 2024, an election year that was a mix of political protests, internet shutdowns, and policies and legislation (proposed and passed) that would increase the policing of free expression, particularly online.

Between January and December 2024, PPF documented at least one hundred sixty-eight confirmed attacks on journalists and media professionals in connection to their work and attempts of censorship to regulate and restrict free expression either through punitive measures or regulation including two murders, seventy-six instances of assault, four instances of abduction, twelve attacks on property, five arrests, twelve detentions, fifteen instances of case registration, eight documented instances of FIA action and two of other legal action, two instances of placement on the Exit Control List, fifteen instances of online harassment, five threats, thirty-one instances of censorship including: nineteen instances of Internet, mobile connectivity and social media platform disruptions including the ban on X, four restrictive directives by Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), and eight other directives, orders or actions tantamount to censorship; and remarks by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province targeting journalists.

In 2024, the sheer frequency of internet, mobile connectivity, and social media platform disruptions was of grave concern. At a time when the significance of digital spaces was growing, such measures cut off citizens' right to access information. This year (2025), following the escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack, the Indian government blocked access to sixteen Pakistani YouTube channels on the recommendations of its Ministry of Home Affairs.

PPF reiterated the urgent need to challenge the complete impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of violence against the media through the active implementation of media safety legislation, passed in the country, specifically for the protection of media professionals. PPF emphasized that it was completely unacceptable that journalists continue to be targeted for their

work. Despite the passage of the Federal Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, 2021, and the provincial Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act 2021, journalists continued to face violence with dismal accountability for perpetrators.

Areas of Concern

PPF focuses on:

- Establishing an effective network of media and journalists throughout Pakistan to gather violations against the press, which are then investigated and documented;
- Engaging with varied stakeholders, including national and international bodies and coalitions, to advocate for media safety and free expression;
- Raising the standard of journalism through media development activities, including capacity-building of journalists in line with changing trends and international best practices.

PPF investigates instances of attacks on journalists and media professionals, as well as any restrictive measures, including laws or directives that impact press freedom. As part of this, the first level of advocacy includes investigating incidents and documenting them.

Whenever journalists' safety is imperiled, PPF issues statements, mobilizes advocacy campaigns, and has repeatedly highlighted these concerns during Pakistan's periodic reviews under UN free-expression mechanisms.

In 2025, PPF issued the following alerts:

- January 27: PPF alarmed by passage of PECA Amendment without prior stakeholder consultation; lack of clarity and consensus raises questions about intent and possibility of misuse²
- February 11: Civil Society Condemns Threats to Journalist and HRCP Co-Chair Munizae Jahangir ³
- March 4: Police Forcibly Enter Quetta Press Club Undermining its Sanctity and Independence⁴
- March 6: PPF Deeply Concerned by Federal and Provincial Govts' Withholding of Ads to Dawn; Alarming Tool to Financially Strangle Publication with a Crippling Impact⁵

- March 21: PPF Concerned by FIA's Arrest of Raftar CEO Farhan Mallick; Call for his Release and Urge FIA to Clarify the Reasons and Circumstances of his Arrest⁶
- March 25: PPF Expresses Serious Concern Over Alleged Forcible Disappearance of Journalist Ahmad Noorani's Brothers⁷
- March 26: PPF Expresses Deep Concern Over Manner in which Islamabad-Based Journalist Waheed Murad Picked Up from his Residence, Later Found to Have a Case Registered Against him by the FIA⁸
- April 30: Journalist Inamullah Mehsud Abducted in KP; released through settlement mediated by a *jirga*⁹
- May 27: Journalist Latif Baloch killed in Awaran, Balochistan; PPF calls for investigation to ascertain the reasons for the murder¹⁰
- June 11: Neo News Team Assaulted by Lawyers During Quetta Bar Association Protest.¹¹

PPF also produces annual reports that present in-depth look at trends regarding press freedom and media safety in Pakistan. In 2025, PPF produced two reports. *Pakistani Journalism Under Pressure In A Tightly Restricted Political Environment, Safety Threats and Internet Shutdowns — Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan in 2024*¹² provided details of attacks on and challenges to journalists and media professionals during 2024 and was released at the beginning of the year. A second report was released on World Press Freedom Day in May, *Intimidation on All Fronts: Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan*.¹³ This report focused on the situation in 2025, including the passage of restrictive legislation such as the PECA Amendment 2025 and the impact being documented.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, in March 2025, PPF published a statement on challenges faced by women in the media in Pakistan and emphasized an urgent need to address the patterns of threats and harassment women in the media in Pakistan are subjected to.¹⁴

On a weekly basis, PPF releases a newsletter, the *Pakistan News Digest*, which provides updates from across Pakistan regarding media safety, press freedom, developments in the media sector and any opportunities. The articles included in the newsletter are posted on PPF's website which includes regular updates on news that affect journalists and media professionals in

Pakistan. These can be accessed on PPF's website at <https://pakistanpress-foundation.org/>

PPF maintains documentation on the following categories: Freedom of Expression, Mass Media including print, broadcast and digital media, laws and governance, opportunities and publications including reports, newsletters and guidelines.

Fellowship Program

PPF set the precedent for capacity-building fellowship programs for journalists and media professionals in Pakistan. Over the years, PPF has engaged hundreds of journalists in fellowship programs that develop their skill set, provide practical experience in drafting and publishing stories and develop networks of journalists. These fellowships have kept pace with the changing media landscape and have attempted to respond to gaps in the media's development, including focusing on investigative reporting.

Investigative Journalism Fellowship: A Legacy of Excellence

PPF's Investigative Journalism Fellowship has emerged as a cornerstone of investigative reporting in the country, reflecting PPF's long-standing commitment to strengthening journalistic standards. With thirteen successful batches completed, the program has played a pivotal role in shaping journalists capable of conducting rigorous, evidence-based investigations. The fellowship provides a platform for mid-career and young journalists to deepen their skills while working on high-impact stories that challenge entrenched power structures and amplify marginalized voices.

Structured over a period of three to six months, the fellowship blends intensive training sessions with ongoing editorial mentorship. Journalists are introduced to techniques in data collection, source protection, and ethical storytelling. These tools are essential in navigating the often-risky terrain of investigative journalism in Pakistan. The guided editorial process ensures that each fellow not only learns the craft but also applies it effectively, resulting in stories that meet professional standards.

The fellowship's outcomes have been far-reaching. Investigations produced through the program have exposed a wide range of critical issues — from systemic corruption and mismanagement in public institutions to

violations of human and labor rights. These stories have sparked public debates, policy discussions, and in some cases, official inquiries. Many fellows have gone on to win national and international journalism awards, further cementing the program's reputation as a catalyst for excellence in investigative reporting.

Beyond the stories themselves, the fellowship has fostered a vibrant network of skilled investigative journalists now working across media outlets in Pakistan. This community of alumni continues to collaborate, mentor newer fellows, and raise the bar for accountability journalism across the nation. By institutionalizing investigative journalism training and nurturing a culture of professional integrity, the PPF Investigative Journalism Fellowship continues to make a lasting impact on Pakistan's media ecosystem.

Media Safety Fellowship: Protecting Journalists in High-Risk Environments

The PPF Media Safety Fellowship is a vital initiative designed to promote freedom of expression and highlight the pressing issues of media safety and impunity in crimes against journalists. Having successfully completed six batches, with the seventh currently underway and the eighth about to begin, the fellowship continues to provide crucial support to media professionals committed to investigative journalism. Through this program, journalists are empowered to produce impactful stories that shed light on threats to press freedom and the violence that often goes unpunished.

This fellowship offers selected media professionals the opportunity to participate in two intensive capacity-building workshops. These sessions focus on enhancing investigative journalism skills and offer deep insights into the complex challenges facing media safety in Pakistan. Fellows also receive hands-on mentoring through personalized online sessions with senior journalists and subject-matter experts. This combination of training and mentorship ensures that participants not only strengthen their professional capabilities but also develop a nuanced understanding of the media landscape and its vulnerabilities.

A key component of the fellowship is the production of investigative stories, which are developed under the close guidance of experienced journalists serving as fellowship editors and mentors. These stories are published or broadcast by national media outlets, giving voice to critical issues that might otherwise remain unexamined. Fellows are encouraged to investigate

specific cases of violence against journalists, particularly where impunity has prevailed, bringing much-needed attention to these injustices.

By supporting in-depth reporting on media safety, the PPF Media Safety Fellowship plays a critical role in holding power to account and advocating for a safer environment for journalists. It not only enhances the professional capacity of individual reporters but also contributes to a broader culture of accountability and transparency. As the fellowship continues to grow, it stands as a testament to the resilience of journalism and the ongoing struggle for freedom of expression in Pakistan.

Rural Media Support Program: Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide

PPF's latest initiative, the Rural Media Support Program, addresses the systemic neglect of journalists working outside major cities. This effort provides tailored training for smaller newsroom setups, bringing digital tools and professional standards to reporters in Pakistan's peri-urban and rural areas. The program combats professional isolation through mentorship networks that connect rural journalists with urban peers, while small grants enable community-focused reporting on undercovered issues.

Other Fellowships, Training, and Activities

Other fellowship programs included the Inclusive Election Reporting Fellowship in Pakistan, which aimed to enhance minority representation and amplify their voices in the 2024 general elections. This fellowship project aimed to support local reporters, including women citizen reporters and bloggers, to produce factual and conflict-sensitive multimedia reports addressing the needs of minorities, especially women, and speaking truth to power in the aftermath of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Pakistan.

Apart from its fellowship programs, PPF organizes specialized training sessions on critical issues like ethical journalism, holistic safety, and combating misinformation. These workshops are designed to equip journalists across Pakistan with practical skills to navigate the country's challenging media landscape while upholding professional standards.

PPF's commitment extends beyond just advocating for media safety laws; the organization continuously conducts awareness-building training sessions about these legal protections. Through interactive workshops, jour-

nalists learn how to practically utilize the federal and provincial journalist protection laws in their daily work. PPF brings together legal experts, senior journalists and policymakers to explain the provisions of these laws and demonstrate how reporters can invoke them when facing threats.

The ethical journalism trainings focus on maintaining accuracy and balance while reporting on sensitive issues. Participants learn verification techniques to counter misinformation and strategies for responsible reporting on conflicts or communal tensions. These sessions emphasize the importance of fact-checking before publication and the ethical considerations that arise when covering vulnerable groups.

For holistic safety, PPF takes a comprehensive approach that addresses physical, digital, and psychological risks. Workshops cover a range of topics, including secure communication methods, risk assessment, trauma awareness, and stress management techniques. Journalists participate in situational awareness drills and learn emergency protocols tailored to various threat scenarios they may encounter in the field.

Recognizing the growing challenge of misinformation, PPF organized sessions on identifying and countering false narratives. These trainings equip journalists with digital verification tools to detect manipulated content and deepfakes.¹⁵ Participants learn investigation techniques to trace the origins of viral claims and strategies for debunking misinformation without amplifying it.



Professor Dr. Tauseef Ahmed Khan, Member of the Sindh Commission for the Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners, addresses participants at PPF's session on the effective use of journalist safety laws, held on International Women's Day, 8 March 2024.



Participants engage in a group activity during the Pakistan Press Foundation's Holistic Safety Training Workshop 2024, held in Karachi.



Trainer Mubasher Bukhari leads a session with the twelfth batch of participants in PPF's "Promoting Investigative Journalism in Pakistan" workshop, held in Karachi on 5-7 May 2023.



A participant sharing her insights during a Pakistan Press Foundation training workshop for the fifth cycle of media safety fellows, held in Karachi on 19-21 March 2023.



Former IGP Sindh Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam leads a session during the two-day “Inclusive Election Reporting in Pakistan” workshop on safety and security, organized by PPF on 15–16 October 2023.



Commemorating International Women's Day in March 2024, PPF, with the support of UNESCO, organized a seminar to discuss the effective implementation of the Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act 2021 with a focus on safety challenges faced by women in the media.

Additionally, PPF places special emphasis on training journalists about the effective use of Right to Information (RTI) laws as a powerful tool for investigative reporting. Through hands-on workshops, media professionals learn how to file precise RTI applications to access crucial government documents and data that can uncover stories of public interest.

These RTI training sessions provide journalists with practical templates and step-by-step guidance on navigating bureaucratic systems. Participants learn strategies to frame their information requests in ways that maximize the chances of receiving meaningful responses, while also understanding the legal recourse available when authorities deny information.

PPF also educates journalists about the relationship between RTI laws and other press freedom safeguards. Sessions highlight how access to information complements constitutional protections for free expression and how reporters can use RTI findings to support their cases when facing legal harassment over their work.

Through these ongoing training initiatives, PPF ensures that journalists across Pakistan - from major cities to remote regions - have access to continuous professional development. PPF adapts its workshops to address emerging challenges while reinforcing core journalism values, creating a more resilient and responsible media ecosystem in the country.

PPF was pivotal in enacting the Sindh Protection of Journalists and Other Media Practitioners Act 2021 and the national law, Protection of Journalists and Media Professional Act 2021. This result was achieved through lobbying



Trainer and RTI activist Dr. Raza Ali Gardezi conducts a session for participants of the three-day capacity-building workshop on media safety and investigative reporting, held on 26-27 December 2024 in Karachi.

with the President, federal and provincial ministers, senators, and members of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies. PPF also arranged consultations with key stakeholders to gain their input on the draft laws so that the input shared with senators, ministers and assembly members was based on multiple perspectives. This process involved engagement with different lawmakers.

PPF established a Media Safety Laws Help Desk in April 2025 to guide journalists through the complaint-filing processes under Sindh and federal media-safety legislation. Through published guidelines and one-on-one assistance, the Help Desk clarifies procedures for invoking legal protections

Conclusion

PPF continues to support the capacity-building of journalists with a goal of keeping pace with changing circumstances regarding media safety and free expression as well as changes in the media landscape. As new technologies emerge and new challenges present themselves, PPF aims to stay on the pulse of change so that activities support the growth and capacity-building of media professionals keeping in mind the ground realities.

Endnotes

1 Intimidation on All Fronts: Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan, https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/intimidation-on-all-fronts-press-freedom-and-media-safety-in-pakistan/?fbclid=IwY2xjawKHnzRleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFQTUpwbzBvRoxSMW4wUlJUAR61bGtdUga5yUrDSZJpf-O-6g6exAHUUe-ONtrnd8wo1c_cvY1uflWpeHjXpsw_aem_CNytVovdOy1RviEcBgcTfg.

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10 PPF Research Team, <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/journalist-latif-baloch-killed-in-awaran-balochistan-ppf-calls-for-investigation-to-ascertain-the-reasons-for-the-murder/>.

11 PPF Research Team, <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/neo-news-team-assaulted-by-lawyers-during-quetta-bar-association-protest/>.

12 *Pakistani Journalism Under Pressure In A Tightly Restricted Political Environment, Safety Threats and Internet Shutdowns — Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan in 2024*, <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Pakistani-Journalism-Under-Pressure-In-A-Tightly-Restricted-Political-Environment-Safety-Threats-and-Internet-Shutdowns-PPF-Annual-Report-on-Press-Freedom-and-Media-Safety-in-Pakistan-in-2024.pdf>.

13 *Intimidation on All Fronts: Press Freedom and Media Safety in Pakistan*, <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/intimidation-on-all-fronts-press-freedom-and-media-safety-in-pakistan/>.

14 On International Women's Day, PPF Calls For an Urgent Need to Address the Patterns of Threats and Harassment Against Women in the Media in Pakistan, 7 March 2025, PPF Research Team, <https://pakistanpressfoundation.org/on-inter->

national-womens-day-ppf-calls-for-an-urgent-need-to-address-the-patterns-of-threats-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-media-in-pakistan/.

¹⁵ Deepfakes, in essence, are synthetic media (typically video or audio) created by Artificial Intelligence (AI) models to mimic real people's faces, voices, or movements with eerie realism. See *What Are Deepfakes?*, Sentinel One, www.sentinelone.com/cybersecurity-101/cybersecurity/deepfakes/.

Sekisui House Group: Corporate Human Rights Education Program*

Sekisui House Group

Since its founding in 1960, Sekisui House has been dedicated to providing people with high-quality homes that protect lives and property in countries like Japan where earthquakes and natural disasters are common. In line with the belief that the customer always comes first and the utilization of the design-build system, we work to fulfill this mission, building deep bonds not only with our business partners but also with our partner companies as “a community with a common destiny.”

Backed by this history and with an awareness that each and every human being is precious and irreplaceable, our foremost desire is to secure the happiness of others and make their joy our own. From this, our Corporate Philosophy of love of humanity was born.

Yoshihiro Nakai, Representative Director of the Board
President, Executive Officer, CEO, July 2024

Human Rights Milestones

The human rights program of Sekisui House Group (The Group) has been developing since the establishment of its Human Rights Protection and Promotion Committee in 1980. From then on, the Sekisui House Group achieved several human rights milestones:

- 1980 - Human Rights Protection Promotion Committee established - Human rights protection training for employees introduced (provided annually thereafter)

*This is an edited excerpt of the Human Rights Report, July 2024, of the Sekisui House Group (www.sekisuihouse.co.jp/library/english/company/sustainable/2024/human_rights_report2024_en.pdf).

- 1999 - Sexual Harassment Hotline launched
- 2003 - Human Rights Promotion Office, an entity dedicated to dealing with human rights issues, established within the Personnel Department
- 2006 - Human Rights Promotion Office moved into the Legal Department and reorganized into the Human Relations Office. The Company created the Human Relations Training textbook (distributed annually thereafter)
- 2008 - Sexual and power harassment consultation service set up at all business sites, including at all Group companies (Training for managers conducted annually thereafter)
- 2014 - Sexual Harassment Hotline renamed to Sexual and Power Harassment Hotline
- 2020 - Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy adopted and publicized
 - Full scale operation of human rights due diligence launched
 - Sekisui House Global Helpline established
- 2021 - Human Rights Due Diligence Meetings established (within the Social Improvement Subcommittee)
 - Human rights risk map created (reviewed annually)
- 2023 - Human Relations Office reorganized into the Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office.

Collaboration with Major External Organizations

Following the signing of the Ten Principles in the four fields of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption stated in the United Nations Global Compact in 2018, the Group joined two subcommittees, human rights due diligence (HRDD) and human rights education, of the Global Compact Network Japan (GCNJ), a local network based in Japan.

The Group also collaborates with related organizations that work on various human rights issues, including the Buraku (a marginalized community) issue, and continuously collect information to utilize for in-house education and training.

It collaborates with several organizations on human rights issues:

- Global Compact Network Japan

- The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute
- The Corporate Federation for Dowa and Human Rights Issue, Osaka
- Association for Fair Employment and Human Rights Education
- Osaka City Corporate Human Rights Promotion Council
- NPO Multi-Ethnic ‘Human Rights Education’ Center for Pro-existence
- Cuore C Cube Co., Ltd.
- NPO Nijiuro Diversity.

Since 2000, the Group has been working with Together, a certified non-profit, and uses SELP¹ products as a way of supporting the independence and social participation of persons with disabilities.

Human Rights Policy

In April 2020, the Group adopted and announced the Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy (Human Rights Policy). The Human Rights Policy was formulated with the advice of outside experts and approved by the Board of Directors of the company.

The Human Rights Policy respects international norms, such as the International Bill of Human Rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and supports the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact.

In order to fulfill its social responsibilities, the Group stated that it would respect the human rights of all stakeholders who might be affected by its business activities, including those in the supply chain. Based on the Group’s Corporate Philosophy, the Human Rights Policy complements and clarifies the principle of “Respect for human rights” outlined in its Corporate Code of Conduct.

All officers and employees (including temporary, part-time and fixed-term employees) of the Group must comply with the Human Rights Policy. The Group promotes awareness of the policy among all officers and employees through training and other measures. It also published the policy on its website, and expected all partner building contractors, suppliers and other business partners to understand and support its policies and initiatives that promote respect for human rights. Moreover, it created a website as online

information sharing platform for major suppliers and is working to ensure their compliance.

See Annex for the full text of the Human Rights Policy.

Policy Regarding Prohibition of Discrimination

As stated in the Human Rights Policy, the Group does not tolerate any form of discrimination. The Sekisui House Group Corporate Ethics Guidelines define the standards of corporate ethics that the company and its officers and employees must comply with in pursuing the corporate activities of each Group company. The Group also adopted the following policy on the respect for human rights and prohibition of discrimination:²

5-1 Respect [for] Human Rights and Prohibition of Discrimination

Consistently strive to maintain a healthy workplace environment, respect the human rights of each person and do not act in any way that could lead to discrimination. Do not discriminate in hiring and treatment of employees. Furthermore, ensure that other persons are prevented from engaging in discriminatory behavior.

1. Do not engage in any form of unreasonable discrimination based on birth, nationality, race, ethnicity, beliefs, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disabilities, interests, educational background, family and others.

2. Do not engage in acts which violate human rights through violence, derision, slander, libel, forced labor through threats, bullying, or spread of rumors.

a. Policy on prevention of child labor and forced labor

As stipulated in the Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy, the Group does not tolerate any form of forced or compulsory labor or child labor. It does not tolerate any involvement in human trafficking or any involvement with companies or production regions where such involvement has been identified through transactions.

It observes the legal minimum working ages of the countries where it operates and verifies the ages of applicants when hiring. Its Corporate Social

Responsibility Procurement Guidelines, which are applied primarily to its main suppliers, prohibit discrimination based on nationality or race, inhumane treatment, forced or compulsory labor and child labor, and require the appropriate management of employee health and safety. The following is stipulated in the Corporate Ethics Guidelines:

2-7 Compliance with Laws and Regulations Related to Importing and Exporting

(3) Do not handle products or raw materials which were produced, manufactured, or transported under conditions which violate human rights, including child labor or forced labor.

b. Consideration of human rights in selecting partners in new businesses and developments

The Group communicates to business partners its Corporate Philosophy and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) management, a major prerequisite when selecting new partners. Its Corporate Philosophy also lays out the idea that “whether developing a product, creating an environment or choosing to enter into a new business, we should always ask ourselves whether this is helpful to the customer and if it contributes to society,” defining this practice as exercising “love of humanity.”

c. Dialogue with employees on freedom of association and respect for collective bargaining rights

As stated in the Human Rights Policy, all Group companies respect freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The Group shall comply with labor-related laws and labor-management agreements, and work to build constructive relationships through sincere dialogue and negotiations with 100 percent of employees, including workers with shorter working hours, or their selected representatives.

d. Response policy for non-compliance with labor standards

All allegations related to labor standards within the Sekisui House Group are dealt with by the relevant departments. When an allegation regarding working hours is made, the company investigates the worksite

where the allegation occurred and takes measures, such as providing guidance on improving work efficiency.

Human Rights Policy Formulation Process

Understanding human rights issues

The Group collects information on human rights issues based on such international norms as the International Bill of Human Rights, ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Since 2019, it has participated in seminars with other signatories to the United Nations Global Compact and has evaluated the company's human rights issues based on feedback from experts and other companies and organizations. Internally, it ensures a full understanding of the impact of these issues on the Group by holding interviews with participants from relevant departments, including Human Resources, General Affairs, Construction, Diversity, Real Estate, Production, Information Technology (IT) and Legal.

Formulation of an action plan

After gaining an understanding of human rights, the Social Improvement Subcommittee, operating under the ESG Promotion Committee, formulated an action plan and system for promoting human rights due diligence within the Group. The adoption of a Human Rights Policy was also included in this plan.

Announcement of Human Rights Policy

In April 2020, with approval from the Board of Directors, the Group announced the Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy. When formulating the Human Rights Policy, the Group made sure to reflect the values it cherished since its founding while considering the advice of experts.

These values include building strong relationships with partner building constructors, striving to be a corporation that does not permit any discrimination or harassment, promoting diversity and more.

Human Rights Issues identified by the Group

The Group identified important human rights issues that were discussed during the Human Rights Due Diligence Meeting attended by representa-

tives of different company departments.³ The Human Rights Due Diligence Meeting identified several human rights issues:

1. Workplace harassment
2. Construction site health and safety
3. Labor issues in the supply chain
4. Employment of foreign workers at construction sites.

Promotion Framework for Respecting Human Rights

As stipulated in the Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy, Sekisui House's Board of Directors oversees compliance of the Human Rights Policy and related initiatives. Under the Board of Directors, the Group developed the Group-wide promotion framework for respecting human rights through the cooperative efforts of various in-house bodies, including Management Meetings, the ESG Promotion Committee and the Risk Management Committee.

The ESG Promotion Committee handles the creation of frameworks. As the consultative body of the Board of Directors, the ESG Promotion Committee facilitates the exchange of opinions regarding issues and the progress of initiatives. In addition to the Directors of the Board and executive officers, the Committee includes at least two external members with special expertise. Meetings are generally held once every three months. The Committee is divided into three subcommittees: the Environmental Subcommittee, the Social Improvement Subcommittee, and the Governance Subcommittee. From these, the Social Improvement Subcommittee meets to determine which issues are urgent for the Group and its policies related to human rights. The Social Improvement Subcommittee also holds the Human Rights Due Diligence Meeting (secretariat: Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office, Legal Department), which is attended by multiple related divisions, taking charge of the Group's approach to various human rights issues and sharing information collaboratively to ensure the promotion of human rights.

The Risk Management Committee, acting as a consultative body to the Board of Directors, aims to develop appropriate risk management systems and ensure their effective operation, while also receiving regular reports regarding measures promoting human rights. Committee members, such

as the directors of the Board and executive officers, debate and strategize around themes related to human rights. These nominally relate to labor and health, harassment and occupational accidents from the point of view of risk management. In addition, the Risk Management Committee creates a human rights risk map to monitor the entire Group, and manages risks in accordance with it.

As a rule, when a human rights-related problem occurs in a region where the Group does business or an issue is discovered in the process of carrying out human rights due diligence, the Legal Department's Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office responds, working cooperatively with every related department, and reports the results to the Risk Management Committee.

Continuous Human Rights Training for Employees

The Group strives to prevent actions that violate human rights, including all types of harassment, by holding continuous training toward this purpose. Several training programs are available for all types of employees and officials, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Training programs

Training programs	Target
Management training	General Managers, Chief Managers, etc.
Training for Human Relations Promotion Officers	Promotion leaders (managers, etc.)
Human Relations Training for all employees	All employees
Introductory training	
External training (Buraku Liberation and Race Summer Course etc.)	General Managers, Chief Managers, etc.

Training for Human Relations Promotion Officers

Human Relations Training for Promotion Leaders is aimed at internally fostering leaders who promote business activities that are respectful of human rights. Taking a broader view of human rights issues, this training includes human resource development and management issues as themes. At the same time, in terms of corporate risk management, the training also focuses

on the acquisition of strategies and skills for eliminating risk and on enhancing knowledge and ethics.

For the FY2023 Training for promotion leaders (2 hours a year), the topics were the following:

- Business and human rights: finding meaningful and dignified work;
- Effective communication for improving the workplace environment.

Human Relations Training for All Employees

Training is provided every year to all employees in the Group. To raise awareness of human rights issues and encourage employees to take ownership of such issues as they relate to their jobs, the training is focused on dialogue between employees. The Human Relations Training programs are held for employees every year, aiming to create a welcoming, comfortable workplace environment based on the following concepts:

- Improve knowledge and moral awareness about various issues (preventing sexual harassment and the abuse of authority, labor management, mental health, etc.) stipulated in the Group's Corporate Ethics Guidelines;
- Think about ways to improve communication to create a free and open workplace culture by truly understanding ourselves and by accepting ourselves and others (acceptance of diversity);
- Through internal case studies, employees aim to relate human rights issues to themselves more closely, respect each other, and attain the insight required to always be aware of and practice the "love of humanity" that underlies the Corporate Philosophy of the Group.

Training manuals are distributed to temporary, part-time, and fixed-term employees as well, and all employees are encouraged to attend the training. Some Group companies hold their own equivalent training.

The training content is developed internally on an annual basis to reflect various reports and internal issues discovered by the Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office staff during their day-to-day management of the hotline. Training mainly consists of case studies, with leaders

at each workplace taking on the role of instructor. It is conducted either in person or through web conferences, rather than as e-learning. The Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office provides leaders with guidance on communicating with their teams more effectively and how to use their own words with greater impact.

For the FY2023 Training for all employees (3 hours a year), the topics were the following:

- A society where those with and without disabilities can live together;
- Harassment and its connection to external stakeholders.

Regarding issues relating to persons with disabilities, the theme for the training in 2016 was “Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and entailed the study of social models involving persons with disabilities and reasonable accommodation for them.

In 2023, the themes relating to persons with disabilities were “From Diversity and Inclusion to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” and “A Society Where Persons with and without Disabilities Can Live Together,” which emphasized learning how to put reasonable accommodation into practice and provided the chance to imagine a world where we could all live together.

Moreover, during instructor guidance, participants learned how to create a harassment-free workplace in a lecture called “Developing Human Resources in the Era of vUCA [volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity],” which was given by an outside expert.

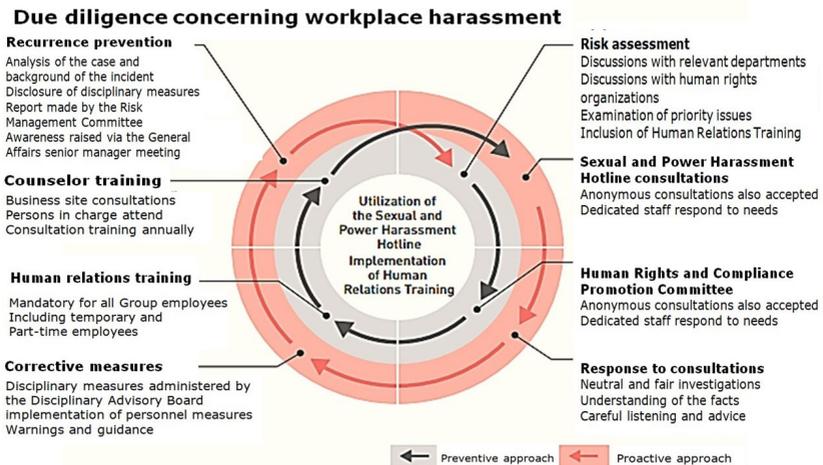


Figure 1. Due diligence concerning workplace harassment.

The Group uses information it receives during consultations in dialogues with its employees and others. The information collected and analyzed is also used as training themes and case studies in training materials.

Sexual and Power Harassment in the Workplace

There are consultation personnel (one male and one female) assigned to serve as consultation personnel (seven hundred seventy people in total as of February 2024) across all (100 percent) of the business sites in Japan, including at the Group companies. Training sessions are held every year for these consultation personnel to improve their skills in handling inquiries and strengthen cooperation with the Human Rights and Compliance Promotion Office. All employees are made aware that consultation personnel are stationed at all business sites through the Company intranet, human relations training manuals and posters.

Table 2 below shows specific training on human rights for sexual and power harassment consultation personnel.

Table 2. Training for consultation personnel

Training activity	Target
Consultation personnel training course	Newly appointed personnel or personnel who have not attended past training courses
Consultation personnel skill improvement training	Personnel who have taken the training course and continue to hold the positions at the consultation counter

Rank-based training

In addition to Human Relations Training, the Sekisui House Group provides rank-based training to communicate the importance of preventing harassment and improving the workplace environment to employees recently appointed to various managerial positions, including chief managers.

Efforts to increase awareness through human rights slogans

Each year, the Group solicits human rights slogans from all its employees and their families for Human Rights Week, 4-10 December. The most outstanding submissions are displayed along with five excellent submissions at business locations nationwide.

External training

The chief managers, deputy technology managers, and managerial employees selected from the Group's factories and Group companies nationwide attend the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Summer Course held every August. In FY2019, before participation was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cumulative number of attendees reached 1,260.

The Group strives to improve its corporate value while coordinating with related organizations working on various human rights issues, such as *Buraku* (marginalized communities) issues. It continuously collects information through participation in seminars and workshops sponsored by related organizations and through subscription to publications that contribute to human rights promotion in order to raise awareness among employees and for utilization in in-house training.

Training to Address LGBTQ+ Issues

The Group adopted several LGBTQ+ related initiatives in its real estate business. It aims to ensure LGBTQ+ friendly service when soliciting tenants for rental housing.

In May 2022, the Group held training for its employees and those of its member stores with the aim of ensuring LGBTQ+ friendly customer service. This training, with over three thousand participants, included the viewing of training videos.

Since 1 August 2022, the Group has taken the following actions to help eliminate the particular stresses LGBTQ+ individuals face when looking for and moving into homes and thereby send a message of its support:

1. To enhance understanding of LGBTQ+ people and increase customer satisfaction, training for the Group's employees and member stores is regularly held;
2. Adoption of diversity-minded changes to paper and electronic applications and rental agreements, such as the deletion of the gender column and the addition of "partner" to the relationship column.

In recognition of these efforts, the Sekisui House Group became the first major housing manufacturer to receive the Gold certification in the

PRIDE Index for six consecutive years. The PRIDE Index is Japan's first index for evaluating corporate efforts concerning the LGBTQ+ community. It was formulated in 2016 by a private organization called work with Pride, with the objective of creating a workplace where sexual minorities such as LGBTQ+ people can work with pride.

Furthermore, for two years in a row starting in 2022, the Sekisui House Group acquired the Rainbow Certification, which was newly established in 2021 to accompany the existing PRIDE Index. The certification recognizes companies who make medium- to long-term commitments to build communities and workplaces where LGBTQ+ people can work openly.

Concluding Remarks

Again from Chief Executive Officer of Sekisui House Group, Yoshihiro Nakai:

Achieving this global vision [of love of humanity] and solving management issues involves spreading the spirit of our Corporate Philosophy of love of humanity across the world. We believe that this is the only way to fulfill our responsibility of respecting global human rights.

Endnotes

- 1 SELP products are made by people with disabilities at welfare centers as part of rehabilitation or vocational training to encourage their participation in society.
- 2 See full text of Sekisui House Group Corporate Ethics Guidelines in this link, www.sekisuihouse.co.jp/library/english/company/info/philosophy/Sekisui_House_Group_Corporate_Ethics_Guidelines.pdf.
- 3 They are the following: Legal Department, Human Resources and General Affairs Department, Procurement Department, Construction Headquarters, Diversity and Inclusion Promotion Department, ESG Management Promotion Headquarters, International Business Department, Sekisui House Construction Business Headquarters.

Annex

Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy

The Sekisui House Group believes that its mission is to continue to provide safe, secure, and healthy housing and services that aim to contribute to a sustainable society.

In order to achieve our vision of “Making Home the Happiest Place in the World”, we strongly hope to create happiness for all stakeholders through our various businesses. We express our commitment to fulfill our responsibility to respect human rights by practicing “love of humanity”, which is a fundamental principle of our Corporate Philosophy.

Based on our Corporate Philosophy and Code of Conduct, the Sekisui House Group Human Rights Policy complements and clarifies the “Respect for Human Rights”, which is one of the principles outlined in our Corporate Conduct Guidelines.

This policy applies to all officers and employees of the Sekisui House Group. We also expect our business partners, including building contractor partners and suppliers, to understand and support this policy.

The Board of Directors of Sekisui House, Ltd. shall supervise compliance with this policy and its implementation.

Respect for Internationally Recognized Standards

We are committed to respecting human rights as stipulated in the International Bill of Human Rights (*1) and the ILO (International Labour Organization) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (*2). We are a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact and we support its ten principles.

We strictly prohibit any form of forced labor and child labor.

We shall continue to promote the creation of a corporate structure with zero tolerance for any discrimination or harassment based on birth, nationality, race, ethnicity, beliefs, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disabilities, preference, educational background, family or any other ground. We also strive to maintain a healthy working environment without discrimination in employment or treatment of employees.

We respect the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. We comply with labor-related laws and regulations and observe labor-management agreements. We are committed to engaging with employees or their representatives in good faith through dialogue and consultations and continuously work to build constructive relations.

We comply with national and regional laws and regulations in countries and regions where we operate. Where national and regional laws and regulations conflict with international human rights standards, we seek ways to honor the principles of internationally recognized human rights while complying with national and regional laws and regulations.

Implementation of human rights due diligence

In line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (*3), we are committed to integrating human rights due diligence processes in our business activities in order to identify negative impacts on human rights and continuously work to prevent and mitigate such impacts.

We believe that the perspective of affected stakeholders is critical to understand human rights issues. We are committed to engaging in dialogues with relevant stakeholders in order to appropriately address human rights issues associated with our business.

If we identify that we have caused or contributed to negative impacts on human rights, we strive to remediate such impacts by appropriate means.

Diversity Initiatives

We shall promote the creation of a working environment with free and open communication, where people who work together and every employee recognize and make the most of each other's diversity, values and working styles. We aim to build an organizational culture that fosters innovation.

Awareness Raising and Training

We shall continue to provide education and training necessary for all Group officers and employees to implement this policy.

Grievance Mechanisms

We have in place the following complaint reporting channels to identify concerns and potential negative impacts on human rights associated with our business activities. The use of the mechanisms is strictly kept confidential and the users are protected from any detrimental treatment as a consequence of reporting issues.

- Internal consultation services for employees regarding harassment, human rights abuses, and issues related to workplace environment
- Contact points for stakeholders affected by our business activities that

enable consultation regarding negative impacts on human rights.

We shall investigate and respond to reports made through the mechanisms and take remedial measures as necessary.

We continuously seek to optimize our grievance mechanisms in order to respond appropriately to any potential negative impact on human rights associated with our business activities.

Disclosure

We will regularly disclose our efforts to respect human rights as outlined in this policy through our website and other means of communication.

Effective on April 1, 2020

Approved by the Board of Directors of Sekisui House, Ltd.

* 1. The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is widely regarded as the fundamental human rights framework by the international community.

* 2. The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted by the ILO sets out the following four categories as the minimum labor standard to be observed: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

* 3. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the United Nations Human Rights Council, is the authoritative global standard for states and businesses to prevent and address the risk of adverse impact on human rights linked to business activity.

Rights Education Revamped

Trinee A.

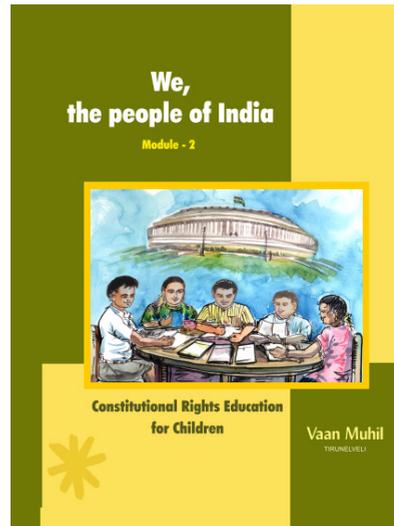
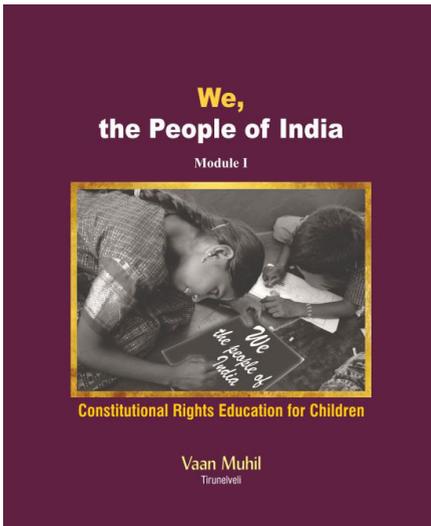
THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (IHRE) was set up as a program unit of People's Watch, Tamil Nadu in 1997 for just nine schools as an experimental measure.¹ The program was confined to Tamil Nadu from 1997 to 2005, and slowly grew into a larger program diffusing into other states of India. After some more years, IHRE covered 13,268 schools involving 16,000 teachers educating 2,600,000 children across twenty-two states. In Tamil Nadu alone, human rights education was offered in about three hundred Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes special schools run by the Government of Tamil Nadu, and about two hundred fifty aided and private schools. In 2016, IHRE and TNSSA jointly carried out a special program in the name of "Girl Children Rights Education in Government Schools;" involving 110,000 students in 10,000 schools with 11,000 teachers.

Human rights education talks about a way of life that is inherent and not just ideal. Therefore, it cannot be taught as a subject among other subjects using only analytical teaching. Human rights education needs to be a child-centred education, respecting the child's role as a constructor of knowledge rather than treating the child as a passive recipient of information. Since the IHRE expanded from being an experimental measure to a full-fledged initiative with a huge population of students garnered, the search for an appropriate pedagogy proved to be endless, one that constantly evolved while delving deeper into the mission of imparting human rights education. Every lesson was introduced by way of stories, dialogues, historical incidents, experiences, media reports of everyday violations of human dignity and so on. But at the pinnacle of its implementation, the IHRE came to an end owing to the unfortunate circumstance of lack of funds to continue induced by the reprisals on People's Watch, Tamil Nadu by the Government of India which revoked the organization's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) license that allowed for funding to be received from outside the country.

Transition in Way of Reinterpretation

Lessons learned in life are to be taken and polished into useful shoes that fit the different occasions the feet demand. In the changing political climate of India where human rights was slowly being seen as an anti-government sentiment—in essence, standing up for human rights is expressing dissent to the government—the State started a crackdown on dissenting voices in order to protect its interests and safeguard itself from future compartmentalization.

The Age of Enlightenment in France led to the French Revolution in simultaneity with the Scientific Revolution. The Age of Reason is not merely enlightenment—that carried much significance on analytical thinking—but more importantly it taught us the underlying principle of questioning. This stems from the thirst to make things clear in a way that deduces the queries into slices of life lessons that everybody should be smart enough to understand and realize. Therefore, human rights education in schools not only teaches what rights are. It teaches the value of oneself, the truth of society and its invariably weak and piteous structure of weary impunity that ironically transpires to protect the structure while breaking it down simultaneously. That is the beauty of human institutions as we are flawed in various ways, but regardless of our flaws, the kind truth is that, we rise and fall be-



Constitutional Rights Education books

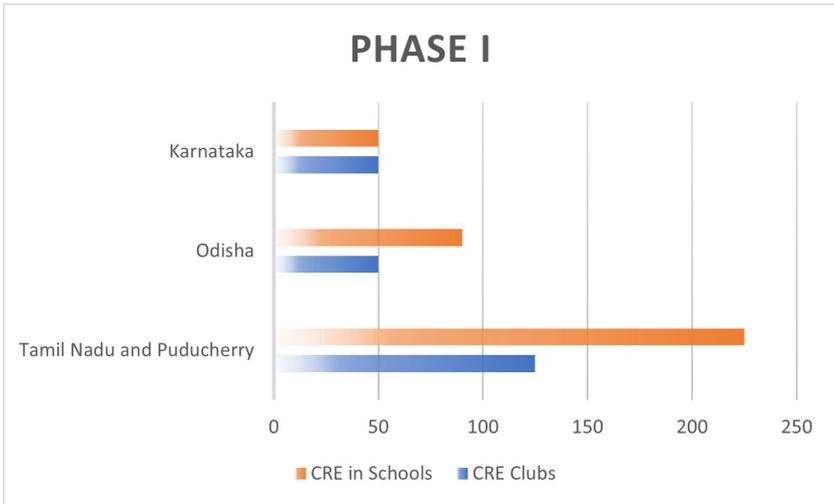
cause of those flaws. Therefore, the flaws are not only there to put us down, but also to lift us up. In this regard, the Constitutional Rights Education (CRE) Program was conceived in 2021 and started as a program of another civil society organization, namely, Vaan Muhil Trust. Fundamental rights, laid down in Part III of the Constitution of India, are human rights with a different title. Nonetheless, as pointed out, lessons learned lead to different polishes for different occasions. In the CRE Program, it is not only the book covers that are different but also the content, structure and methodology. This was never conceived to be a continuation of the earlier initiative but a new program that was built afresh with added vigor and strength in order that it would suit the changing times and challenges faced across the country.

The CRE books were first made colourful. This subtle change is no different than adding some salt to food as the children with their curious brains are more drawn towards such colourful blast of shades that makes them curious enough to explore what is inside. The children cannot be merely subjected to a closet of books with similar themes and attractions. They need to be given the choice and an avenue to understand that choice. To achieve this, the CRE Program not only focused on schools but also opened centers in communities and called them Constitutional Rights Education Clubs (CRE Clubs). These clubs welcomed a range of students, and allowed the children to mingle and have fun while playing and learning their constitutional rights. The target is mainly those from the marginalized and excluded. Now, if human rights are supposed to be imbibed by everyone, focusing only on the marginalized would feel hypocritical. However, the idea of human rights being propagated is that of the freedom one possesses that assigns the “Right” irrespective of any worldly categorizations. Hence, CRE mainly focuses on materials that talk about how to attain the highest regard that one is entitled to as a birth right - a distant yet intimate discourse for the marginalized and excluded. This is fundamental and natural in conception because this idea alone gives rise to an understanding about the image of human rights as an integral part of the structure of societal discourse we operate in.

The CRE Program was officially launched in January 2021. Due to COVID-19 measures, the schools were closed for the most part of the year. Phase I implementation occurred in these states:

- Tamil Nadu and Puducherry - CRE was introduced in around two hundred twenty schools and one hundred twenty-five CRE Clubs were formed;
- Karnataka - CRE was introduced in around fifty schools and fifty CRE Clubs were formed;
- Odisha - CRE was introduced in around ninety schools and fifty CRE Clubs were formed.

Table 1. Phase I implementation of the CRE Program



Two Modules (Module I & II) were developed titled “We, The People of India” inspired from the Constitution of India. Both modules carry enriching illustrations, case studies, interactive exercises and stories that aim to impart a wholesome sense of human rights. Two dimensions exist– Human Rights in Education and Human Rights through Education. Taking the latter into account, a separate Module titled *Vaandugal Payanam* (translated in English as “the Journey of energetic youngsters”) was introduced exclusively for CRE Clubs and contains much more practical and interactive exercises and engagements for students to participate in, given the freedom of being outside the school. This module provides students various opportunities of having participatory education involving activities and social engagements.

Recognizing the pertinence of digitalization, Module I was crafted into a visually appealing and interactive resource in an audio-visual format. These videos prove to be adept to the evolving age of education through digital means. This initiative has appealed to a lot of students as it is simple, fun, interactive and acts as a break from the traditional pen & paper learning in the classroom.

As the whole conception of the Module is student-centric, the idea of not limiting it to the books but also to the facets of interaction was envisioned. A few by-laws were noted exclusively for the CRE Clubs since the school had its own institutional structure that cannot be changed. In CRE Clubs, the by-laws gave a structure and direction to uphold. Some of which include students heading the CRE Club as coordinators. In the event of more than one student volunteering, elections are held. The by-laws allow election of co-coordinators with defined duties and responsibilities. This induces a sense of engagement and responsibility that furthers the students' interest in learning and actively participating.

This approach of directly engaging with the community without the institutional fabric of schools where the societal traits are absent, opens a new avenue of challenge and reach because of the bias present. To be specific, these CRE Clubs opened in different communities (Scheduled Caste communities, Scheduled Tribe communities, Fishing communities, Denotified Tribes, Urban Poor, victims of Forced Eviction) and have children from that community coming in with their own habits and sensitivities. Therefore, each club becomes different and the imparting of CRE takes different shapes tailored to each of them individually. Before opening a CRE Club, members of the community (children and adults alike) are consulted and introduced to the idea of CRE. The general habits and societal traits prevalent in the community are studied, and on the successful opening of a CRE Club, an audit is done using means of interaction and questionnaire distributed to the students to understand their knowledge level, skills and general attitude. This informs the tailoring of human rights education suitable to the particular community.

One solid example would be the Denotified Tribes (DNTs) Community like Kal Oddars. The colonial rule in India left with the enactment of a law - the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) – in 1871 that labelled the entire community as “criminal tribes” – people who are born criminals or will likely become criminals. Although, the independent Indian Government repealed the

Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in 1952, the stigma of being “criminals” still persists among these communities. The everyday reality of police surveillance and attitude towards these communities has not changed in any part of the country. The children growing up with the birthmark of being “criminals” need to be addressed through CRE. Therefore, in these particular communities, unlike others, the idea of “birth right” relating to human rights rather than “criminalization” needs to be stressed. The children of these communities have to be exposed to the freedom of thought and freedom of ambition.

The prevalence of caste sensibilities needs to be addressed within the CRE Clubs. In schools, this is fairly eradicated, but in communities (i.e., society) it is not. Therefore, CRE Club as an idea takes shape in public community halls, which are present in the midst of communities, and need to be shielded from caste sensibilities. In this regard, each child present in a CRE Club is asked to interact and mingle with all others present irrespective of caste or sex.

In schools, the problems of societal sensibilities are evicted but other problems arise since it is an institution having bureaucratic branches within its structure. Nobody denies the need for a CRE Program in educational institutions. However, most teachers are conflicted when it comes to its concrete implementation. This is primarily because of the nature of the educational system and the customs relating to it. The traditional and modern educational systems do not or rather cannot get rid of rigid classroom settings. The idea of imparting education needs a scalable value to understand the extent of understanding, thereby, delegating a strict and confined system that is analytical. Human rights education cannot be confined to evaluating values laid down by the educational system since it relates less to knowledge accumulation and more to sensitization of life. It can only be evaluated in everyday settings through societal interactions and participation. This is the beauty of it. Yet, it is a complicated enigma to be merged with the educational system. Now, the question arises – though this may seem forced, how else can one impart these values to a child? The answer to this question cannot be a simple solution of adding it to an existing system or creating a new one in which it can be accommodated. Having said that, we need to change our lens by viewing the educational system through the eyes of the teachers. For teachers, the educational system levies a much stricter fidelity towards the curriculum set and the governing system in place. As a basic tenet of Freedom, i.e., all need to possess freedom for everyone to enjoy

it; even if one possesses it and the other does not, the freedom of the one who possesses it is curtailed. The freedom to learn for children can only be established if the freedom to teach for teachers is established. As a human rights idea, “freedom” is not so simple as to do whatever you want, but is about the flexibility of analyzing the right from the wrong and establishing a dialogue of negotiation to do what one thinks is right and what the system or society thinks is right. This dialogue is essential for teachers in order for them to operate outside the confines of generality and operate within a “student-centric” arena.

While the pertinence of CRE programs in schools was realized by officials in the School Education Department, they expressed hesitation in integrating it, given the additional burdens already placed on teachers. This is rationally undeniable, but the way to a solution would be to find an aperture in the schedule of the curriculum and make them use it for Constitutional Rights Education. One of the ways found was to introduce CRE Clubs in hostels in the state of Odisha. This blended the CRE Clubs and CRE Schools structure, and by doing so, garnered participation by hostel students with the cooperation of the Headmasters/Principals of the residential schools, and hostel wardens encouraging them to take forward this program in their hostels. In Odisha, fifty residential hostels have been engaging with CRE Club activities.

Drawing attention to the same thought, it was a new and unique revelation that having a proactive government and School Education Department is detrimental to the teachers. This irony persists in a way that is strange and flawed. In Tamil Nadu, the government has taken various initiatives to strengthen the educational fabric of the state. This has come at a cost of accountability and pro-activeness of the teachers. On the surface, this looks like a positive change, but deep down the teachers have been tearing apart as it leaves them suffocated. When approached to have Constitutional Rights Education in schools, they invariably deny the idea. The flaw in all this is that those proactive steps are demanded by the government without changing the existing system in which all operate. Further, a few instances of reports of external nuisance created in schools by a very miniscule range of NGOs/individuals have led to complete closure of outside influence in schools. This has led to almost no avenue of engagement with the government in taking up the CRE program, although lately things are slowly starting to change. As the political climate changes in India, some states are still immune to those

changing realities. Tamil Nadu is one of them and therefore there is still hope. Further, the diversity of India calls for the shaping of a contextual outlook. The Modules were first introduced in Tamil and then translated into English. On diffusion to other states, the state context and ideas were taken into account. The Karnataka and Odisha Module integrated local nuances and language to be taken forward to the students.

Although the CRE program is limited to school students and adolescents, it is also ambitious. College students are also engaged on special occasions and circumstances. Occasions include the 75th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights where college students were also engaged in addition to CRE Schools and Clubs in line with the anniversary theme of “Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All.” Circumstances include some colleges that allow such inclusions within their outreach centers. The ambition is further kept alive by placing certain advancements to ensure structural firmness of the project. The facilitators and teachers handling CRE programs are constantly and periodically subjected to trainings and feedbacks. The CRE Module I’s audio-visual format is a success and was well appreciated by the students. It would serve as a catalyst for furthering digitalization of CRE programs leading to interactive, widespread and possibly even remote dissemination of values. Lastly, the Modules are being upgraded regularly with



Members of the community discussing CRE program in a *Grama Sabha* meeting.



Children engaged in CRE activities.

the advice of advisory committees instituted for each state/Union Territory. In addition to these intimate steps, lobbying and advocacy to address the political climate is also being taken as one of the steps to ensure widening of the CRE program. A testament to this is the effective lobbying in calling for a CRE program in schools in the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly session.

While all rights violated are of equal significance, can one really choose in what order to address those violations? Human rights education is about pondering on the question of subjecting rationality and reason to circumstances in a way that allows for the element of morality and humaneness penetrating the callous human. This cannot be achieved in a classroom and certainly cannot be achieved if only taught about Fundamental Rights laid down in the Constitution. Over the course of implementation, since 2021, there have been numerous examples of children spearheading a human rights cause – children participating in *Grama Sabha* Meetings (local governance system in India) and questioning the resolutions taken in them; the idea of gender equality being addressed to the parents by the children themselves; the equality and oneness of all being promulgated by the children, etc. These have been predominantly realized in a number of CRE Clubs since the Module 'Vaandugal Payanam' includes visits to the society around them

while wearing a human rights lens. The students are asked to identify what is the reality, how it should function and how it is functioning. They then compare them with their own surroundings and jot down things that need to be changed or addressed in their surroundings. This list not only includes material objects but also values and freedoms. Sometimes, they even submit petitions in the *Grama Sabha* and there have been positive changes initiated owing to those petitions.

Therefore, the CRE Program is a wholesome account of human rights sensibilities that delivers values and understanding, not knowledge, in the form of interactions, stories, exercises and experiences.

Endnote

¹ See Henri Tiphagne, Experiment in Human Rights Education in Schools, *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, Volume II (1999), www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human_rights_education_in_asian_schools/section2/1999/03/experiment-in-human-rights-education-in-schools.html and Vasanthi Devi, Institute of Human Rights Education: India Experience, Schools, Volume X, (2007), www.hurights.or.jp/archives/pdf/asia-s-ed/v10/04Institute%20of%20HRE,%20India%20Experience-reduced.pdf.

Designing the Law in Nepal: An Experiment in Legal Awareness

Mariam Faruqi & Supriya Roychoudhury, iProbono

WHEN RIGHTS ARE AT RISK, preventive action is critical. Legal awareness bridges this gap between vulnerability and justice. To illustrate what the law can tangibly do to change a life, iProbono works with allies, partners, and members of impacted communities to develop practical resources that translate legal knowledge into actionable guidance.

iProbono first travelled to Nepal in 2018, only a few years after the country's new Constitution came into force in 2015. One of our interventions, a successful collaboration between practice and academia across borders, has taken the shape of "legal design," or the creative use of communications to promote knowledge of the law, to advance a woman's right to abortion.

Professor of Legal Education and Director of Legal Design at City University, Emily Allbon, has explained that

Working within legal design is always rewarding. Like teaching, the best bit is arguably when you get to see that final flash of understanding after you've made a challenging or difficult concept become clear, and the individual can see a way forward to answer a question, to reason something out or to take a specific action.

This article charts the rewarding impact of an experiment in legal design.

Nepal Legal Context

Nepal's Constitution guarantees women the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health, which includes autonomy over one's decision to have children and the right to terminate the pregnancy. But laws outlined under the National Penal Code (2017) and the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act (2018) allow women abortions only under specific sce-

narios, leaving them unprotected and vulnerable to prosecution where terminations are sought beyond the parameters permitted. Many women, especially those who are poorer and historically more marginalized, are forced to undergo illegal and unsafe abortions which carry longer-term health risks and can even result in death. Without fully decriminalizing abortion, these risks and dangers will only persist and deepen.

Legal Design Toolkit

In 2021, iProbono filed Public Interest Litigation before the constitutional bench of the Supreme Court highlighting that even partial decriminalization of abortion, as it currently exists within Nepal's legal framework, violates a suite of fundamental rights enshrined under Nepal's Constitution. These include the right to live with dignity, the right to equality, and the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health.

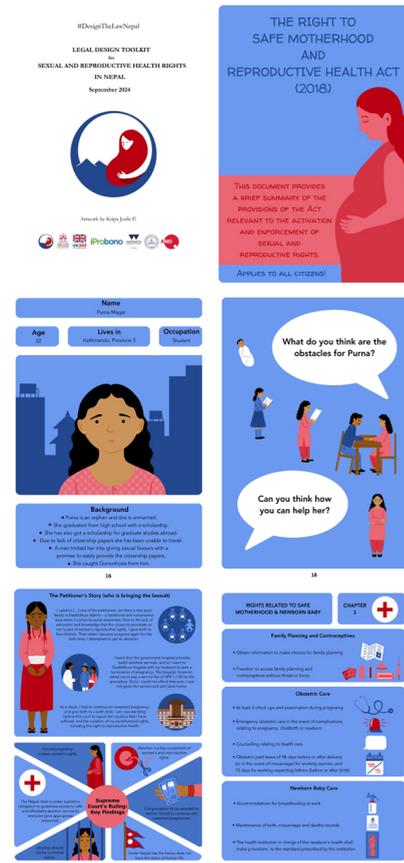


Mara Malagodi and Sabrina Germain at the Legal Design Workshop in Kathmandu, April 2024.

This petition is the culmination of groundwork carefully established in previous years by iProbono and its partners. Our team realized early on in the litigation journey that additional strategies were required to raise awareness around this issue. Dr Mara Malagodi, Associate Professor at Warwick University and a member of iProbono’s Global Advisory Committee was already using varied legal education tools to enhance our litigation strategy. By introducing a collaboration with Emily Allbon and Sabrina Germain from City University, the team was able to deliver a series of professional development workshops for Nepali lawyers, civil society activists, and academics

committed to fully decriminalizing abortion in Nepal. The idea to develop a “legal design toolkit” was seeded in one such workshop as a way to raise legal awareness, spotlight the Public Interest Litigation and re-ignite public debate on the need for urgent legal reform.

A legal design approach can work at many levels and for varied audiences. It can replace complex legal jargon with interactive features such as storytelling and visual illustrations. It can also deploy information design fundamentals about how information is processed and formatted. An example cited by our team is in contract law and using a human-centred approach to make legal agreements and contracts more accessible. Dr Malagodi and her team worked with well-known Nepali illustrator, Kripa Joshi to create compelling creatives and design to illustrate the toolkit. Each image, simple yet compelling expresses ideas from



Illustrations from the Legal Design Toolkit, created by Kripa Joshi.

the persona of a client to explaining medical terminology using graphic illustrations of the reproductive system.

Our team has considered how effective visual design can ensure users understand what they are agreeing to. Innovative examples of legal design include Robert de Rooy's contracts for fruit pickers and Camilla Andersen's employment contract for the global infrastructure company Aurecon. These "comic contracts" are legally binding and offer a way to improve the transparency of legal documents, reduce confusion, and empower individuals to make informed decisions. The WorldCC Contract Design Pattern Library⁴ also shares examples of design techniques which can be utilized for contracts.

With additional support from local partners, including the Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice (LAPSO) our team developed a first-of-its-kind toolkit which brings together Kripa's illustrated descriptions of important and relevant judgments pertaining to abortion rights and an explainer for the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act 2018, and "journey maps" - or fictionalized stories inspired by the real-life experiences of Nepali women who have sought abortions in the past - to highlight the particular barriers faced by women suffering from intersectional discrimination. We also developed a "how to" written manual and video explainer as accompanying resources to guide the toolkit's intended users - lawyers, civil society activists, doctors, and nurses - on how to mobilize the toolkit when interfacing with women approaching them for abortion-related services or counsel.

The Toolkit was launched in Nepali and English in 2024 to lawyers, activists, former members of the judiciary, journalists and doctors. Its potential to shift institutional mindsets on reproductive rights was acknowledged by senior members of Nepal's judiciary. Kalyan Shrestha, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Nepal, noted:

The toolkit can serve as an invaluable resource for service providers, such as doctors, nurses, and health workers, as well as for the general public. It is my hope that this toolkit will be fully utilized and that its reach will continue to expand.

Hon. Justice Hari Prasad Phuyal of the Supreme Court of Nepal similarly noted that the "toolkit is a promising step toward ensuring that stake-

holders are well-versed in the law and that international and national commitments are upheld.”



Prem Chandra Rai (Executive Director, Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice – LAPSOJ), Mariam Faruqi (CEO, iProbono), Dr. Mara Malagodi (Warwick Law School), Hon’ble Kalyan Shrestha (Former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Nepal), and Hon’ble Justice Hari Phuyal (Justice, Supreme Court of Nepal) launch the toolkit.

The launch was accompanied by practical workshops involving lively simulations and role-plays to demonstrate its usability among lawyers, activists, and medical professionals. Feedback data from these workshops showed that 90 percent of the participating lawyers surveyed gained valuable insights from the toolkit and recognized its potential to strengthen their casework.

Toolkit Ambassadors

Partner feedback to disperse the toolkit beyond those present in the room resulted in our “toolkit ambassadors” intervention. Using a dynamic “training of trainers” model, our team equipped five “toolkit ambassadors” from civil society, public health, and the legal domain to integrate the toolkit into their professional practice and pass this knowledge on to their peers based in more remote regions of Nepal.

Capacity-building sessions conducted by our team for five “toolkit ambassadors” snowballed into toolkit knowledge and access for an additional one hundred lawyers, healthcare professionals, and civil society representatives across Nepal. Conducted over a period of just four months, feedback data from participants attending the ambassador-led trainings showed notable improvements in legal knowledge. 83 percent of civil society participants of one such training, many of whom had no prior sexual and reproductive health rights education, reported moderate to high understanding of abortion laws afterwards. Health professionals accurately identified essential legal grounds for abortion, a remarkable achievement given that 64 percent had not received such training in medical school. We received numerous requests for additional training sessions from participants, including those from more diverse backgrounds, like the *Kamlari* Group, an ethnic community of women who were previously subjected to bonded labor, as well as non-binary people.

Toolkit Dissemination

The toolkit has until September 2025 reached more than four hundred stakeholders across Nepal through workshops, trainings, consultations, meetings, and direct downloads from iProbono’s website. Early examples attest to how diverse actors, within just a few months of exposure to the toolkit, have already begun to actively embed it into their professional practices. One lawyer, for instance, told us that they used the toolkit to develop an audio-visual explainer about relevant abortion laws which in turn sparked a wider conversation on social media. In another example, a youth-led sexual and reproductive health rights advocacy group used the toolkit as part of their legal empowerment trainings for young adults. We expect to see more such examples of toolkit ownership and usage in the coming months. Importantly, the toolkit is a living resource, and we continue to seek feedback to ensure that it remains adaptable and context-appropriate at all times.

Collaboration has been the cornerstone of the toolkit’s success. It deepened interdisciplinary collaboration by bringing together perspectives from law, healthcare, design, and applied research, offering an innovative and effective pathway to advance reproductive justice. By bringing together varied expertise and skillsets from different countries - Nepal, UK and India - the

project also deepened innovative South to South, South to North, and North to South exchanges of knowledge and learning. It was also heavily contingent on collaboration with local partners. We interviewed stakeholders to collect valuable baseline data and invited feedback and input into various iterations of the toolkit (and accompanying resources) to ensure participation and local ownership.

Feedback data collected by us revealed strong stakeholder interest in formally integrating the toolkit into law curricula, medical school trainings, and secondary education. During our evaluation, both legal practitioners and medical professionals emphasized critical gaps between theory and practice, highlighting the toolkit's potential to spark empathetic engagement and nuanced legal understanding of sexual and reproductive health rights, prevent medical negligence by adopting a rights-based approach, and embed the principle of non-discrimination. It is also seen as a potentially critical lever for promoting awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights among younger audiences, such as students at the primary and secondary level, by converting the toolkit into child-friendly handouts.

Concluding Remarks

iProbono's experiment with legal design to develop legal awareness in Nepal is a work in progress and an example of how we can adapt to shifting socio-political realities in the countries where we work. This project also shows that justice is collaborative and pragmatic. iProbono's vision is a world where justice is inclusive, and where justice actors working in increasingly complex environments have the support they need. We realize our mission and vision by representing people in need before courts and tribunals, strengthening the power of civil society, and advocating for policies that advance equality and end discrimination. With a global footprint and deep expertise across South Asia and its diaspora, we are committed to making justice accessible to all. As structural inequities grow and fundamental rights are increasingly contested, we continue to adapt – guided by the conviction that a just society is not an abstraction, but the result of strategic interventions, grassroots empowerment, systemic reform, and sustained effort.

Endnote

- 1 Contract Design Pattern Library, <https://contract-design.worldcc.foundation>.

Human Rights Education in Gwangju: A Comprehensive Analysis

Shin Gyonggu*

GWANGJU'S TRANSFORMATION into a human rights city represents one of the most remarkable journeys from tragedy to triumph in modern urban governance. Located in the southwestern region of South Korea with a population of 1.44 million, Gwangju has evolved from being known as "the city of resistance" to becoming a leading human rights city in Asia and a global model for rights-based governance.

The city's commitment to human rights is deeply rooted in its painful yet inspiring history of resistance to injustice, colonialism, and dictatorship. This legacy includes the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894, which is the first grassroots uprising for freedom and equality in Korea, the March First Independence Movement of 1919, the Gwangju Student Independence Movement in 1929, and the April 19th Revolution in 1960 that toppled the civilian authoritarian government.

The defining moment came with the May 18, 1980 Democratization Movement,¹ when citizens of Gwangju bravely challenged the military rulers. Despite extreme fear of death, human dignity was respected as citizens shared food, donated blood to the wounded, and remarkably, not a single store was looted during the nine-day struggle even in the absence of security forces. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands more injured, but the movement became the beginning of a seven-year struggle toward democracy that culminated in South Korea's new democratic constitution being established by a nation-wide uprising in 1987.

The so-called "Gwangju Spirit," representing "democracy, human rights, and peace," has become the core philosophy of the city's administration and the foundation for its development as a human rights city. This spirit plays a key role in building and maintaining human rights mechanisms regardless of changes in political leadership, enabling the city to develop positive nar-

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ratives from its painful history to construct its human rights city brand and promote a community spirit in the city governance.

Gwangju's journey toward becoming a symbol of human rights began in 1998, when the Gwangju Citizens' Solidarity declared the Asian Human Rights Charter in collaboration with the Asia Human Rights Commission. In 2000, the May 18 Memorial Foundation established the Gwangju Human Rights Prize to annually recognize prominent human rights activists and organizations in Asia. Another significant milestone came in 2011 when UNESCO's Memory of the World Register listed the May 18 Archives as a World Human Rights Documentary Heritage Site. The archives include 858,900 pages in 4,271 volumes, 2,017 cuts in negative films, and 1,733 photos, serving as crucial documentation of the struggle for human rights and democracy. It serves as one of the most important memorials for young people to learn the value of democracy and human rights.

Basis of Human Rights Education

a. Legal Framework for Human Rights Education

Gwangju has established a comprehensive legal framework for human rights education among Korean cities, creating a robust foundation that supports systematic implementation of human rights principles across all aspects of municipal governance.

The city's legal journey began with the enactment of the "Democratization, Human Rights, and Peace City Promotion Ordinance" in 2007—the first human rights ordinance by a local government in Korea. This ordinance underwent extensive revisions to become the "Gwangju Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance" in 2012, which includes the chapter on "Democratization, Human Rights, and Peace City Promotion."

The current version of the ordinance includes comprehensive provisions for the human rights city with specific articles and chapters on the Human Rights Master Plan (Article 7), human rights indicators (Article 9), the Democracy, Human Rights and Peace City (Chapter 3), the Human Rights Promotion Citizen Committee (Chapter 4), and the Human Rights Ombudsman (Chapter 5), among others.

Article 10 stipulates on the Establishment of a Human Rights Education System:

A. The Mayor and Superintendent of the Board of Education shall implement the following projects to raise human rights

awareness and spread a human rights culture through the institutionalization and establishment of a human rights education system.

To conduct human rights education at least twice a year for employees of affiliated public officials, city corporations, public corporations, invested/funded organizations, and corporations or organizations under the guidance and supervision of the Mayor (amended on 1 January 2020);

To establish and operate a regional human rights education council;

To recommend and support human rights education for public institutions, corporations, and private organizations;

To develop human rights education materials and to train and support human rights education instructors.

B. The Mayor shall encourage private organizations and workplaces to implement the projects set forth in Paragraph 1, Item A in this article.

The Gwangju Human Rights Charter, declared on 21 May 2012, serves as the first city-level human rights charter in Asia and the third in the world. Developed through more than forty meetings with about thirty institutions and organizations over a year-long period, the Charter incorporates diverse perspectives from civil society activists, academics, human rights experts, public officials, refugees, women, laborers, and other stakeholders.

The Charter presents guidelines for human rights institutions and establishes a new model for mainstreaming human rights within local government administrations. Since 2013, the city has conducted annual Human Rights Promotion Contests accompanied by exhibitions of human rights-related slogans and posters to familiarize citizens with the Charter's contents.

In 2020, the City Council specifically addressed the educational aspects of human rights (establishing formal requirements and frameworks for democratic citizenship and human rights education throughout the city) by enacting the Ordinance on Democratic Citizenship Education of Gwangju. This ordinance complements the broader human rights framework by ensuring that citizenship education remains central to Gwangju's human rights city vision.

b. Institutional Framework for Human Rights Promotion

In January 2019, the city established the Democracy, Human Rights and Peace Bureau, expanding from the original Human Rights Office created

in 2010. This bureau, comprising forty-five officials across three divisions—Democracy and Human Rights (sixteen), Promotion of May 18 (seventeen), and Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation (twelve)—serves as the control tower for implementing human rights policies, including comprehensive educational programs.

Established in April 2013, the Human Rights Ombudsman system focuses on relieving citizens experiencing human rights violations or discrimination in administrative processes. The system consists of one standing ombudsman and six experts in various human rights areas designated as non-standing human rights ombudsmen. In 2018 alone, the ombudsman office provided three hundred forty-six counseling sessions and registered seventy-eight human rights violation cases, contributing significantly to public awareness and education about human rights issues.

c. Holistic Operation of Human Rights Education

Gwangju's approach to human rights education distinguishes itself through several unique characteristics that reflect the city's historical experience, comprehensive vision, and commitment to systemic change.

Gwangju has adopted a holistic approach to emphasize the promotion of all human rights. This comprehensive strategy ensures that all human rights - civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights - receive adequate attention in educational programs. The city avoids concentrating on particular fields, instead focuses on comprehensive human rights enhancement across all sectors of society.

Gwangju's human rights education is uniquely grounded in the city's tradition of resistance against dictatorship and authoritarianism. The May 18 Democratic Uprising serves as both historical context and moral foundation for contemporary human rights education efforts, providing authentic, locally-relevant examples of human rights struggles and victories that resonate deeply with citizens.

The city's educational approach centers on three interconnected pillars: democracy, human rights, and citizen participation. This integration reflects the understanding that human rights cannot be protected without democratic institutions and active citizen engagement. As a result, Gwangju's human rights education emphasizes democratic values, human rights principles, and participatory citizenship as inseparable elements.

The Survey on the Status of Human Rights Education for Public Officials in Local Governments (NHRCK 2021) shows that Gwangju excels over other cities in terms of legal basis, institutional systems, and operational effectiveness. This superiority stems from the city's systematic approach to building human rights infrastructure and its sustained commitment to continuous improvement and innovation in human rights education methodologies.

The Gwangju human rights education system emphasizes both process and outcome indicators rather than focusing solely on structural elements in documents. With a comprehensive legal and structural foundation already in place, the city concentrates on measuring the effectiveness and impact of educational programs through both quantitative participation metrics and qualitative assessment of learning outcomes.

Targets of Human Rights Education

Gwangju's human rights education programs demonstrate remarkable breadth and depth in targeting diverse population groups, reflecting the city's commitment to creating an inclusive human rights culture throughout the entire community.

a. Comprehensive Participation Strategy

The City of Gwangju positions human rights education as the fundamental starting point for establishing itself as a Human Rights City. Education enables local government officials and residents to understand that embodying human rights values represents the city's ultimate aspiration and serves as the most effective tool for implementing human rights principles in daily life and governance.

The number of participants in human rights education is stable and high in city officials and students while limited to the general public. Table 1 shows a detailed breakdown of participation by target groups in 2017 to 2019 (Jeon 2017, Kim 2020).

Table 1. Participation by target groups

Target	Activities	2017	2019
Public Officials	Wednesday Human Rights Talk, City Training Institute, Executive/Fire fighter/District office class, Cyber class & human rights events	9,518	6,727
Children and Youth	Visiting Classes, Out-of-School Youth, Model United Nations Human Rights Council	203,323	185,285
General Public	Classes for city bus workers, apartment residents' associations, human rights culture communities and sports workers	20,880	32,954
Vulnerable Groups	Classes for multicultural families, temporary workers, social service agents	696	778
Expert Training	Youth Human Rights Education instructor courses, strengthening human rights education activist capabilities	44	166
Social Workers	Classes for nursery school teachers, elderly care, disabled services, social welfare facility workers, local children's center workers	40,618	50,067

b. Institutional Support for Human Rights Education of Students

The City Council established the Student Human Rights Ordinance in 2011. The ordinance also includes specific articles and chapters on the Human Rights Master Plan (Article 4) accompanied by annual implementation plan and human rights indicators (Article 5), the Democracy, Human Rights and Peace City (Chapter 3), the Student Human Rights Committee (Chapter 4), and the Student Human Rights Council (Chapter 5). Chapter 3 stipulates what the schools need to do to protect thirteen student rights listed below:

1. Right to learn
2. Right to physical freedom
3. Right to privacy and information protection
4. Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion
5. Freedom of expression and assembly
6. Right to autonomy and participation
7. Right to due disciplinary procedures
8. Right to educational welfare
9. Right to rest and cultural activities
10. Right to health and safety
11. Right to non-discrimination
12. Rights of minority students
13. Right to petition.

Human rights education in primary, middle secondary and senior secondary schools in Gwangju is considered one of the most progressive and comprehensive in Korea. This approach reflects Gwangju's history as a city for democracy and human rights. The key characteristics include:

- **Systematic policy support:** The Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education has established the Democracy and Human Rights Education Center in 2013, which develops curricula, provides resources, and supports human rights initiatives across schools. It is notable that there are only four student human rights centers out of seventeen sub-national local governments;
- **Curriculum Integration:** Human rights topics are included in social studies and ethics classes, as well as in special and extracurricular programs. Education covers issues such as respect, equality, diversity, anti-discrimination, privacy, and the prevention of bullying;
- **Student Participation:** Students are encouraged to exercise their rights and responsibilities through student councils, self-governing bodies, and participation in school policies, promoting democratic citizenship from an early age;
- **Teacher Training:** Teachers receive professional development on human rights and anti-discrimination to ensure a positive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment;
- **Practical Programs:** Schools conduct campaigns, workshops, and experiential activities such as mock trials, debates, and peace education;
- **Prevention and Counseling:** There are robust systems for human rights counseling, addressing violations, and supporting victims of school violence or discrimination;
- **Community Collaboration:** Schools often collaborate with local organizations and the broader community.

As a result, Gwangju's schools are widely recognized for fostering human rights awareness and democratic values in students, teachers, and the wider community.

These characteristics make Gwangju a pioneer in human rights education within Korea, frequently cited as a benchmark for other municipalities and international initiatives.

c. University education

Most universities in Gwangju offer a range of human rights-related courses as part of their curriculum. A review of the human rights-related liberal arts and major courses offered at ten national flagship universities of Korea shows that Jeonnam National University (JNU)² offers four liberal arts courses specifically focused on human rights, which aligns closely with the number of similar courses available at other national universities across the country. However, JNU stands out by uniquely hosting a graduate program dedicated to Non-governmental Organization (NGO) studies, consisting of five specialized human rights courses, emphasizing advanced, practical engagement with civil society and human rights advocacy.³

Beyond formal academia, JNU enriches its human rights education through ongoing civic engagement and community outreach. The university's Human Rights Law Center organizes free weekly Community Human Rights Lecture Series.⁴ The program usually hosts around twenty to thirty lectures annually, with participation numbers often reaching several hundred attendees in total. The lectures feature experts from academia, law, civil society, and cultural sectors who provide insights and facilitate discussions on contemporary human rights challenges.

JNU also features three trails on its campus, each dedicated to themes of democracy, human rights, and the memory of the May 18 Movement. Democracy Trail is approximately two-kilometer long and covers key campus areas related to Korea's democratization movement. It includes memorials, monuments, and educational plaques, allowing visitors to explore the history and spirit of democracy that shaped modern Korea. May 18 Trail is dedicated to commemorating the victims and heroes of the May 18 Gwangju Democratization Uprising in 1980. This trail connects various memorial sites including the 5.18 Square. It offers a space for reflection on the sacrifices made during the movement and serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for justice and democratic rights in South Korea. Human Rights Trail links significant areas such as human rights memorial walls and spaces honoring professors and students who suffered for democracy and human rights under authoritarian governments.

Places and Events: Human Rights Education Beyond Formal Curriculum

Gwangju employs a comprehensive approach to human rights education that extends beyond traditional classroom settings, utilizing the city's physical spaces, cultural events, and participatory governance mechanisms as educational platforms. The city maintains numerous monuments, sites, and events related to the democratization movement, particularly commemorating the May 18 Democratization Movement. These physical spaces and events serve as powerful educational tools to the residents.

a. Human Rights Places

Here is a list of exemplary places and institutions tied to democracy and memory of the May 18 Movement (1980–1998 and beyond), followed by short explanations.

Jeonnam National University Main Gate and Campus: The main gate was the starting point of the May 18 Uprising. The campus became a frequent site of clashes between students and riot police throughout the 1980s, preserving many memorial spaces such as the famous May 18 mural and memorial halls dedicated to Yun Sang-won and poet Kim Namju.

Provincial Hall (Asia Culture Center): The Provincial Hall was the heart of resistance where the citizen army held out until 27 May 1980. It later became the site of sorrow and martyrdom, especially with Yun Sang-won's last stand. Today, the site hosts the Asia Culture Center, symbolizing both commemoration and cultural renewal.

Geumnam-ro Street: This central Gwangju thoroughfare was the main battleground between demonstrators and martial law forces in May 1980, and a place of prolonged conflict in the 1980s. Today, it is transformed into a street of remembrance, cultural festivals, and annual May 18 commemorations.

Democracy Plaza with May 21 Fountain: Located in front of the former Provincial Hall, the plaza and fountain became central rallying points during the uprising, especially after the mass shooting on May 21, 1980, which triggered the full-scale citywide uprising. Now the plaza has become a place of gathering for diverse events.

Jeon-il Building: This is an iconic site marked with more than two hundred bullet holes discovered in 2017. Despite earlier demolition plans, it has been preserved and renovated as a reminder of military violence against the

citizenry. It also accommodates diverse functions and events. Its roof-top provides a good view of the provincial hall and the May 18 Plaza.

YMCA and YWCA Buildings: The YMCA housed protest leadership meetings and citizen army firearms training, while the YWCA hosted the production of resistance newsletters and settlement committee meetings. Both served as hubs of civil society and anti-military activities throughout the 1980s.⁵

Catholic Center: A critical safe space and organizing point for protests, the Catholic Center provided moral and logistical support to democratization activists. Later purchased by the city, it became the site of the May 18 Democratization Movement Archives.

May 18 Democratization Movement Archives: Designated as part of UNESCO's World Heritage Documentary Heritage (2011), this archive documents the uprising, preserves testimonies, and strengthens global recognition of May 18 as a human rights struggle. It plays a pivotal role in education and countering the distortion effort by right-wing groups.

May 18 National Cemetery: Established officially in 1997 (upgraded to National Cemetery in 2002), it holds seven hundred sixty-four graves of victims as of 2025, including those missing or who later died after the uprising. It has become one of the three primary symbols of May 18, along with the Provincial Hall and the Jeonnam National University Main Gate.

b. Participatory Devices and Platforms

The May 18 Institute at Jeonnam National University (JNU) is a leading research center dedicated to advancing the study, memory, and global discourse surrounding the May 18 Movement and democratization in Korea. The Institute conducts multidisciplinary academic research, organizes international conferences, and publishes the *Journal of Democracy and Human Rights* to promote the values of democracy, human rights, peace, and civic engagement. It fosters collaboration among scholars, local communities, and international partners, serving as an important hub for education and the preservation of the May 18 spirit in Korea and worldwide. It operates with a core team of three professors specializing in law, sociology, and NGO studies, alongside several dedicated office assistants and administrative support staff. This academic workforce is complemented by affiliated graduate students and collaborators from various departments, enabling the Institute

to conduct interdisciplinary research, education, and public projects related to democracy and human rights.

The May 18 Memorial Foundation was founded in 1994 by movement participants to promote the spirit of May 18 through education, activism, and international networking with the funding support from the local and central governments. It hosts the annual Gwangju Democracy Forum (since 1999) and awards the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights (since 2000). As of 2025, the Foundation has thirty staff members, organized into six functional offices, including administrative, international, educational/cultural, archiving, and research sections.

Gwangju has hosted the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) annually since 2011, making it one of the longest-running human rights forums hosted by a local government.

The WHRCF has grown significantly in both quality and quantity providing an international platform for the people and the civil society to grow with participants including human rights city officials and NGO activists from other countries. However, the growth of WHRCF has been negatively influenced by COVID 19 since 2020.

Table 2. Data on WHRCF

Year	Participants	Sessions	Countries	Cities
2011	500			
2015	1,000	19	29	58
2017	1,300	27	38	74
2018	1,500	38	58	137
2019	1,831	45	47	119
2021	1,488	54	76	326
2023	860	32	64	156
2025	1,588	25	31	80

The WHRCF provides opportunities for human rights cities and activists worldwide to share experiences and expertise, while serving as a platform for Gwangju to share its own experiences and learn from other cities simultaneously.⁶ Even young students are exposed to the issue of human rights while participating in the forum as shown in the following photo.



Gwangju has implemented the Human Rights Neighborhood Project since 2013 to promote human rights awareness and problem-solving capabilities among citizens within their living spaces. The project aims to create human rights culture and improve human rights environments at the neighborhood level. The number of participating neighborhoods is around fifteen annually. They present their achievements at the WHRCF site.

The Human Rights Promotion Citizen Committee was established in 2009 as part of the implementation of the “Gwangju Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance,” which was enacted that year. This committee consists of twenty members on two-year terms who represent civil society organizations, human rights activists, and experts. The committee conducts sub-committee meetings and workshops in addition to four regular meetings annually. It has official powers and responsibilities under the city ordinance, which include making recommendations on the city’s human rights policies to the city hall, participating in establishing the city’s human rights master and annual plans, promoting human rights education and impact assessments and indicators, recommending necessary measures for policy adjustments, and facilitating public hearings and dialogue as a public facilitator in human rights governance.

The Gwangju Governance Council was established in 2021 with an expanded membership and broader organizational structure (one hundred eighty-five members in eleven subcommittees as of 2025) to better address diverse local issues. This Council functions as an official collaborative platform where civil society and government jointly discuss regional matters, discover policy agendas, and implement cooperative projects including human rights. This structure promotes a wider channel of democratization and collaborative governance by inviting more partnerships among govern-



Gwangju Governance Council, 2025

ment, citizens, and social organizations through institutionalized dialogue and joint decision-making.

Human Rights Indicators to Assess Achievement

One of the strengths of Gwangju’s human rights education initiatives is its statistical indicators that demonstrate the achievement of the city’s human rights policies and education. In 2012, Gwangju developed a sophisticated human rights indicator system comprising one hundred nine indicators under five areas of “participatory city, happy city, inclusive city, safe city, and collaborative city.” The system was revised by removing (seventy-one) and adding (thirty-five) indicators resulting in seventy-three current indicators.

The annual assessment shows that the human rights situation has been improving since 2014 with more indicators showing positive changes.

Table 3. Items showing positive changes over time

Year	Positive Change	Negative Change	Total Indicators	Positive Change (%)
2014	73	25	98	74%
2015	74	16	90	82%
2018	58	14	72	81%
2021	51	22	73	75%
2022	56	15	71	79%
2023	52	19	71	73%

However, the number of participants in human rights education shows a negative trend in both city employees and common residents. The obligatory requirement of human rights education became optional since 2022.⁷ The number of participants from schools has remained at 100 percent from 2021 to 2024 (Table 4).

Table 4. Number of participants in human rights education programs

Human Rights training participants	2014	2016	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Citizen	17.7	18.1	18.9	19	15.08	12.85	12.55	12.45
City officials	72.7	100	100	100	100.78	97.4	67.17	59.13
School	97.1	97.2	99.4	100	100	100	100	100

a. Human Rights City Gwangju in Comparison

The city of Gwangju is compared with six other metropolitan cities: Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Daejeon, and Ulsan in terms of political participation, women representation, gender equality and school violence.

Gwangju demonstrates exceptional political engagement in presidential elections as shown in Table 5. With participation rates of 89.9 percent (1997), 80.4 percent (2012), 82.7 percent (2017), 81.5 percent (2022), and 83.9 percent (2025), it consistently outperforms other major cities. This pattern suggests Gwangju citizens maintain strong civic engagement and democratic participation compared to cities like Seoul, Busan and Daegu.

Table 5. Engagement of citizens

Cities	1997	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022	2025
Seoul	80.5	71.4	62.9	75.1	78.6	77.9	79.4
Busan	78.9	79.3	62.1	76.2	76.7	75.3	78.4
Daegu	78.1	70.5	66.8	78.5	74.5	78.7	80.2
Incheon	80.7	74.2	60.3	74.0	75.6	74.8	77.7
Gwangju	89.9	78.1	64.3	80.4	82.7	81.5	83.9
Deajeon	80.7	77.1	61.9	78.5	77.5	76.7	79.4
Ulsan	80.7	71.5	64.6	77.3	78.5	78.1	80.1
	80.7	70.8	63.0	75.8	77.2	77.1	79.4

Gwangju shows remarkable progress in women’s representation in city councils, particularly in recent years. The city achieved the highest rates

among major cities in 2018 (37.5 percent) and 2022 (43.5 percent), significantly above the national average of 25.3 percent. This upward trajectory from 12.0 percent in 2006 indicates substantial advancement in gender equality within political institutions (Table 6).⁸

Table 6. Women's representation

Cities	2006	2010	2014	2018	2022
Seoul			12	21.1	27.7
Busan	17.5	11.4	10.6	18.9	24.9
Daegu	13.3	13.5	20.6	15.8	34.4
Incheon	9.1	8.1	11.4	15	15
Gwangju	12.0	15.4	27.3	37.5	43.5
Daejeon	12.0	15.4	27.3	27.3	18.2
Ulsan	26.1	18.2	31.8	15.8	13.6
Average	15	13.7	20.1	21.6	25.3

Despite strong performance in political representation, Gwangju's overall gender equality rating by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Families places it in the middle range (71.5 average score). While it excels in decision-making (50.6, highest among cities), it has average performance in employment (77.5), income (69.5), and other categories. This suggests that political progress has not fully translated to broader socioeconomic gender equality (Table 7).

Table 7. Gender equality rating

City	Decision-making	Employment	Income	Education	Health	Special Care	Gender Equality	Average
Seoul	36.6	83.9	76.5	96.8	94	36	81.9	72.2
Busan	37.2	78.7	66.9	95.7	93.1	35	81.7	69.8
Daegu	43.1	78.5	68.9	95.9	94	29.9	81.9	70.3
Incheon	32.4	77.3	70.3	96.6	92.4	36.4	81.4	69.5
Gwangju	50.6	77.5	69.5	95.6	94.5	31.4	81.6	71.5
Daejeon	41.7	80	73.5	95.3	95.5	39.9	80.9	72.4
Ulsan	33.6	70	69.2	96.7	92.2	44	82.2	69.7

Gwangju's school violence statistics align closely with other major cities across all categories - verbal abuse (38.7 percent), bullying (16.9 percent),

physical violence (15.1 percent), and cyber incidents (7.2 percent). This similarity indicates that despite political progressiveness, social issues affecting youth remain consistent nationwide.

Table 8. School violence nationwide

Cities	Violence report	Verbal	Bullying	Physical	Cyber	Extortion	Stalking
Seoul	2.9	39.1	17.1	15.1	7.6	4.8	5.6
Busan	2.6	38.2	16.2	15.5	7.1	5.3	5.8
Daegu	1.1	39	15.7	15.4	6.9	6	5.6
Incheon	2.6	39.2	16.2	14.5	8.6	3	N/A
Gwangju	2.6	38.7	16.9	15.1	7.2	7.6	3.1
Daejeon	2	39.7	16.1	14.9	7.8	5.1	4.8
Ulsan	2.1	38.9	15.3	15.7	7.5	N/A	N/A

The data, though limited in scope, reveals an interesting paradox: Gwangju citizens demonstrate progressive political attitudes through high electoral participation and strong support for women’s political representation, yet daily social realities - including gender equality outcomes and school violence rates - remain largely consistent with other Korean cities. This suggests that while Gwangju may lead in political consciousness and democratic values, translating these ideals into comprehensive social change across all aspects of daily life remains an ongoing challenge. In other words, comprehensive human rights education efforts should be accompanied by city governance directed at creating a more rights-conscious and peaceful community in diverse ways.

Challenges: Declining Attention to Human Rights Education

As suggested in the conclusion of the previous section, despite significant achievements, Gwangju has faced notable challenges in establishing itself as a human rights city.

a. Institutional Weakening and Administrative Changes

Changes in mayoral leadership and shifting political priorities have led to reduced emphasis on human rights education, demonstrating the vulner-

ability of human rights initiatives to political transitions despite the foundational “Gwangju Spirit.”

The importance and influence of the human rights department have declined within the municipal structure over time, potentially undermining the systematic approach that previously characterized Gwangju’s human rights efforts. This institutional weakening threatens the sustainability of comprehensive human rights education programs.

A significant setback occurred when human rights education became optional rather than mandatory in several contexts, particularly for public officials starting in 2022. This change potentially weakens the institutional foundation for maintaining high levels of human rights awareness among city employees who play crucial roles in implementing rights-based policies. The transformation of mandatory human rights education requirements into optional programs has diminished the systematic approach to ensuring that all public servants maintain adequate human rights knowledge and sensitivity.

b. Systemic Challenges and Structural Issues

The Human Rights Office faced challenges functioning effectively as the control tower for implementing human rights policies across all departments due to lack of coordination mechanisms, highlighting the need for enhanced inter-departmental collaboration.

Reduced priority for human rights education has led to challenges in maintaining adequate human and financial resources for comprehensive educational programs. For example, the WHRCF provides comprehensive educational opportunities for both students and general public. The city can increase its financial support to WHRCF to make it more effective for human rights education.

The experience reveals the critical importance of institutionalizing human rights education in ways that transcend political changes and maintain continuity regardless of leadership transitions.

Conclusion: Lessons and Future Directions

Gwangju’s transformative journey from a city of resistance to a global model for human rights education demonstrates the enduring power of civic spirit and participatory democracy. Through innovative legal frameworks, inclu-

sive institutions, and vibrant educational initiatives, Gwangju has institutionalized the core values of democracy, human rights, and peace across municipal governance and civil society. This commitment is reflected in strong civic engagement, pioneering women's representation, and a robust ecosystem for human rights learning in schools, universities, and public institutions.

The city's integration of history, practical programs, and community collaboration places it at the forefront of human rights education in Korea and beyond. However, recent challenges - including shifts in administrative priorities and the weakening of mandatory education - highlight the need for renewed commitment to institutional sustainability and broad-based participation. While Gwangju's ideals remain influential, translating these into everyday practice and ensuring long-term impact will require ongoing collaboration and innovation among local government, civil society and educational stakeholders.

In conclusion, Gwangju's experience offers valuable lessons:

- a. Comprehensive human rights education must be grounded in both historical context and contemporary practice;
- b. Democratic values thrive when actively fostered through participatory institutions under a strong political will supported by inclusive civil society engagement; and
- c. Advancing a human rights city should be translated into advancing the quality of life of its residents.

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Endnotes

1 This movement was originally named as Gwangju Riot by the then military regime in May 1980, but it was quickly renamed as Gwangju Incident. In 1988, the National Assembly officially renamed it as May 18 Democratization Movement. However, it has been commonly named as Gwangju Uprising by people and researchers.

2 Chonnam National University (CNU) is a more widely used name of the university. However, this paper follows the romanization scheme of the Korean Government with Jeonnam National University (JNU).

3 May 18 Institute, Jeonnam National University https://cnu518.jnu.ac.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=curriculum&page=1.

4 Law School, Jeonnam National University, <https://lawschool.jnu.ac.kr/lawschool/11343/subview.do>.

5 The YWCA building was sold and demolished for commercial purposes.

6 The forum has been co-hosted by UNESCO and United Nations Human Rights Office since 2020. It is also co-organized by the Gwangju International Center, Raoul Wallenberg Institute, and UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (UCLG-CSIPDHR).

7 The requirement of human rights education participation was made in 2025, when a blunder in issuing cards of different colors to different level of income groups occurred.

8 The women ratio of Seoul was not available in its homepage.

Building Human Rights Culture in Fukuoka Prefecture

Fukuoka Prefectural Human Rights Research Institute

THE FUKUOKA BURAKU HISTORY RESEARCH STUDY GROUP (Study Group) was established in September 1974. This was the only research institute in Fukuoka Prefecture that focused on Buraku issues. It was established by twenty-one people including the late Rinshi Imoto (at the time the director of the Fukuoka Municipal Chiyo Rinpo-kan and former general secretary of the National Levellers Society, the late Taketoshi Matsuzaki, a local historian, the late Masao Nakamura, Senzo Hidemura, and Shiro Matsushita of Kyushu University, Shigeru Takada of the Fukuoka Prefectural Federation of Buraku Liberation Leagues, and Hayashi Chikara of the Fukuoka Prefecture Dowa Education and Research Council. The Study Group received support from researchers, local administrations and many people from the prefecture.

The Study Group did not only research on the Buraku history but also the “Rokuyo” superstition and the caste system in India.

Imoto and Matsuzaki made full use of Buraku historical materials such as the “Yuya Documents,” “Mori Family Documents,” as well as the history of the leveller’s movement in Japan and documentation of the Dowa education movement in the prefecture.¹

As a result, they compiled and published collections of historical sources such as the *Buraku Liberation History, Fukuoka, Zenkyushu Suiheisha Bulletin* (Levellers Monthly Report), *Chikuzen Koku Kawaza Records* (three volumes), and the Matsubara Leather Association Documents, as well as research series and picture books.

The research results of the Study Group elevated the study of Buraku history in Fukuoka to national attention, became widely used in the field of Buraku history learning and social enlightenment in Fukuoka Prefecture, and have been highly evaluated not only for the development of academic research but also for the development of the whole country. Needless to say, this was in line with the fact that the resolution of the Buraku problem was socially indispensable.

In December 1999, the Study Group was reorganized into the Fukuoka Prefectural Institute for Buraku Liberation and Human Rights with a focus on research on human rights issues, including Buraku issues, which the Study Group had been conducting, and on organizing educational projects to make the results of research more widely known to the people in Fukuoka Prefecture.

On 8 June 2003, the Fukuoka Prefectural Human Rights Research Institute (the Institute) was established to replace the Fukuoka Prefectural Institute for Buraku Liberation and Human Rights. It became an incorporated association on 1 April 2004 and certified as a public interest incorporated association by the Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture on 19 March 2013.

In September 2024, the Institute celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Study Group.

Objective of the Institute

In order to solve all human rights issues, including Buraku issues, the Institute aims to contribute to the creation of a human rights culture based on the results of research on historical facts related to Buraku people, research related to human rights, education and enlightenment, and publication activities.

Pursuant to this objective, the Institute engages in various activities including

- (1) Research and study activities aimed at resolving all human rights issues, including the Buraku issue;
- (2) Educational and training activities aimed at resolving all human rights issues, including the Buraku issue;
- (3) Publication of results of research and study activities through journals and other publications;
- (4) Collection, organization, storage, and introduction of materials related to human rights issues; and
- (5) Other activities necessary to achieve its objectives.

Research and Surveys

The Institute expanded its wings by placing surveys and research at the core of its activities, while inheriting the research and other activities of the

former organizations. This means that the Institute responds to the social demand for the resolution of human rights issues, particularly the Buraku issue, by stimulating research activities in various forms while building on its past activities.

There are existing information centers on human rights issues in the prefecture (Fukuoka Prefecture Human Rights Awareness Information Center, Kitakyushu City Human Rights Awareness Center, Fukuoka City Human Rights Awareness Center, etc.), and they are promoting activities centered on raising awareness of prefectural residents and citizens.

Under such circumstances, the most promising function of the Institute is its survey and research function, and the dissemination of the results through educational activities in cooperation with the local government. These activities would greatly increase the understanding and efforts of the people of Fukuoka Prefecture on human rights issues.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to enrich research activities on human rights issues, including the historical elucidation of the Buraku issue, with the cooperation of many people.

To that end, the Institute can achieve its objectives by bringing together the wisdom of more people involved in human rights issues than ever before.

The Institute aims to become the core of the human rights network in Fukuoka Prefecture, to connect with the global human rights network, and to create a human rights culture.

Starting with its predecessors, the Fukuoka Buraku History Study Group and the Fukuoka Prefectural Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, the Institute has a track record of undertaking many projects commissioned by local governments, educational institutes, and companies.

The Institute has recently been commissioned by local governments to conduct a survey of residents' attitudes toward human rights issues. The surveys measure the awareness of the people on human rights and harmony issues and analyze the rich data obtained that other companies cannot do.

The data analysis involves people with specialized knowledge including Tatsuo Aso (Director, Tagawa City Coal History Museum), Toyomi Ishitaki (Director, Institute for Human Rights Studies, Ishitaki), Tadashi Horiuchi (Secretary General, Tagawa District Human Rights Center), Yusaku Matsuo (former President of Fukuoka University of Education), and Senichi Moriyama (Professor, Fukuoka Prefectural University).

The Institute established seven committees, namely, Buraku History Committee, Foreigners Committee, Education Committee, Awareness Committee, Gender Committee, Overseas Human Rights Study Tour Planning Committee, Buraku Issues Committee, and Ishitaki School (Ishitaki Juku).

Educational Activities

The Institute has adopted the slogan “Global Perspectives, Local Activities” since its establishment. It has always aimed at engaging in activities that are rooted in the local community and yet it has always taken into account the international human rights situation.

The Institute has sponsored projects such as the “Liberation Seminar” centered on the youth section of the Buraku Liberation League, the “Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion Walk” to conduct fieldwork in the places related to the Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion (the attack against Buraku people in 1872 that burned their houses), and “Aiming for the Combination of Historical Facts and Classes II” co-sponsored by the Fukuoka Prefectural Human Rights and Dowa Education and Research Council.

It also published six books since then, taking over the “Rapeseed Flower Booklet” of the study group, and presented the results of the Institute’s activities in “Human Rights Forum Fukuoka.”

Mini-symposium

The Institute held its first mini-symposium on 6 April 2025.

The Publication Compilation Committee of the Institute reviewed the research results published in *Buraku Liberation History Fukuoka* (the predecessor of *Liberation*) by the Fukuoka Buraku History Study Group, applied them to the present context, and drafted a publication. Since this was an unprecedented concept, the Institute decided to hold a mini-symposium in order to deepen the understanding of the content of the publication.

The first session was a reflection on Dowa education (anti-Buraku discrimination education). With the rapid generational change among teachers, a sense of crisis in pursuing human rights and Dowa education arose. The Institute thought that it would be of great significance to learn from the voices of the pioneers of Dowa education.

Shinya Yasuaki gave a talk titled “A Warning to ‘Dowa’ Education ~ What I Want to Learn Now from Mr. Yuimichi Matsunaga’s Theory of Classes~.”

The talk was followed by a question-and-answer session. Thirty participants in the mini-symposium actively joined in the discussion causing the session to exceed the scheduled time.

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Study Group

The Institute commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Study Group on 28 September 2024 at the Sawara Citizen Center, Fukuoka City. More than five hundred fifty people (including the Institute’s staff members) attended the successful event.

The commemorative gathering included an opening show (guitar and ocarina performance, recitation of the 1922 Suiheisha Declaration,² and *taiko* performance).

There were lectures by Atsushi Uesugi (Buraku history researcher) entitled “Where did Buraku discrimination come from and where does it go?,” Hisako Sonoda (Vice-chairperson of the Institute) entitled “Both sides exceed the wall~Turn it into a problem~,” and Ian Neary (Emeritus Fellow, St Antony’s College and the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford) on the *Buraku Problem Handbook*.

There was also an exhibition of the picture book *Flower of Life*, and the 50th anniversary materials and photographs.

Toshiyuki Maruki’s original artwork, publications including *Buraku Liberation History Fukuoka* and *Liberation* and the works by Koji Yoshikata, who has long illustrated the cover and cuts for *Buraku Liberation History Fukuoka*, were exhibited.

The opening ceremony included greetings from the Fukuoka Prefecture, Fukuoka City, Kitakyushu City and Buraku Liberation Alliance Fukuoka Prefectural Federation.

Workshops

The Buraku Issue Committee holds a workshop every year. In 2025, the Committee held two workshops.³ The first workshop was held on 26 July 2025 in Inatsuki District Community Center, Kama City. The workshop had two topics:

- a. Unraveling the breeding ground for discriminatory attitudes from the preface of the Buraku Place Name;

- b. Toward the development of teaching materials on Buraku history and the Buraku issue.

Masashi Yamazaki of Kama City Inatsuki Higashi Compulsory Education School spoke about the Buraku Place Name Inspector Case and the discriminatory attitudes that have been ingrained in society behind it. He also discussed the existence of companies using social media for background checks in recruitment, in relation to the Buraku Place Name Inspector Case, while watching the news video “Demand for Social Media Secret Account Investigations is Exploding: The Current State of Corporate Recruitment Activities and Legal Issues.”

Hisako Sonoda, Vice President of the Institute, reported on her participation in the July 2024 event “Considering Human Rights Issues 2025 - Toward the Development of Buraku History Teaching Materials - Sponsored by the Saga Buraku Liberation Institute.” She also presented materials such as the 25 April 2025 *Kaiho Shimbun* article “Questioning the Kurume City Board of Education’s Perception of Buraku” and the July issue of *Buraku Liberation*, “Questioning the Kurume City Board of Education’s Perception of Buraku Issues in Fukuoka Prefecture: Kurokawa Midori.”

The second workshop featured a talk by Yukimura Tanaka on the theme of the Suiheisha Declaration. The workshop was held on 22 November 2025 in Fukuoka City Teachers’ Union Eastern Office.

Tanaka’s presentation entitled “Suiheisha Declaration and Me - My Encounter with the Buraku Liberation Movement” discussed the beginnings of the Suiheisha Levelers movement. In discussing the proposal to adopt the Declaration of Human Rights (Suiheisha Declaration), he raised several questions: What is its spirit? How many declarations are there? When and why did the Suiheisha end?

Its 2024 workshop was held in 26 October 2024, as a follow-up to the January 2023 workshop entitled “Lesson Practice Report and Picture Book ‘Life Flower’ was born!!” Koga reported on the efforts to connect human rights studies and social studies classes for the three years of middle school.

The 2023 workshop content (From Practice Case Collection) focused on practical case collection classes, the 2024 workshop on the other hand discussed in detail how to create a connection between the subjects (using medieval examples) in the three-year curriculum of middle school, and how to make students feel more like their own selves.

The 2024 workshop also had an exchange of opinions among the participants on how to link the primary and secondary schools in human rights learning, as well as on concerns and questions about human rights learning.

Field work

The Institute organizes field work every summer known as *Ishizuka*, where people learn about the history of places in Fukuoka Prefecture. On 17 August 2024, the Institute organized *Ishizuka* in the town of Chikujo in the prefecture.

The participants visited the sites around Tsukijo base where battles were fought in 16th century between armies of opposing fiefdoms. The visit was designed to make the participants think about past and present wars.

As part of the Buraku history in Chikujo town, the participants listened to lectures about the story of the construction of the Chikujo castle and related matters. This session was held at the Chikujo-machi Products Hall “Metase no Tsubo.” The participants also visited the former Horiuchi residence, the house of the Horiuchi family, which operated coal mines mainly in the Chikuhō region of Fukuoka Prefecture from the Meiji period to the early Showa period, and also managed cedar plantations.

On 23 November 2024, the Institute organized a field work under the theme “Overcoming religious differences ~Living a Multicultural Symbiotic Society~.” This field work involved visiting Christian church, Buddhist hall and Islamic mosque used by non-Japanese residents in Japan. The participants learned from various people working across religious differences on the different programs for non-Japanese residents.

The participants visited the following places:

a. Catholic Minoshima Pastoral Center (Hakata-ku, Fukuoka City)

The Minoshima Pastoral Center work with non-Japanese residents in the Kyushu DARC, a facility for drug and alcohol dependency recovery, homeless people and other vulnerable people in Japanese society. The participants listened to the presentation of a Catholic priest and the center staff on “walking together” with the vulnerable people in society.

b. Yoshizuka Mido (Hakata-ku, Fukuoka City)

At the Yoshizuka Mido in the Little Asia Market of Kichijo Market, a Shaka-sama (Buddhist statue) from Myanmar welcomed the participants. This is the place where Buddhists from other countries in Asia come to pray. During the visit, the participants learned about the situation in Myanmar from Mr. Takino, the caretaker of the temple.

c. Fukuoka Masjid Annur Islamic Cultural Center (Hakozaki, Higashi Ward, Fukuoka City)

This is the first mosque in Kyushu that opened on 12 April 2009. Male worshippers pray on the first floor and female worshippers pray on the second floor. The interior of the place of worship is relatively simple that brings in natural light, and is equipped with facilities necessary for worship such as *mihrab* (a niche that shows the direction of Mecca) and *minbar* (a raised platform in the front area of the prayer hall of the mosque). The interior of the hall is decorated with silk imported from the United Arab Emirates and gives a sense of exotic feelings.

The Institute also organizes the Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion Walk in Ashiya every two years. The 2025 walk marked its 17th anniversary. Ashiya is a port town famous for the Ashiya Temple and Ashiya Kilns. The walk toured historical sites in Ashiya related to the Bamboo Spear Rebellion.

The 17th anniversary walk was held on 1 November 2025 and included visit to Kindaiji Temple, former site of Daikokuza Theatre, shrines and temples, Ashiya Kama no Sato and Ashiya History and Folklore Museum. There were also lectures by Toyomi Ishitaki (“The Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion and Ashiya”) and Satoshi Uesugi (former professor at Osaka City University).

The “Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion” was a large-scale uprising that occurred on 16 June 1873, two years after the Emancipation Edict of 1871, and engulfed the Chikuzen region (the old name of what is now northern Kyushu). It is said that 100,000 people participated. The uprising engulfed Fukuoka and Hakata, destroying the prefectural office. The uprising was sparked by opposition to the Meiji government and Fukuoka Prefecture’s policies of modernization and enlightenment. They attacked Buraku communities under the banner of “opposition to the Emancipation Edict,” burning over 1,500 homes.⁴

Awareness-raising

The Institute organizes seminars on different topics to raise human rights awareness. Below are some of the topics in the seminars:

- “Does knowledge have no power to eliminate discrimination?” ~Thinking from the results of a survey on awareness of the leprosy issue~ (27 October 2024)
- “Reading books about children’s human rights” – Children’s right to express opinions and advocacy (24 November 2024)
- “Is it kindness? Is it a human right? ~How to nurture ‘subjects of rights.’” (26 April 2025)

Overseas Human Rights Study Tour

The Institute organizes the Overseas Human Rights Study Tour every year. The 16th “Overseas Human Rights Study Tour in Tsushima~‘Jeju 4/3 Incident’ and Tsushima~” was held on 21-22 September 2024.⁵ It was meant to learn more the so-called “Jeju 4/3 Incident,” the biggest tragedy in modern Korean history, when the Korean government violently suppressed the armed uprising on Jeju Island, South Korea on 3 April 1948, which victimized approximately 30,000 islanders.⁶ The villages of Jeju Island were burned due to the scorched-earth operations and massacres carried out by the military during this time.

At the time of the incident, hundreds of victims’ bodies, with their wrists tied, washed up on the shores of Sago Bay in the northwest of Tsushima, Nagasaki Prefecture, and were buried by the residents of Tsushima. In 2007, a memorial tower was built by volunteers, and a memorial service for the victims was held.

The 2024 Human Rights Study Tour included the following activities:

Day 1 – visit to the Tsushima Chosen Tsushinshi History Museum (this museum introduces the history of the ‘Chosen Tsushinshi’, a diplomatic mission sent to Japan by the Korean Dynasty), Satsuma Bansho-in Temple (a temple of the Tendai sect in Izuhara-cho, Tsushima; it is the family temple of the So clan in Tsushima Fuchu Domain and successive domains), Taiheiji Temple, Genkai Nuclear Power Plant;

Day 2 - participation in the Mourning Ceremonies (4/3 Jeju Incident Memorial Festival), visit to the Hill Observation Center (an obser-

vation tower set up in a protruding shape near the top of the hill, circling Mt. Chihama, designated as Iki Tsushima Quasi-National Park) which has a view of neighboring countries, etc.

Movie Screening

The Foreigners Committee of the Institute showed the film “Nitobe’s Dream” on 8 November 2025 in The University of Kitakyushu. Professor Yoshifumi Soeda (Fukuoka University Faculty of Humanities) gave a lecture on the film.

The Committee screened on 22 June 2024 the movie “Watashitachihaningenda! (We are human beings!)” in Kitakyushu City. The screening was followed by a lecture by Sochi Takaya (Associate Professor at Tokyo University) and lawyer Yu Ikegami, who deals with non-Japanese residents in his hometown in Kitakyushu.

The movie screening was held in one of the classrooms of the Law School of the Kitakyushu City University, which co-hosted the event. As a result, nearly seventy students participated out of the total of one hundred forty participants.

The movie had substantive content on the Japanese immigration problem. Thus it was followed by a lecture by Takaya and Ikegami, who dealt with non-Japanese residents in Kitakyushu.

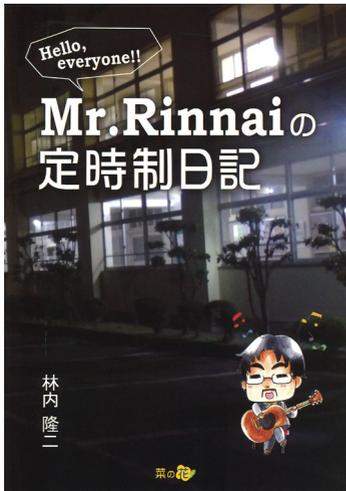
The event enabled the students to understand the immigration problem better.

The Institute plans to have a field work at Minoshima Tsoshimaki Center in Fukuoka City, where activities of non-Japanese residents are held, as the next project.

In its 6th Monthly Meeting of the Committee, Kim Yeokyung (Associate Professor, Faculty of Letters, University of Kitakyushu) gave a presentation entitled “Sociological Approach to the Korean Community in Japan.” In the 4th Regular Meeting of the Committee Section on 30 July 2025, Mai Yoshida (Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Kitakyushu) gave a report entitled “People who don’t move; focusing on the struggle of the Aeta, an indigenous people of the Philippines.”

Books

The Institute organized a book launching in its booth at the Kitakyushu City Fureai Festa on 24 November 2024. The new book entitled *Hello, everyone!! Mr Rinnai – Part-time Diary* written by Professor Ryuji Hayashiuchi of

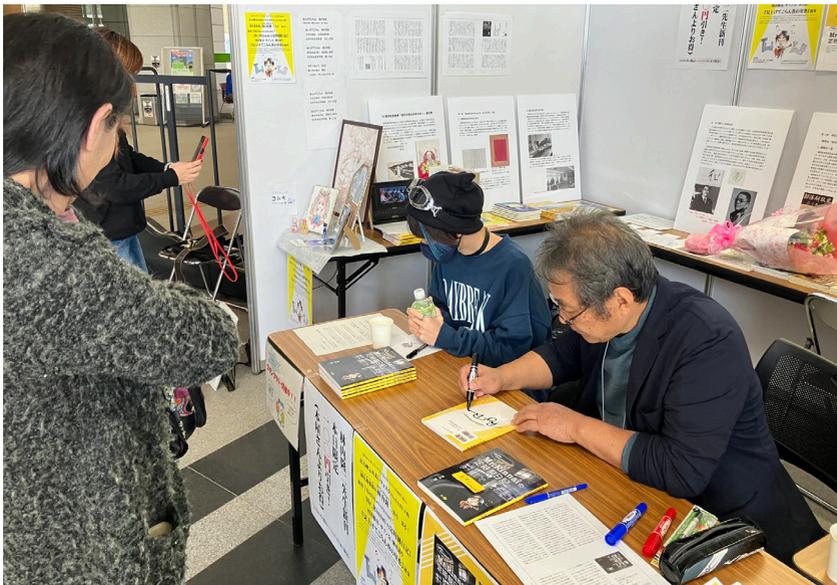


Hello, everyone!! Mr Rinnai – Part-time Diary

the human rights band Ganjigarama was launched during the Festival. Professor Hayashi wrote the serial “A little good story” as part of the “Mr. Rinnai’s Part-time Diary” series in the *Liberation* newsletter.

He signed copies of the book along with Kotoki, a student who drew the illustrations in the book, during the festival. They also gave a performance entitled “Look up and see the stars of the night” in collaboration with Recorder Rainbow Earth. Due to Professor Hayashi’s personality, many of his students came to see him frequently at the back stage at 10 o’clock before the performance. Both Hayashi and Kotoki were chased by those who bought the book for their autograph leaving them without any break before their performance at 12 o’clock.

The Kitakyushu City Fureai Festa features stage events related to human rights, panel exhibitions, and presentations on the daily activities of human



Ryuji Hayashiuchi signing copies of the book along with Kotoki, who drew the illustrations in the book.

rights and welfare organizations, allowing people to think about the importance of human rights in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. In the 2024 Fureai Festa, there were also the Barrier-free Stage at the Arts Festival for People with Disabilities and a lecture on human rights by lawyer Yukio Kikuchi, entitled “The Internet and Human Rights.”

The Institute also launched the long-awaited book version of The Town with the Pure River (清らかな川の町) series, which was serialized intermittently in Liberation. It was authored by Mieko Iwasaki. The book version included unpublished stories.

This work is a humorous depiction from a young girl’s perspective of the joys and sorrows of people living in the former entertainment district of the late Showa period. It is the story of a resilient girl with a “will to live,” who interacts with adults on an equal footing like a Hakata version of “Jarinko Chie,” remains cheerful even in the face of adversity, and is shrewd enough to use tattooed adults to get some advantage.

The book was the winner of the Fukuoka Mayor’s Award in 2025. Naoko Higashi of the Fukuoka Mayor’s Award Selection Committee described the book as a

highly engaging work that vividly depicts the real lives of people working in Fukuoka’s entertainment district in the 1960s and 1970s through the eyes of a young girl who lives there.

The story depicts the interactions between local people, and a number of truly unique characters make an appearance. I thought the author’s ability to portray these people not only in pretty words, but also unashamedly show their vulgarity, cunningness, fear, and weakness, and then connect them to a certain lovability was wonderful.

The conversations, which casually made use of the Fukuoka dialect, were deep and touched my heart. A lingering, sad feeling remained after I finished reading. After reading, the meaning of the title will appear in a different light.

Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21

The Institute participates in the Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 by organizing Citizens’ Course on human rights issues.

The Course had the following topics:

- a. 71st Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 – 25 September 2024



Mieko Iwasaki with her book.



Town with the Pure River

Theme: Current incidents of discrimination against Burakumin and efforts by schools and governments to overcome these and eliminate discrimination

b. 72nd Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 – 8 November 2024

Theme: Today's state of discrimination in Buraku and eliminating discrimination.

Takashi Akai, Secretary of the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters, was the main speaker in the Course during the 71st Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21.

The Course was held with the following rationale: The Anti-Buraku Discrimination Promotion Act was entering its eighth year. However, the state of Buraku discrimination continued to be serious, as seen in online Buraku discrimination. In Kitakyushu City, “discriminatory graffiti,” “discriminatory postcards,” and “discriminatory memos” were found one after another even after the enforcement of the Law for the Promotion of Elimination of Discrimination. In addition, at school sites, discriminatory remarks by children and parents have been repeatedly made.⁷

Thus the Course during the 72nd Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 focused on how to overcome the reality of Buraku discrimination and create a city free of discrimination in Kitakyushu.

Akai, the Buraku Liberation League Central Headquarters Secretary, presented examples from various regions across the country on how to overcome Buraku discrimination during the 72nd Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21.

Participants' Responses

The participants of the activities of the Institute express their thoughts by answering survey form at the end of each activity.

In the lecture held on 15 December 2024 entitled “Visiting the Past, Charting the Future” given by Uesugi, the participants expressed the following thoughts:

- I'm glad I listened to you teacher. I want to study. I want to talk about the teacher. (50s)

- I wondered how much discrimination was created by the “family system” (discrimination against Buraku, discrimination against women). In order to realize the idea that there should be no “family system” anymore in order to be truly free, I thought it would be best to realize the separate couples formulation (it seems that “female bloodline is not a big deal”). From the Heian period to the Meiji period, there were many stories about Buddhist scriptures, and it was interesting. Thank you. I'm going to read my books again. (50s)

- As I listened to the story, I finally wanted to study further the relationship between boundaries and discrimination in the process. I found a lot of very insightful things about customs and institutional changes. (60s)

- I understand better the answer to the question “Where did Buraku discrimination come from?” than the last time it was discussed. It was interesting to know related Buddhist scriptures. In addition, Buraku discrimination was created by politics, so there were fewer Buraku people in the Tohoku region, I thought, “I see.” (50s)

- The fact that Buraku discrimination originated from Hinduism in India was taught in a very easy-to-understand way that I didn't understand just from the previous presentation. I'm a teacher at a primary school. In teaching history, I want to create materials on ancient places that can be used before linking [it to Buraku discrimination]. I'm going to try my best to create a lesson with a long span that will allow me to think about how discrimination works and how it is being created. Thank you for planning this. I'm glad I came.
- [The topic] was explained through the chronology of human rights, and it was quite easy to understand. (60s)
- It was a very interesting three hours. I think I learned about the use of the education field [in eliminating discrimination] and teachers have to think about it. And I hope we can eliminate discrimination in education by giving advice and other things. (60s)
- Do teachers feel a ray of hope for ending discrimination? Gotta keep going! I thought. (50s)

People who read the book *The Town with the Pure River ~ The Little Female Warrior of the Entertainment District* expressed their impressions during the forum on the launching of the book:

The brightness and toughness of the main character, a girl, was impressive. Even in an environment where terrible father, flower streets, and yakuza are familiar to her, she lives her life to the fullest, valuing her connections with people. Even though I am not blessed by any means, I also have a kind heart that cares about my adopted child. I enjoyed reading it while empathizing with the unique characters, slightly funny episodes, and various things that represent the times.

I was very angry with the father. The violence is terrible, and I realize that he only cared about the woman he live with and his own self rather than the happiness of his child. I couldn't help but think that it would have been nice if this man had been changed. The way each character is portrayed is interesting and can be imagined realistically. I am very happy that this story was written as I felt and saw the town and people of Kiyokawa from the time as a four-year old, shed light on people who lived through the times to the fullest, and people who would have been forgot-

ten without anyone caring if she had not written it. Everyone is living life to the fullest.

The enactment of the Anti-Prostitution Law and the abolition of the red line coincided with the year I was born. When I was a child, I heard the word “red line” without knowing what it meant, and I remember the place where I went, which I don’t know anymore. Mieko, who grew up among the people who live in Kiyokawa, is smart, active, and strong. No matter what kind of adversity she faced, she was able to get out of it because she received love from the people around her. The warmth of not abandoning the weak is strangely nostalgic and comfortable. Nowadays, people who live smartly in smart cities come out, but we must not forget that there are still people who are hurt by being a woman and who live their lives by making a business of sexuality.

I thought that the main character was a person who really had the power to live. I learned the power of relating to people and the ability to ask for help. And there were people who responded to it and people who were involved, and the relationship between people was warm and interesting and sad. At the same time, the harshness of the times was depicted as it was, and it made me think about the fact that although the semi-official red line was abolished, there would have been no support and no change in consciousness just by abolishing it.

Concluding Remark

In recent years, the human rights situation has become more diverse and internationalized. While the Buraku issue remains a central issue, the Institute has come to recognize its social responsibility to respond to these needs as an even more important issue.

Endnotes

1 For the results and issues of the research activities of the study group, see the special feature in “Buraku Liberation History: Fukuoka” No. 100 (部落解放史・ふくおか 第100号).

2 The English version of the Suiheisha Declaration [Declaration of Human Rights in Japan] adopted in 1922 the National Levelers’ Association (Zenkoku Suiheisha) is available here www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/1922/04/declaration-of-human-rights-in-japan.html.

3 See Information about the Buraku Issues Committee, www.f-jinken.com/activity/burakumondai.html.

4 See Information on Sekiryu Juku and Chikuzen Bamboo Spear Rebellion Walk, www.f-jinken.com/activity/ishitakijuku.html.

5 See Information on the Overseas Human Rights Study Tour Planning Committee, www.f-jinken.com/activity/kaigaistudy.html.

6 In South Korea, this tragedy is described as follows:

The Jeju April 3 Uprising and Massacre refers to a period of political violence on South Korea's Jeju Island from 1948 to 1954. It began after a protest in 1947 was violently suppressed by police, triggering mass unrest. The conflict escalated into an armed uprising against government forces, who carried out brutal crackdowns. Over the course of seven years, as many as 30,000 civilians—around 10% of Jeju's population—were killed. The tragedy, once heavily censored, is now seen as a symbol of state violence and a pivotal chapter in Korea's modern history.

The Chosun Daily, www.chosun.com/english/national-en/2025/04/11/VRDGLKS5BDHHG2M5L27NEK7ZA/.

7 Based on joint announcement of the course in the 72nd Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 by respective Chairpersons of Kitakyushu Human Rights Forum 21 and Fukuoka Prefectural Human Rights Research Institute, www.facebook.com/fukuokajinken/.

Human Rights Promotion and Education in Local Communities: Some Examples from Japan

Jefferson R. Plantilla

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS play a significant role in human rights promotion and education. They have resources, though limited, that can be used to ensure that the people within their jurisdiction understand human rights, act on them and respect the rights of others.

Japan has a long history of local human rights movement that involved the anti-Buraku discrimination movement, and subsequently movements by other sectors in society. These movements greatly influenced the local governments in the country in helping promote human rights and resolve human rights issues.

The human rights promotion and education activities of local governments and organizations getting their support are varied. They cater to local contexts of people and cover recent human rights issues such as those related to the internet and problems faced by persons with disabilities, non-Japanese residents and other sectors of society.

Human Rights Education Policy

Kenzo Tomonaga, then Director of the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRRRI), summarized the development of human rights education policy of the Japanese government since the mid-1990s:¹

On 15 December 1995, in response to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the Japanese government established the Promotion Headquarters for the Decade (HQ). The HQ is chaired by the Prime Minister, vice-chaired by the Cabinet Chief Secretary and 4 other Cabinet ministers.² It also designated the vice-ministers of 22³ ministries and government agencies as senior staff. The HQ Secretariat is stationed at the Cabinet Councilors' Office on Internal Affairs.

On 4 July 1997, the HQ announced the adoption of a National Plan of Action on Human Rights Education (1997-2004). This plan was finalized after getting comments from the public, though not all comments were incorporated in the final version. The plan [paid] special attention to the promotion of human rights education not only in schools but also in private corporations and the civil society in general. It provide[d] for the development of human rights programs for professional groups such as public servants, teachers, members of the police, personnel of the Self-Defense Forces, medical professionals, social care workers, and journalists. It highlight[ed] the rights of women, children, the aged, persons with disabilities, Buraku people, Ainu people, foreigners, persons with HIV/AIDS, and former convicts. It also emphasize[d] the need to support the work of the UN in assisting the development of human rights education programs in developing countries.

In December 2000, the Japanese parliament enacted “The Law on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-raising.” This law define[d] human rights education as educational activities aimed at nurturing the “spirit of respecting human rights,” and human rights awareness-raising as public relations and other activities aimed at popularizing and deepening respect for and understanding of human rights. This law [made] the national and local governments responsible for carrying out human rights education/awareness-raising activities. As required by this law, the “Basic Plan for the Law on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising” was adopted in March 2002. This new plan [was] meant to supplement the 1997 plan.

The main legal and policy bases of local human rights promotion and education initiatives in Japan are the 2000 law and the 2002 Basic Plan.⁴ The 2000 law aimed to “clarify the responsibilities of the national government, local governments, and citizens for the promotion of policies concerning human rights education and human rights awareness-raising, to provide for necessary measures, and thereby to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights.” Article 4 provides:

(Responsibilities of Local Governments)

Article 5 Local governments shall be responsible for formulating and implementing policies on human rights education and human rights awareness-raising based on the conditions of

the community, in accordance with the fundamental principle [of this law], while coordinating with the national government.

The 2002 Basic Plan was partially amended in 2011 with the addition of a provision on the abduction of Japanese by North Korea.⁵ On 6 June 2025, the government issued the second Basic Plan for Human Rights Awareness.⁶ HURIGHTS OSAKA reports that⁷

[t]he Second Basic Plan, which takes into account changes in the socio-economic situation and international trends since the formulation of the First Basic Plan, lists the following as its main changes: (1) the addition of a section on “business and human rights,” (2) the reorganization of “human rights violations on the Internet” as a cross-cutting theme for each human rights issue, (3) the addition of “hate speech” and “sexual minorities” as individual human rights issues, and (4) the separate discussion of “leprosy [Hansen’s disease] patients, former patients and their families” from the discussion of “patients with infectious diseases, etc.”

The law and the 2002/2025 Basic Plan (amended and second plan) are cited by local governments in Japan in explaining their human rights promotion and education programs.

In this article, human rights promotion covers human rights awareness-raising activities at the local level.

The 2002 Basic Plan lists the institutions responsible for implementing the plan at the national level:⁸

Human Rights Bureau of the Ministry of Justice, and its subordinate organizations, such as human rights departments of Legal Affairs Bureaus and District Legal Affairs Bureaus. Additionally, there are volunteers in the private sector, who are appointed by the Minister of Justice, under the Human Rights Volunteers System. These human rights bodies of the Ministry of Justice are coherently carrying out human rights awareness-raising activities.

It stresses that⁹

other ministries and agencies are engaging in various human rights awareness-raising activities in relation to affairs under

their jurisdiction, respectively, and local governments, public interest corporations, private organizations and companies, etc. are also carrying out diverse human rights-related activities.

It provides for collaboration and cooperation with local governments, etc.:¹⁰

Roles of local governments, public interest corporations, private organizations and companies are significant in promoting human rights education and awareness-raising. All these entities are expected to make voluntary efforts in line with the purport of the Basic Plan, while maintaining organic mutual collaboration as needed depending on their positions and fields of expertise. In the meantime, the national government should give due consideration to efforts and opinions of these entities when implementing the Basic Plan.

It discusses the existing efforts of local government on human rights awareness-raising:

B. Awareness-Raising Activities by Local Governments

Prefectural and municipal governments are carrying out various awareness-raising activities depending on their regional circumstances, respectively. These activities range from the preparation and delivery of awareness-raising materials to surveys and studies on relevant means and holding of events and training sessions. Concrete content thereof varies by region. In particular, prefectural governments conduct projects to lead municipal governments, projects that are difficult for municipal governments to handle, and projects to assist municipal governments, depending on respective circumstances, from the broad-based standpoint of encompassing municipalities and from the perspective of complementing municipal governments. Municipal governments are promoting meticulous activities closely linked to local communities upon diverse opportunities from the standpoint of being closest to local residents and responsible for local administration necessary for their everyday life.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) launched its “Project of Entrusting Human Rights Awareness-Raising Activities to Local Authorities” (also referred to as “Entrustment to Local Authorities”) “to entrust a wide range of

awareness-raising activities covering all human rights issues to prefectures and government-designated cities, etc. Specific activities include holding lectures and training sessions, preparing reference materials, placing commercial messages on TV, and making advertisements on the internet, newspapers and local papers, etc.”

Another project of the MOJ called “Project of Vitalizing Local Human Rights Awareness-Raising Activities” is an

[e]ntrustment to Local Authorities in collaboration with the network associations of human rights awareness-raising activities ... This cross-sectional network consists of the human rights bodies of the Ministry of Justice and prefectural and municipal bodies and public interest corporations engaging in human rights awareness-raising activities.

Ministry of Justice Awareness-raising Activities

In line with the “Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising Promotion Act,” and the “Basic Plan,” the MOJ undertakes several awareness-raising activities aimed at disseminating and raising the “concept of respect for human rights such as workshops, sharing information, and public relation activities, excluding human rights education.”

The MOJ lists these activities:¹¹

Human Rights Week¹²

In Japan, the Ministry of Justice and the National Federation of Associations of Human Rights Volunteers¹³ designated the week ending on December 10 each year as Human Rights Week in 1949, and have carried out human rights awareness-raising activities throughout the country to facilitate spreading the idea of respecting human rights.

Human Rights Lectures¹⁴

“Human Rights Lectures” are [...] human rights awareness-raising activities where citizens learn about the preciousness of life and compassion. This is conducted mainly by Human Rights Volunteers nationwide.

Human Rights Lectures target elementary school students primarily but also target junior high or high school students, university students and adults.

National Essay Contest on Human Rights for Junior High School Students¹⁵

MOJ “has organized the annual National Human Rights Essay Contest for Junior High School Students since 1981. This program aims to help junior high school students, who will be major players in the next generation, to deepen their understanding of the importance and necessity of respecting human rights, and foster awareness of human rights, through writing essays on human rights issues.”

Human Rights Flower Campaign¹⁶

The Human Rights Flower Campaign, which has been held since 1982, is an awareness-raising activity targeted mainly for elementary school students.

During the campaign, children are given flower seeds or bulbs and grow them by cooperating together. Through this experience, children are anticipated to realize the preciousness of life, nurture a warm-hearted spirit and learn tenderness and compassion.

Local Human Rights Promotion and Education Initiatives

A number of institutions at the local level in Japan that undertake human rights promotion and education activities have existed for decades prior to the 2000 law on human rights education. They were established with specific focus but subsequently widened their main agenda with the adoption of human rights (instead of rights specific to a sector in society) as general focus.

These institutions, consisting of museums, archives, human rights centers, research institutes, etc. in Hokkaido, Mie, Shiga, Kyoto, Nara, Osaka, Tottori, Tokushima, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, Kumamoto and Oita prefectures, established a network in July 1996. This is the Human Rights Network with thirty members as of 2025 that collect, store, conduct research, and exhibit materials related to human rights, with the aim of contributing to research, education, and awareness-raising for the elimination of discrimination and

the understanding of human rights, and promoting mutual exchange.¹⁷ There are other local human rights centers, however, that are not members of the network yet.

On the other hand, many local governments support human rights promotion by printing leaflets and flyers, newsletters and posters; producing videos, organizing lectures; and undertaking awareness-raising activities (exhibition of posters, photos and other materials, book fairs, film screenings).

The Human Rights Database of the Human Rights Library provides a list of different activities on human rights promotion in different cities and towns all over Japan.¹⁸

Objectives of Local Initiatives

In this article, specific examples of local level human rights promotion and education activities refer to the cities of Settsu and Yao in Osaka prefecture, Kobe city in Hyogo prefecture, and Kitakyushu city in Fukuoka prefecture.

The Yao City Human Rights Association started as the Yao City Dowa Business Promotion Council that was founded in 1968. The Hyogo Prefectural Human Rights Awareness Association, based in Kobe city, was established on 20 November 1991. The Settsu City Human Rights Association was established in 1997 as a civic group made up of school district promotion committees organized for each of the city's five junior high school districts and thirty-six related organizations, and supported by Settsu city.¹⁹

Local human rights institutions generally aim at raising awareness of human rights among the people by carrying out various awareness-raising and training activities, and contributing to the resolution of human rights issues, including the Buraku issue.²⁰

To achieve the objectives, these institutions perform a number of functions including research (surveys included), consultation and educational functions. The Yao City Human Rights Association has defined its functions as follows (taken from the booklet *We Have a Dream! The Story of the Yao City Human Rights Association*²¹):

What is Yao City Human Rights Association?²²

<Functions and characteristics of the Yao City Human Rights Association>

The Yao City Human Rights Association is a central cooperative organization for human rights administration in Yao City, and in addition to having social work functions, it also cooperates with the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association, a foundation.

The Yao City Human Rights Association is an institution that guarantees the participation of discriminated citizens (minority citizens) in city government.

The Yao City Human Rights Association serves as a center for various consultation activities related to human rights.

The Yao City Human Rights Association will identify and analyze cases of human rights violations that occur within the city, take the necessary steps to resolve the cases, and carry out activities necessary to provide relief to the victims of human rights [violations/abuses].

The Yao City Human Rights Association proposes human rights policies to the city administration and other organizations. It also conducts research and studies for that purpose.

The Yao City Human Rights Association serves as a center for educational and awareness-raising activities related to human rights.

The Yao City Human Rights Association is working to understand the reality of discrimination.

Programs

It appears that many city and town governments in Japan have complied with the 2000 “Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising Promotion Act” and the 2002 “Basic Plan.” Some might have adopted a local version of the national policy that would address local context (issues, resources, programs, etc.). Again, the activities done by institutions at the local level, most of which are supported by local governments, follow the national human rights education policy (see The Human Rights Database of the Human Rights Library).

The Yao city government has adopted a human rights education plan. The Second Yao City Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising Plan (2021) cites Article 5 of the 2000 law as its basis.²³

The Settsu City Human Rights Association (an organization supported by Settsu City), focuses on human rights issues that exist in the community such as those listed in Chapter 4, Section 2 of the 2002 Basic Plan:²⁴

1. Women: Sexual harassment, domestic violence, stalking, etc.
2. Children (bullying, corporal punishment, abuse, etc.)
3. Elderly people (bullying, abuse, etc.)
4. Persons with disabilities (bullying, abuse, etc.)
5. Buraku issues (employment, marriage, discrimination related to land, etc.)
6. Ainu People: Prejudice
7. Foreigners (prejudice, employment)
8. HIV-infected persons, leprosy patients, etc. (prejudice, assumptions) [leprosy/Hansen disease patients are separately listed under the 2025 second Basic Plan]
9. People who have completed their sentences and been released from prison (prejudice, finding a job)
10. Crime Victims, etc. (prejudice)
11. Human rights violations via the Internet (harassment, sexual assault)
12. The issue of abductions by North Korean authorities
13. Others.

The Kitakyushu City government in Fukuoka prefecture adopted in November 2005 the “Kitakyushu City Human Rights Administration Guidelines” in order to promote the “development of a human rights culture.” The city also established the Human Rights Promotion Center, which is responsible for human rights awareness, and the Human Rights Planning Department, Dowa Countermeasures Division, which is responsible for planning and coordinating human rights administration. On 1 April 2007, they were integrated and renamed the Kitakyushu City Human Rights Promotion Center, Human Rights Culture Promotion Division. In order to promote the “development of human rights culture in the city,” the city works to enhance human rights policies and human rights awareness projects.²⁵

The human rights promotion and education activities of local governments are similar to some extent to the activities being held by the MOJ at the national level.

There are also local government declarations for specific sectors such as for children, which support the rights of the child. Kitakyushu City adopted the “Child-Centered City Declaration” in November 2023, for example. Other local governments enact ordinances such as the “Kawasaki City Ordinance on the Rights of the Child,” passed by the Kawasaki City Council on 21 December 2000, and came into force on 1 April 2001.²⁶ These declarations and ordinances are bases of local level human rights promotion and education activities.

Activities

Selected activities of several cities in Japan are presented below to illustrate examples of human rights promotion and education activities.

a. Lectures and Seminars

Lecture sessions are held by the Kitakyushu city government during the Fukuoka Prefecture Buraku Issue Awareness Month. The lectures are given by NGO workers, artists and academics and discuss different issues. In 2024, nine lectures were held in the month of July:

1. The future of “Dowa” education (10 July 2024)
2. I fled from the village (12 July 2024)
3. Thank you for being born (13 July 2024)
4. Protecting children’s rights (19 July 2024)
5. “Halfway” to eliminating Buraku discrimination – Let’s be inspired together (20 July 2024)
6. Let’s think with Momomaru-kun! What lies at the root of the Burakumin problem (20 July 2024)
7. Building a city with a culture of human rights through music (20 July 2024)
8. Future human rights and Dowa education (22 July 2024)
9. Consider human rights and Buraku discrimination issues as issues that concern you, here and now (27 July 2024).

As part of its human rights awareness activities, the Settsu City Human Rights Association holds seminars for local citizens. This is the “Human Seminar” series of the Association. It also holds “Memorial Lectures” after holding its regular general meeting.

The Hyogo Prefectural Human Rights Promotion Association holds human rights symposiums. On 12 November 2024, it held a human rights symposium titled “How to Live in a Diversifying Society: Based on the Results of the Prefectural Citizens’ Awareness Survey on Human Rights.”

Human Rights Learning Academy

The Yao City Human Rights Association launched in 1998 a human rights education course called *Jinken Rakugakujuku* (じんけん楽習塾) or Human Rights Learning Academy. This course continues to run till the present.

Jinken Rakugakujuku aims at making people understand “Jinken” (human rights) not as a concern of “other people” but a concern of “you” (each person, everyone).

People learn about human rights in workshops, along with learning facilitator’s skills, planning human rights learning activities, and other matters. Since different types of people gather in *Jinken Rakugakujuku* sessions, one attraction is the excitement of meeting new people.

Jinken Rakugakujuku has been taking up a variety of issues relating to children, women, persons with disabilities, Burakumin, Hansen disease victims, day laborers, non-Japanese residents, among others, and about peace, democracy, internet, literacy, diversity and other issues.

In 2025, *Jinken Rakugakujuku* sessions consisted of the following:²⁷

- 1st session, 14 May 2025: “Staring” at discrimination and the deepening issue of discrimination against foreigners
- 2nd session, 28 May 2025: Choices we can make as people living in the nuclear age to abolish nuclear weapons
- 3rd session, 11 June 2025: Sex Work Is Work - Discrimination against the sex industry
- 4th session, 25 June 2025: Writing, reading and talking about “Buraku Feminism”
- 5th session, 9 July 2025: Learning from Jane Elliot’s “Buraku Experience Workshop”

- 6th session, 23 July 2025: Time to stop and think - Reflecting on myself and society through current events.

The sessions are facilitated by diverse sets of resource persons including people working with non-governmental organizations, academics doing research on human rights issues, and professional trainers.

For the past five years, six sessions were held on different topics per year (see Annex A for the list of topics for the sessions held from 2021 to 2024).

b. Human Rights Week

The Settsu City Human Rights Association organizes the Human Rights Week that includes human rights education awareness exhibition, art exhibitions in each junior secondary school district, “human seminars” (series of human rights awareness lectures), and lending of DVDs and books.²⁸

The Kitakyushu city holds Human Rights Week from December 4th to 10th of each year. The events during the week include commemorative lectures (lectures on human rights issues), street awareness-raising (distributing awareness leaflets on the streets), and promotion of human rights awareness information material (such as the information paper “Life, Love, Heart” [いのち あい ころ]).

c. Human Rights Festivals

Japanese communities have a tradition of holding festivals that likely provided a reason why a human rights festival can easily be appreciated. In Minoh city in Osaka prefecture, Rightpia 21 (Kayano Chuo Culture of Human Rights Center) organizes the Kayano Otakara Jinken Matsuri (Kayano Human Rights Festival). The Tokyo Metropolitan Government organized the Human Rights Festa Tokyo 2024 with the aim of providing a space for a wide range of citizens to think about and deepen their understanding of the importance of human rights. The Human Rights Festa 2024 was held in several venues in Tokyo. Each venue had its own unique program. At Shinjuku Station West Exit Plaza, dance performances and live music allowed people to experience “inclusion” where “everyone can shine through.” At AEON Mall Musashimurayama, sign language singing performances and deaf table tennis demonstrations were meant to enable everyone from adults to children to enjoy the activities. At the Tokyo International Forum, programs touched on and encouraged people to think about various human rights issues, such

as human rights violations on the internet and talk shows on the theme of LGBTQ+.²⁹

Fureai Festa

The Kitakyushu city government holds the annual Fureai Festa, which features events related to human rights such as panel exhibitions and presentations on the daily activities of human rights and welfare organizations.

The program of Fureai Festa 2024, held on 24 November 2024, included

- an awarding ceremony for the Art Exhibition for People with Disabilities held in collaboration with the 17th Kitakyushu City Arts Festival for People with Disabilities;
- performance of “Makoto’s Genki Adventure” by a famous gymnast; and
- lecture by a lawyer entitled “The Internet and Human Rights.”

People from inside and outside the city gave song and dance performances.

At the Community Square, human rights and welfare groups introduced their activities, held panel exhibitions, and sold small items.

The events during Fureai Festa are held in an atmosphere of fun to encourage people to think about human rights, with the voluntary participation of citizens and human rights groups.

Hyogo Human Festival

The Hyogo Prefecture adopted the Hyogo Vision 2050,³⁰ which serves as a guide for the prefectural government. Hyogo Vision 2050 aims to realize a society in which the human rights of all people are respected, the ability to think from the perspective of others is cultivated, the individuality of each person is valued regardless of age, gender, disability, nationality, etc., and no one is left behind.

To achieve this, raising awareness on human rights is important in order to cultivate a “spirit of coexistence” and that each and every resident of the prefecture hone the sensitivity to understand and be considerate of the feelings and positions of others.

Human rights activities are held during summer, in the month of August. The Hyogo Human Festival is held within this month.

The “Hyogo Human Festival 2024 in Minami Awaji” [「ひょうご・ヒューマンフェスティバル2024 in南あわじ」] had the following program:³¹

- Minamiawaji Junior High School Folk Performing Arts Club
- Awaji Puppet Theatre “Ebisu Mai”
- Opening ceremony on presentation of the Hyogo Human Rights

Declaration

- Human Rights Lecture: “Always Keep Respect in Your Heart”
 - ◇ Lecture by a former Japan Women’s National Soccer Team Member
- Arena interaction event
 - ◇ Healthy jogging class with Hyogo Human Rights Ambassador
 - ◇ Blind & walking soccer experience class
 - ◇ Para sports experience (boccia, table tennis, volleyball, para sports equipment exhibition, etc.)
- JINKEN [Human Rights] Summer Festival 2024 (various group exhibition events)
 - ◇ Screening of a human rights awareness video “Important People” (theme: Internet and Buraku discrimination)
 - ◇ Intellectual and developmental disability simulation, color vision simulation
- Children’s Multicultural Education Forum and Children’s Multicultural Center Exhibition
- Consultation corner (human rights consultation, educational consultation regarding foreign students, etc.).

d. Publications

Local governments produce publications that provide the public with easy-to-understand information and discussion of issues and human rights. The Yao City Human Rights Association publishes an annual booklet series entitled *We Have a Dream! The Story of the Yao City Human Rights Association* [私たちには夢がある!ブックレット]. The booklet records human rights work including information and education related to human rights, such as the following:³²

- Booklet 11 (2020) has the theme “Transforming human rights from being the concern of other people to being your own concern.” It features Jinken Rakugaku Juku. It explains that the words “Rakugaku Juku,” which are pronounced as “gakushujuku,” are shortened into

“rakugaku” instead of “gakushu” because of the serious image of learning about human rights. The character “raku” expresses the desire to learn and make people learn in a fun way.³³

- Booklet 10 (2019) has the theme “Human Rights Milestones” and features the three laws on eliminating discrimination that came into force in 2016.³⁴ It also discusses the reality that severe cases of discrimination and human rights violations still occur relating to issues covered by the laws. Since the three laws provide that these issues need to be resolved by society as a whole, it is hoped that the laws would change people’s awareness and lead to efforts to eliminate discrimination.³⁵
- Booklet 9 (2018) has the theme “Recommendations for learning about the Buraku issue” and was prepared in consideration of inexperienced teachers and staff who wanted to promote and expand the study of the Buraku issue in Yao city. It is hoped that by studying the Buraku issue, children would look at their own lives, connect with their peers, and create their own way of life. This booklet series contains many examples of studying human rights in social studies subjects.³⁶
- - Booklet 8 (2017) has the theme “Yao’s Way of Dealing with Discrimination.” This booklet was created with the aim of encouraging people to think about discriminatory incidents that have occurred in Yao City. Simply listing events could result in a gloomy, hopeless read, and above all, it would fail to grasp the issues in depth, so we enlisted the help of seven people who are active in Yao City. From Chapter 2 onwards, these seven people talk about the issues they are raising, the status of their activities, and their own “dreams.”
- Booklet 7 (2016) has the theme “What is the ‘Buraku problem’ in Yao?” The booklet addresses the problem of “public opinion,” or the “popular mood” leaning towards discrimination. There is no end to discriminatory incidents and anonymous information about discrimination and prejudice against Burakumin continues to flood the Internet and spread more and more every day. The main objective of this booklet is to ensure that “public opinion that does not tolerate discrimination” is not swallowed up by “public opinion that leans toward discrimination,” by learning about the reality of dis-

crimination and its background, and taking firm steps throughout society to overcome it.³⁷

In Hyogo prefecture, the Hyogo Human Rights Promotion Association publishes *Kizuna*, a quarterly newsletter. For 2024-2025 issues, the following were the main themes:³⁸

- Have you received my little SOS? - May/June 2025 issue
- Are you taking care of yourself? Your body and your mind - March/April 2025 issue
- Is nationality important in judging people? - January/February 2025 issue
- Are your human rights respected in the workplace? - November/December 2024 issue.

Kizuna is available in e-book and pdf formats.

The Kitakyushu City government publishes the booklet called *Let's think with Momomaru-kun!*, an “awareness booklet” meant to help eliminate human rights abuses on the Internet. It also produced human rights awareness information paper entitled *Life, Love, Heart* [いのち あい ところ], which is distributed to each household.³⁹

The Settsu City Human Rights Association produced the Human Rights Education Awareness Collection series (人権教育啓発作品集) from 2018 to 2022.⁴⁰

Local governments also publish instructional materials for moral education in school with contents related to different human rights issues.⁴¹ Most of the human rights issues listed in 2002/2025 Basic Plan are covered by instructional materials. However, the instructional materials do not have contents on several issues (as of 2024) such as “Social Integration,” “Ainu people,” “Disaster-Related Human Rights Issues and Harassment.” The issues “Internet Human Rights Violations” and “COVID-19 Prejudice and Discrimination” appear in one material each, and “Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation” appears in two materials. The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, “a local public body” “has continuously supplied instructional materials” on human rights issues to support moral education. It is cited for having “implemented the Human Rights Education Program School Education Edition.”⁴²

Local Governments and Human Rights Promotion and Education

The role of local governments in human rights work is given global recognition as shown in the World Human Rights Cities Forum being held annually

in Gwanju city, Korea and supported by the city government of Gwangju. The conference promotes the idea of human rights city, which is explained as follows:⁴³

Human Rights Cities recognize cities as key players in promoting and protecting human rights. The term generally refers to cities where local governments and residents are governed morally and legitimately under human rights principles. The Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights Cities, adopted during the very first World Human Rights Cities Forum, defines human rights cities as ‘both a local community and a socio-political process in a local context, where human rights play a key role as the fundamental values and guiding principles.’ Human rights cities emphasize the importance of inter-local and international cooperation and solidarity among cities engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights, securing wide participation from all actors and interest groups, in particular socially marginalized and vulnerable groups, and the importance of effective and independent human rights protection and management systems.

The experiences of local governments in Japan provide concrete examples of how cities can act as “key players in promoting and protecting human rights.” It appears that many local governments in Japan work with other institutions particularly the local human rights organizations in “promoting and protecting human rights” of the local residents.

Though the cities of Yao, Settsu and Kitakyushu have not expressed the desire to become human rights cities, they do tasks that support human rights. Their activities, supportive of the national law and basic plan on human rights education, illustrate locally contextualized human rights promotion and education. They work with local organizations and dwell on issues relevant to the people in the local communities.

Sakai city, however, in Osaka prefecture has a long history of adopting policies and programs that support human rights and human rights promotion and education.

The city adopted the “Human Rights Protection City” Declaration in 1980, after Japan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1979. It enacted in 2007 the Sakai City Peace and Human Rights

Promotion Ordinance to support the development of Sakai city as a City of International Peace and Human Rights.

On gender equality, Sakai City became the first local government in Japan to declare itself a city aiming to achieve gender equality in January 1995. In 2002, the city also became Osaka Prefecture's first local government to enforce the Ordinance regarding the Promotion of the Formation of a Gender Equal Society. In 2013, the city joined the Safe Cities Global Initiative of UN Women, the first city in Japan to do so.

Sakai city subsequently adopted the Sakai Equal Participation Plan, Basic Plan for Prevention of Spousal Violence and Protection of Victims, Sakai City Human Rights Policy Promotion Plan, and the Plan for Advancement of Children and Youth. It also created the Human Rights Office, and established the Peace and Human Rights Museum and the Henomatsu Human Rights History Museum.⁴⁴

Finally, the city supports the Sakai City Human Rights Education Promotion Council (*Jinkenkyo*), established in 1979 with member-organizations composed of "civil groups, business and religious corporations." The Council organizes human rights education activities in the city.⁴⁵ It publishes a newsletter named *Kokoro-no-Hibiki* "to help increase awareness of human rights."⁴⁶

In the same manner, local human rights promotion and education activities receive support from the World Human Rights Education Programme, which in its Phase 2 provides for training of civil servants.⁴⁷ UNESCO promotes the training of local government officials regarding management of local government system. In the Outcome Document of the UNESCO-supported "Human Rights Go Local: What Works" – Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels, 1-8 February 2023, the following is recommended:⁴⁸

5. train the representatives of local governments, the local governments' future leadership, local administration, as well as front-line public servants in contact with rights-holders in the appropriate use of human rights-based management tools, and inform the civil society, the youth as the next generation experts, as well as the public on their role and function in human rights-based governance.

Specifically on public management, the Outcome Document provides:

encourage local level governments worldwide to

1. embed and highlight human rights in their public management systems with a view to govern by human rights objectives and fulfil their human rights obligations,
2. make an informed and explicit commitment to a human rights-based public management system that shall provide a continuous basis for respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights and good governance in local administrative practice.

Training of local government officials not only on how to promote human rights but also on how to embed human rights principles in their public management system is an essential part of the human rights work of local governments.

Conclusion

The experiences of a few local governments in Japan discussed in a limited manner in this article provide concrete examples of locally relevant activities that can help promote human rights to members of local communities.

The significance of these experiences lies in the fact that they are supported by local governments or results of implementation of local government programs. Involvement of local governments in human rights promotion and education at the local level is a major factor in facilitating public awareness of issues, their human rights implications and the need for enjoying/asserting rights by people in the local communities.

Annex A

Sessions of *Jinken Rakugakujuku* held since 2021 and reported by OYAOYA (OYAOYA News).

Year	Session and date	Topic
2021 ⁴⁹	1st session 19 May 2021	Considering the challenges of modern literacy – Osaka's literacy and Japanese language learning movement and Us
	2nd session 2 June 2021	Crossroads of Diversity Education: Experience diverse values through card games
	3rd session 12 June 2021	Kamagasaki's history and present
	4th session 30 June 2021	See, notice, and think - Your connection to color vision problems
	5th session 14 July 2021	Report on Nukku's activities and the current situation and support for children we meet at Nukku
	6th session 28 July 2021	Jane Elliot Returns
2022 ⁵⁰	1st session 18 May 2022	Let's celebrate the "100th Anniversary Declaration of the Suiheisha" together!
	2nd session 1 June 2022	Development of children with disabilities and outside school [sexual rights]
	3rd session 15 June 2025	The birthplace of poetry - Talking about leprosy literature
	4th session 29 June 2022	Yamadoku NEET
	5th session 13 July 2022	What is majority privilege?
	6th session 27 July 2022	Thinking again about the current era: Do you believe in democracy?
2023 ⁵¹	1st session 7 May 2023	Thinking about learning Buraku issues in an internet society
	2nd session 31 May 2023	Internet and Human Rights Violations
	3rd session 14 June 2025	Theater "Hosenka": Peace efforts using soft power by ordinary citizens
	4th session 28 June 2025	Sexuality education ~Education for living happily~
	5th session 12 July 2023	For children to grow up in the community
	6th session 19 July 2023	Children's Challenge: Why? Sugoroku adult experience

2024 ⁵²	1st session 15 May 2024	For children to protect their own safety
	2nd session 29 May 2024	Experiences of refugee applicants on specific activity visas
	3rd session 12 June 2024	Easy Japanese is a Courtesy in a Multicultural Society
	4th session 26 June 2024	Considering the issues faced by people without family registration from the perspective of support workers
	5th session 10 July 2024	Changing Buraku discrimination in modern society - Based on the findings of racism research
	6th session 24 July 2024	My Perspective on the Hansen's Disease Issue

Endnotes

1 Kenzo Tomonaga, The National Human Rights Education Program in Japan: Some Notes, *FOCUS Asia-Pacific*, Volume 30, December 2002, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2002/12/the-national-human-rights-education-program-in-japan-some-notes.html.

2 Under the January 2001 Cabinet reorganization, the four Cabinet Ministers are from the Ministries of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology; Justice; Foreign Affairs; and the Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications.

3 The number of Ministries since January 2001 has been reduced to 15.

4 The titles of the law and plan used in Japanese government documents are the following: Act on the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising (Act No. 147 of 2000) also referred to as the “Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising Promotion Act,” and the Basic Plan on Human Rights Education and Human Rights Awareness-Raising also referred to as “Basic Plan” (adopted in March 2002 and partially amended on 1 April 2011. The English text of 2000 law and Basic Plan is available in the 2018 White Paper on Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising, edited by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, page 11, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/pdf/white_paper2018.pdf. 2018 White Paper on Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising, op. cit.

5 See partial changes to the Basic Plan for Human Rights Education and Awareness-raising, Cabinet decision, April 1, 2011, Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.jp/content/000072340.pdf.

6 See Japan Govt OKs 2nd Basic Plan for Human Rights Awareness, Jiji Press, 6 June 2025, <https://sp.m.jiji.com/english/show/40597>. For the text of the second Basic Plan (in Japanese), see Jinken (Human Rights), Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.jp/JINKEN/JINKEN83/jinken83.html; www.moj.go.jp/content/001440366.pdf. The Human Rights Awareness Division, Human Rights Protection Bureau, Ministry of Justice of Japan solicited public comments on the draft renewed Basic Plan. 1,198 public comments were collected from 28 January 2025 to 26 February 2025. See Human Rights Awareness Division, Human Rights Protection Bureau, Ministry of Justice, <https://public-comment.e-gov.go.jp/pcm/1040?CLASSNAME=PCM1040&id=300120124&Mode=1>; Summary of Public Comments on the draft (in Japanese) <https://public-comment.e-gov.go.jp/pcm/download?seqNo=0000293810>.

7 “Basic Plan for Human Rights Education and Awareness” (2nd Edition) approved by Cabinet - First revision in 23 years (6/6), News in Brief, HURIGHTS OSAKA, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/newsinbrief-ja/section1/2025/07/2366.html.

HURIGHTS OSAKA notes that the summary of the public comments issued by the Ministry of Justice does not mention how much of the public opinions was reflected in the approved 2025 Basic Plan.

8 See 2018 White Paper on Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising, op. cit.

9 2018 White Paper on Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising, *ibid*.

10 2018 White Paper on Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising, *ibid.*, page 41.

11 See Awareness-raising Activities, Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/activities/campaign.html.

12 Human Rights Week, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/activities/week.html.

13 The “Human Rights Volunteers” are also known as Human Rights Commissioners, see Henry Seals, “Being a Human Rights Commissioner in Japan,” *FOCUS Asia-Pacific*, September 2023, volume 113, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section3/2023/09/being-a-human-rights-commissioner-in-japan.html.

14 Human Rights Lectures, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/activities/lectures.html.

15 National Essay Contest on Human Rights for Junior High School Students, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/m_hishoo6_00018.html.

16 Human Rights Flower Campaign, www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/HB/activities/index.html.

17 For the list of human rights centers in these prefectures, see “List of organizations and institutions that are members of the National Network for Human Rights Materials and Exhibitions,” <http://e-jinken.net/list.htm> and also <https://www.fukuokaken-jinken.or.jp/institutions/net.html>.

18 Visit Human Rights Database, www.jinken-library.jp/database/list.php?p=task&c=other.

19 See www.city.settsu.osaka.jp/soshiki/shichoukoushitsu/jinkenjoseiseisaku-ka/jinkenkyoukai/1946.html, and www.settsu-jinken.jp/index.html.

20 See overview of the Hyogo Prefectural Human Rights Awareness Association, www.hyogo-jinken.or.jp/info.

21 This excerpt is from page 24 of the booklet, www.yaojinken.org/about-rinen.

22 The English text is from the automatic online translation function of a browser (Chrome).

23 The Second Yao City Human Rights Education and Awareness-Raising Plan (Revised Edition) Summary — Creating a city that is kind to its citizens and whose citizens are kind—: Yao City Human Rights Culture Interaction Promotion Section, March 2021, www.city.yao.osaka.jp/res/projects/default_project/page/001/009/632/english.pdf.

24 Issue number 12 was added by Cabinet decision on 1 April 2011. Human rights topics - www.settsu-jinken.jp/subjects.html; see pages 19-35 of the Basic Plan, [op. cit.](#)

25 Human Rights Promotion Center, Human Rights Culture Promotion Division, www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/contents/924_11509.html.

26 Kawasaki City Ordinance on the Rights of the Child, www.city.kawasaki.jp/450/page/0000076916.html. Also, Tajimi City Ordinance on Children’s Rights, *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, volume 4, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/pdf/Tajimi%20City%20Ordinance%20on%20Children%27s%20Rights.pdf. On child-friendly city, see Isami Kinoshita, “Japanese Movements on Children’s Participation and the Child-friendly City,” *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, volume 6, 2015, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/3%20Japanese%20Movements%20on%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Participation.pdf.

- 27 じんけん楽習塾 (Jinken Rakugaku Juku), www.yaoinken.org/kouza.
- 28 Activities - www.settsu-jinken.jp/index.html.
- 29 For more information on the activities in the Human Rights Festa Tokyo 2024, visit this link: www.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/information/press/2024/10/2024100209.
- 30 For more information on Hyogo Vision 2050, visit (in Japanese language, <https://hyogo-vision.com/>).
- 31 About the “Hyogo Human Festival 2024 in Minami Awaji,” www.hyogo-jinken.or.jp/archives/9542.
- 32 Selling human rights booklets, Yao City Human Rights Association, www.yaoinken.org/book.
- 33 The 2020 series contains the following:
 Prologue: A place to think without fearing change
 Chapter 1: The past and future of Jinken Rakugaku Juku
 Chapter 2 Participatory learning and Jinken Rakugaku Juku
 Chapter 3 Participants’ Comments
 Chapter 4: Programs from Jinken Rakugaku Juku
 Reference Material 1 History of Jinken Rakugaku Juku
 Document 2: 20 years of progress as seen through OYAOYA News
 Epilogue: Towards establishing human rights as a universal culture
- 34 According to the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, there were two laws enacted in 2016: Act on the Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behaviour against Persons Originating from Outside Japan (June 2016) and the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination (December 2016). See Concluding observations on the combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of Japan (26 September 2018), www.mofa.go.jp/files/000406781.pdf. But the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, enacted in 2015, took effect in April 2016.
- 35 The 2019 series contains the following:
 Introduction
 Chapter 1: Ordinances, policies and guidelines relating to human rights in Yao City
 Chapter 2: Human Rights Education and Promotion Act and the Three Laws on Eliminating Discrimination
 Chapter 3: The Constitution of Japan, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Human Rights Treaties
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 Introduction
 Chapter 1: Building a foundation for learning about the Buraku issue
 Chapter 2: Making the study of the Buraku issue accessible to students
 Chapter 3: Creating a “Buraku Issue Study Plan”
 Chapter 4: Recommendations for learning about the Buraku issue
 Starting line before you begin learning about the Buraku issue
 Social Studies Historical Area 1: Middle Ages - The lives and culture of discriminated people in the Middle Ages

Social Studies Historical Field 2: Early Modern Period I - The Class System in the Edo Period

Social Studies Historical Field 3: Early Modern Period II – “Kaitai Shinsho”

Social Studies Historical Field 4: Early Modern Period III - Shibori Rebellion

Social Studies Historical Field 5: Modern I – “Encouragement of Learning”

Social Studies Historical Section 6: Modern Emancipation Proclamation (1871 Dajokan Proclamation)

Social Studies Historical Field 7: Modern III - Zenkoku Suiheisha

Social Studies Civic Field 1: Employment Discrimination

Social Studies Civics Field 2: The Struggle for Free Textbooks

Social Studies Civic Field 3: Marriage Discrimination

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Prologue: Weaving a Dream

Chapter 1: Discrimination in Yao City

Chapter 2: Buraku discrimination issue

Chapter 3: Foreigner discrimination issue

Chapter 4: Discrimination against people with disabilities

Chapter 5: Age

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Prologue: Bringing Buraku discrimination closer to home

Chapter 1: Buraku discrimination today

1. Discrimination based on “land”

2. Buraku discrimination in modernization (discrimination that remains)

3. The situation surrounding buraku communities as seen from survey results

Chapter 2: A series of discrimination cases

1. Recent major discrimination cases

2. Discrimination case in Yao City

Chapter 3: Efforts to eliminate discrimination

1. The “Report of the Committee on Appeals for the Complaint” and its Significance

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Social Issue Films in the Asia-Pacific

Cinemata

ENGAGEMEDIA launched Cinemata in 2021 as a video platform for social issue films about the Asia-Pacific. With over six thousand six hundred user-contributed films from more than thirty countries, Cinemata aims to bring to the forefront critical but often overlooked narratives about pressing issues in the region, such as climate change, conflict, freedom of speech, gender and sexuality, and food security.

EngageMedia is a nonprofit organization that promotes digital rights, open and secure technology, and social issue documentary. Combining video, technology, knowledge, and networks, EngageMedia supports Asia-Pacific and global changemakers advocating for human rights, democracy, and the environment. In collaboration with diverse networks and communities, EngageMedia defends and advances digital rights.

Why “Cinemata”?

“Cinemata” combines “cine” (motion picture), and “mata” (eye in various regional languages reflecting a regional perspective and commitment to seeing and understanding social realities:

- Bahasa Melayu, Bahasa Indonesia, and Filipino: *mata*
- Tetum (East Timor): *matan*
- Vietnamese: *mắt*
- Thai and Lao: *ta*.

This name reflects Cinemata’s vision: connecting films, issues, and filmmakers across the Asia-Pacific through a collective lens.

Upload and Download of Films

Cinemata allows filmmakers and contributors to upload their films of any genre at any time, provided they meet the platform’s editorial guidelines.

The platform supports a wide range of formats, from h264 and h265 to professional codecs like Apple ProRes and Avid DNxHS, and offers transcoded versions from 240p to 1080p for easy accessibility and sharing.

Film downloads are only enabled with the consent of the uploader. Users can also organize content using the Playlist Feature, enabling classroom use, community screenings, or tailored educational experiences. Video links can be embedded in websites, expanding visibility and reach.

Editorial Policy and Curatorial Approach

Cinemata serves as a platform for essential yet underheard stories, fostering greater reach, engagement, and impact for filmmakers, helping audiences discover thought-provoking videos. It welcomes various styles ranging from documentary, fiction, animation and experimental. Cinemata features and promotes videos that:

- are well-produced, innovative, engaging, and entertaining
- are produced by the communities directly affected by the video, or at the very least include their perspectives
- are connected to civil society and other social actors
- aim to create change, or are solutions-driven
- promote critical thinking, questions, and conversations, as well as respect freedom of expression, differing opinions, and viewpoints
- are open-minded and explore innovative ideas and approaches to problems
- promote underheard voices and perspectives.

At the same time, Cinemata does not accept films that promote discrimination, misinformation, violate privacy, or show disrespect toward the dignity of subjects.

Creative Commons and Open Content

Cinemata supports open content through Creative Commons licensing, encouraging sharing for advocacy, education, and community use. Filmmakers can select their preferred licensing terms when uploading. This approach ensures vital stories are accessible to those working to build a more just and informed region.

The Cinemata Curatorial Team and Community Building

Cinemata is more than a video platform. It is a growing community of socially engaged filmmakers and film practitioners, human rights advocates, educators, and technologists. The Cinemata team supports the community through:

- **Featured Films:** Weekly spotlighting of significant videos, promoted across the platform and social media;
- **Outreach and Collaboration:** Partnerships with filmmakers, civil society organizations (CSOs), educators, and festival organizers;
- **Screenings and Dialogues:** Both virtual and in-person screenings with post-viewing discussions;
- **Curated Collections:** Film playlists focused on relevant social and environmental issues in the region;
- **Users are also empowered to create their own curated playlists for advocacy, education, or community use.**

New Initiatives: Expanding Cinemata's Impact

To further its mission, Cinemata launched key initiatives that deepen its engagement with filmmakers and the broader advocacy and tech communities:

1. Cinemata Community Curators Residency Program

Launched in 2025, this program supports Asia-Pacific curators in developing thematic film programs such as those addressing civic space, gender justice, environmental justice, human rights issues, and more. Each residency involves curating a film program, organizing screenings and talkback sessions, and developing advocacy resources. This initiative strengthens local curatorial leadership and highlights underrepresented regional narratives.

2. Cinemata CMS: An Open-Source Platform for Human Rights Film Hosting

To strengthen the long-term sustainability and adaptability of the platform, EngageMedia is developing CinemataCMS, an open-source video content management system designed to support the hosting and curation of human rights and social issue films in the Asia-Pacific. CinemataCMS builds on the lessons of the existing Cinemata.org platform, offering a flex-

ible, transparent and locally adaptable alternative to commercial video platforms.

Developed in collaboration with Southeast Asia-based developers, CinemataCMS is now open to contributions from the broader tech community, particularly those working in the free and open-source software (FOSS) space. The project invites developers, designers and collaborators interested in human rights and social impact technology to help improve the system. A growing community of contributors is already working to enhance features such as film uploading, playlist creation, metadata tagging, moderation tools and Application Programming Interface (API) integration.

Built using Django and React, CinemataCMS supports multi-language film metadata, robust access control, and customizable editorial workflows, allowing film programmers and filmmakers to manage their own collections or set up independent film hubs.

Interested contributors can learn more and get involved via the project's GitHub repository: <https://github.com/EngageMedia-video/cinematacms>.

Cinemata Currents

Cinemata launched Cinemata Currents 2025 on 5–8 June 2025, with pre-view screenings on 2 June 2025. Cinemata Currents is a hybrid film festival spotlighting films from and about Southeast Asia that interrogate, reclaim and reimagine civic spaces. While Cinemata continues to highlight stories from across the broader Asia-Pacific region, this festival edition centers on the urgent struggles, resistances and solidarities emerging from Southeast Asian contexts.

The 2025 edition was curated by Aghniadi from Indonesia and Patrick F. Campos from the Philippines, two film programmers and cultural workers whose practices lie at the intersection of cinema, advocacy and regional solidarity. Both curators were part of the first batch of Cinemata Community Curators Residency Program that supports curators in developing regional film programs on human rights, environmental justice and civic engagement.

Film Programming as a Mode of Intervention

As an advocacy-driven initiative, Cinemata Currents does not just present films—it creates a participatory space where audiences, filmmakers, and ad-

vocates can actively engage with one another. Through interactive and community screenings, real-time discussions with civil society organizations, and a digital campaign, the festival aims to transform film programming into an act of shared meaning-making.

Cinemata Currents highlights organized social movements as well as micro-resistances—the ways in which marginalized groups assert their presence in historic moments and daily life, whether through non-governmental networking, community organizing, or documenting their lived experiences. However, rather than flattening these narratives into a single framework, Cinemata Currents emphasizes the nuances of diverse practices, places and issues—understanding that while themes of displacement, marginalization and erasure may resonate across regions, the specific conditions, responses and stakes differ. By centering these complexities, Cinemata's programs foster a deeper engagement with how civic spaces are contested, reclaimed and reimagined across the Asia-Pacific. Central to this approach is Cinemata's decades-long, extensive archive of thousands of audiovisual materials—a collection built collaboratively with a wide range of civil society actors in the region.

Through a constellation of curated screening sets, Cinemata Currents illuminates the manifold ways in which minor cinemas articulate the lived experiences of those who exist at the peripheries of dominant power structures and majority populations, foregrounding the political tactics, cultural expressions and theoretical reworldings represented in and enacted through moving-image practices and works. By fostering discussions with individuals whose lives connect with, intersect with, and are represented in the films, Cinemata Currents acknowledges the multifaceted nature of images: simultaneously shaping and being shaped by the intervening act of movement and moviemaking.

Translocal Thematics of the Minor

This inaugural festival iteration was organized into four segments, each revealing a thematic praxis of the minor that frustrates the unquestioned status quo.

This festival responds to the question: For what is power but erasure disguised as order?

Minority Counterpublics

The festival interrogates moving images as a site of de- and reterritorialization, where the margins do not plead for inclusion but instead dispute the center's claim to universality and the myth of national cultural homogeneity. In this segment, films document not only acts of preservation but also the evolution of cultural practices that refuse the pressures of reductive categorizations, involuntary assimilation and systemic exclusion.

Displacement and Countermovement

In a kind of inversion, films about displacement gain resonance when viewed from multiple locations. The online platform mirrors the condition of exile—present yet imprecisely located. Moreover, this segment captures the precarious situations of migrants, refugees and those crisscrossing borders while focusing on solidarity networks and cultural acts that reconstitute civic spaces.

Indigeneity and Sovereignty

The films in this segment preserve and reactivate Indigenous knowledge against the logics of empire, capital and military power. They explore land politics and environmental issues, positioning Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies as potent counter-discourses to extractive paradigms.

Feminist and Queer Subjectivities

In societies where LGBTQIA+ identities and feminist movements are criminalized or suppressed, minor cinema forges networks of care, traces vital new kinships, and offers resources for self-definition. This set unveils doubly marginalized subjects and celebrates them through luminous films in the interstices of personal suffering.

As these thematics demonstrate, speaking from the region's diverse margins is not seeking assimilation but inhabiting multiplicity. For those deemed "minor," cinema becomes both rupture and solace—a breath that disrupts silence and resonates in the spaces between. The personal and political dissolve into one another; the everyday reveals itself as insurgent.

Ultimately, minor cinema claims no dominion but unsettles. In its articulation lies reclamation—not merely of territory, but of presence. To witness, to be witnessed—not as Other, but as selves in flux—is a refusal to vanish, a refusal to be contained.

As a continuation of Cinemata Currents 2025, EngageMedia released *Mapping the Currents: A Manual for Community-Centered Cinema*, a practical guide for civil society organizations, independent film spaces, video collectives, educational institutions, and other changemakers interested in mounting film initiatives grounded in civic dialogue and community engagement.

Tech Tales Youth¹

Tech Tales Youth is an EngageMedia initiative supporting young filmmakers in creating compelling stories about digital rights while building advocacy campaigns for safer digital spaces. Building on successful editions in Thailand and the Philippines, this latest collection brings urgent stories from Malaysia and Bangladesh, where emerging filmmakers shine a light on pressing digital rights challenges in their local contexts. The films serve as crucial tools for awareness-raising and advocacy, inspiring audiences to take action and support local digital rights initiatives.

Tech Tales Youth's latest film collection, showcasing powerful stories about digital rights from Malaysia and Bangladesh, launched with compelling premieres highlighting the urgent need for youth-led digital rights advocacy in Southeast Asia. The premieres revealed strong demand for community screenings and sparked crucial discussions about online safety, digital security and freedom of expression.

Tech Tales Youth 2: Defending Internet Freedom in Bangladesh and Malaysia²

Tech Tales Youth 2 expands the digital rights movement in Asia-Pacific through compelling visual storytelling, building on the success of Tech Tales: Films about Digital Rights in the Asia-Pacific and Tech Tales Youth Philippines and Thailand. This new edition focuses on Malaysia and Bangladesh, where emerging filmmakers create powerful short films that address pressing digital rights challenges in their local contexts. The project has a strong emphasis on mentorship and peer and community support, with selected filmmakers guided in shaping their story ideas to align with key digital rights issues relevant to their specific contexts, as well as ways to maximize their films' impact.

The films from Bangladesh explore the intersection of digital rights and social justice: from the impact of internet shutdowns on disabled workers and digital labor, to privacy violations during political unrest, to how digital harassment and online extremism affect the trans community. Meanwhile, the Malaysian films delve into critical issues of online safety and social cohesion: examining online grooming and exploitation of teenagers, the manipulation of social media regulations following cyberbullying-related deaths, and how digital disinformation fuels racial and religious tensions in multi-cultural communities.

Beyond serving as informative tools, these films contribute to growing the digital rights movement by bringing new allies into the space and creating compelling advocacy materials that can be used in film festivals, community screenings and grassroots campaigns.

Successful Regional Premieres

The Malaysian premiere, held on 18 January 2025 at Toffee in Kuala Lumpur, drew over one hundred attendees from civil society organizations, film initiatives and student groups. Co-organized with Freedom Film Network Malaysia, the region's longest-running human rights film festival organizer, the event featured six short films exploring pressing digital rights issues, including online grooming, digital discrimination and government surveillance.

The films deeply resonated with audiences, particularly in exploring how digital rights intersect with Malaysia's complex social landscape. "Balang Terang" examined the impact of online disinformation on racial and religious harmony, while "Hai Anis" addressed the increasing threat of online grooming targeting Malaysian youth.

The Bangladesh premiere, held on 4 February 2025 at the Bangabandhu International Convention Center in Dhaka, gathered ninety participants, primarily students and civil society representatives. Co-organized with the youth-led digital rights organization Activate Rights, the screening took place after the DRAPAC Digital Rights National Convening, amplifying discussions around critical issues like internet shutdowns, online harassment and digital security.

The Bangladesh collection featured compelling works, including "The Black Kite," exploring how internet shutdowns affect disabled gig workers,

“Whispers of the Ink,” examining privacy violations during political unrest, and “Echoes of Exile,” highlighting digital harassment faced by marginalized communities.



Seated on stage during the Q&A session (from left): Tech Tales Youth advisory board member Saiyeed Shahjada Al-Kareem, filmmakers Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad (“Whispers of the Ink”), Lamea Tanjin Tanha (“Echoes of Exile”), Taosin Md. Bahadurshah Zafar (“The Black Kite”) and Tech Tales Youth Project Lead King Catoy. (Bangabandhu International Convention Center in Dhaka, 4 February 2025.)



Ishtiyak Zihad, Director of “Whispers of the Ink”, attended a Q & A session with fellow Tech Tales Youth filmmaker Lamea Tanha at Gopalganj Science and Technology University.



Tech Tales Youth filmmakers engage in a Q&A session at the Malaysian premiere in Kuala Lumpur (from left): Intan Sakinah (“Balang Terang”), Azura Nasron (“Hai Anis”), and Tech Tales Youth Project Lead King Catoy.



Indigeneity and Sovereignty watch party for Cinemata Currents. Image from Vietnam National University's Cinema Club.

Distribution Challenges and Opportunities

The film collection includes “Echoes of Exile,” which addresses critical issues facing Bangladesh’s *hijra* community. Given the sensitive nature of LGBTQ+ topics in Bangladesh, the project team is particularly interested in connecting with international organizations that can help amplify these important stories and support broader discussions about gender identity and human rights in the region.

Impact through Mentorship and Community Engagement

Tech Tales Youth integrates filmmaking with digital rights advocacy through a structured mentorship program. The project began with an intensive digital rights and impact production workshop in Kuala Lumpur last September 2024, where young filmmakers received mentorship from an advisory board of regional experts. This foundation in both creative storytelling and advocacy has enabled the filmmakers to lead various community initiatives:

- Bangladeshi filmmakers Taosin Zafar and Ishtiyak Ahmad Zihad brought digital rights discussions to the Bangladesh University of Professional FilmFest 2025;
- “Balang Terang” director Intan Sakinah, partnering with Architects of Diversity, developed an interactive screening module on identifying disinformation;
- Filmmaker Azura Nasron is creating the “Hai Anis Campaign Toolkit” to facilitate discussions on online grooming prevention while conducting screenings with Malaysian children’s rights organization Monsters Among Us Get Involved.

Organizations interested in hosting screenings can access the following:

- Free film screenings
- Campaign toolkits and discussion guides
- Support for impact activities
- Connection with young filmmakers.

Potential screening partners include:

- Educational institutions (high schools and universities)

- Youth organizations and community centers
- Religious institutions and cultural centers
- Civil society organizations and advocacy groups
- Media organizations and film schools.

Cinemata's Audience

Who makes up Cinemata's audience?

Cinemata's diverse audience encompasses a wide range of individuals and groups who share a common interest in socially impactful content. This includes filmmakers and video collectives seeking a platform to showcase their work, educators, researchers, looking for thought-provoking material and valuable resources for educational purposes, human rights and environmental advocates and activists dedicated to raising awareness on critical issues, as well as film festivals, film curators, and film initiatives seeking to showcase new content that are relevant to their causes. Additionally, civil society and nonprofit organizations utilize Cinemata to disseminate their messages and promote their causes to a broader audience.

Trusted Users

Cinemata has "Trusted Users" who get more features such as a wider array of publishing options, efficient uploads, AI transcription, English translation, and password-protection of content.

Trusted Users are not just regular account holders. They play a crucial role in upholding the platform's vision, which revolves around social issue films centered on the Asia-Pacific region. These users deeply understand the platform's core focus and are granted a special privilege - the ability to publish their videos to the public without requiring review.

Concluding Remark

At a time when freedom of expression faces growing challenges, Cinemata affirms the importance of community-driven digital spaces for movement building. EngageMedia invites filmmakers, activists, and educators in the Asia-Pacific to be part of a community that builds technology which puts advocacy, security and digital sovereignty front and center.

Annex

Society, Secrets, and Silence: Digital Literacy in a Deceptive World

Written by Izzah Dejavu

“A predator can groom a child for sex in just one hour,”³ warns Senior Assistant Commissioner Siti Kamsiah Hassan, head of the Bukit Aman CID Sexual, Women and Children Crime Investigation Division (D11).

One hour is all it takes—that’s how little time it takes for a predator to infiltrate a child’s world. Social media becomes a tool for manipulation, a window into the lives of the vulnerable.

“We cannot avoid the fact that educating children starts at home,” she reminds us. “Parents must teach their children about self-control, the risks around them, and how to assess them. Crimes now start from the comfort of your own home.”

But the question that remains unanswered—or perhaps one that many lack the courage to confront—is this: How do we start a conversation about something shrouded in silence while the very idea of grooming, sexual harassment,⁴ and child exploitation⁵ is still considered taboo⁶ in Malaysia?

Malaysia and Religious Conservatism

Across Southeast Asia, digital rights are no longer just about access—they are about survival in an increasingly monitored⁷ and manipulated online world. In Malaysia, the convergence of growing religious conservatism⁸ and digital control is reshaping how society engages in conversations⁹ about sex education and safety. This conservatism is not just present in the policies governing public life but is deeply rooted in how families and communities perceive morality.¹⁰

For women and girls especially, talking about sex—even in the context of safety and consent—remains shrouded in stigma and shame.¹¹ This culture of silence doesn’t just suppress conversations; it systematically excludes women and girls from critical discussions about their own safety, where women have experienced limited access to public discourse and decision-making.¹² This further widens the gap in digital literacy, deepening this vulnerability. Without the tools to navigate online spaces safely, young people are left exposed to exploitation,¹³ cyberbullying, and grooming.¹⁴ Meanwhile, adults struggle to bridge this conversation with their

children—not because they don't care, but because finding the right words requires both eloquence and a level of openness many were never taught to have.

The Story of Many Women

Azura Nasron's film, "Hai Anis"¹⁵ offers an urgent look at the harsh realities of online grooming and digital exploitation. Through Anis's journey, viewers are confronted with the sinister ease with which predators manipulate victims in the digital world. The film opens with a chilling exchange of flirtatious messages between an adult and a teenager, escalating into explicit content—a stark reminder of how easily grooming can occur.

"Hai Anis" is not just a story of Azura Nasron; it is a reflection of the lived experiences of countless women, young people, and survivors whose voices are often silenced. This is not an isolated incident; it is a growing epidemic spanning generations. Ask any woman or girl, and chances are, she has endured something similar or knows someone who has. These stories, buried beneath layers of shame and silence, reveal one painful truth: In the digital age, predators operate unchecked.

The urgency of this issue is highlighted by the alarming increase in sexual offences involving children.¹⁶ According to the Children Statistics Malaysia 2024 report¹⁷ released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), the number of cases of sexual offences involving children reported to the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) rose by 26.5 percent, reaching 1,567 cases in 2023, compared to 1,239 cases in 2022. This troubling statistic underscores the pressing need for immediate action, as the digital world continues to expose young people to exploitation and harm.

Reimagination of Digital Rights

The recent passing of the Online Safety Bill 2024,¹⁸ with its promise to hold platforms accountable for failing to protect children and to curb harmful content, presents a glimmer of hope¹⁹ in addressing the legal loopholes within Malaysia's current legal system. Yet, it remains a small thread in the tangled web of regulation,²⁰ struggling to keep pace with the fast-evolving digital world. Legislation, though abundant, remains trapped in the slow churn of bureaucracy, while the reality²¹ on the ground remains murky at best.

Malaysian teenager Ain Husniza's viral TikTok video ignited the #MakeSchoolASaferPlace movement, which gained further momentum through political artist Fahmi Reza's powerful illustration urging students to speak up about unsafe school environments.

But this is not only a matter of policy—it is about a profound shift in how we view the digital world, and how we choose to navigate it. The task before us is not simply to update laws, but to engage every layer of society—NGOs, families, communities, the public—each must stand as guardians of a new narrative. A narrative that says: Enough is Enough. A narrative where respect is not optional, where the rights of women and girls are not negotiable, and where predators are held accountable, not just by law, but by their very own conscience. This could also begin with equipping parents with resources to discuss online safety, supporting teachers to integrate digital literacy into curriculums, and creating safe spaces where young people can report concerns without fear of judgment or shame.

“Hai Anis” shows us how predators exploit digital spaces to groom young victims. However, it also points to solutions: teaching youth to recognize manipulation tactics and building support networks where they can safely report concerns. As the spirit of Paulo Freire’s work reminds us, “Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People change the world.” Meaningful digital empowerment requires more than awareness—it demands action, collective responsibility, and a commitment to dismantling the culture of silence that allows harm to persist. It’s time for all of us to step up and ensure that digital spaces are safe for everyone, especially our children.

Izzah Dejavu is a writer and human rights advocate dedicated to advancing social justice through community engagement, public discourse and activism. She is passionate about gender equality, expanding civic space, and defending human rights—to amplify marginalized voices and challenge oppressive systems.

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Department of Human Rights: Aoyama Gakuin University

Faculty of Law, Aoyama Gakuin University

THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS in the Faculty of Law of Aoyama Gakuin University was launched in 2022. It started to offer the first human rights program in Japan at the university level.

Background

There are approximately one hundred faculties of law in universities (national, public and private universities combined) in Japan whose curriculums certainly cover human rights especially as part of a pillar of constitutional law. On the other hand, the teaching method employed by these faculties has largely focused on learning provisions of statutes and interpretation thereof, through required reading of legal texts, textbooks as well as cases in which those texts were interpreted and applied by courts. In the pre-World War II era when a handful of universities with law faculties used such teaching method with the aim of producing elite civil servants and lawyers, it might have been efficient.

However, since university education became highly popularized in recent decades, the limits of such teaching method have been apparent. Students barely 18 or 19 years of age who have little experience in life have to learn abstract theories of law, without actually understanding the relevance of such theories to real life, in a static manner. Even case law based on real incidents is distant to them: the cases are just “given” as something to be memorized as knowledge. Then, as many of them start working in private companies after graduation, the human rights theories learned tend to be estranged from their everyday life. But of course, knowledge and consciousness on human rights are essential to anyone, not only to protect oneself and others but also to build a society respectful of human dignity.

The need to learn human rights as a living and active tool was especially felt by law faculty members of Aoyama Gakuin University in the early 2000s, when graduate law schools were established nationwide including

in the University as a result of the reform of judicial system in Japan. Those who want to take the bar exam are, in principle, required to study in law schools.

While prospective legal professionals are supposed to enter law schools after undergraduate studies of law or other areas, faculty members (professors of constitutional law and international human rights law in particular) in charge of educating undergraduate students in the University shared a strong belief in the value of education at a law faculty designed for a wide range of students who would not necessarily become legal professionals, and proposed developing a human rights education program for this purpose. The program focused on “visualization” of realities such as poverty, discrimination and oppression at an early stage of undergraduate years, and on orientation of students to the study law with a sense of purpose, specifically to use law to address human rights issues in society.

On the initiative of those professors, a “Human Rights Course” was launched in 2013, as one of the four courses of the law faculty (the other three were public policy, business and legal profession) that students were required to choose from the second year in order to better organize their studies in accordance with their future career paths. “Human Rights in the Field,” an introductory “show-window” class designed to raise awareness on human rights issues through documentary films and talks of various guest speakers, was started at this time. This is currently a compulsory class for students of the Department of Human Rights.

The Human Rights Course constantly attracted significant number of students every year, and the law faculty decided to develop it into a full-fledged department that has distinct curriculum. After a few years of intense preparation involving a large number of faculty members, the curriculum obtained the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Department was launched in 2022. Thus, the faculty now has two departments, Law and Human Rights, with the capacity of three hundred eighty and one hundred twenty students for an academic year respectively. While many classes of the faculty are open to students of both departments, the curriculum of the Human Rights Department has certain uniqueness as described below.

The Concept

“Diversity.” Since people have different values and behaviors, recognizing these differences is important for us to live a fulfilling and secure life. However, to ensure diversity, there is something even more important: guaranteeing the “human rights” of each individual.

Human rights are universal rights that all people have, and are fundamental rights that are recognized on the basis that humans are dignified beings. They can be considered to be the same right or concept as what is called “fundamental human rights.” The protection of human rights is not only the principle and purpose on which the constitutions of constitutional democracies are based, but also a common value shared by the international community. The United Nations has set international cooperation for the respect of human rights as one of its objectives, and human rights are recognized as a fundamental value for all human activities, both domestically and internationally, as can be seen in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a human rights bill for the international community adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights adopted in 2011. The Department of Human Rights employs the term “human rights” as it is in its name, not the Japanese word “*jinken*” as a translation of “human rights,” to express the idea that the learning in the Department is geared toward universal human rights, not just the rights enumerated in the Japanese constitution.

Issues surrounding human rights in contemporary society are becoming more diverse and complex, and the significance of studying the “law” that is the basis for protecting human rights and analyzing and considering human rights issues from a legal perspective is increasing. Based on the concept of human rights and the fact that human rights are a common standard of value both in domestic legal order and in the international community, it is necessary to understand what legal systems exist and are functioning as means to eliminate and remedy human rights violations, and as means to better realize human rights, and to translate this into concrete action by nations, international organizations, and private companies both domestic and overseas.

In order to understand and solve various human rights issues occurring in society, such as discrimination, poverty and violence, it is important not

only to study law, but also to approach them from a broader perspective and in a multifaceted way.

Objective and Policies

The human rights program has the following educational and research objective:

We aim to develop talented individuals who can contribute to problem solving with accurate analytical skills, judgment, and expression, based on a deep understanding of the role that law can play in improving and resolving social issues, especially various human rights issues.

It is governed by several policies:

a. Diploma Policy (Policy for Graduation Certification and Degree Awarding)

■ Knowledge and Skills

Understand the concept of human rights and that human rights are a common standard of value in both domestic and international legal systems, and concretely understand what systems exist as means of eliminating and providing relief when faced with actual human rights violations, and be able to utilize that understanding in nations, international organizations, and private companies both domestic and overseas.

■ Ability to think, judge and correctly recognize that various issues arising in society are human rights issues, as well as the legal ability to think, judge and express views persuasively in order to solve them using the law.

■ Motivation, Interest, and Attitude

In daily life (for example, family life, professional life, etc.), be able to act with appropriate consideration from the perspective of respecting not only one's own but also the human rights of others. In addition, be able to maintain an interest in political and social issues broadly, and act as a citizen with a sense of justice as someone who has studied human rights law and a Christian spirit of charity.

b. Curriculum Policy (Policy for creating and implementing educational courses)

■ Knowledge and Skills

In the first year, students are offered courses that provide basic knowledge for thinking actively about human rights issues. Specifically, these courses include courses that provide opportunities to learn about and think about human rights issues through documentary films and talks by the people involved, courses that teach the basics of law in general, courses that help students understand the significance of the law, courses that teach how to investigate the field, and courses that teach the basics of political science and economics. From the second year, students are offered a variety of courses that provide knowledge and ways of thinking to contribute to solving human rights issues. For example, courses that deal with specific themes such as war, conflict, and poverty, specialized courses taught in English with an awareness of global society, and specialized courses in political science, economics, and public policy that take into account the importance of diverse approaches in considering human rights issues. In the third and fourth years, students participate in seminars to gain practical knowledge about solving human rights issues, such as evaluating and designing solutions.

■ Ability to think, judge and express

Students learn not only the “interpretational aspect” of existing laws, but also the “legislative aspect” through political process leading up to the enactment or amendment of laws and what the law should be, policy theory on the design of legal systems, policy evaluation theory, fiscal theory on national finances, economic policy, etc. Students will acquire practical and sound ability to think and judge about legal methods for solving social problems, including human rights issues. In addition, students will develop the ability to express their thoughts in writing and orally in practical and seminar courses.

■ Motivation, interest and attitude

They will pay attention to the various human rights issues that arise in society and have an attitude of seeking ways to solve them through the power of law and the politics that enacts the laws. They will have an attitude of seriously addressing human

rights issues without thinking of them as someone else's problem, based on the spirit of Christianity, which has had a major influence on the emergence of human rights ideas, that all people are created equal by the Creator.

Courses

The Department of Human Rights offers courses in relation to social science fields, such as political science, economics, sociology and public policy, and students acquire the ability to deal with social issues and systems related to human rights in an interdisciplinary manner.

Under this program, students acquire the ability to analyze real-world situations through classes such as “Human Rights in the Field,” a class that uses documentary films that visualize human rights issues; “Human Rights Fieldwork,” where students actually immerse themselves in human rights issues; “Public Policy Training,” where students participate in the field where government policies are formulated and implemented; and “Social Survey Theory,” where students learn data analysis methods to grasp the current state of human rights issues.

Some classes are held in English not only to learn about the culture and history of other countries and regions firsthand but also to learn how to express ideas and opinions about human rights issues and other social problems in a way that can reach to a wider audience. Overseas training to study at universities in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia during long vacations are also offered. Students will acquire the ability to act independently and proactively from a broader perspective, rather than focusing only on Japan.

Toward a Society Where People are Respected

The human rights program of the Department of Human Rights is the first academic program in Japan where students learn about human rights, essential for people to be able to live as human beings, from the perspective of legal studies and other academic fields. The human rights program covers human rights issues in society, and develops logical thinking skills and specialized knowledge to understand and solve these issues.

The program has three characteristics:

Point 1. Beyond the sphere of legal studies

In order to understand and resolve the various human rights issues in society, it is important to not only study law, but also to take a multifaceted approach from a broader perspective. The human rights program offers subjects in adjacent social science fields such as political science, economics, sociology and public policy, so that students acquire the ability to deal with human rights-related social issues and systems in an interdisciplinary manner.

Point 2. Beyond the sphere of the classroom

Classes use documentary videos to illustrate human rights issues. Students also learn to analyze real situations through actual fieldwork related to human rights issues, practical classes where they participate in the real planning and implementation of policies by government ministries and agencies, and classes on analyzing data in order to understand the current state of human rights issues.

Point 3. Beyond the sphere of Japan

The human rights program offers classes in English on challenges and initiatives in other countries and regions regarding the relationship between human rights issues and law, as well as classes on the culture and history of other countries and regions, and overseas study at universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere. Rather than confining their opinions to Japan, students take a broader perspective and develop the ability to act independently and proactively.

Curriculum

The Department of Human Rights helps students learn practical knowledge of law, politics and economics necessary for problem solving, based on the premise that “law exists to realize a society in which human rights are respected.”

In the first year, students are required to take “Introduction to Law,” “Introduction to Civil Law,” “Introduction to Criminal Law,” and “Legal Philosophy” to learn the basics of law. The department’s unique required course is “Human Rights in the Field A/B,” in which students watch docu-

mentaries related to human rights issues and listen to the voices of those who suffer from human rights violations, and then consider the role of law. In addition to legal knowledge, knowledge of adjacent social science fields such as economics, political science and sociology is also necessary to consider human rights issues, so in addition to “Social Research Theory,” which teaches data analysis methods to grasp the current state of human rights issues, “Introduction to Political Science,” “Introduction to Economic Analysis,” and “Introduction to Public Policy” are optional required courses.

In the second year, students are required to take a compulsory “Introduction to Human Rights Law,” which covers both national constitutions and international human rights law. Students can also take specific human rights-related thematic courses such as “War, Conflict and Human Rights,” “Poverty and Human Rights,” and “Gender and Human Rights.” In addition, in “Journalism Theory,” students can learn about the role of journalism in reporting on human rights issues, while courses that discuss human rights issues in English and courses using fieldwork are also offered.

In the third and fourth years, students will take more specialized courses and explore issues in seminars in line with their own interests. In addition, courses such as “Children and Human Rights,” “Business and Human Rights,” “Sexual Minorities and Human Rights,” and “Christianity and Human Rights” are offered, as well as the course “International Society and Humanitarian Aid,” which is offered in collaboration with the Japanese Red Cross Society, where students will have the opportunity to hear about the real experiences of people who are active in humanitarian aid globally.

See Annex A for the human rights course curriculum.

Experience So Far

Currently into the fourth year after its establishment, the Department of Human Rights has attracted a number of motivated students every year. Student responses to characteristic courses such as “Human Rights in the Field” have been largely positive, and some new courses such as “International Society and Humanitarian Aid” have become very popular, thanks to close cooperation with the partner organization, Japanese Red Cross Society. The Department will produce its first graduates in spring 2026, and it is hoped that students with solid knowledge and consciousness on human rights will make use of their ability in various fields in society such as journalism, pri-

vate companies, civil service, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

On the other hand, challenges also exist. There are several entrance examinations and other admission mechanisms at the University, and at times, though this is not a phenomenon peculiar to the law faculty or Department of Human Rights, students join the Department without special interest and motivation to learn human rights, probably because they think that Aoyama Gakuin University is a good option in terms of its name, location in central Tokyo and positive image. As a result, a tendency of polarization of students is observed: while there are strongly motivated students who deliberately chose this Department and keep that motivation, there are those who lack such motivation and have difficulty in following the courses. Mismatches of students to the Department should be prevented as much as possible, in the process of admission mechanisms and also through dissemination of information about the Department to prospective students.

Another challenge is that, while courses such as “Human Rights in the Field” are generally well received, there are students who complain that the contents of films are too shocking or that they get depressive by watching the films. Concerning the former, while documentary films used in classes are carefully selected from already released pieces with high reputation, it is inevitable that some scenes are felt as upsetting to young students. But the point about getting depressed may be something that has to be taken seriously. It often happens that people feel depressed and powerless when they learn imposing realities, but it is not the intention of the Department to make students feel that way. Teaching staffs should be careful that students do not have a depressive idea such as “I/we cannot change anything anyway,” and should encourage them to learn and use law in order to improve the situation by citing positive, transformative examples and practices.

Conclusion

The Department of Human Rights started as an undergraduate program of Aoyama Gakuin University. In a number of countries, human rights courses exist at the graduate level. In the future, the creation of similar program in the graduate school of law at Aoyama Gakuin University or elsewhere should also be considered in Japan for those who wish to pursue advanced studies of human rights.

Annex A

Lists subjects that students of respective courses can take.

Required credits for graduation:132 credits.

Category	Subjects
Required Courses	<p>1st year Introduction to Law Introduction to Civil Law Introduction to Criminal Law Human Rights A Human Rights B Philosophy of Law A Philosophy of Law B</p> <p>2nd year Introduction to Human Rights Law</p>
Introductory Courses	<p>1st year Introduction to Political Science Introduction to Economic Analysis Introduction to Public Policy Methodology of Social Research A Methodology of Social Research B</p>
Core Courses	<p>1st year Constitutional Law A Constitutional Law B</p> <p>2nd year War, Conflict and Human Rights Poverty and Human Rights Gender and Human Rights Human Rights Fieldwork Human Rights Issues in the World Islamic World Studies International Human Rights Law Journalism Theory Journalism in Practice (Basic) Public Policy in Practice A</p> <p>3rd year Children and Human Rights Business and Human Rights Sexual Minorities and Human Rights Christianity and Human Rights Human Rights Law in the World Sociology of Human Rights Topics in Human Rights A Topics in Human Rights B International Community and Humanitarian Assistance International Criminal Law Comparative Constitutional Law (Protection of Human Rights) Topics in International Law A Topics in International Law B Journalism in Practice (Advanced) Public Policy in Practice B</p>

Basic and Applied Courses	<p>1st year Theories and Concepts of Political Science A Theories and Concepts of Political Science B Law and Economics</p> <p>2nd year History of Legal Thought A History of Legal Thought B European Legal History A European Legal History B Japanese Political History A Japanese Political History B History of Japanese Politics and Diplomacy Public Administration A Public Administration B History of Political Thought A History of Political Thought B Western Political History Comparative Politics International Relations Topics in Political Science A Topics in Regional Studies A Public Economics A Public Economics B Economic Policy A Economic Policy B Introduction to Public Finance Introduction to Labor Economics Introduction to Institutional Economics Topics in Economics A Welfare State Topics in Public Administration Policy A Policy Evaluation</p> <p>3rd year Sociology of Law A Sociology of Law B Topics in Foundation of Law A Topics in Foundation of Law B Theory of Political Process A Theory of Political Process B Local Government Regional Integration Theory International Security A International Security B Topics in Political Science B Topics in Regional Studies B Introduction to International Economics Topics in Economics B Topics in Public Administration Policy B Environmental Policy Criminology A Criminology B Theory of Non-Profit Organizations International Development</p>
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Advanced and Extension Courses	<p>1st year Overseas Training (Australia) Overseas Training (US) Overseas Training (UK)</p> <p>2nd year International Law A International Law B Introduction to Civil Proceedings</p> <p>3rd year Environmental Law A Environmental Law B Social Welfare Law A Social Welfare Law B Labor Law A Labor Law B Media Law A Media Law B Consumer Law Law of Education Juvenile Law Comparative Constitutional Law (System of Government) Criminal Law Procedure A Criminal Law Procedure B Administrative Law A Administrative Law B Topics in Administrative Law A Topics in Administrative Law B Language and Politics Issues in Contemporary American Society Introduction to Language Introduction to Sociolinguistics</p>
Seminar Courses	<p>1st year Introductory Seminar</p> <p>3rd year Seminar A Seminar B</p> <p>4th year Seminar C Seminar D (Graduation Thesis)</p>

Source: <https://www.aoyama.ac.jp/faculty/law/dh/curriculum.html?lang=th&wovn=en>

Clinical Human Rights Education: The Optimal Approach for Teaching Human Rights in Indonesian Higher Education?

Saru Arifin

FOLLOWING THE 1998 REFORM MOVEMENT (*gerakan reformasi*) that effectively ended three decades of authoritarian rule, Indonesia formally embraced international human rights standards by passing Act 39 of 1999 on Human Rights. Simultaneously, the country amended the Constitution of 1945 to modify the state system following democratic ideals, one of which was enhancing human rights for its citizens. The first democratically elected government in 2000 created the Ministry of Human Rights to promote human rights ideals in the country. In addition, Act 39 of 1999 authorizes the establishment of a national human rights institution, which is responsible for promoting and enforcing human rights standards. This law became the basis of the continued existence of the *Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia* (Komnas HAM), which was established by Presidential Decree No. 50 of 1993.¹ At the grassroots level, activists and universities founded human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or institutes to cultivate awareness of human rights among the citizens. Considering this, the Indonesian National Education System Law (Act Number 20 of 2003) mandated that the national education system be democratic and non-discriminatory, in line with human rights ideals, religious values, and cultural and national diversity perspectives. Consequently, human rights education entails the acquisition of knowledge on human rights principles to empower individuals to advocate for their own and others' rights.

However, after nearly twenty-five years of traditional human rights education, instilling ideas about human rights remains a significant challenge in Indonesia. Therefore, an alternative approach to human rights education is imperative.

The human rights clinic, a pioneering program designed to promote human rights concepts, especially among students, has shown promising results in other countries. While the clinic's method is not as popular in

Indonesia as in the U.S., where it has been extensively implemented in law schools, its successful implementation offers hope for its potential use in Indonesia.

Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang

The Institute of Teacher Training and Educational Science (IKIP), founded in 1963, evolved into Universitas Negeri Semarang in 1999. This move created a larger mandate for teacher training programs to include professional workers. As a result, the Ministry of Education and Culture changed the University's statutes in 2000 to allow the development of non-educational study programs, including a legal program, which later became the Faculty of Law.

The Faculty of Law at Universitas Negeri Semarang was formed under a license from the Directorate General of Higher Education (*Dirjen Dikti*) on 19 November 2007, and was publicly inaugurated by the University Rector on 30 November 2007. The faculty's objective is to equip the students to become professionals in their legal vocations as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, notaries, researchers, scholars, or legal officers. Consequently, the curriculum of the Faculty of Law incorporated theoretical and practical teaching and learning methods. The theoretical components of the courses are delivered by the lecturers, but the practical components are taught by legal



Building of the Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang

practitioners affiliated with the law faculty. These legal practitioners come from judicial offices, prosecutorial offices, law firms, notarial offices, and other professions with legal components, including government agencies, enterprises and NGOs.

Human Rights Education Framework

The concept of human rights education is distinct from conventional education. It covers human rights and education on five domains of practice and research, including (1) teaching about and for human rights; (2) education as human rights in itself; (3) human rights in education; (4) education and training of professionals confronted with human rights issues; and (5) educational and social work aspects of the rights of the child.² In this context, UNESCO asserts that effective human rights education not only cultivates knowledge of human rights and their protective mechanisms but also develops the skills and attitudes necessary for students to promote, defend, and implement human rights in everyday life. Moreover, human rights education is founded upon essential principles of respect, equality, justice, inalienability, interdependence, interrelatedness, indivisibility, and universality of human rights. Consequently, human rights educational initiatives ought to be practical and student-centered by integrating human rights with the real-life experiences and contexts of the students.³

In practice, human rights education varies by country. It depends on the situation in a country, such as the influence of religion and politics. A democratic nation inherently supports the adoption of human rights policy. But human rights education is affected when human rights are not properly defined and promoted without consideration of the long-term political ramifications of such effort. Western states promote human rights education under the principle that each state is primarily responsible for human rights violations, although third-party states are also accountable for massive and widespread violations of human rights.

The Indonesian approach to human rights, rooted in cultural values, is embodied in *Pancasila*, the five foundational principles of the nation's philosophy: belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. Nonetheless, no singular directive exists for the implementation of Pancasila-based human rights standards. Such human rights standards implementation is contingent upon the governing authority in the nation.

The human rights policy adopted in the first few years of the post-Soeharto era was liberally implemented, consistent with the practices of Western nations. In this instance, civil society enjoyed freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of the press, and all other relevant human rights. Conversely, the government vigorously ratified two major human rights treaties in 2005: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). During this period, the government led by President Abdurrahman Wahid was at the forefront of democracy. He also served as the chair of the largest Muslim traditional organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, or Awakening of Islamic Scholars. This impetus compelled Indonesian higher education institutions to incorporate human rights education into their curriculums, which was previously solely focusing on the nation's Constitution.

Human rights NGOs and institutions of higher learning played a significant role in advocating for human rights within Indonesian society and among students. The Center for Human Rights Study at Universitas Islam Indonesia (PUSHAM UII)⁴ is a leading entity in advancing human rights teaching initiatives for law lecturers across the nation's universities. Supported by the Norwegian Center for Human Rights, PUSHAM UII organized a series of human rights education training sessions ranging from basic to advanced levels. PUSHAM UII's effort and the government's top-down approach significantly promoted human rights education in Indonesia.

Clinical Human Rights Education

Clinical human rights education (CHRE) is an element of the clinical legal education (CLE) concept. The CHRE approach empowers students by combining conventional human rights pedagogy with experiential learning. Students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active participants who apply their understanding of human rights to actual cases, primarily benefiting marginalized or disadvantaged individuals through advocacy or fostering human rights awareness.

Since the CHRE method originates from CLE, which combines theoretical understanding with actual legal skills and social values, students acquire extensive knowledge and experiences that differ from standard classes focused solely on cognitive learning or knowledge transfer. The clinical meth-

od is categorized into two types: in-house and out-house clinics. The in-house clinic comprises of students offering legal assistance and advocacy service to clients. Another example is a simulation clinic, where students demonstrate the handling of real cases in a moot court setting.



Moot court room at the Faculty of Law

The out-house clinic model has three programs. One is an intensive program, in which students intern in legal offices. Another is the community clinic program, where students engage with the community to provide legal or human rights consultation and advocacy.

The third program is the mobile clinic, which allows students to travel to various locations to provide legal or human rights consultation, advocacy and education to the community.

Before participating in these clinic programs, students should have learned three components in CHRE: knowledge, lawyering skills, and reflection exercise. The community clinic, formerly the street clinic, is the most prevalent practice in Indonesian law schools; it primarily targets junior and senior secondary school students as participants in the activities.

Clinical Human Rights Education in Universitas Negeri Semarang

The CHRE program in the Faculty of Law in Universitas Negeri Semarang commenced in 2018 with the intention of equipping law students with experience in advocating for and securing the rights of marginalized communities. Moreover, the program aims to instill in the students social justice ideas that directly apply to disadvantaged individuals. This program is integral to the law faculty's pedagogical approach of using clinical legal education (CLE) that started to be implemented in 2010.

The CHRE program primarily emphasizes civil and political rights. Students learn the basic principles of these rights and how to fight for marginalized groups to secure them. It is predominantly utilized for courses in human rights law. Nonetheless, other courses related to human rights, including agrarian law concerning land rights issues and constitutional law addressing specific citizen rights such as freedom of speech and citizenship rights, are also adopting the CHRE instruction format.

The CHRE program aligns with the *Kampus Merdeka* (Independent Campus) policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The *Kampus Merdeka* policy includes a credited program for students to undertake three-month internship. It was initiated in January 2020 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as a novel innovation in university education in Indonesia. The *Kampus Merdeka* policy seeks to provide students with the flexibility to engage in autonomous learning beyond their campus, within designated institutions such as industries, private sectors, government offices, or entrepreneurial ventures. The *Kampus Merdeka* policy aims to produce graduates with competencies relevant to the labor market's and society's demands. Consequently, the implementation of *Kampus Merdeka* policy involves collaboration among universities, industries, government bodies and NGOs. Students should have one semester or its equivalent, comprising twenty credits, to undertake the *Kampus Merdeka* according to their chosen program. However, the *Kampus Merdeka* policy recently allowed students to study at another university for up to two semesters, equivalent to forty credits, as an alternative to internship in business entities. 4,593 universities in Indonesia implement *Kampus Merdeka* programs, with 8.4 million students involved.



Law students completed internship at the Boyolali district court, where they learned about judicial procedures (2024).

Theoretical Understanding

Students intending to enroll in the CHRE program must have completed legal theories and practical law subjects, encompassing legal procedures and case analysis. This knowledge is crucial for students seeking to successfully achieve their objective in participating in the CHRE program.

The CHRE program at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang, is available to students who have completed their third semester or second year, signifying that all necessary courses have been completed. It differs from international law schools, which require students to have completed at least their third or fourth year.⁵

The undergraduate course on law and human rights aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject, encompassing seven topics, including the historical evolution of human rights. One topic pertains to the fundamental principles of human rights and the international human rights frameworks, primarily addressing the two founding covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Another topic is the method for monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties, encompassing the United Nations bodies and regional institutions such as the Council of Europe (European Court of Human Rights, Commissioner for Human Rights).

Upon concluding the study of international human rights concepts, tools, monitoring mechanisms, and enforcement, the remaining issue in the law and human rights subject pertains to applying human rights law in the Indonesian setting. This covers discussion of the historical evolution of human rights concept in Indonesia, followed by an introduction to the national legal frameworks governing human rights. Finally, the discussion covers the enforcement of the human rights law and the human rights court in Indonesia.

In addition to the human rights law course, various other courses incorporate human rights topics, including the subject of *Pancasila*, which encompasses the five state pillars: belief in God, humanity, unity, democracy and social justice. All these principles are intrinsically linked to human rights. The other subjects with human rights content include constitutional law, agricultural law, law and technology, juvenile criminal law, and local autonomy law. All these subjects utilize the clinical technique in their learning process, particularly with case studies.

Case Studies

With sufficient knowledge of basic legal concepts, including human rights theories, students acquire a framework on how to assess and resolve real human rights cases. In this context, students acquire the theoretical underpinning of human rights and develop analytical skills through case studies.

Students in the CHRE program are organized into groups based on their selected human rights topics and the specific communities they aim to work with under the program. This is the preliminary stage of the CHRE program.

The next stage involves identifying a relevant case related to their chosen topic. Students present their cases in class to get thoughts from peers and the lecturer, who serves as the supervisor for their CHRE activities.

Groups of law students select human rights issues confronting urban and underprivileged groups, such as people begging on the street, slum communities, and primary school students. Other groups choose to visit marginalized or suburban poor communities. Upon completing this stage, the Law Faculty's CLE section communicates with each targeted community and secures all necessary permits.

Practical Legal Skills

Students must complete legal skills before admission to the CHRE program, including lawyering and field research, notably interview and consultation skills. Practice-based law lectures include research methodology, legal aid, moot court simulations for criminal and private law cases, constitutional law procedures, and administrative law courts. The interview skills acquired from the methodology course benefit students in managing client human rights case consultations.

Before their departure to meet the client in the community, students receive training in the law laboratory concerning the technical and ethical considerations they must strictly observe while interacting with a client. At certain times, the training for live consultation is supervised by practicing attorneys who have formal agreements with the law faculty. Similarly, the moot court simulation is overseen and guided by lawyers, prosecutors or judges with formal agreements with the law faculty. With adequate training, students can better prepare for their CHRE in any format they choose.

Reflection Component

Students must compose a reflection paper detailing their experiences under the CHRE program encompassing the knowledge, advocacy and values acquired from their engagement with the targeted community. To thoroughly understand this phase, below are two examples of human rights clinics conducted by students utilizing the street legal clinic model and advocacy in the human rights course.

a. Street human rights law

Human rights clinics include visiting specific communities for clinical activities, promoting human rights awareness, and helping school students. In light of this, a group of five female students visited a primary school to promote the fundamental value of human rights, that is, respecting others or tolerance. Respecting the human rights of others is an essential element of human rights taught in the human rights course. In this case, students promote this human rights value to the primary schools as part of “eliminating the bullying at school” program. The incidence of bullying in Indonesian



Law students advocate for the right to education for people living in remote areas of the country.



Law students at General Election Office in Central Java, as part of the street human rights law program, advocating for protection of the right to vote (May 2025).



Law students conducting human rights clinic on empowering the Klaten district villagers (2024).



Law students after conducting human rights clinic on empowering the Klaten district villagers regarding assertion of economic rights by campaigning for access to funding support for their home industry businesses (2024).

schools has been rising markedly each year. Data released by the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network in 2024 indicate five hundred seventy-three incidences of bullying, a significant increase from ninety-one cases in 2020.⁶ The number of bullying incidents is expected to continue increasing in subsequent years. Therefore, promoting human rights, particularly tolerance and mutual respect, is essential for students in school.

In the human rights clinic at “Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) Sekaran 1,” law students utilized puppets depicting various animals to facilitate comprehension of human rights among primary school students, illustrating the diversity of social existence. Initially, the primary school students reflected on the core principle of *Pancasila*, encapsulated in the phrase “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,” meaning Unity in Diversity, which mirrors the actual social dynamics inside the nation. Following the demonstration of friendship and tolerance among various animals, the law student requested the primary school students to articulate in front of the class the moral of the story they learned, with each student primarily emphasized the benefits of tolerance in daily life and contrasted it with the detrimental effects of bullying.

The street law methodology of human rights education, grounded on students’ reflections during their human rights law class, affords the law students with substantial practical experience in promoting fundamental human rights among primary school students in cases of bullying. Law students engage in a productive interaction with the primary school students regarding the latter’s reflections on the concept of bullying and instances of bullying behavior they know. Conversely, law students articulate their difficulties in promoting human rights ideals and in conveying the benefits and effectiveness of their experiential learning related to this course.

b. Migrant fishing workers’ advocacy

The suffering of Indonesian migrant workers particularly those employed on Taiwanese-flagged vessels is a significant issue. In 2018, Wallace Yu-Jhong Huang, a lawyer and human rights activist of Yilan Migrant Fishermen Union, Taiwan, visited the law faculty to discuss the human rights issues faced by Indonesian migrant fishing workers in Taiwan. Following an extensive presentation on the plight of Indonesian migrant fishing workers in Taiwan, Wallace stressed the perilous conditions workers face in the fishing business, particularly those lacking sufficient Chinese language proficiency and requisite skills. During a segment of his presentation, Wallace

cited a case involving a fishing worker from Tegal, Central Java, who perished. Following this seminar, the human rights law clinic encouraged a cohort of students to advocate for the case of the fishing worker from Tegal. Before departing for Tegal, the law students received training in advocacy, consulting with victims' families, and obtaining local authority permit. Once all matters had been settled, five law students visited Tegal to conduct a clinic for several days.

The law students reported on their human rights clinic on migrant fishing workers in Tegal and their reflection on the experience. They recognized the challenges associated with advocating for human rights issues, including acquiring the necessary licenses from local authorities, locating the precise addresses of the victims' families, and conducting interviews with them. Their report highlighted several key recommendations to the Human Rights Law Clinic, including collaboration with human rights NGOs and legal advocacy alongside legal assistance institutions (such as Lembaga Bantuan Hukum [LBH]). According to their report, the clinic offered an opportunity for collaboration between institutions, resulting in an agreement between the Institute for Migrant Rights (IMRs) in Cianjur and the Human Rights Law Clinic signed by the Dean of the Law Faculty, and for advocacy purposes, the Dean also inked a cooperation agreement with Semarang LBH, Mawar Saron.

Efficacy of Clinical Approach in Human Rights Education

As previously stated, human rights education is distinct from general education. It encompasses pedagogy and experience. It requires students to comprehend the theoretical and historical framework of human rights as a foundational knowledge that aids in understanding the protection of human dignity inherent in various rights. This awareness compels individuals to take tangible actions to safeguard human rights against any attempts to undermine their dignity. The clinical approach to human rights education equips law students with essential legal skills. These legal skills guarantee that students can apply what they have learned in different circumstances after graduation. Alongside the legal skills acquired from the human rights clinics, students also embrace the principles of social justice, and better understand the injustices, discrimination, and various human rights issues marginalized communities face. During the reflection session after com-

pleting the human rights clinics, law students articulate in front of the class their lawyering skills and the value of social justice. They exhibit great enthusiasm in sharing experiences in community consultation sessions and helping strengthen communities regarding human rights and access to justice throughout clinical processes.

According to the clinical technique of human rights teaching employed in my class, this approach is among the most promising in higher education. The clinical learning method fulfils the objective of human rights education. Students study the meaning of human rights while learning that education itself constitutes a fundamental human right. They also gain experience in promoting or campaigning for human rights in society. The clinical learning method also addresses the criticism that Indonesian law schools primarily focus on legal theories and lack a tradition of training students to address legal issues or human rights concerns. As a result, according to this criticism, Indonesian law graduates do not acquire practical legal skills. Law students are acquainted with legal theories and sources of law, yet they cannot apply them effectively. (Bedner, 2013)

Conclusion

The human rights education course of the Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Semarang represents a synthesis of theoretical and practical components that distinguishes it from other courses, particularly law school courses. A comprehensive understanding of the human rights concept is essential for effective advocacy concerning the issues marginalized people face. Consequently, the clinical approach employed in human rights class illustrates the successful efficacy of teaching human rights. Students acquire knowledge, legal skills and social justice principles essential in preparing them for graduation and subsequent practice as professional lawyers. Aside from financial gain in providing legal services to clients, they are also expected to demonstrate concern for the rights to justice of marginalized communities.

This clinical method is currently only a modified teaching method for human rights subjects and activities using it do not earn credit for students. Law school stakeholders should pay close attention to having an updated law curriculum that gives credit to clinical practice.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Komnas HAM, www.komnasham.go.id/tentang-komnas-ham.
- 2 See Human rights education in higher education, World Programme for Human Rights Education, Second Phase, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217350/PDF/217350eng.pdf.multi>; and United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/pdf/11%20-%20UN%20Declaration%20on%20Human%20Rights%20Education%20and%20Training.pdf.
- 3 World Programme for Human Rights Education and United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, *ibid*.
- 4 See the profile of PUSHAM UII in the Directory of Human Rights Centers in Asia-Pacific - <http://hurights.pbworks.com/w/page/11947505/Indonesia-Centers>.
- 5 In this context, students would have completed several foundational courses by the fifth semester, including Introduction to Law, Introduction to the Indonesian Legal System, Indigenous Law, Private Law, Constitutional Law, Customary Law, International Law, Law and Human Rights, Criminal Law, and other fundamental legal subjects.
- 6 See Umi Zuhriyah, Data Kasus Bullying Terbaru 2024, Apakah Meningkatkan?, [tirto.id, 30 December 2024, https://tirto.id/data-kasus-bullying-terbaru-2024-apakah-meningkat-g621](https://tirto.id/data-kasus-bullying-terbaru-2024-apakah-meningkat-g621).

Twenty Years of Training for Peace and Human Rights

Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding

IN 2000, proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year for the Culture of Peace at the initiative of UNESCO, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) was established with the mandate of promoting and developing Education for International Understanding (EIU) within the framework of education towards a culture of peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

In order to fulfill its mandate and objectives, APCEIU has been earnestly carrying out for more than two decades its main functions as specified in the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the Establishment of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (hereafter, “APCEIU Agreement”), in spite of its limited resources and adverse conditions.

APCEIU has the following functions:

- a. To strengthen regional and subregional capacities in planning and implementing a broad range of practices in education for international understanding and global citizenship education;
- b. To encourage and facilitate collaborative links between Asia-Pacific initiatives and other regional, international and global efforts in education;
- c. To carry out research and development related to the philosophy, teaching methods and curricula in the field of education for international understanding and global citizenship education;
- d. To organize training workshops and seminars on education for international understanding and global citizenship education;
- e. To produce and disseminate teaching/learning materials and other publications on education for international understanding and global citizenship education; and

f. To undertake any other activities necessary to promote education for international understanding and global citizenship education in the Asia-Pacific region.

These functions were defined based on the result of the feasibility study on the establishment of APCEIU. At the time of the renewal of the APCEIU Agreement with UNESCO, these functions were modified to reflect the trends of the time. The feasibility study has served as a foundation upon which APCEIU has engaged in activities to promote EIU for twenty years.

APCEIU has continuously striven to establish legal and institutional foundations to effectively fulfill its mandates and functions as well as to be in accord with the status of UNESCO Category 2 Centre.



APCEIU Building, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Adoption of Resolution on Establishment of APCEIU

The Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) submitted to UNESCO the draft resolution on the establishment of APCEIU signed by twelve member-states in the Asia-Pacific region. The draft resolution was reviewed at the Education Commission of the 30th UNESCO General Conference held on 30 November 1999. At that time, some European Member-states expressed opposition to it, making it uncertain whether it would be tabled as an agenda item for discussion at the plenary meeting of

the General Conference. However, the resolution narrowly passed through the Education Commission and was finally adopted at the plenary meeting (30C/Resolution 17).

The adoption of the resolution despite such a difficult process was the result of the government of the Republic of Korea (ROK government) strenuously pushing for the establishment of APCEIU, maintaining close cooperation with the personnel of the UNESCO Secretariat, including Deputy Director-General Colin Power and Director Kaisa Savolainen (Division for the Promotion of Quality Education), and gaining support from member-states in the region through frequent consultations with them. Strong support from Mr. Ahmad Hussein, Vice President of the Education Commission, who chaired the plenary session, was also an integral factor in the successful adoption of the resolution. At the time, European Member-states exercised much influence on UNESCO, and Asian Member-states' opinions were divided by region—East, Southeast, and Southwest Asia. On top of this, it was unlikely that China, Japan and Korea would join their voices as one. In this environment, it was inevitably a challenging and difficult task for the Republic of Korea to host the EIU regional center with its own initiative.

Announcement of APCEIU Agreement

August 2000 marked a significant event when UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura signed the APCEIU Agreement together with Korean Education Minister Song Ja in the Republic of Korea. The APCEIU Agreement was given the same effect as a treaty on 25 August 2000 signifying the opening of APCEIU. In September 2000, the ROK government promulgated the Agreement as Treaty No. 1535 in its Official Gazette No. 14597.

The opening of APCEIU, held in August 2000, was a true feat that the ROK government achieved in less than three years after proposing to establish an EIU regional center at the 29th UNESCO General Conference in November 1997 and in just nine months after the adoption of the resolution at the 30th UNESCO General Conference in November 1999.

Programs

APCEIU has several programs that implement its mandate as a *UNESCO Category 2 Centre*. The programs support the promotion of Global

Citizenship Education (GCED) in Asia-Pacific as well as other regions of the world.

a. GCED Research and Policy Development

In an effort to ensure that GCED is widely disseminated and firmly grounded, APCEIU has been developing evidence-based research and action-oriented policies on GCED for and with different stakeholders around the world.

In cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and UNESCO, APCEIU facilitates global dialogue on GCED through policy forums and conferences in order to identify strategies aimed towards action at the local, regional and global levels. APCEIU also engages in curriculum research and development in primary and secondary education in order to identify strategies on how to strengthen and complement national education systems through GCED. In order to engage with stakeholders in higher education institutions, APCEIU supports the development of GCED courses in universities.

b. International Teacher Exchange Program

In order to foster future generations that actively participate in the globalizing and multiculturalizing society, schools and teachers must have the opportunity to experience different educational settings and practices established in different contexts.



Curriculum Development, Uganda Refugee Camp 1

Recognizing the crucial role of teachers in making social changes, AP-CEIU aims to develop teacher capacity to nurture global citizens who can cooperate with peers for a better society.

Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange for Global Education (APTE)

The Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange for Global Education (APTE) is a bilateral teacher exchange program between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and seven Asia-Pacific countries, namely, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand and Lao PDR.

Selected by the ministry of education of the respective home country, exchange teachers are placed at host schools for three to four months to teach in collaboration with host school teachers, to experience different education systems and cultures, to share ideas and concerns on education and pedagogy, and to promote mutual understanding.

APTE is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education 2030 by fostering intercultural understanding and global citizenship in schools, as well as strengthening global competency of educators in each participating country.



Teacher Exchange - Cambodia

School to School Online Exchange

The APTE promotes both face-to-face and non-face-to-face educational exchange through offline and online educational activities. Non-face-to-face educational exchange focuses more on “exchange between schools” by coordination of Korean schools and schools of the partner countries. The participating schools organize study groups to carry out real time online classes, classes using GCED lesson materials, and study group projects.

Development of Online Educational Materials

To improve exchange teachers’ understanding of APTE and prepare them for participation in the program, online lectures are provided.

Exchange teachers enhance understanding on the program through courses supporting the objective of the program - culture & history of the partner countries, and school system of the partner countries, etc. Moreover, online GCED materials developed by APTE alumni are distributed to Korean schools for better understanding of GCED by teachers and students. Spreading GCED materials utilizing various cultures of the partner countries is aimed at promoting multicultural acceptability and global citizenship in the education fields.

SSAEM Conference

SSAEM (Sharing Stories of Asia-Pacific Education Movements) Conference is the final presentation for sharing outcomes of APTE. The Conference includes presentations of the program participants to share



SSAEM Conference (2024)

their experiences and a panel discussion of the ministry officials from the partner countries to share program outcomes at the policy level and to set a vision for the next year. It has been held since 2014, and annually about four hundred participants gather for sharing and networking.

c. Information Sharing

APCEIU serves as a GCED information hub by building and distributing updated GCED news and information, and providing GCED partnership platforms.

APCEIU publications raise understanding of GCED and are easily accessible through its website to anyone who is interested.

UNESCO Clearinghouse on GCED

Considered the first and most comprehensive database on GCED, this web-based platform disseminates GCED resources collected from all over the world, including policies, teaching & learning materials, case studies, etc. The Clearinghouse is available in multiple languages - English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Korean.

Publication of SangSaeng

Published two times a year, the professional EIU/GCED English magazine *SangSaeng* fosters global citizenship through updated quality information on various EIU/GCED-related issues such as cultural diversity, peace, human rights and sustainable development. The French version of *SangSaeng* is also published online.

Global Citizen Campus

As an experimental learning space for GCED, Global Citizen Campus provides opportunities to experience GCED through diverse activities such as making global citizen passports, checking a global citizen type, and participating in model UNESCO conferences.

EIU Storytelling Project

Striving to foster the importance and value of EIU/GCED, this program collects interesting EIU/GCED related stories from global citizens to share them on the APCEIU website and other global social networking services.

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UNESCO CLEARINGHOUSE ON GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION HOSTED BY APCEIU

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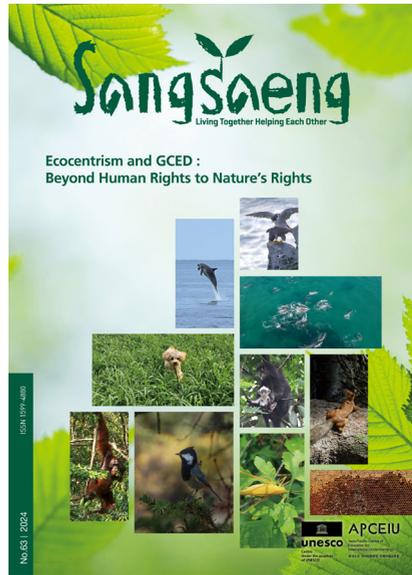
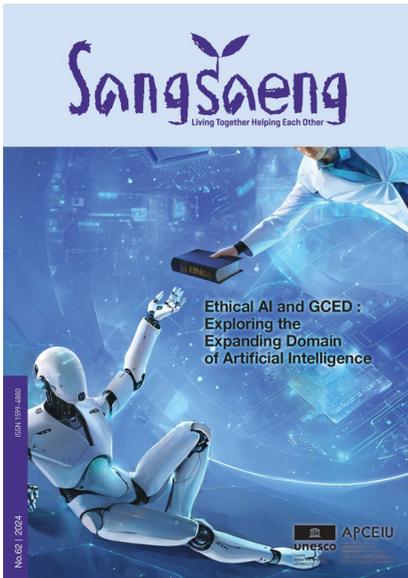
GCED Clearinghouse Homepage

Eru Photo Class

Fostering global citizenship, the EIU Photo Class provides experiential learning opportunities to secondary school students through the art of photography by rediscovering the themes of cultural diversity, peace, human rights and sustainability through their own lenses.

d. Partnerships and Networking

The inclusion of GCED in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflects the clear call around the world for an education that enables



SangSaeng Magazine



EIU Photo Class in Kyrgyzstan (2024)

learners to play active roles in seeking solutions to global challenges being faced.

Inspired by the wealth of initiatives happening on the ground globally, APCEIU is finding ways to strengthen its network and partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals through various GCED programs to contribute towards more peaceful, sustainable and tolerant societies collectively.

GGEDNetwork

APCEIU provides GCED partnership platforms for various actors and institutions implementing GCED to share their experiences and promote collaboration for solidifying global actions. Through regional GCED networks and a global actors' platform, GCED partners also work together to develop effective GCED strategies and collaborative initiatives at the regional and global levels.

UN GCED Seminar

In close cooperation with UN, the UN GCED Seminar is held annually to provide a platform to share practices and exchange information among various stakeholders including permanent representatives to the UN, high-level officials, and delegates from international organizations and civil society, aimed at advancing implementation of GCED in the global context, in line with UN SDGs.



UN GCED Seminar

Networking for UNESCO Category 2 Centres in Education

APCEIU, recognized by the international community as one of the most active UNESCO Category 2 Centres in Education, leads and enhances a wide range of cooperative initiatives and exchange activities between UNESCO Category 2 Centres in Education.

By actively participating in regular meetings of the UNESCO Category 2 Centres in Education and organizing networking and updating meetings on UNESCO Category 2 Centres, APCEIU seeks to explore and develop new opportunities to build a more inclusive and action-driven community of UNESCO Category 2 Centres, surrounding the field of education, particularly on GCED and UN SDG Target 4.7

Establishment and Operation of Global Citizenship Education Cooperation Centres

In order to strengthen the capacity of teacher education institutions to implement GCED based on the characteristics and needs of each country, APCEIU has been implementing a project on establishment of Global Citizenship Education Cooperation Centers (GCC) at teacher education institutions in partner countries since 2021. To date, Global Citizenship Education Cooperation Centers have been established at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, the University of Science Malaysia (USM) in Malaysia, the Philippine Normal University (PNU) in the Philippines, the National



GCED Cooperation Centres Workshop



2nd International Conference on Global Citizenship Education 2024

Institute of Education (NIE) in Cambodia, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) in Indonesia, and the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Community Education Development (SEAMEO-CED) in Lao PDR with plans to expand to other countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

Capacity-Building of Educators on GCED

One of the core mandates of APCEIU is to enhance educators' capacities in understanding and carrying out GCED, with the ultimate goal of fostering a Culture of Peace. In accordance with this commitment, APCEIU offers a variety of professional development and training workshop opportunities for educators in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

APCEIU's training programs are committed to broadening the participants' perspectives on GCED, increasing their competencies in teaching GCED, and further encouraging them to build and maintain networks and partnerships. Moreover, training programs aim to develop participants' knowledge and skills that can be applied to different educational contexts, reflecting the participants' national and local needs.

Global Capacity-Building on GCED for Teacher Educators

Highlighting the necessity of teachers' capacity-building in order to carry out and spread GCED, UNESCO created this global workshop to provide teacher educators from around the world the opportunity to deepen their understanding of GCED, share relevant experiences, and seek effective



Global Capacity Building Workshop (2024)



human rights do not remain as concepts and ideas,

Human Rights in the Context of GCED Workshop (2017)

implementation measures, thereby strengthening their capacities to implement GCED and building a collaboration network.

Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on EIU

Designed to be a “Training of Trainers (TOT),” the Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on EIU annually invites teacher educators from the Asia-Pacific



APTW 2025



APTW 2025



APTW 2025



APTW 2025



APTW 2025

region to a ten-day comprehensive training session to strengthen their motivation and capacities to implement EIU and GCED.

Sub-Regional/Country-Based Workshop on GCED

Reflecting the interests of UNESCO Member states, APCEIU provides subregional workshops as well as country-based workshops to meet regional and local needs in the field of GCED. Also, APCEIU has been providing capacity-building workshops for Korean GCED Lead Teachers and providing support for teachers' research activities on GCED.

Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED

Intended to strengthen youth-led GCED initiatives, the Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED provides a platform where youth can share their own programs and discuss global citizenship for future generations. Furthermore, by supporting the GCED Youth Network established in 2016, APCEIU aims to contribute to the spread of GCED led by youth advocates across the globe.

GCED Online Campus

APCEIU has the GCED Online Campus, a platform that provides GCED online courses for educators, special lecture series, case videos of GCED initiatives, and GCED-related teaching & learning materials. All courses and contents are free and accessible to every educator who is interested in GCED.

Easily accessible e-learning resources encourage educators to promote GCED in various settings, including classrooms, schools, and local commu-



Youth Leadership Workshop (2025)



Youth Leadership Workshop (2025)



Youth Leadership Workshop (2025)

nities. This will ultimately contribute to what APCEIU has long been advocating: Learning to Live Together.

The GCED Online Campus courses cover a number of topics including “Curriculum Development for GCED Educators: Perspectives, Purposes, and Practices” and “Empowering Educators in Shaping Futures with Action-Oriented GCED (A pre-requisite course for APTW).”

Human Rights in APCEIU Programs

APCEIU’s programs that promote GCED include human rights as content. The programs subscribe to the SDGs as specifically provided in Goals 4 and 16. Goal 16 provides a general frame for the sustainable development of society as a whole. Goal 4 provides the specific educational content in promoting sustainable development.

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals provides:

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 16 has several targets, a number of which are directly supportive of action in the community grounded on global ideas – the concept of “global citizenship.” Some of these targets are as follows:¹

16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.6 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.10 ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels, in particular in developing countries, for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime

16.b promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

Goal 4 of the SDGs is about ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and [promoting] lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

Target 4.7 of this Goal is about “Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship” which translates into the following specific target:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

Human rights constitute a major topic of learning of the SDGs as a whole. Their understanding and realization support the achievement of the SDGs. Goals 4 and 16 provide the explicit mention of human rights as essential element in achieving SDGs.

The targets of Goal 4 and 16 are discussed in the activities held under the APCEIU programs, more specifically in the Global Capacity-Building on GCED for Teacher Educators and the Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on EIU.

APCEIU provides training both in-person and online. It has an Online Campus that provides online courses on a variety of issues related to EIU and GCED.

Additionally, in line with the Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 20 November 2023), APCEIU is guided by the following recommendations:²

21. Education for peace and human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and sustainable development should be provided to all learners, teachers, education personnel and educational communities, and contribute to universal values, the prevention of human rights’ and fundamental freedoms’ violations and abuses, promote a universal culture of peace, as well as enable every person to exercise their own rights and to promote the rights of others and participate democratically in the cultural and social life of their educational institutions, community and public affairs.

42. (f) motivating educators to commit to the principles underpinning a culture of democracy, peace, human rights, sus-

tainability and global citizenship as part of teaching standards and competency frameworks for teachers and students, guiding teacher professional development.

The programs of APCEIU promote these Recommendations in order to facilitate not only the learning of human rights but more importantly the application of human rights principles inside the classroom and in the school as well as the realization of the human rights of students and everyone in the education community.

Online Campus

Several courses in the GCED Online Campus discuss human rights. The GCED Online Campus is a portal for APCEIU's online courses. These courses are described as follows:

a. Becoming Global Citizens for a Sustainable Society

This course introduces the SDGs and the notion of Global Citizenship through the series of lectures by renowned experts from all over the world, interviews with scholars, advocates and representatives from all different sectors, and case presentations by active global citizens.

The course aims to examine and critically reflect on the revolving issues around the globe at local, national, and international levels by providing a platform where participants can virtually meet and learn from one another.

Participants will be able to deepen their understanding of the SDGs and global citizenship, exchange and embrace different perspectives, and challenge their own assumptions in this course.

The course invites those who see themselves as global citizens as well as those who aspire to assume active roles in bringing meaningful changes to oneself and to the society they are in.

Table 1. Modules of Becoming Global Citizen for a Sustainable Society Course

No.	Module	Units
1	Global Citizenship and the SDGs	1) Understanding global citizenship in the context of the SDGs. 2) Why & What is Global Citizenship? 3) Issues Around Global Citizenship

2	Global Citizenship in a Challenging World	Key Challenges to Global Citizenship - Poverty & Glocal Justice - Consumerism & Eco Justice - Peace & Preventing Violent Extremism - Media Influence and Critical Literacy - Globalization & Migration - Gender Equality
3	Act to Change: Global Citizenship for Transformation	1) Highlights and Key Issues of the SDGs 2) Global Partnership for Achieving the SDGs
4	Meet the Global Citizens Around the World	Case studies of innovative movements and cases of global citizens
5	Plan for Action: Becoming Active Global Citizens	1) How to become active global citizens 2) Advocacy tools and strategies

b. Glocal Justice and Peacebuilding

Among individuals, groups and institutions committed to building a peaceful world, there is a long-standing consensus that there can be “no peace without justice”. Hence, this course seeks to provide a critical understanding of the relationship between conflicts and social and economic justice at local and global levels as well as peacebuilding initiatives to transform such conflicts in both South and North contexts. Identifying structural violence or social and economic inequalities and injustices as one of the major root causes of glocal (global and local) conflicts, it also explores strategies whereby nations and their citizens can live together with justice and compassion to build a culture of peace through personal and social action.

Drawing on case studies in diverse regions in the Global South and in part in the Global North, four specific themes or sectors are critically examined, including paradigms of development and globalization, marginalized rural communities, women and Indigenous Peoples. The impact of unjust social structures and relationships at international, national and local levels in catalyzing conflicts are analyzed. Various exemplars of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and movements to transform these conflicts towards realities that reflect the values and principles of social and economic justice are explored. The course also provides a forum for understanding the roles played by NGOs, other civil society organizations and social movements in the building of a just world community.

Table 2. Four- week course, Glocal Justice and Peacebuilding

Week	Session
1	Global Poverty and Hunger, Paradigms of Development
2	Marginalized Rural People
3	Justice for Women
4	Rights of Indigenous Peoples

c. Your Role in Eliminating Discrimination against Women

As of 2024, no country has fully achieved gender equality. However, people can work together to change this and make gender equality a reality.

This course introduces feminist activist approaches to eliminating discrimination against women. While efforts to combat discrimination often begin at the local level, global mechanisms are in place to support governments in fulfilling their commitments to women. Key UN mechanisms are discussed, including:

- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Committee
- Special Procedures
- The Universal Periodic Review, and
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A core focus of the course is on Violence Against Women (VAW), which is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. Various forms and types of VAW are examined and two critical topics are explored in greater depth: Women's Reproductive Rights and Women in Media.

d. Preventing Hate Speech: The Role of Media Literacy

What can be done when online hate speeches spread into the physical world? This closed course is designed for educators who want to teach about Media and Information Literacy. It focuses on the spreading of prejudice and stereotypes online and their consequences offline. The workshop explains the role played by the Internet and the mechanisms of their diffusion on social networks (trends and patterns of online extremism). Using material found online, this course allows the participants to experiment hands-on the functioning of Internet, define their own posture, and gives them the tools and recommendations to teach about it.



Radicalization

- Influenced by radicalism through exposure to far-right, white nationalist ideologies.
- Found clues of radicalism in his childhood and family history.
- His radicalization mainly occurred through online communities and echo chambers where extremist views were normalized, reinforcing his xenophobic and Islamophobic beliefs.

PRESENTER: MASUD (BANGLADESH)

Preventing Hate Speech Course

Those who want to apply for this course should complete the prerequisite course “[Critical Media Literacy](#)” in advance.

Table 3. Modules on Preventing Hate Speech Course

Module No.	Title
1	The Challenges of Privacy Online
2	Consequences of Fake News and Conspiracy Theories
3	Online Discrimination and Hate Speech by Extremist Groups

e. Human Rights in the Context of GCED

This five-week course covers a basic introduction to human rights principles, standards and mechanisms, discussion of specific issues related to GCED from a human rights perspective, and an understanding of the teaching of human rights in relation to GCED issues. After taking this course, participants will be able to explain basic principles of human rights, discuss GCED issues from a human rights perspective, and expound on issues and systems of teaching human rights.

Table 4. Weekly topics of Human Rights in the Context of GCED Course

Week	Topic
1	Society, History, Culture and Human Rights
2	International Human Rights Standards
3	GCED Issues Affecting Human Rights
4	Realizing Human Rights and GCED
5	Building Sustainable Communities

Various materials such as articles, videos, and documents from the UN, national/local governments, other institutions, and also from individuals are utilized for this Online Course.

Each weekly syllabus has several sections containing reading materials and tasks for participants to work on.

Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on EIU

The Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on EIU (APTW) is a flagship training program of APCEIU. Through this workshop, APCEIU has provided training opportunities for key educators and teacher trainers in the Asia-Pacific for the past twenty-four years, contributing to the spread and enhancement of EIU/GCED in both the region and individual countries.

Since 2021, in response to the global pandemic, the original face-to-face workshop has been transformed into an online training format. In 2025, APCEIU adopts a hybrid format that combined the strengths of both methods. The online training (pre-workshop) enhances understanding of EIU/GCED, while the face-to-face workshop (main Workshop) focuses on deepening learning through active peer interactions and strengthening networking among participants. This format is to further enhance the effectiveness of the training and contribute to the effective implementation of the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation.

Designed as a Training of Trainers, the main workshop consists of three modules - Module 1: Conceptual and thematic areas of EIU/GCED; Module 2: transformative pedagogies for EIU/GCED; and Module 3: Action Planning. The first and second modules provide participants with opportunities to understand key concepts of EIU/GCED and engage in discussions on regional and international issues, as well as innovative pedagogical approaches to EIU/GCED. They also aim to help participants internalize the core values of EIU/GCED through various forms and content of training program, such as

field studies, case sharing and analysis, alongside lectures, discussions and workshops. Some examples of the previous sessions in the Modules 1 and 2 are as follows.

[Module 1] Conceptual and Thematic Areas of EIU/GCED

- Unpacking the Framework of GCED Implementation: *Theoretical Foundations* (2025)
- Language to Lives: Translating the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation and Asia-Pacific Road Map into Lived Experiences (2025)
- Reimagining GCED from Asia-Pacific Perspectives (2025)
- Peace, Glocal Justice and GCED (2024)
- Tackling Inequalities in the Context of Human Rights (2024)
- Climate Change and GCED (2024)
- Critical Media Information Literacy and Digital Citizenship (2023)
- Gender Equality for Inclusive Education (2023)
- Learning from History towards Peaceful Reconciliation (2021)
- Dismantling the Culture of War (2017)
- Dialogue with Director of DMZ Peace-Life Valley (2016)
- Culture and Sustainable Development in EIU Lens (2013).

[Module 2] Transformative Pedagogies for EIU/GCED

- Teachers' Role for Transformation (2024)
- Intercultural Dialogue for Peacebuilding (2023)
- Education for Respect for Diversity (2017)
- Learning from Each Other (2017)
- Teaching GCED: *Democratic Dialogism and Communication Skills* (2017)
- Pedagogical Approaches to EIU (2014)
- Curriculum Mapping (2014)
- Education for Peaceful Conflict Resolution (2014)
- Internalizing EIU through Creative Experiential Learning (2013).

Module 3 supports participants in developing specific action plans to implement contextualized EIU/GCED tailored to their educational settings. It also facilitates the establishment of alumni networks and follow-up initiatives, aiming to further advance EIU/GCED in the Asia-Pacific region.

Furthermore, by implementing the mentorship program as a follow-up activity of the workshop, APCEIU offers continuous learning opportunities

to alumni, supports their follow-up EIU/GCED activities in their local contexts, and identifies best practices in EIU/GCED.

Participants

Each year, APTW brings together approximately twenty to forty participants from across twenty to thirty UNESCO Member-states in the Asia and the Pacific region. Initially designed as a training-of-trainers program targeting teacher educators, APTW gradually broadened its scope to engage a wider range of stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum developers and policymakers.

Participants' Reflections: Head, Heart, and Hand

Participants of APTW consistently describe the program as a transformative learning experience. Their reflections, articulated through the dimensions of Head (what they learned), Heart (what moved them), and Hand (what they are called to do), reveal the personal and professional impact of the workshop.

A. HEAD – *What did they learn?*

Participants reported a deepened understanding of GCED and the culture of peace—not only in theory, but through lived and relational experiences. APTW provided a unique learning space where knowledge was cultivated not only through structured sessions and educational materials, but also through meaningful connections, shared personal stories, and collective reflection.

Key insights shared by participants include:

- Several participants expressed that they “*deeply experienced a culture of peace*” through the workshop.
- A powerful realization expressed was that “*peace should never be taken for granted.*”
- Many participants highlighted the acquisition of practical skills, particularly on how to implement GCED projects in their own educational contexts.
- Others reflected on the power of interpersonal connection, noting that “*even though we wear different clothes and speak different languages, we laugh at the same jokes, we feel the same fears, and share the same dreams.*”

- Another participant shared: *“To create a safe space for others, one must first embrace one’s own authenticity without judgment. This openness allows honest and impactful dialogue to emerge.”*

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b. HEART – What moved them?

The most moving aspect of APTW for many was the sense of shared humanity and connection.

Key moments that moved participants include:

- Stories of personal struggle—*“silent battles and lonely fights for peace and change”*—resonated deeply.
- Participants were inspired by the courage of their peers, particularly during the Alumni Session, where one noted: *“Despite her wounds, she still chooses to reach out to others through education.”*
- A sense of unity in diversity was a recurring theme, as one participant beautifully stated: *“No one is the same in this space, yet we are united by GCED.”*
- Many noted that they *“learned more than words can express,”* highlighting the emotional and intellectual richness of the workshop.
- For others, the workshop awakened a newfound sense of responsibility: *“I experienced GCED through connection—I felt empathy, respect, and love. Now, I feel responsible. I need to educate my people.”*

c. HAND – What are they called to do?

Inspired by APTW, participants expressed renewed commitment to act—both individually and collectively.

Key calls to action expressed by participants include:

- One eloquently summarized their motivation using the acronym GCED:
 - G – Gift of being called for a purpose
 - C – Courage to pursue the lonely battles for a cause
 - E – Energy, Encouragement, and Empathy
 - D – Direction and Drive to make a difference.
- Many committed to strengthening the bridge between global and local efforts: *“I am called to build understanding in my community by meaningfully implementing GCED values.”*

- Participants emphasized that action begins with mindset shifts: *“I used to question everything and delay action. But now I ask myself, why not [act now]?”*
- Others shared that the workshop reaffirmed their commitment: *“Doing GCED without support is difficult, but I will continue for the sake of the next generation.”*
- Above all, participants left with hope: *“Even if the change seems small, I have learned not to give up. I will keep moving forward.”*

Twenty-year Experience

For the last twenty years, capacity-building programs have been APCEIU's main initiative, with the highest demand from UNESCO Member-states. While these programs have high satisfaction rates as reported by participants, and inspire numerous follow-up activities, they also should be upgraded, improved and systematized for another leap forward at this turning point.

First, although face-to-face group training programs have an essential role to play in the capacity-building of the participants, it is also necessary to develop a new training program that can create multiplier effects, in consideration of limited resources. When planning and operating programs, it is necessary to prioritize their medium- and long-term multiplier effects, such as those in cases where the capacity-building of lead teachers leads to community activities such as delivery training and composition of research groups. Multinational training programs also need to explore ways to amplify medium- to long-term multiplier effects by taking into account the demands and characteristics of various participants.

Second, it is necessary to create a training module with a systematic curriculum so that the participants can engage in delivery training with less difficulty. While APCEIU has already developed some basic modules in the form of a training guide, it also needs to more systematically develop them into the APCEIU's signature modular curricula. Based on basic research on the training module since 2020, APCEIU should focus its efforts on the development of a modular curriculum for the next two to three years.

Third, APCEIU should develop and offer intensive training programs with advanced theme-based training or practice-oriented workshops, which are differentiated from basic training programs. APCEIU's basic training

programs can be evaluated as having outstanding impact in raising awareness of the importance of GCED and motivating practices of it. However, APCEIU also needs to provide advanced training programs by subject and by pedagogy to support field practices such as teacher training and classroom teaching.

Fourth, as the demand for online education increases, it is necessary to expand online courses and actively utilize them to increase the effectiveness of offline training. Although the previously developed online training programs can be used in the preparation for offline training programs or for the post-training expansion of the programs, there is also a need to develop and plan a program mainly consisting of online and offline blended learning where both modes are organically and systematically combined.

Fifth, there have been discussions on the ways to develop a prototype advanced capacity-building program out of those intensified, systematized, and institutionalized in the Republic of Korea to be shared with other UNESCO Member-states so that they can benchmark it. To do so, a new program is necessary to analyze, evaluate, and develop a model of the capacity-building programs already implemented in the Republic of Korea, and share it with UNESCO Member-states.

Sixth, the APCEIU's capacity-building programs are currently focused on public education, but there is a need to develop a program to train key personnel in the fields of non-formal education such as civil society and media. Considering the limited human and material resources of APCEIU, it is more efficient to focus only on the public education sector. However, as the non-formal education field has been growing in terms of influence and importance, whether APCEIU's capacity-building programs should embrace non-formal education needs to be discussed in consideration of a long-term perspective.

Seventh, APCEIU needs to find ways to resume meaningful programs that have been terminated, such as: the Asia-Pacific Leadership Academy for School Principals, which was aimed at school managers like principals; the China-Japan-Korea Children's Story Exchange Programme and the China-Japan-ROK GCED Policy Youth Forum that contributed to the promotion of cooperation and peace in Northeast Asia.

Finally, in order to increase the effectiveness of its programs, APCEIU should improve the planning and operation of its capacity-building programs by systematizing the monitoring and evaluating process. In order to

achieve this, APCEIU should secure the budget needed and separately develop them into programs, and it is essential to include the participation of external experts. In this respect, it was proposed that APCEIU establish a medium- to long-term plan as the first step towards a leap forward.

Endnotes

1 Indicators and a Monitoring Framework, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), <https://indicators.report/goals/goal-16/>.

2 Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development, UNESCO, 20 November 2023, www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental.

Legal Empowerment in Action: Evaluating Paralegal Models in Pakistan

Inara Ali, Haya Emaan Zahid, Kamran Khan and Ahtesham Gul*

ACCCESS TO JUSTICE is recognized as a fundamental right and an essential component of any society (Sheikh & Mohyuddin, 2019). Yet, for many people in Pakistan, particularly those from marginalized groups, this right remains distant. Despite constitutional guarantees and Pakistan's commitment to international human rights frameworks, the country's justice system faces numerous barriers that hinder access (Khan et al., 2025). For the citizens, the justice system feels daunting, inaccessible, and expensive. Long delays in case resolution, procedural complexities, and the high cost of legal representation are just some of the issues that discourage people from pursuing justice (Khan & Ahmed, 2024). It is evident through World Bank's Summary Statistics for Rule of Law (1996-2018) that Pakistan's score is far less than the average of countries in its own categories (Ahmad & von Wangenheim, 2021).

In rural settings, the concept of personal prestige acts as a barrier to seeking formal justice. Consequently, many turn to informal systems like *jirga* (tribal council or traditional dispute resolution assembly) and *panchayat* (village council or traditional local governance body), which often resort to coercive, authoritarian and subjective appeals as there is a lack of accountability (Sheikh & Mohyuddin, 2019). These systems reinforce harmful power structures, particularly against women and religious minorities. While a number of laws exist for the protection of women on paper, their implementation is concerning, which deteriorates access to justice, particularly for gender groups that are in a marginalized position (Saleem et al., 2024). Similar is the case with religious minorities. Sectarian violence is common, where legal structures fail to put an end to such cases. Pernicious use of blasphemy law also leads to violation of non-Muslims' rights and treats them as second-class citizens (Malik, 2002).

*With contribution from Anoosha Hasan.

In response to these structural challenges, the concept of legal empowerment has gained increasing attention as a sustainable and community-driven solution. It aims to “empower people to know, use and shape the law, to advance their rights to key public services.” (Joshi et al., 2022, p. 2). In Pakistan, this approach is being operationalized through a range of grassroots organizations and initiatives. They ensure community mobilization and legal literacy through paralegals, who inform people of their rights and help empower them to access justice systems and seek legal remedies for their issues (Joshi et al., 2022). Thus, paralegals play an important role in helping underserved populations navigate legal systems that are often inaccessible, intimidating, or unresponsive. Although they are not licensed lawyers, paralegals are trained to assist people with legal processes, raise awareness of legal rights, and connect individuals to justice institutions. Their value lies in their proximity to the communities they serve, making them trusted and approachable sources of support for people facing legal challenges. In many contexts, paralegals act as the first point of contact for legal help and empowering individuals to take action (Braithwaite, 2015). Increasingly recognized as a key component of legal empowerment strategies, paralegals offer a grassroots approach to bridging the justice gap. Especially in contexts where formal legal aid is limited or unevenly distributed, community-based and institutional paralegal models offer a sustainable way to increase legal literacy, build confidence, and enable more people to engage with the justice system (Diehl, 2009).

About the Organizations

A prominent model of paralegal integration in Pakistan can be seen through the work of two sister organizations, the Legal Aid Society (LAS)-Pakistan and the Committee for the Welfare of Prisoners (CWP).

The Committee for the Welfare of Prisoners (CWP) is a government-funded not-for-profit Committee dedicated to improving access to justice through provision of pro bono legal representation services to Unsentenced or Under-Trial Prisoners (UTPs) across twenty prisons in Sindh, Pakistan. Since its establishment in 2004, the Committee has significantly expanded its operations and continued to play a crucial role in supporting these UTPs, thereby enhancing the delivery of justice for the marginalized and contributing to improving the criminal justice system in Pakistan at large.

The Legal Aid Society (LAS) is an independent offshoot of the CWP, aiming to improve access to justice for all citizens, particularly those who are marginalized and underprivileged, since the year 2013. It is a not-for-profit non-governmental organization (NGO), the mission of which is to connect the vulnerable and disempowered end-users of justice such as women, children, transgender, religious minorities and low income communities with effective and expedient services for the delivery of justice. It further works to protect, promote and ensure the knowledge of, and access to, fundamental rights by working on thematic areas such as Access to Justice, Gender and Child Security, and Climate Resilience, Sustainability and Security.

These organizations work simultaneously on the demand and supply sides of the justice system, raising legal awareness at the community level to help people understand and demand their rights, while also training and collaborating with key justice sector actors such as police, judges and lawyers to strengthen institutional responsiveness and accountability.

In 2017, CWP introduced a paralegal program within the Central and Women's Prisons in Karachi, with the aim of promoting legal literacy among UTPs. Recognizing that many prisoners lacked even a basic understanding of their rights or the status of their cases, the program was designed to equip them with the knowledge necessary to navigate the justice system



2023 training of trainers conducted with UTPs in prison as part of prison paralegal program.

more effectively. Following its initial success, the program was expanded to the Central Prisons in Hyderabad and Sukkur. What sets the CWP model apart is that the paralegals are themselves UTPs, selected from within the prison population. These peer paralegals are trained and supported to conduct weekly legal literacy classes for their fellow inmates. Each class covers one of seven key legal topics, with participants selected at random from the prison population. Through these sessions, UTPs gain a clearer understanding of their legal status, available legal remedies, and prison regulations.¹

Parallel to the prison-based paralegal initiative, LAS has implemented a comprehensive community-based paralegal model since 2014. LAS designs its projects with a long-term sustainability lens, and the paralegal system forms a key part of its strategy to ensure that the impact of legal interventions continues well beyond the life of individual projects. Paralegals at LAS are carefully selected on a voluntary basis, considering factors such as their proximity to the community, familiarity with local issues, understanding of legal and human rights, and passion for advocacy. After receiving comprehensive training, these paralegals work closely with LAS's field teams to carry out legal awareness sessions, support community members in addressing legal issues, and refer cases for formal legal representation.

Despite operating in different contexts (CWP within prisons and LAS in communities), both organizations share a common vision: to make the justice system more accessible by equipping people with the tools and knowledge to engage with it effectively. In both models, paralegals are not supplementary actors but core components of the access to justice strategy. Whether peer educators inside correctional facilities or mobilizers in communities, paralegals act as enablers of justice.

This article presents findings from a preliminary evaluation of the paralegal programs implemented by CWP and LAS. The evaluation was initiated to systematically assess the impact of the paralegal system across various programs and thematic areas at the organizational level. It aimed to measure the effectiveness of the paralegal system, along with capturing insights regarding the sustainability that it promises for the future. This evaluation also assessed the impact of paralegals on legal awareness in the communities and prisons.



2024 monitoring visit to evaluate the effectiveness of a community awareness session conducted by a paralegal.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation of the paralegal programs implemented by CWP and LAS was guided by three out of six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: effectiveness, sustainability and impact (OECD-DAC, n.d.). The table below further expands on what each of the three criteria measure in the context of the evaluation.

Table 1: Overview of the key criteria and their measurements

Criteria	Description	Evaluation Questions
Effectiveness	The extent to which the system has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across target groups. (Is the system achieving its desired objectives?)	To what extent have the paralegals effectively raised legal awareness within prisons and communities?

Sustainability	The extent to which the net benefits of the system continue, or are likely to continue in the future. (Will the benefits last?)	How sustainable is the paralegal system expected to be in maintaining and advancing prisoners' and community's awareness and legal empowerment after the conclusion of project interventions?
Impact	The extent to which the system has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. (What difference does the system make?)	What significant impact, both intended and unintended, has the paralegal system had on the communities and prisoners and how does this impact align with the overall organizational goal?

While the evaluation framework remained consistent across both organizations, the design and tools were adapted to suit the different environments in which the paralegals operate.

For the CWP program, implemented within prison settings, the evaluation primarily focused on effectiveness and some early indicators of impact. This was done through a feedback questionnaire gauging the perceived effectiveness of the legal literacy sessions. The data collection drew from a population of one hundred fifteen UTPs engaged between February to May 2024, with a follow-up rapid evaluation conducted in September–October 2024 with a final sample of twenty-three UTPs. The results thus consisted of the twenty-three UTPs with whom the rapid evaluation was conducted. Feedback regarding the program was also gathered from UTPs and paralegals. Figure 1 explains the definition of each stakeholder group and their respective criteria.

For the LAS programs, which operate in community-based settings, the evaluation assessed all three OECD-DAC (criteria, effectiveness, sustainability and impact), given the broader field engagement. The evaluation engaged both supply-side actors (paralegals) and demand-side actors (beneficiaries and general community members) to assess whether the program was meeting its intended objectives across stakeholder groups. Three distinct stakeholder groups were involved: one hundred thirty-three paralegals (engaged through Focus Group Discussions [FGDs] and Key Informant Interviews [KIs]), one hundred forty program beneficiaries (engaged through Community Feedback Surveys for beneficiaries), and three hundred seventy-eight general community members (engaged through Community Feedback Surveys for general community). Figure 2 explains the definition of each stakeholder group and their respective criteria. Sampling for paralegals was

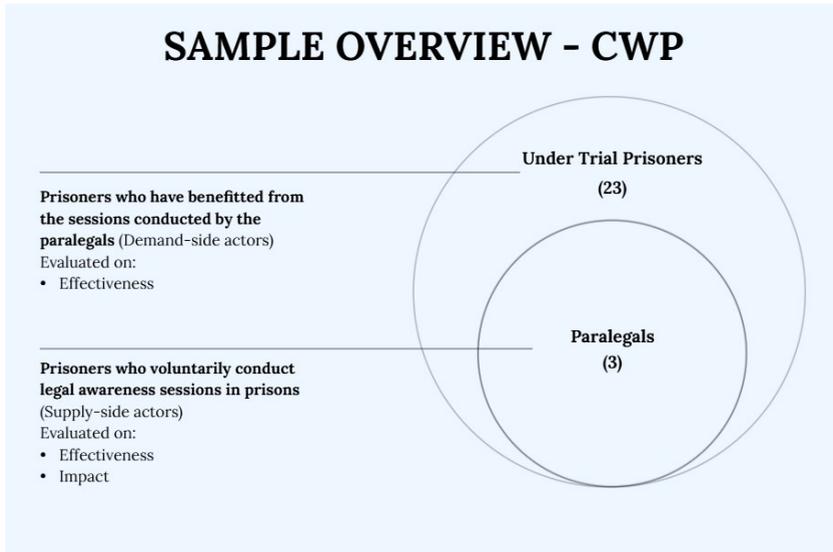


Figure 1: Sample overview for CWP

stratified by gender, district, and experience (minimum twelve months) to ensure representativeness across LAS’s major programs. Gender-separated FGDs were held to ensure paralegals’ comfort, and experienced paralegals were purposely selected for KIIs. Beneficiaries were selected through a mix of random and convenience sampling, depending on the program context and availability, while the general community was engaged through convenience-based outreach during field activities. The evaluation took place from July to November 2024, progressing from planning and tool development to data collection, analysis and final review.

Findings

1. Effectiveness

Findings from both the CWP and LAS programs point to the overall effectiveness of the paralegal model in increasing legal awareness, strengthening community outreach, and improving access to justice.

In CWP, there was a measurable improvement in legal knowledge. UTPs who attended paralegal-led sessions showed a 15 percent average increase across seven lessons. Participants largely found the sessions useful and

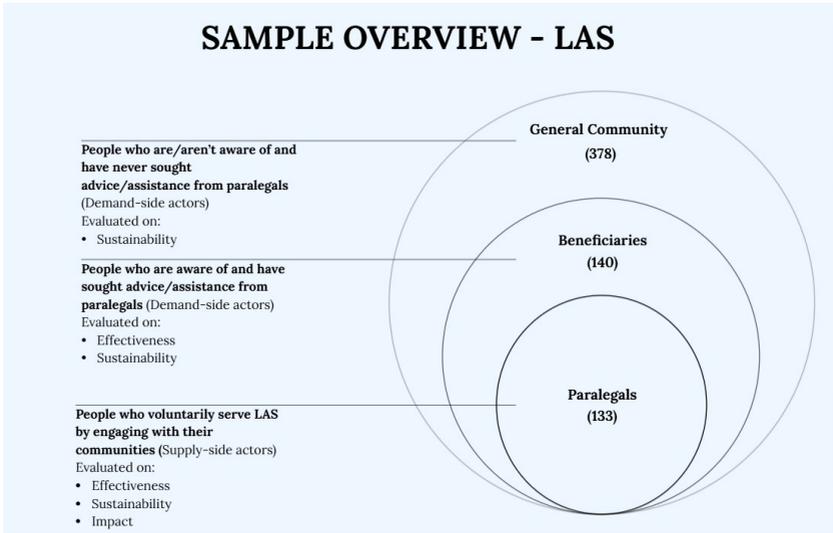


Figure 2: Sample overview for LAS

relevant: 87 percent agreed the content was relevant, 82 percent said they learned new concepts, and 85 percent rated the sessions as overall effective. The facilitator's knowledge was appreciated (87 percent agreement), and all respondents (100 percent) described paralegals as supportive and responsive.

CWP paralegals themselves reported a 57 percent increase in their legal knowledge post training. They expressed strong confidence in their role as 100 percent felt the topics were relevant and would recommend the role to others, but also highlighted the need for improved materials and additional support going forward.

Similar trends were reflected in LAS, where the paralegal program has not only built legal awareness but also community trust. Many paralegals expressed that the training sessions helped them learn about legal rights, laws and procedures, which they were previously unaware of. This knowledge empowered them to guide their community members effectively on matters such as property inheritance, early child marriage, domestic violence, and First Information Record (FIR) procedures.

A paralegal from Larkana reported:

I helped around 1000 trans individuals with regards to recovery of rightful property, legal action against threats and harassment, and secured employment for 30 individuals in NGOs.

Another paralegal from Shaheed Benazirabad shared:

There is a woman in my community whose husband took loans in her name and went to Dubai. I accompanied her to court for every hearing. This trust she placed in me is a true success of being a paralegal.



2024 focus group discussion with male paralegals



2024 focus group discussion with female paralegals

Community feedback further validated the model: 94 percent of beneficiaries said paralegals were accessible, 96 percent were satisfied with the timeliness of support, and 93 percent felt the conduct of paralegals was professional. The overall effectiveness score stood at 88 percent, confirming that paralegals are seen as reliable and trusted sources of support, often going beyond legal aid to help with services like disability registration, medical camps, and social protection linkages.

2. Sustainability

The paralegal model is viewed as a sustainable and long-term solution by both paralegals and community members. One of the strongest indicators of sustainability is the deep trust that communities have placed in paralegals. Because paralegals come from the same communities they serve, people feel comfortable approaching them for legal advice and dispute resolution. The trust they have built has led to word-of-mouth referrals, with more people seeking their support, showing that the model can grow organically and continue to function. Another sign of the model's sustainability is the legal awareness and empowerment it has generated. Many paralegals shared that they now better understand legal procedures, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and how to navigate cases, which is also translating into greater legal knowledge among community members. A paralegal from Sanghar corroborated this: *"It is long-term because we have provided them with essential information that will continue to be passed on. I don't think this knowledge will disappear anytime soon, so it's a very effective and sustainable system."* There is also a clear demand for the program's continuation and expansion. In various districts, paralegals noted that more people want to become part of the system, and communities have expressed a need for additional trained paralegals. Altogether, these factors suggest that the paralegal model is not just impactful in the short term, but built in a way that allows it to endure and adapt over time.

This perception of sustainability is also reflected in beneficiary and community feedback as 51 percent believed the program is highly sustainable and capable of continuing independently once project interventions end. However, when asked about potential challenges to sustainability, paralegals, beneficiaries, and community members identified several barriers that could hinder the system's ability to function without ongoing support. These included limited communication due to lack of mobile access, cul-

tural and gender-based barriers rooted in patriarchal and traditional power structures, and low awareness of paralegals and their role. Additionally, gaps in organizational support, paralegal motivation, and subject expertise were highlighted. Skepticism from families, especially toward women seeking help, was also shared as a reason. Another recurring concern was the lack of formal authority. Paralegals often lack identification cards or legal credentials, which undermines their credibility and limits their ability to engage effectively with communities and institutions. Moreover, challenges with external institutions such as police, courts and government offices, especially delays and bureaucratic hurdles, further restrict paralegals' ability to resolve cases, particularly those involving marginalized groups, affecting long-term trust and sustainability.

3. Impact

The paralegal program has had a visible and meaningful impact, both within prisons and in communities, by increasing legal awareness, strengthening individual confidence, and shifting attitudes around justice.

Among the UTPs, weekly peer-led sessions contributed to a stronger grasp of essential legal concepts. Participants reported clearer understanding of the trial process, prison rules, probation and relevant laws. This not only helped them make more informed decisions about their cases, but also enabled a greater sense of agency. The program's peer-to-peer format also created a support system inside the prison, where those with knowledge were able to guide others.

Paralegals themselves reported a transformation in how they see their role and abilities. Whether they were part of the CWP program or working in communities under LAS, many described an increase in confidence, better communication skills, and stronger legal understanding. They spoke of feeling more equipped to support others and deal with institutions. Over time, many came to view themselves not just as helpers, but as educators and community advocates. A paralegal from Khairpur shared, *"In the Christian community, cases of underage marriage were prevalent. With the support of LAS, we were able to help many young girls who had become victims of this issue."*

The program's ripple effect in communities has been especially significant. Paralegals described a shift from skepticism and silence around legal issues to a culture where people, especially women, now speak up about their



2023 group discussion during training of trainers for prison paralegal program

rights. In areas where there was once little awareness about legal processes or services like National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) or Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), people now turn to paralegals for help navigating these systems. A paralegal from Dadu reported, *“We have resolved 300 legal documentation issues, registered 45 women in social protection schemes and assisted poor families in obtaining ration bags.”* Taboos around issues like domestic violence and divorce are also starting to break down, replaced by more open discussions and a willingness to seek justice. A paralegal from Karachi said, *“I’ll share my own example. I got divorced and now my former husband regularly visits our children and also provides their maintenance. My process was handled through LAS. When people see that I am happy, they also trust LAS.”* This shift in mindset has built trust. Paralegals are increasingly seen as reliable, accessible figures within their communities and prisons, often the first point of contact for legal help. Their presence has helped bridge the gap between formal institutions and individuals who previously felt excluded or intimidated by legal systems. For many, especially women and young people, paralegals have become role models, people who not only provide information, but also inspire others to step forward and claim their rights. Table 2 provides a summary of the shifting perceptions and attitudes of the people post the paralegal program.

Table 2: Impact of paralegal program

Then	Now
Limited awareness and skepticism about paralegal roles	Paralegals as trusted figures in the community, with people actively seeking their assistance
Marginalized groups remained silent on legal matters	Women increasingly vocal about their rights, particularly on domestic issues
Cultural barriers and doubt	Diminishing cultural barriers and societal taboos
Lack of knowledge about navigating legal systems and bureaucratic processes	Communities know how to access services like NADRA, BISP, etc.
Minimal confidence in legal support systems	Paralegals seen as bridges between communities and legal resources
Few role models for seeking justice and addressing rights issues	Empowered individuals spread awareness and inspire others

Despite its overall success, the paralegal program faces several practical and systemic challenges that limit its effectiveness, impact and sustainability. In prisons, low literacy, language barriers, and the stressful environment hinder UTPs’ ability to engage with legal sessions. In communities, safety concerns, lack of formal recognition, limited resources like transport and phone access, and community skepticism, particularly toward NGOs, undermine paralegals’ work. Gender-specific barriers, such as family restrictions, lack of mobility further reduce access for women. These issues need to be addressed to strengthen the program’s reach and long-term viability.

Conclusion

Access to justice in Pakistan remains out of reach for many, especially those from marginalized communities who face structural and social barriers. The paralegal models implemented by CWP and LAS demonstrate the transformative potential of community-based legal empowerment to bridge these gaps.

By equipping individuals with legal knowledge and creating trusted points of contact within prisons and communities, these programs offer a scalable, rights-based approach to navigating a complex justice system. The impact of these models is evident; not only in increased legal awareness, but in the confidence, trust, and civic engagement they foster. Paralegals have become critical actors in shifting mindsets, enabling rights-claiming, and challenging exclusionary norms, especially for women, religious minorities

and vulnerable groups. Their dual role as educators and advocates positions them as a sustainable force for grassroots justice.

To ensure the long-term viability of this model, investments must address structural challenges: lack of formal recognition, limited institutional coordination, and persistent gender and social barriers. With stronger linkages to state mechanisms, greater resource support, and formal integration into legal aid ecosystems, the paralegal model can evolve from a project-based intervention to a permanent pillar of Pakistan's justice architecture.

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Endnote

¹ For a discussion of the CWP program as of 2019, see Haya Emaan Zahid and Shahzaman Panhwar, "Pakistan's Prison Paralegal Program," *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, volume 9, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/hreap_v9_sectoral_education5.pdf.

Documenting Human Rights Education

Jefferson R. Plantilla

THE IDEA OF A JAPANESE HUMAN RIGHTS INFORMATION CENTER for Asia and the Pacific was inspired by the plea of a Japanese official of the United Nations, the late Yo Kubota. He made the plea in 1983 in Osaka for Japan to help promote human rights in Asia and the Pacific. He addressed his plea to the local human rights movement.

The local human rights movement, led by the anti-Buraku discrimination movement, lobbied the city and prefectural governments in Osaka to support the plea of Kubota. More than a decade later, in 1994, the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA) was formally opened.

In his message at the opening ceremonies of HURIGHTS OSAKA on 7 December 1994, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala-Lasso, stressed that¹

The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center has a very special meaning for the United Nations. Eleven years ago, on the occasion of the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, here in Osaka, a highly respected staff member of the Centre for Human Rights, Mr. Yo Kubota, suggested the establishment of such a Center. I want to take this opportunity to thank all who worked to bring that idea to the reality we are witnessing today: to the human rights activists, to the distinguished scholars and to the Osaka Municipal and City Governments who had the foresight and commitment to human rights to bring about the creation of this Center.

HURIGHTS OSAKA aimed to collect human rights information related to the situation in the Asia-Pacific and to promote human rights in the region.

Human Rights Education

As expressed by Thomas McCarty, Senior Adviser for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his address during the opening

ceremonies in December 1994,² the establishment of HURIGHTS OSAKA came after the significant United Nations-supported events on human rights were held starting with the 1982 Asian regional conference on promotion and protection of human rights held in Sri Lanka, and more than a decade later the World Conference on Human Rights held in Austria, as well as the series of regional workshops on human rights (1990 in Manila, 1993 in Jakarta, and 1994 in Seoul).

In 1995, HURIGHTS OSAKA organized two activities on human rights education. The first was a symposium (with a focus on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education) held on 29 July 1995 in Osaka city,³ and the other a meeting with representatives of regional organizations held on 21 September 1995 in Bangkok.⁴

The proceedings of the two activities were reported in the newsletter of HURIGHTS OSAKA. The proceedings reports contained what documentation on human rights education should be: discussion of concrete programs, the challenges that should be faced at the ground level, and the relevant international initiative.

These activities started the human rights education program of HURIGHTS OSAKA.

Why Document Human Rights Education?

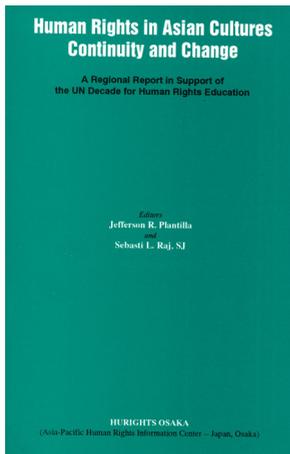
Documentation of human rights activities is essential in promoting human rights. There is a dire need to emphasize to the public that human rights are not mere concepts but are acted upon to serve personal and societal benefit. Presenting concrete human rights activities—those that address concrete issues affecting people at the ground level—serves as effective means of understanding human rights.

Human rights education is a key human rights activity (along with human rights protection and realization) that should be understood well in terms of practice. Documentation of human rights education gives both practitioners and the general public a guide on how “every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms” (Preamble of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights).

HURIGHTS OSAKA and Human Rights Education Documentation

HURIGHTS OSAKA initiated the documentation of human rights education activities through its publications. This started with the launching of a series of activities in 1996 aimed at developing a regional human rights education program.⁵

A research project in relation to the Asian values debate in early 1990s included a workshop on cultural values and human rights in 1997.⁶ Two publications came out subsequently, *Human Rights in Asian Cultures - Continuity and Change* (1997) and *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* (1998). The 1997 publication included research reports on cultural values and human rights (in Japan, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka), discussion of human rights education initiatives in different countries, and a review of the human rights education initiatives of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in Asia.



Human Rights in Asian Cultures - Continuity and Change (1997)



Human Rights Education in Asian Schools

This was followed, as suggested by the participants in the 1997 regional workshop, by a project on human rights education in the formal education system.⁷ The papers presented in this workshop were published in 1998 with the title *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*. The papers were prepared by education officials, Commissioners of NHRIs, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, academics and researchers in different countries in Asia.

This publication brought out another

aspect in documenting human rights education: the need to disseminate varied national and local contexts, and differing viewpoints coming from a variety of institutions in different countries involved in human rights education.

This publication likewise stressed the need to recognize the meaning of human rights education from the perspective of field work.

Documentation by Practitioners

An essential content of any documentation of human rights education should be on what it is, how it is done, and by and for whom. HURIGHTS OSAKA documents human rights education by presenting ground-level experiences. Thus it seeks practitioners of human rights education in gathering information and compiling materials. This translates into the discussion of the following:

- Introduction of profile of the organizations implementing human rights education programs including story of its establishment;
- Reason(s) for the adoption of human rights education programs;
- Local contexts of human rights education programs;
- Practical aspects of human rights education including types of participants, human rights issues involved, educational activities, teaching and learning materials, pedagogies, impact on participants;
- Issues and challenges that not only assess the programs but also provide bases for their development.

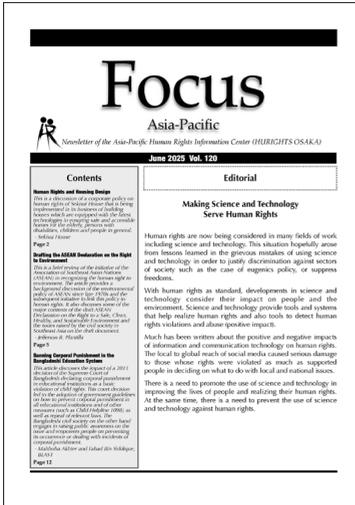
HURIGHTS OSAKA likewise values the role of researchers in documenting human rights education experiences and providing analysis of such experiences from a third-party perspective. Thus, HURIGHTS OSAKA publishes research reports to support the development of human rights education programs through ideas and experiences gathered in the research. Research on the practical aspects of human rights education is essential in HURIGHTS OSAKA's documentation efforts.

Forms of Documentation

HURIGHTS OSAKA's documentation work brings to a larger audience human rights education experiences in Asia and the Pacific.

For a period of almost twenty-nine years, from 1996 till the present, HURIGHTS OSAKA has disseminated human rights education experiences through different publications: newsletter, annual publication, project report, and teaching-learning material. The variety of forms of documentation serves a purpose: it allows wider readership. Different forms of documentation circulate to different people.

The newsletter named *FOCUS Asia-Pacific* covers short articles on human rights education gathered from various sources including those from NGOs, academic institutions, research centers (local, national and regional), NHRIs, United Nations (UN) offices and agencies and individual practitioners.



FOCUS Asia-Pacific newsletter

Human rights are now being considered in many fields of work including science and technology. This situation hopefully arose from lessons learned in the gross misuse of using science and technology in order to justify discrimination against sectors of society such as the case of eugenics policy, or suppress freedoms.

Published reports of workshops and projects allow people to know in detail issues surrounding human rights education. HURIGHTS OSAKA has documented the proceedings of workshops it organized in South, Southeast and Northeast Asia in collaboration with NHRIs, education ministries, UN offices and agencies and other institutions. The documentations are useful reference materials on issues affecting human rights education.

HURIGHTS OSAKA published materials that encapsulate ideas and pedagogies of teaching and learning human rights drawn from the experiences of human rights educators in Asia and the Pacific. It published subregional teaching and learning materials (lesson plans) developed by educators in the different Asian subregions (South, Southeast and Northeast) during the 1998-2006 period.⁸

Annual Publications

The annual publication of HURIGHTS OSAKA on human rights education started with *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* of 1998. It continued for twelve years, until 2010. Similar to the *FOCUS Asia-Pacific* newsletter,

this publication included articles contributed by those working in NGOs, education ministries, academic institutions, research centers (local, national and regional), NHRIs, UN offices and agencies, and also individual practitioners particularly school teachers and trainers. This annual publication is distinct for its focus on human rights education in the formal education system in Asia.



Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific

From 2011, HURIGHTS OSAKA expanded the scope of human rights education initiatives in its annual publication by covering all types of programs and including both Asia and the Pacific. This became the annual *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* that has covered countries from all subregions of Asia (West, Central, South, Southeast and Northeast subregions) and the Pacific.

Documentation as Human Rights Promotion

Documenting human rights education, from the perspective of HURIGHTS OSAKA, serves a number of purposes:

- Support for human rights educators and educators in general in their educational programs and activities;
- Recognition of the variety of contexts, institutions, initiatives, concerns, issues, activities and challenges of human rights education in Asia-Pacific;
- Understanding of the trends in human rights education implementation in the region and identifying measures needed to support human rights education development at various levels (community, provincial, state, national/federal, regional);
- Creation of database on human rights education programs, activities, materials, etc. in Asia-Pacific.

They all lead to understanding the practical aspects of doing human rights education; or more specifically, the way practitioners develop human rights education programs and implement them in specific contexts.

Ultimately, the documentation of all these experiences supports the basic objective of HURIGHTS OSAKA: promote human rights in Asia and the Pacific.

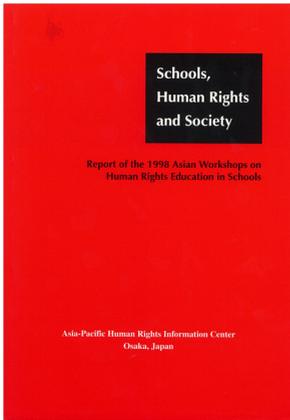
Forms of Human Rights Education

The documentation of human rights education stresses the practical aspects and challenges of developing and implementing programs and activities. Painting a sanitized version of the experiences is not useful to those looking for realistic guide in starting human rights education initiatives. Presenting the realities of starting and implementing human rights education programs

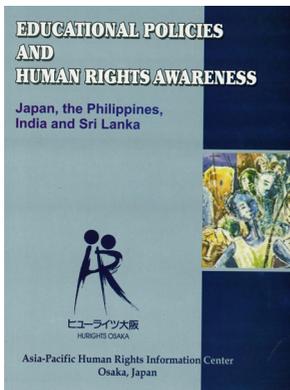
and activities teaches lessons to others. At the same time, presenting diverse programs and activities provides options and possibilities in undertaking human rights education that fits situations and challenges.

The publications of HURIGHTS OSAKA cover a variety of forms of human rights promotion and education—formal, semi-formal, non-formal.

Formal education



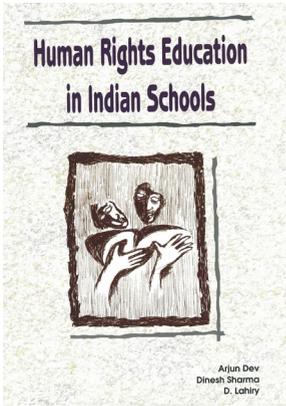
Schools, Human Rights and Society - Report of the 1998 Workshops on Human Rights Education in Schools



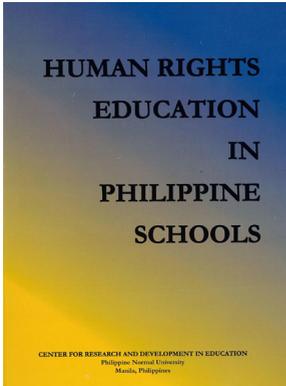
Educational Policies and Human Rights Awareness - Japan, India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (2008)

HURIGHTS OSAKA started documenting human rights education in the school system experiences in 1998 in the form of workshop and research reports. The series of workshops held in Southeast Asia led to the publication in 1999 of a report entitled *Schools, Human Rights and Society - Report of the 1998 Workshops on Human Rights Education in Schools*. This report provides a comprehensive discussion of initiatives, components, issues and challenges confronting the teaching and learning of human rights in the school system in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines).

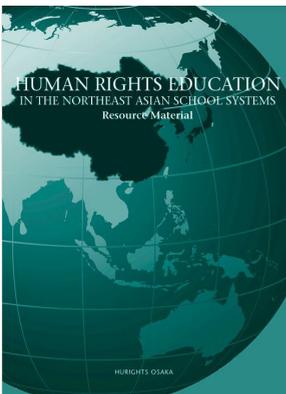
HURIGHTS OSAKA also researched on educational policies that relate to human rights education and did a survey of awareness of human rights among students and teachers in India, the Philippines and Japan. The research and survey results were published in 2007-2008 both as country reports and as a collective report of all the countries involved: *Human Rights Education in Indian Schools* (Arjun Dev, Dinesh Sharma, D. Lahiry, 2007); *Human Rights Education in Philippine Schools: Analysis of Education Policies and Survey of Human Rights Awareness* (Lolita H. Nava, Zenaida Q. Reyes, Maria Carmela T. Mancao, Maria Victoria C. Hermosisima, and Felicia I. Yeban, 2006) and *Educational*



Human Rights Education in Indian Schools (2007)



Human Rights Education in Philippine Schools: Analysis of Education Policies and Survey of Human Rights Awareness (2006)

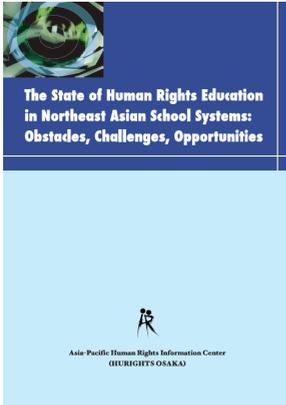


Policies and Human Rights Awareness - Japan, India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (2008).

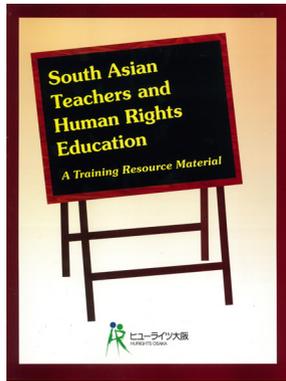
These publications were followed by reports from Northeast Asia that present the situation in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Mongolia and South Korea: *The State of Human Rights Education in Northeast Asian School Systems: Obstacles, Challenges, Opportunities* (2010)⁹ and *Human Rights Education in the Northeast Asian School Systems - Resource Material* (2013).¹⁰ Both publications discuss educational policies, school curriculums and lesson plans used in Northeast Asian school systems.¹¹

The two annual publications of HURIGHTS OSAKA (*Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, 1998-2010; and *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, 2010-present) provide the avenue for experiences in many other countries to be documented and made available in both print and online versions. Most of the articles are accounts of implementation of programs and activities by teachers and NGO workers inside the classroom, school and in the community. Some discuss the teaching and learning materials including lesson plans used in teaching/learning human rights. Articles on school activities cover the history of the teaching of human rights (or related concepts such as non-discrimination), the lesson plans and the activities;¹² those on school curriculum describe how human rights can be infused in the different subjects;¹³ those on textbooks analyze the textbook contents;¹⁴ and those on teacher training discuss the content of the training ac-

Human Rights Education in the Northeast Asian School Systems - Resource Material (2013)



The State of Human Rights Education in Northeast Asian School Systems: Obstacles, Challenges, Opportunities



South Asian Teachers and Human Rights Education - A Training Resource Material (2009)

tivities (including human rights concepts, relevant national laws, lesson planning, appropriate pedagogies) and sometimes the training impact.¹⁵ There are also articles on tertiary level human rights education programs that discuss the educational policy,

human rights issues, pedagogies, programs supporting tertiary level human rights education programs and also networks of universities for human rights education.¹⁶

Semi- and non-formal education

With the start of the annual publication of the *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* in 2010, semi-formal and non-formal human rights education programs have been featured that ranged from training programs for specific sectors to community-based activities as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Training programs

Activity	Initiatives
Judicial training	Philippines (Philippine Judicial Academy), Nepal (National Judicial Academy)
Training program	Yemen (Mwatana), Myanmar (Political Prisoners), Pakistan (Institute for Development Studies and Practices)
Community legal education	Bangladesh (legal empowerment program for Biharis)

Table 2. Activities that promote human rights in Asia and the Pacific

Activity	Initiatives
Theater production	Sri Lanka (Active Theater Movement focusing on post-conflict reconciliation), Vanuatu (Vanuatu Rainbow Disability Theatre Group), Indonesia (SIGAB, Jogjakarta, empowering persons with disability), Papua New Guinea (Seeds Performing Arts Theatre Group), Bangladesh (Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts), Taiwan (Garden of Hope, women and child rights advocacy)
Art exhibition	Japan (paintings on women issues), Thailand (creative art on child rights)
Museum visit	Bangladesh (Liberation War Museum), Pakistan (Citizens Archive of Pakistan), Cambodia (museums on the Khmer Rouge regime abuses), Sri Lanka (Community Memorialization Project)
Film festival	India (Kriti Film Club, Madurai International Documentary and Short Film Festival), Bangladesh (International Children's Film Festival), Papua New Guinea (Human Rights Film Festival), the Philippines (Active Vista), Malaysia (Freedom FilmFest)
Literature festival	India (LitFests)
Social media	Taiwan (advocacy on gender issues)
Community activities	Japan (social education program of community-based centers, local human rights festivals); Singapore (Migrants Day); Myanmar (International Day celebration), Cambodia (CamASEAN photo exhibit in villages)
Child play	Hong Kong (Playright, Children's Play Association), India and the Philippines (research on play and human rights), Bahrain (Be Free Program)

The list of activities in Table 2 reveals the diversity of initiatives that promote human rights in Asia and the Pacific. It also shows the variety of institutions involved that work at both national and regional levels. It is notable that many of these activities are community-based. They are designed to get the local residents to participate in the activities (as can be seen in the community theatre productions, art exhibits, film showings, festivals and seminars¹⁷). Even the museum visit can be community-based with the mobile museum of Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh¹⁸ as an example. These community-based activities allow the members of local communities to engage in a dialogue on issues related to human rights as well as the idea of human rights itself.¹⁹

The articles also focus on specific sectors such as indigenous peoples, children, students, civil servants, women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, judges, prisoners, youth, NGO workers, teachers, journalists,

staff of national human rights institutions, artists, and members of local communities.

In terms of institutions, the articles involve schools, NGOs, training centers, education ministries, national human rights institutions, human rights centers,²⁰ local governments, UN agencies, international organizations, art and theater groups from thirty-two countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Table 3. Human rights institutions with articles on human rights education published by HURIGHTS OSAKA

Country	NHRI
Afghanistan	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
Australia	Australian Human Rights Commission; Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Bahrain	National Institution for Human Rights
Bangladesh	National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh
Hong Kong	Equal Opportunities Commission
India	National Human Rights Commission of India
Indonesia	Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia
Iran	Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission
Jordan	Jordan National Centre for Human Rights
Korea (South)	National Human Rights Commission of Korea
Malaysia	Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia
Maldives	National Human Rights Commission of Maldives
Mongolia	National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia
Myanmar	Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
Nepal	National Human Rights Commission of Nepal
New Zealand	Te Kāhui Tika Tangata
Philippines	Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
Qatar	National Human Rights Committee of Qatar
Sri Lanka	Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
Thailand	National Human Rights Commission of Thailand
Uzbekistan	National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Articles from these institutions have been published since 1998 and continued till 2025 mainly in the two annual publications of HURIGHTS OSAKA. But the first publication about some of these institutions was in a chapter

of the 1997 *Human Rights in Asian Cultures - Continuity and Change*. The articles discuss the historical background of their establishment, the legal bases of the establishment of the institutions, the programs and activities and the assessment of their activities.

These institutions play a critical role in human rights promotion and education. They have the authority and capacity to provide training to government officials, members of police and security forces, public school officials and teachers and other sectors in society. They have been continuing their human rights promotion and education program and activities in line with their official mandate.

See Annex A for the list of articles by and about these institutions.

Value of Documented Experiences

Are the published articles getting outdated with the passing of time?

The answer is no. A number of cited articles on human rights education published by HURIGHTS OSAKA refer to those that were published more than fifteen to twenty years ago.

A 2013 book article cites as reference a 1998 article on human rights education in Cambodian schools that appeared in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*.²¹ This 2013 book article discusses the role of civil society in the struggle for human rights in developing countries.²² A 2015 report cites a 1999²³ article on human rights education in the school system in Thailand. A 2018 journal article cites a 2003 article on Cambodia.²⁴ A 2019 book on English language teaching²⁵ cites a 2002 article on language teaching and human rights education.²⁶ Also, a 2019 thesis in Universitas Darma Persada²⁷ cites a 1998 article of Minoru Mori and Yasumasa Hirasawa on Dowa education.²⁸

The twenty-one year-old article of Sheela Barse on textbook review is cited in an article on primary school textbooks.²⁹ Barse's critical perspective is presented in her article published in 2000 in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume 3.³⁰ A 2019 journal article cites³¹ a 2005 article on Pakistani experience. A 2021 paper³² cites the 1999 report of HURIGHTS OSAKA – “*Schools, Human Rights and Society*” - *Report of the 1998 Workshops on Human Rights Education in Schools*.³³

A 2022 journal article cites a 2000 article in relation to Dowa education.³⁴ For 2023 and 2024, several journal papers³⁵ cite articles published in 2001.³⁶

A final example is a report in the 19th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights held in 2020 in Tromsø, Norway. The report of the rapporteurs of the Seminar on human rights education initiatives in Asia and Europe cite many articles published by HURIGHTS OSAKA, one as early as 1998.³⁷

Citation of fifteen- to twenty-year-old articles occurs because their contents remain relevant. On one hand, the articles provide a perspective on human rights education as well as its history. On the other hand, they provide examples of human rights education done under existing school curriculum, appropriate teaching/learning materials, and teacher training.

Needless to say, the citation in other literature of articles in HURIGHTS OSAKA publications shows the value of human rights education experiences that have been documented.

Human Rights Education Journey in Asia-Pacific

Human rights education programs and activities in Asia (and probably also in the Pacific) arose and disappeared in a roller coaster fashion since 1990s. The decade of the 1990s was supportive of human rights education in view of the series of world conferences organized by the UN including the Vienna conference on human rights (1993), Beijing conference on women (1995), Istanbul conference on housing (1996), Cairo conference on population (1997) and various other conferences. In the region, the UN-supported Asia-Pacific regional workshop started in 1990 and continued till the end of the decade. All these global and regional conferences expressly declared the need for human rights education. UN agencies were also supporting activities on human rights education at the regional and national levels in line with the results of the global conferences and especially with the adoption of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in 1994.

At this time, and probably with the supportive environment for human rights, many national human rights institutions were established starting in early 1990s till early 2000s.

In this regional context, human rights were discussed more openly and human rights education was welcomed generally speaking by governments in the region. HURIGHTS OSAKA, for example, was able to implement hu-

man rights education projects in partnership with national human rights institutions, ministries of education and NGOs in several Asian countries from 1997 to almost mid-2000s.

However, from mid-2000s, the interest on human rights and human rights education seemed to be waning. Government educational policies seemed to have left out human rights education in view of new educational priorities. In Japan, for example, the government made moral education a major focus of the school curriculum.³⁸ This new focus is seen as giving less stress on human rights, despite the laws and national action plan on human rights education.

At the international level, likely due to the campaign of the UN since 1990s, governments became more interested in supporting the idea of sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) became a major educational form of this campaign.³⁹ By 2015, the UN adopted another educational form alongside ESD related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This was Global Citizenship Education (GCED). The side-by-side existence of ESD and GCED was reiterated in the 2023 “UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development.”⁴⁰ The UN World Programme for Human Rights Education that started in 2005, while continuing at present, does not appear to be a major focus at least as far as governments in Asia are concerned.

This journey of human rights education in Asia and the Pacific is evident in the documentation of HURIGHTS OSAKA.

Final Note

HURIGHTS OSAKA’s documentation promotes the idea that human rights education does not have a singular form. It cannot also be said that its history started only when the United Nations began using the words “human rights education” sometime in the 1980s. There are many “educations” that can be considered equivalent to human rights education, which have existed since the 1960s. These “educations” evolved with explicit incorporation of international human rights standards.⁴¹

The United Nations, through UNESCO, has been promoting different “educations” with human rights content. A recent example is Global

Citizenship Education (GCED), which has been framed as an implementation of “Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on Education), which calls on countries to ‘ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”⁴² One should note that GCED is defined by UNESCO as covering⁴³

knowledge about the world and the interconnected nature of contemporary challenges and threats. That includes, among other things, a deep understanding of human rights, geography, the environment, systems of inequalities, and historical events that underpinned current developments.

This reiterates SDG 4.7 which emphasizes human rights, gender equality, culture of peace and non-violence, cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

In showing ways of undertaking human rights education based on the real situation on the ground, documentation reveals as well as proves the existence of issues and opportunities that are important considerations in any effort to promote human rights.

Thus documentation provides a better understanding of the situation of the school system particularly the challenges in incorporating human rights education into the school curriculum, and of the community particularly in ensuring that the local people are involved in the process of appreciating human rights while considering their peculiar socio-economic and cultural contexts (which can either support human rights or restrict them).

Likewise, documentation helps bring out issues such as the relationship between human rights and culture including religion. Experiences in Indonesia, Iran and Pakistan are providing examples of how Islam is being related to human rights in the education field.⁴⁴ Another issue is about human rights accountability and the need to preserve societal order and relationship among people (reconciliation), particularly at the community level. The experiences in Cambodia and Sri Lanka point to possible ways of addressing this issue.⁴⁵

There are also interesting stories about the shifts in perspective in human rights work. A legal assistance group in Sri Lanka saw the need to change from “firefighting” to education to effect longer-term impact of the work it was doing.⁴⁶ An NGO in India started to “experiment” on human rights education in the school system that led to a multi-state program years later.⁴⁷ An association established by former political prisoners for their own welfare in Myanmar subsequently developed a human rights education program for local government officials.⁴⁸

Surveys provide information on how people appreciate human rights. In a survey done in the Philippines, teachers would teach the rights of the child (Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC) but not the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – “CRC is considered to be a ‘safer content than the UDHR, which is often deemed as having more ‘militant’ content.”⁴⁹

The documentation of human rights education through the years yields persistent issues that challenge educators. Issues regarding the understanding of the human rights concept and standards, use of participatory pedagogy, addressing problems inside the classroom and the school, developing appropriate teaching and learning materials, making teacher training on human rights available arose in the past and remain in the present.

Documentation means database in many ways. An institution that documents its activities is creating an institutional database. One can say that this is part of “institutional memory.” A compilation of experiences of different institutions in Asia and the Pacific is the creation of database of the regional level type. Such a database is useful in “looking back” at experiences and learning what improvement has occurred as much as understanding what issues have remained till the present.

HURIGHTS OSAKA’s human rights education documentation is human rights promotion at the regional level.

Annex A

Articles of National Human Rights Institutions and Other Institutions

Author and Publication	Article
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Lakshmi Singh HREAS I, 1998	The National Initiative on Human Rights Education in Schools and the Role of National Human Rights Commission
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Altangerel Choijoo HREAS XI, 2008	Human Rights Education Program of the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia
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National Human Rights Commission of India HREAS XI, 2008	Initiatives of National Human Rights Commission of India on Human Rights Education
Riyad Al-Subuh HREAS XII, 2009	The National Center for Human Rights and Human Rights Education in Jordan
Shirani Rajapaksa HREAS XII, 2009	Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka: Human Rights Education in Schools Mandate
Ana Elzy E. Ofreneo HREAS XII, 2009	Philippine Commission on Human Rights: More than Two Decades of Promoting Human Rights in Schools
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Abdul Karim Azizi and Yeseul Christeena Song HREAP 2, 2011	Human Rights Promotion: The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
Tek Tamata HREAP 2, 2011	UNDP and the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal
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Bolorsaihan Badamsambuu HREAP 4, 2013	National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia: Building Positive Attitude to Human Rights
Kim Cheol Hong HREAP 4, 2013	Human Rights Education for Civil Servants in Korea: Current Situation and Tasks

Human Rights Commission of Malaysia HREAP 5, 2014	Human Rights Best Practices Schools: SUHAKAM Program
National Institution for Human Rights HREAP 9, 2019	National Institution for Human Rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain: Human Rights Education Program
SUHAKAM HREAP 9, 2019	SUHAKAM: Education, Promotion and Publicity
Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission HREAP 11, 2022	Raise It! Evaluation Insights and Enhancements from the Pilot Program
Human Rights Commission of the Maldives HREAP 12, 2023	Human Rights Promotion in Maldives
National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia HREAP 12, 2023	National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia: Human Rights Awareness and Education Functions
Francis Tom Temprosa HREAP 12, 2023	The Enduring Challenge to Human Rights Education: Reflections from the Field in the "New Normal"
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Equal Opportunities Commission HREAP 12, 2023	A Territory-wide Representative Survey on Sexual Harassment in Hong Kong
Department of Social Work, Delhi University HREAP 12, 2023	Locating National Human Rights Commission within the Human Rights Discourse at the Grassroots in Rural India
Aparna Tiwari HREAP 13, 2024	Human Rights Commission, India: Awareness and Advocacy Activities
Equal Opportunities Commission HREAP 13, 2024	Study on Challenges, Effective Policies, and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong
Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission FAP, June 2024	New Educational Programs of the Human Rights Commission in Iran
National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan HREAP 14, 2025	Implementing the Fourth Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education: Uzbekistan's Experiences

Note: HREAS - Human Rights Education in Asian Schools; HREAP - Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific; FAP - FOCUS Asia-Pacific.

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Agenda items 2 and 3

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General****Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development****Evaluation of the implementation of the fourth phase of the
World Programme for Human Rights Education****Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights***Summary*

Submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/10, the present report contains an overview of action undertaken at the national level during the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, as reported by 34 States, with regard to human rights education for youth. The action reported concerns the following four areas: policies and related implementation measures; teaching and learning processes and tools; training of educators; and an enabling environment. The report also contains conclusions drawn from the information received and recommendations for furthering human rights education and building on the progress made during the fourth phase of the World Programme.



I. Introduction

A. Background

1. In its resolution 59/113 A, the General Assembly proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education, a global initiative to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors. The World Programme is structured in consecutive phases, with each phase focusing on specific sectors. The first phase (2005–2009) was dedicated to the integration of human rights education into primary and secondary school systems. The second phase (2010–2014) was focused on human rights education in higher education and human rights training for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel at all levels. The third phase (2015–2019) was focused on strengthening the implementation of the first two phases and promoting human rights training for media professionals and journalists.

2. In its resolution 39/3, the Human Rights Council decided to make youth the focus of the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme and requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare a plan of action for the fourth phase. By its resolution 42/7, the Council adopted the plan of action submitted by OHCHR,¹ which provides guidance on developing a comprehensive human rights education strategy for youth at the national level. In the same resolution, the Council called upon all States to implement the plan of action for the fourth phase and requested OHCHR to prepare a midterm progress report and a final report on the implementation of the fourth phase and submit them to the Human Rights Council.

3. In 2022, OHCHR submitted to the Human Rights Council the midterm progress report² on the implementation of the fourth phase, as reported by 17 States.³

4. In its resolution 57/10, the Human Rights Council reminded States of the need to prepare and submit, on a voluntary basis, their national evaluation reports, and requested OHCHR to submit a final report on the implementation of the fourth phase, based on those reports, to the Council at its sixtieth session.

B. Methodology

5. In January 2025, OHCHR sent notes verbales to Member States recalling the Human Rights Council's reminder of the need to submit their national evaluation reports on the implementation of the fourth phase of the World Programme. OHCHR also forwarded a guidance note, based on the plan of action for the fourth phase, to facilitate their preparation.

6. As at 5 June 2025, 25 States (see annex) had responded to the notes verbales. The present report is based on those responses and also takes into account information previously submitted – including by nine additional States – for the midterm progress report.

7. The present report contains an overview of action that States have reported taking, structured around the four components of the plan of action for the fourth phase, namely: policies and policy implementation measures; teaching and learning processes and tools; training of educators; and an enabling environment. The report highlights some examples and contains conclusions and recommendations for further implementation of the World Programme. Due to word-limit constraints, it was not possible to include all the information submitted.

¹ A/HRC/42/23.

² A/HRC/51/8.

³ Angola, Argentina, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Mauritius, Mexico, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Türkiye.

II. Action taken at the national level to implement human rights education for youth

A. Policies and related implementation measures

8. The vast majority of States reported that provisions on human rights education were included in national strategies, plans or laws concerning education. In Argentina, articles 3, 8 and 92 of the National Education Law (No. 26.206) establish the promotion and protection of human rights as a core component of public education policy, guiding the development and implementation of all educational curricula in a cross-cutting manner. In Azerbaijan, section 3.0.1 of the law on education stipulates that the free development of the individual, human rights and respect for the environment and individuals are core principles of education; section 4.0.1 outlines that the primary objective of the education system is the development of independent-thinking citizens who respect human rights. In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has, since 2011, implemented human rights, anti-racism and intercultural education through the health education curriculum, which includes competencies such as taking action for peaceful coexistence, tackling intimidating behaviour and violence, and promoting respect for diversity. In El Salvador, the institutional strategic plan for education (2019–2024) outlines the tools and strategies implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to promote human rights through skills development. In Finland, human rights education is integrated into education policy through the national core curricula, including for basic education and general upper secondary education. These curricula emphasize human rights, democracy and global citizenship, and promote respect for human dignity and cultural diversity as core values. In Guatemala, the national core curriculum stipulates that education must involve teaching about respect, justice and solidarity as well as the rights of children and adolescents, and adopts a pedagogical approach that promotes inclusion and respect for cultural, social and gender diversity. In Italy, Law No. 92/2019 introduced mandatory teaching of civic education in schools and provided for the issuance of a ministerial decree to define the relevant implementation guidelines. Civic education, as a curricular discipline, is structured around three key pillars: the Constitution, economic development and sustainability, and digital citizenship; throughout those themes, the cross-cutting principles of individual and collective rights and responsibilities are integrated across all competencies. In Latvia, the education development guidelines for 2021–2027, entitled “Future skills for the society of the future”, stipulate that all forms of education and training are to include content that promotes the understanding of human rights, sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and cultural diversity. In Serbia, the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System establishes respect for human rights, including children’s rights, as well as equality, democratic culture, social justice, tolerance and interculturalism, as general principles and goals of education (arts. 7 and 8), and sets out human rights-related competencies that students are expected to acquire, such as responsible participation in a democratic society, respect for human rights and civil liberties, tolerance, and non-violent communication (arts. 9 and 11); more specific laws, regulations and strategies support the implementation of those provisions. In Türkiye, pursuant to the National Education Law (No. 1739), the goals of the national curriculum include ensuring that students exercise their rights, fulfil their responsibilities and are prepared for life in accordance with their individuality; human rights and other relevant topics have been integrated into various school subjects.

9. During the period 2020–2024, several reporting States undertook reviews of their education laws and other frameworks, or adopted new ones, with a view to include or strengthen human rights education. In 2021, Armenia approved the new State Standard for General Education, which included, among other things, democratic and civic competencies and self-awareness and social competencies for secondary school students; in 2023 it adopted a new curriculum for social studies, an interdisciplinary subject that covers various human rights topics. In Azerbaijan, the State Standards for General Education were revised in 2020 to incorporate topics related to human rights and freedoms into the content of academic subjects and extracurricular activities at the general education level. Between 2022 and 2024,

nine curricula for general education institutions were developed and nine were improved. Within the framework of those improvements, textbooks in subjects such as literature, history and geography were expanded to include topics, informational texts, tasks and illustrations on human rights. El Salvador undertook a curricular transformation to integrate human rights as a central axis across various academic subjects and their teaching areas, with a strong emphasis on the subject of citizenship and values, which focuses on the rights and duties of individuals in society; the programmes for mathematics, science, health and the environment at all education levels have been revised to reflect this. In Ireland, senior students complete the Leaving Certificate Politics and Society curriculum, which includes human rights and responsibilities as a topic of study. Also in Ireland, the new Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development curriculum, which is to be introduced on a phased basis from September 2025, will allow students to explore the interconnections between climate justice, equality and human rights. In 2020, the Mauritius Institute of Education introduced new curricula for the Social and Modern Studies and Life Skills courses for primary and secondary schools, both of which include human rights education. In 2021, the Ministry initiated a review of the curriculum for the Values and Citizenship Education courses. In Mexico, the 2022 plan of study for preschool, primary and secondary education includes knowledge and skills, including critical thinking, that enable young people to identify, value and defend their human rights and those of others. In the Philippines, the Department of Education, through its Order No. 31 of 2022, adopted a rights-based education framework, to ensure that children's rights are central to the education system and mandating the incorporation of human rights principles across all subjects and levels of education. In 2023, Romania adopted a new legislative framework in the field of education, consisting of the law on pre-university education (No. 198 of 2023) and the law on higher education (No. 199 of 2023); law No. 198 makes environmental and climate change education and education for democratic citizenship, among other topics, compulsory in pre-university education. In Slovakia, a new State educational programme adopted in 2023 largely reflects human rights topics, both within the educational area "Man and society" as well as in the cross-cutting civic literacy programme.

10. During the period 2020–2024, some reporting States also developed or resumed national plans for human rights education and related coordination mechanisms. In 2023, Brazil reactivated the national committee for education on, and a culture of, human rights and resumed the implementation of several relevant policies and measures, building on the extensive experience it had acquired in the context of its National Human Rights Programme and National Human Rights Education Plan. Burkina Faso adopted, in 2020, a plan of action for the implementation of human rights education (2020–2024), following a related assessment undertaken in 2019; and in 2024, the ministry responsible for secondary education and vocational training reinstated the subject of civics education in secondary education. Colombia adopted the National Plan for Human Rights Education (2021–2034), accompanied by an implementation plan (2021–2022) that contains a series of guidelines, strategies and actions for over 30 relevant national entities. In Uzbekistan, pursuant to presidential order No. 5664 of 2021, a national commission for the implementation of the fourth phase of the World Programme was established. The commission, composed of representatives of key governmental institutions, educational bodies and civil society organizations, is responsible for developing and overseeing a national programme for human rights education and a corresponding road map covering seven priority areas, including young people.

11. Some of the reporting States highlighted policies concerning human rights training for teachers and other education personnel. In Brazil, Decree No. 11.342/2023 recreated, within the Ministry of Education, the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy for Youth and Adults, Diversity and Inclusion, which is aimed at developing, in partnership with federal education institutions, human rights training programmes for education professionals. In Mexico, one of the priority strategies under the Education Sector Programme (2020–2024) is to provide comprehensive training for teachers, including on human rights, in order to ensure quality education. In Slovakia, the National Institute of Education and Youth conducts educational programmes for pedagogical and other professional staff at schools, other educational facilities and social assistance facilities, in accordance with Act No. 138/2019 on

pedagogical and other professional employees; in those programmes, human rights themes have been integrated as cross-curricular topics.

12. States have also reported developing policies, legislation and incentives regarding the governance and management of youth-serving educational establishments that reflect human rights principles. In Azerbaijan, the legal framework requires educational institutions to comply with international human rights conventions, including provisions related to freedom of expression, privacy and non-discrimination. Governance and management in education are guided by principles of transparency, stakeholder participation and accountability, with roles for educators, parents and students in decision-making processes. In Chile, pursuant to the General Education Law of 2009 (No. 20.370) and Law No. 20.911, the Civic Education Plan establishes that educational establishments must promote knowledge, understanding and commitment to human rights in their teaching plans and spaces. In Slovakia, the Engaged Schools national service-learning award recognizes the work of educational establishments that promote active citizenship among young people and carry out activities for the benefit of the community.

13. Some of the reporting States highlighted the importance of engaging young people as key partners in planning and designing human rights education policies and programmes. In El Salvador, municipal youth units have been created in order to enable the participation of young people in the formulation of youth policies and their contribution to the development of their respective municipalities. As part of this process, young people are trained in human rights, and especially in youth rights, so that they can contribute effectively to policy formulation efforts. A digital council platform was set up in Finland in 2022 to provide a secure channel for consultations and dialogue between children, young people and decision-makers. In Italy, the fifth national plan of action and interventions for the protection of the rights and development of children and adolescents (2021) – which includes provisions on human rights education – was the result of collaboration and consultation among various stakeholders, including young people; their views and suggestions in relation to the priorities and strategies contained in the national plan were collected through surveys. In Serbia, in 2010, the Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman) established the Youth Advisory Panel, which allows the participation of children and youth in the work of the Protector. Among other things, members of the Panel participate in developing recommendations and reports on relevant issues, deliver human rights education to their peers and develop related materials. In Slovakia, representatives of the secondary school youth council, of the European Union youth dialogue programme and of various youth organizations are participating in the work to amend Law No. 282/2008, on the support of youth work.

14. Some respondents reported that they provided various forms of support, including financial support, to civil society for their human rights education programmes, among other initiatives. In Czechia, the Government supports human rights education work through grant programmes for non-governmental organizations, funded by European Union operational programmes and the State budget. Chile, Lithuania and Slovenia reported facilitating non-formal human rights education by civil society through the provision of funding. In Estonia, between 2020 and 2024, more than 6.5 million euros in grants were allocated by the Estonian national agency for Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps to over 140 youth-focused projects addressing various human rights-related topics. In Slovakia, Law No. 282/2008, on the support of youth work, recognizes the role of non-formal human rights education and mandates the ministry responsible for education, research, development and youth to provide financial support through a subsidy scheme for youth organizations to implement programmes aimed at providing human rights education, fostering democratic values and supporting the active citizenship of young people. In Uzbekistan, pursuant to a resolution issued in 2023 by a parliamentary commission of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, a human rights grant competition supported by a public fund under the Oliy Majlis was established. In 2023, 10 civil society projects were selected, and in 2024, eight projects received a total of 2.215 billion soums in government grant support.

15. Colombia and Slovakia reported measures and projects, including nationwide surveys, to monitor national progress in the area of human rights education in order to strengthen implementation, as mentioned in the midterm progress report on the implementation of the

fourth phase.⁴ In Chile, implementation of the National Human Rights Plan (2022–2025), which includes a human rights education section, is assessed regularly and publicized through reports. In Slovenia, the monitoring plan for the implementation of the mandatory content module on active citizenship in secondary schools was implemented during the 2023/24 school year, and the related report was prepared in November 2024.

16. Various States reported the existence or adoption of sectoral policies and initiatives that promoted human rights education efforts, including policies and initiatives concerning human rights in general as well as youth, gender equality, sustainable development, social inclusion and combating hate speech and discrimination. One of the pillars of the National Strategy for Human Rights (2020) in Angola concerns the promotion of human rights education and training; within that framework, a proposal for a national strategy for human rights education has been developed. In Armenia, the Action Plan (2023–2025) for the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection includes the organization of human rights training courses for education professionals. Also in Armenia, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports has entered into partnerships with the Armenian branches of international foundations to support relevant curricular reform and teacher training as well as the promotion of youth engagement in public life. In Brazil, in 2023, the working group to combat hate speech, under the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, identified, in its final report, human rights education as one of the key fields of recommended action and called for the expansion of efforts beyond formal education settings to reach civil society organizations. The working group presented a diagnosis of major manifestations of hate and extremism, including acts targeting schools, educational institutions and teachers; violence driven by hate speech; and misogyny against Indigenous women. It also identified young people and older persons as the generational groups most vulnerable to the spread of extremism, and noted the growing intimidation of education professionals as part of that trend. In Chile and Romania, human rights education has been tackled in the context of strategies to prevent discrimination. In Finland, the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (2020–2023) was adopted through a government resolution in December 2019. The purpose of the programme is to improve conditions for young people, prevent marginalization and discrimination and promote participation. It emphasizes strengthening education for democracy and human rights through a whole-school approach, and improving teachers' competencies. In Guatemala, the general directorate of non-formal education is fostering inter-institutional synergy with national agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, coordinating actions within key sectors such as youth, education, human rights and sustainable development. Serbia mentioned several strategies concerning youth, prevention of discrimination, gender equality, minorities, social inclusion of Roma men and women, and persons with disabilities. Switzerland reported that, since 2013, education for sustainable development, which highlighted interdependence among the environment, economy, society and the individual, had included human rights, environmental and global citizenship education.

B. Teaching and learning processes and tools

17. Human rights courses or subjects have been made available in higher education in Angola, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mauritius, Mexico, the Russian Federation and Slovenia, either through specific human rights programmes leading to a degree in human rights or through incorporation into other study programmes. In Azerbaijan, higher education institutions for training law specialists have established law clinics that connect theoretical education with practical experience. Supervised by professors, students handle real cases and provide free legal services to vulnerable groups. Teaching methods and materials are designed to ensure that students develop knowledge of legal principles and foster a positive attitude supportive of social justice and rights protection. In the Philippines, the Commission on Human Rights collaborated with various State universities and colleges to establish the Center for Human Rights Education in institutions such as Talisay City College, the University of the Visayas, the University of Cebu, the University of the Philippines Cebu and

⁴ A/HRC/51/8, para. 12.

Bicol University to integrate human rights education into academic institutions and thus inform future professionals.

18. Some respondents highlighted human rights education initiatives tailored to local priorities and realities. In Chile, human rights education initiatives have been developed in relation to the fiftieth anniversary of the 1973 coup, to prompt reflection on how to prevent gross violations of human rights by learning from the past. In Romania, “History of the Jews: the Holocaust”, introduced in the 2023/24 school year as a compulsory high school course, fosters awareness of the life, history, culture and traditions of Jewish people in Romania. By addressing the consequences of prejudice and xenophobia, it encourages students to reflect critically and draw connections with other situations, such as those related to the Roma and Sinti communities. Following the approval of the syllabus for the course, teacher guidelines and textbooks have been developed.

19. Many respondents reported the promotion of participatory and experiential methods. The National Curriculum Framework (2015) in Mauritius specifies the adoption of contextual, problem-based, interactive and participatory methodology; teacher-learner relationship fosters inclusion and respect and empowers learners to voice their views and share their experiences. In Mexico, under the 2022 plan of study for preschool, primary and secondary education and its curricula, a variety of learner-centred methodologies were designed to empower young people through active participation and experiential learning, to understand, apply and defend their rights in daily life. These included project-based learning, where students work on projects that address real problems, allowing them to apply their knowledge in practical and meaningful contexts; collaborative learning, which promotes teamwork and shared knowledge-building; and service learning, where students engage in community projects to apply their skills, promoting social responsibility and a commitment to human rights. In Paraguay, the project “Healthy coexistence among peers in educational institutions” is based on a preventive approach model in which students take the lead in peer training and the creation of reflective spaces, thereby promoting leadership, artistic expression and constructive communication. This has become a key strategy for building emotional resilience and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships in schools. In Serbia, the Institute for the Improvement of Education has developed the online National Education Portal, which includes a collection of educational resources to support pedagogical and psychological competences of teachers to improve educational practices in the field of enhancing the motivation, self-respect and emotional development of students. In Türkiye, the National Education Law stipulates that secondary education institutions are to employ a student-centred methodology that fosters active participation and democratic culture.

20. Some States made targeted efforts to ensure that education – including human rights education – policies, plans, programmes and materials are inclusive of youth in vulnerable situations and accessible to all children and youth without discrimination. In Estonia, a handbook on disability-inclusive practices in European youth projects was developed with Erasmus+ national agencies; it was translated into Estonian and Russian and made freely available online. In Guatemala, the general directorate of non-formal education is developing educational materials focused on serving the incarcerated population, the migrant population and persons in vulnerable situations. For the 2024/25 school year, the Ministry of Public Education in Mexico, through the General Directorate of Indigenous, Intercultural and Bilingual Education, published 180 free textbook titles in 20 national Indigenous languages for basic education. This includes textbooks for secondary education, enabling youth from Indigenous communities to use their languages both at school and in their communities. In Paraguay, the Nahendumi podcasts are educational audio tools that promote intercultural language skills and awareness of Indigenous Peoples’ rights. They were created by the general directorate for Indigenous education during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in response to the need for alternative educational and learning tools. Saudi Arabia has developed educational plans and curricula for students in special education, including those with learning difficulties, with visual and hearing impairments and with autistic spectrum disorder. New subjects, such as digital skills, social studies, physical education and self-defence, have been introduced in alignment with the specific needs of students with disabilities. In addition, sign language has been incorporated into the family education and life skills curriculum throughout general education. Slovenia developed specific inclusion strategies for Roma children and adapted learning resources accordingly. Efforts have

focused on promoting language learning for Roma children, raising the general educational level of members of the Roma community, and training professionals working with Roma pupils. Following the conclusion of the “Together for knowledge” project in 2021, Slovenia began co-financing the “Multi-purpose Roma centres as innovative learning environments” project, with support through the European Structural and Investment Funds.

21. Technology, including the development of online learning platforms and delivery of online sessions and webinars, and digital tools, including documentaries, podcasts and mobile learning tools, were widely reported as being used increasingly in order to broaden access to human rights education. In Brazil, in 2024, the General Coordination of Educational Policies in Human Rights developed a project, in partnership with the Federal University of Goiás, to produce 54 podcasts, 54 videocasts, and 540 “pills” of one to three minutes in length to support human rights education, for release in 2025. Materials to educate children and adolescents on the risks associated with the use of digital devices and on digital protection have also been developed and disseminated. In Chile, the “Let’s talk about everything” platform provides information and support to young people with a focus on young people’s rights, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. The educational technology department of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute organizes a number of media literacy programmes on human rights, such as the Recording Memory programme, which supports students in making their own documentaries, the Student Web Radio platform, and the CyberSafety video contest and CyberSafety Youth Panel, which encourage students to use the Internet responsibly and tackle human rights, diversity and tolerance issues. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice of Lithuania implemented a public legal education project entitled “I know my rights”, which included the development of an innovative educational application for smart mobile devices that presents various topics to young people in the format of everyday situations. In the Russian Federation, the interactive educational project for students entitled “The school of human rights defenders: learn and act” involved online awareness-raising and educational activities, including interactive lectures and a game platform entitled “Legal volunteers”. “Madrasti”, an electronic platform promoting human rights education in Saudi Arabia, is a free e-learning platform for general education, accessible to all students regardless of nationality. It supports equal access to quality education and provides comprehensive tools and digital content across various subjects, including those related to human rights education. The platform features guidance manuals on digital conduct, digital citizenship and the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence tools to safeguard human dignity and well-being. In 2024, the Ministry for Digital Transformation of Slovenia commissioned the production of the documentary “On the paths of online violence”, about online violence involving youth, which was viewed by students at 771 primary schools and 179 secondary schools. As part of the film’s screening in schools, a 90-minute webinar on online violence was held for a target group of teachers and other school staff.

22. A few States reported creating and strengthening local youth structures that supported access to and delivery of human rights education. In Armenia, youth centres established through government funding are aimed at offering a safe and supportive environment for the organization and delivery of non-formal human rights education activities. By the end of 2026, 25 youth centres are expected to be operational. According to the relevant guidelines approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Armenia, one of the four key activity areas of those centres includes the implementation of educational programmes and multi-format events on promoting human rights among youth, community engagement and the development of engaged citizenship; related activities include civic education courses, initiatives and meetings aimed at fostering knowledge of human rights, and implementation of community initiatives among young people. In Burkina Faso, efforts to strengthen local youth structures are reflected in the organization of young people under the National Youth Council, which is decentralized through regional, provincial and communal councils. These structures carry out human rights education activities and participate in decision-making bodies, with technical and financial support from the Government. In Burundi, the ministry for human rights and gender conducts training and awareness-raising activities on human rights for young people through youth centres in various municipalities. In Serbia, youth centres have been established in various regions to

support non-formal education and youth development; the first such centres were established in 2023.

C. Training of educators

23. Most respondents reported that human rights training efforts targeting professionals working in the formal education system had been implemented, with a view to enabling them to advocate for the human rights of youth and to empower young learners to identify, value, and uphold their rights and those of others. Angola reported that teacher training had been addressed as part of the integration of human rights content into primary and secondary education. Since 2011, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, has collaborated with OHCHR to include human rights content in pedagogical materials. In the first phase, staff of the National Institute for Education Research and Development were trained on the main international human rights instruments, cultural values and education, curriculum revision and evaluation techniques, the development of pedagogical texts and basic strategies for the integration of human rights into the school curriculum. Subsequently, human rights textbooks for primary and secondary levels were developed, and teacher-training programmes on using the textbooks were delivered at the national level, aimed at providing teachers with a series of methodological guidelines to enable them to teach human rights in various subjects. In Armenia, training courses for teachers covering the topics of democracy, the rule of law and justice are held regularly, supported by updated materials such as manuals and standards, to ensure the continued advancement of human rights education among students. The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development also organizes training courses and seminars for administrative and pedagogical staff of vocational education and training institutions. In Azerbaijan, within higher education teacher training, the “Introduction to multiculturalism” course is aimed at enhancing teachers’ understanding of cultural diversity and ensuring that future educators are professionally prepared to protect human rights. In addition, “Creating a healthy social-emotional environment in schools”, a professional development programme, is designed to raise awareness of aggressive behaviour and bullying in educational settings, and is aimed at equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to defend youth rights and raise students’ awareness of those rights.

24. El Salvador, through the department of teacher training and educational counselling, promotes comprehensive teacher development by offering courses on social risk prevention and psychological first aid. As part of education-system innovation, teachers are certified in flexible modalities, with a focus on training young teachers who can apply new skills to support students’ academic development in line with modern demands and technologies. In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the national Teacher Education Development Programme (2022–2026), in collaboration with the Teacher Education Forum, which includes all relevant teacher education institutions and covers all levels of teacher education, from initial training to continuous development. The Programme addresses evolving societal challenges, including climate change and polarization, and emphasizes the role of teacher education in promoting inclusion and well-being in society. In Romania, the national offer of accredited programmes for the continuous professional development of pre-university teachers covers key areas of human rights education and related fields, including children’s rights, inclusive education, democratic citizenship and gender. For the 2022–2024 period, 69 such programmes were offered. In parallel, complementary in-service training programmes have been offered to strengthen teachers’ expertise in these areas. In this context, eight programmes specifically related to human rights education were approved and delivered during 2023–2024.

25. Several States highlighted multi-stakeholder partnerships in delivering or supporting human rights training for teachers and youth educators. In Chile, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the National Institute of Human Rights, has developed the initiative entitled “School in the context of human rights”, a blended learning course for teachers and school administrators, aimed at integrating a human rights approach into pedagogical practices and school management, with the objective of strengthening a culture of respect for and promotion of fundamental rights in education. In the Philippines, the Department of

Labor and Employment has conducted training-of-trainers programmes for labour inspectors, human resources officers and trainers to enhance their capacity in educating young workers about their rights and responsibilities. These initiatives are supported through partnerships with private organizations, labour associations and international organizations such as the International Labour Organization. In Romania, in the context of introducing the compulsory “History of the Jews: the Holocaust” course and implementing the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Antisemitism, Xenophobia, Radicalization and Hate Speech, teacher-training measures have been intensified. In 2024, two training workshops for history teachers were held in partnership with Yad Vashem and the Shoah Memorial, led by experts from those institutions, focusing on new pedagogical methods for teaching the new subject. Training has also targeted other education professionals, including policymakers, school inspectors, curriculum developers and textbook authors, to support teacher preparation and ensure the sustainability of quality teaching resources. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Ministry of People’s Power for Education, in line with teachers’ requests and national priorities, launched and is implementing a specialized programme on the rights of children and adolescents, supportive coexistence and peace under the national plan of advanced training in education, through a national experimental university.

26. Some States reported a focus on training young educators in order to build a pool of skilled young people to train their peers. In Estonia, the Education and Youth Board has organized or funded numerous seminars and training courses for youth workers, educators and youth leaders, focusing on youth rights, the inclusion of young people with disabilities, and the participation of refugees and migrants in local and international education and youth work activities. In Romania, the “Youth Worker – TineRETEA” projects (2020 and 2024) supported 128 young beneficiaries who completed the “Youth Worker” vocational training course, implemented by the former Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities. The projects were aimed at developing a national network of youth workers (TineRETEA), a non-formal structure working with youth and consulting them to develop related public policies. The general directorate of non-formal education in Guatemala has launched initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacities of young educators and those working with groups in situations of exclusion or vulnerability, in order to develop a pool of young educators and community leaders able to promote and implement human rights education.

27. Some respondents reported developing human rights and gender-sensitive training programmes and materials for educators, which were often available online. In Argentina, the Undersecretary for Human Rights manages the learning platform CampusDH, which offers, among other things, human rights courses for educators. In Armenia, the National Centre for Education Development and Innovation, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, has developed an online course entitled “Gender-responsive education in schools.” In 2024 alone, 50 trainers of trainers and 500 teachers completed the course. Since 2021, a course on gender-responsive pedagogy has been implemented under the programme entitled “Ensuring the development of teaching skills for teachers and their assistants”. Participation in that programme included 120 schools and 2,861 teachers in 2021; 122 schools and 2,464 teachers in 2022; 132 schools and 2,266 teachers in 2023; and 127 schools and 2,207 teachers in 2024. In Brazil, the educator training component of the 2023 and 2024 editions of an exhibition of human rights films was aimed at enabling young educators to use audiovisuals as a tool for the promotion and defence of human rights. In Estonia, the national youth information service, through the youth information portal – Teeviit – developed a youth information workshop guide on human rights. Designed for specialists working with young people, Teeviit facilitates the exploration and discussion of human rights, encouraging youth to understand their relevance in everyday life. Freely available online, it offers a wide range of high-quality guidance and support materials, serving as a resource for both youth workers and young people. Lastly, a number of European countries mentioned the use or adaptation of *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*, an activity-based resource for educators published by the Council of Europe.

D. Enabling environment

28. Some States reported that they had adopted measures specifically aimed at building safe learning environments in educational establishments. In Ecuador, with a view to mainstreaming gender perspectives, promoting gender equality and eliminating gender violence in the higher education system, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation established the Higher Education and Gender Network in 2015 to provide a space for coordination and cooperation in human rights and gender issues between higher education institutions and the governing bodies of public policy in higher education. In Italy, the renewal of the memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Education and Merit and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Italy is aimed at reinforcing initiatives that enhance students' awareness of their rights and promote behaviours consistent with the principles of inclusion, non-discrimination, respect and non-violence. In Saudi Arabia, a range of preventive measures have been implemented to ensure student safety and support participation in educational activities. These include anti-bullying training programmes in public schools, training for early detection and intervention for children at risk, and student guidance programmes aimed at preventing violence, abuse and neglect, such as the "Rifq" programme for reducing violence. Reporting mechanisms are integrated into the "Rifq" programme, with referrals made to relevant authorities, including the Child Helpline under the National Family Safety Programme and the domestic violence reporting centre operated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. Schools also follow established procedures for managing high-risk cases.

29. Some of the reporting States have put in place or strengthened avenues for students to exercise governance and defend their rights. In El Salvador, there are various mechanisms to that end: student councils, which operationalize student-led strategies in educational establishments; student governments, which represent all students in all matters of interest to them; committees on the prevention of gender-based violence, which collaborate with educational institutions in the promotion of gender equality; student mediators, who are responsible for supporting teachers and school authorities in mediation or negotiation in the case of conflicts among students; and student ombudspersons for the protection of rights – a mechanism for guaranteeing the rights of children and young people in the educational system. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, various forms of voluntary student brigades have been established in educational establishments. Human rights student brigades focus on promoting human rights through educational projects and workshops, experience-sharing with peers from other institutions and awareness-raising events such as exhibitions, as well as identifying students in situations of vulnerability to facilitate support. The school mediator brigades focus on promoting conflict resolution, mentoring students in difficult situations and in general facilitating group coexistence.

30. Respondents also reported undertaking efforts and initiatives to advance the protection and realization of young people's human rights. In Finland, the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (2020–2023) (see also para. 16 above) was recently revised for the 2024–2027 period; youth were consulted extensively during the revision process. The National Democracy Programme, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice of Finland, complements this work by promoting good practices in human rights education and fostering a culture of constructive public debate. In Guatemala, the Ministry of Education has strengthened its human rights education efforts by introducing complementary initiatives aimed at supporting youth rights and participation, including updated content and methodologies in teacher training and educational materials. Under the national strategy for citizenship education, meetings of youth leaders have engaged students in peer-led discussions on historical memory, democracy, human rights, global digital citizenship and education for peace. Youth participation in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of those activities is a central feature of that approach. In Paraguay, educational institutions have access to resources that outline prevention strategies to reduce student vulnerability and provide guidance on responding to suicide attempts and/or suicides within the school environment. In the Philippines, the National Youth Commission has advanced human rights education through initiatives such as the National Youth Week, the Youth Leadership Summit and leadership training programmes, among others. The Commission

introduced the Philippine Youth Development Plan (2023–2028), which provides a comprehensive road map to encourage young people to take ownership and lead change in their local communities.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

31. The submissions reflected in the present report, from 34 States, reveal significant progress in human rights education for youth, particularly during the five-year period (2020–2024) of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. Reporting States have intensified action across all components of the plan of action for the fourth phase, indicating that human rights education has come to be widely understood as a complex undertaking involving not only teaching processes and tools but also policies and legislation, training of educators and an enabling learning environment, in line with the guidance provided in the plan of action. The assessment of country-specific needs and the monitoring and evaluation of action undertaken have allowed some States to tailor their strategies to the evolving realities of youth in their territory.

32. A trend observed in national submissions is the integration of human rights education not only into education legislative and policy frameworks but also within sectorial policies and strategies related to youth, sustainable development, non-discrimination and social inclusion, underlining that human rights education can bring about multiple benefits to communities and societies, enabling young people to lead positive action in many fields. Engaging young people in such policymaking, as some States reported, ensures policy relevance and implementation.

33. With regard to human rights education methodologies, including for educators, contributions highlighted the use of learner-centred and experiential methods, gender-sensitive approaches and targeted efforts to reach out to young people in vulnerable situations. To enhance accessibility, increased use of technology – for instance, through digital learning platforms and online initiatives, as well as the development of podcasts, audiovisual materials and mobile learning tools – was widely reported. The strengthening of local youth structures has also expanded opportunities for human rights education in non-formal settings, providing safe spaces for peer learning.

34. Human rights training for educators in formal education, mainly teachers, was widely reported, with respondents highlighting partnerships among various stakeholders. Fewer respondents referred to human rights training for youth workers and educators working in the non-formal education sector, in particular young educators and multipliers who can foster human rights learning among their peers. National reports underscored some measures that have accompanied human rights education strategies, aimed at fostering enabling learning environments and the broader protection and realization of young people's rights.

35. The above conclusions, based on the information received, provide some ground for reflection on the way forward, as the international community moves into the fifth phase (2025–2029) of the World Programme, which continues to be dedicated to young people while also promoting human rights education for children. Areas for further attention may include:

(a) Ensuring the integration of human rights education programming into education and into youth development, anti-discrimination and sustainable development and other sectoral efforts, while also ensuring the coherence of such programming so as to maximize resources and allow for a strategic and sustainable approach;

(b) Expanding efforts to ensure the inclusive and meaningful involvement of youth, as key partners and decision makers, in developing, implementing and monitoring human rights education policies and programmes, so that human rights education “for” youth is also “with” and “by” youth;

(c) Increasing support, in particular sustainable financing, for non-formal human rights education efforts – including within youth-led organizations and for young activists and youth workers – and scaling up successful initiatives, including those undertaken in formal education and those reaching underserved youth populations;

(d) Strengthening human rights education monitoring and evaluation frameworks, which should entail, among other elements, the systematic collection of data disaggregated by, *inter alia*, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and socioeconomic status, which is essential to identifying gaps, informing targeted strategies and assessing impact effectively;

(e) Capitalizing on the tremendous potential of new technologies to increase accessibility, while exercising caution and putting in place measures to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all youth have the opportunity to learn, including about human rights, and thereby leaving no young people behind, and addressing other risks associated with the use of technology, such as the isolation of young people, divisive discourses and disinformation, and violations of the right to privacy.

36. In a time marked by violent conflict, widespread inequality, climate emergencies, and democratic backsliding, the contribution of young people, as powerful agents of change, could revolutionize the world's trajectory. Human rights education, and its promotion of the principles of solidarity, equality and belonging to a common humanity, is vital to building inclusive, cohesive and resilient societies, and represents an extraordinary beacon of hope, for young people and beyond.

A/HRC/60/56

Annex

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Guatemala
Ireland
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The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center or HURIGHTS OSAKA, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally opened in December 1994. HURIGHTS OSAKA has the following aims: 1) to engender popular understanding in Osaka of the international human rights standards; 2) to support international exchange between Osaka and countries in Asia-Pacific through collection and dissemination of information and materials on human rights; and 3) to promote human rights in Asia-Pacific in cooperation with national and regional institutions and civil society organizations as well as the United Nations.

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