

Acknowledgment

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Foreword

TWELVE YEARS of exclusive focus of this publication on human rights education in the school system yielded more than two hundred articles from almost two hundred contributors in more than twenty countries in Asia and beyond. Individuals and various types of institutions contributed articles on mainly ground-level experiences on the teaching and learning of human rights. We see many more experiences to document from many more individuals and institutions in the region. And we are continuing the task of gathering them.

However, as we brought out the twelfth and final volume of *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* in 2009, we paved the way for a new annual publication that would cover a wider range of human rights education initiatives in Asia and the Pacific.

We correctly predicted the availability of many documentations on human rights education experiences that we considered worthy of dissemination to many others. We correctly anticipated the support of individuals and institutions in producing this new publication.

We are therefore proud to bring to you this inaugural volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*. Just like its predecessor, it aims to document and disseminate to an audience beyond the communities of the contributing individuals and institutions the rich Asia-Pacific experiences in human rights education.

We thank the contributors in this volume for joining us in this task. We salute their work as much as we wish their initiatives to continue for a longer period.

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Introduction

THE VASTNESS of the Asia-Pacific region spawns myriads of social-cultural-economic-political-historical contexts that make weaving a common thread of its historical development a highly difficult task. Human rights situations vary from country to country, from one subregion to another, from one alliance of nations to another.

It is the diversity of the region that makes the experiences on human rights education very interesting and challenging at the same time. The highly differentiated situations in the region provide the ground for a variety of human rights education initiatives to develop and even prosper.

This inaugural issue of the publication tries to capture the diversity and richness of the human rights education experiences in the Asia-Pacific region. By compiling various experiences in one volume, it creates linkages between formal and non-formal human rights education initiatives at the local, national and regional levels.

The main objective of this publication therefore is to present such diverse, ground level human rights education experiences and discuss their achievements, issues, challenges and potentials. Just like the *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* volumes, this publication is designed mainly for practitioners – the workers at the ground level.

To achieve its objective, this publication attempts to

- Define areas that deserve greater attention from educators be they about specific rights, issues, sectors/communities, programs, teaching/learning systems, key education players including those that support them;
- Tell the stories on how human rights education initiatives began and developed through the patient nurturing of people who were almost always adventurous enough to start something new and challenging;
- Stress the common factor of sharing of efforts among people of diverse backgrounds (members of sectors or communities, educators, supporters of human rights education);
- Identify nuggets of good experiences such as those that “educate and mobilize,” facilitate “reflection and remembrance,” and “institutionalize, mobilize and deliver;”

- Connect the unconnected experiences of the different networks for different issues and yet with similar goals and methods, and lay the ground for cross-fertilization as well as shared analysis of experiences;
- Present the widening reach of human rights education initiatives as in the cases of increasing number of schools that incorporate human rights into their systems and the thousands of students who are joining the activities.

There are new developments in the field of human rights education in the region that deserve recognition and support. There are programs for hitherto unattended issues (such as HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, religious minorities) that should be replicated. There are studies of concrete efforts by schools that can be used to develop specific programs in schools in other countries. There are courses for non-human-rights or non-human-rights-education practitioners that can initiate them into working in this field. There are likewise graduate programs for those who would like to pursue further academic studies on human rights.

The present collection of articles reflects to some extent what this publication tries to achieve. The articles represent quite significantly the variety of issues, situations, players and initiatives on human rights education that exist in the Asia-Pacific. But they certainly do not cover all types and programs of human rights education in the region. These other types and programs of human rights education should be documented and included in the next volumes of this publication.

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