

Human Rights Centers: Educating for Action

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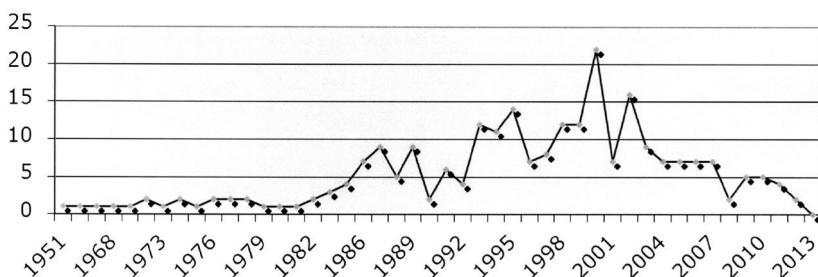
AN INSTITUTION devoted to human rights information dissemination can be considered a human rights center. Other institutions devoted mainly to human rights protection and advocacy, but have human rights information dissemination function can also be considered human rights centers.

In Asia and the Pacific, both types of human rights centers seem to have grown in number from 1993 and peaked in around 2001 based on HURIGHTS OSAKA's 2013 data. It was in 2001 when HURIGHTS OSAKA started to gather information on institutions that fall within the category of human rights centers. From fifty-plus institutions in HURIGHTS OSAKA's initial list in 2001, the number grew to more than four hundred by 2013. In 2008, HURIGHTS OSAKA published the first edition of the *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers*. In 2013, HURIGHTS OSAKA published the second edition of the Directory with many more human rights centers having been included from West, Central, South, Southeast and Northeast Asia and the Pacific.¹ Both editions of the Directory feature a profile for each human rights center.²

The *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers*³ defines a human rights center

as an institution engaged in gathering and dissemination of information related to human rights. The information refers to the international human rights instruments, documents of the United Nations human rights bodies, reports on human rights situations, analyses of human rights issues, human rights programs and activities, and other human rights-related information that are relevant to the needs of the communities in the Asia-Pacific.

There were certainly human rights centers or institutions with human rights center function before 1993. As shown in Graph 1 below, some have existed from early 1950s to late 1960s. These older centers were not established as human rights centers but as social action centers or research centers for specific social issues. They eventually became more explicit in identifying their issues of concern as human right issues.



Graph 1. Year of Establishment of Human Rights Centers in Asia-Pacific (as of 2013)

In the 1950s, centers for social action were established in response to the many legal, social, economic, cultural and political issues of the time. This is the case of the Indian Social Institute in New Delhi (established in 1951) and the Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations in Seoul (established in 1956). In the 1960s, several centers were established for very specific issues such as discrimination against particular sectors in society (Dalit people in South Asia, the *Burakumin* in Japan, farmers, urban poor, fisherfolk, etc.) as seen in the cases of the Indian Social Institute in Bangalore (established in 1963), Buraku Liberation Research Institute (established in 1968, renamed Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute in 1998) and Legal Aid Foundation (established in 1969 and more popularly known as LBH) in Indonesia.

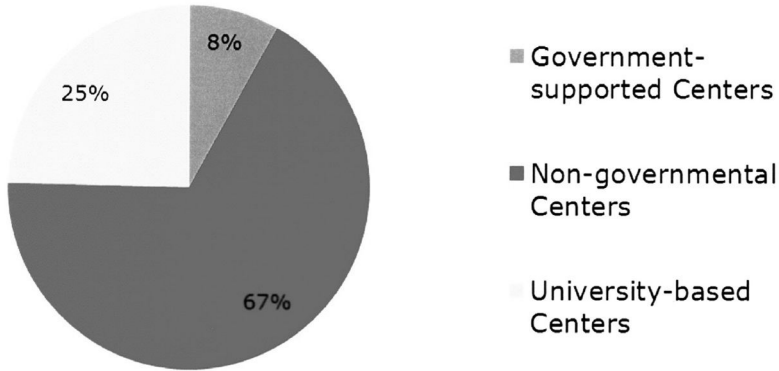
From 1993, many more institutions were established as human rights centers or as centers for specific human rights or human rights-related issues that have “human rights center” function.

The human rights centers have varied characteristics but generally fall under three categories: non-governmental centers; university-based centers and government-supported centers.

As of 2013, majority of the identified human rights centers belonged to the non-governmental center category as shown in the graph below (Graph 2).

In the late 1990s and 2000s, many university-based centers were established. This trend is represented by the establishment of “PUSHAMS” (Pusat Studi Hak Asasi Manusia) in Indonesia, the human rights study centers in many universities in different parts of the country. Around forty PUSHAMS have been established so far with the support or encouragement of the Indonesian government (particularly regarding the state universities). This

trend is also seen in the establishment of human rights centers in Korean universities. Most of these Korean university-based centers were established by law schools, with strong focus on promoting the study of human rights law and human rights law practice (in the form of public interest human rights law practice).



Graph 2. Categories of Human Rights Centers (as of 2013)

Generally speaking, human rights centers engage in various types of information gathering (including formal research activities), processing of the information gathered and disseminating them in different forms (print, broadcast and digital). They print books, newsletters, pamphlets, and training manuals. Many either have their own radio and television programs or have representatives appearing in other broadcast programs to discuss human rights. Most of them also established their own websites, and use the social media such as Facebook and Twitter to disseminate vital human rights information to their respective constituencies.

Their capacity to gather, process and disseminate human rights information sets them apart from other human rights organizations that provide direct service such as legal assistance, or engage solely in advocacy and campaigns, or act as networks of organizations working on common issues. Some of the organizations in the Directory also have these latter functions.

Many human rights centers have likewise strong human rights education programs as vehicles for human rights information dissemination. Many of them have human rights education programs that include various activities and cover specific geographical areas and constituents.

Many present themselves as “resource centers,” or “documentation centers,” or have human rights libraries, where various types of information and materials are made available to the public, especially to those in the field of education.

This article highlights the different aspects of human rights promotion work of the human rights centers. Without being overly comprehensive, this article shows the variety of human rights education initiatives of the different human rights centers in Asia and the Pacific. Some of the examples cited no longer exist, being project-related activities, and form part of the accomplished activities of the human rights centers. Nevertheless, the overall set of initiatives show the extent and diversity of human rights education work they did and/or are doing.

The General Public

How does the general public become aware of human rights? This is a very difficult question from a human rights education perspective. The general public is an amorphous entity. It can generally refer to the whole population of a country. It is usually affected by human rights issues relating to different sections of society. It has competing interests and ideas that underlie conflicts in society. It is subject to layers of societal structures based on class, social status, economic condition, religious belief, ethnic grouping, language, political affiliation, nationality and many other considerations.

Nevertheless, the question is a valid one and has been answered in a variety of ways. More often, the “general public” has been defined in simplified or limited terms. Some of the answers are in the educational programs and activities of human rights centers.

Aims

The human rights awareness programs of the human rights centers for the general public have varied objectives. They range from general understanding of human rights principles to learning human rights regarding specific issues or sections of society. These are seen in the following objectives:

- To raise awareness of human rights as values and concepts recognized locally and internationally with a focus on issues of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel by providing youth with the necessary tools through human rights education so that they

- themselves can bring about a positive change in their lives (Arab Association for Human Rights/Israel);
- To enhance the awareness and critical understanding of gender relationships that have to be formulated into policies at the local level based on the interests of marginal groups, especially women, and in the context of regional autonomy (Women Research Institute/Indonesia);
 - To increase awareness of the various detrimental environmental issues in society, YIHRC seeks to ensure that the community fully understands the importance of “human rights,” “life” and the “environment” (UN NGO Yokohama International Human Rights Center/Japan);
 - To increase the awareness of various sectors of society on significant issues (Dr. Jovito R. Salonga Center for Law and Development/Philippines); and
 - To air the side and grievances of workers to the public (Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)/Philippines).

These objectives also indicate a “local” component in terms of support for actions at the community level by local people. (See discussion below on community-focused programs.)

Other objectives refer to advocating specific action by the general public such as getting their opinion (through public discussion and debate) and their support for specific issues and actions. The following are examples of these objectives:

- To influence and mobilize public opinion (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, MINBYUN South Korea);
- To facilitate women empowerment and transformation of the social system that is considered oppressive to the community or women (Kalyanamitra/Indonesia);
- To advocate for specific policy change (B’Tselem/Israel);
- To raise awareness and foster public discussion on strategic litigation cases (Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights); and
- To educate the public to become more critical media consumers (Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy).

Content

Human rights awareness-raising activities respond to perceived needs of the “general public.” They would normally present general human rights principles as well as specific human rights that are relevant to the situations of the “general public.” Thus the contents may, for example, be on the “Arab minority rights in particular, and human rights in general,” or “human rights as values and concepts recognized locally and internationally with a focus on issues of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel.”

Some activities focus on specific concerns such as “Violence in the Community,” domestic violence, different child rights issues, victims of torture, plight of workers, anti-terrorist regulations, and set of issues in a particular place (torture and illegal detention, freedom of expression and the censorship of the Palestinian press, or the right to education of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem). There can also be more general issues such as protection of human rights of women and children, “human rights aspect of issues,” gender relationships, “human rights, life and the environment,” and “democracy and human rights.”

Other contents refer to standard issues in human rights education programs such as the following:

- Human rights and rule of law;
- Human rights protection and realization;
- Importance of human rights and how to assert them;
- Human rights values from Islamic point of view; and
- Customary rights.

These contents indicate the importance given to the understanding of how people can assert their rights; where to get help in cases of human rights violation; and how their own beliefs (cultural, spiritual, social, etc.) relate to human rights.

Modes

The human rights centers organize numerous activities to raise the human rights awareness of the general public. These activities include annual events, issue-based events, presentations and audio-visual showings/exhibitions, visits to specific areas of the community, utilization of the mass media, and distribution of written or printed materials.

Annual events invariably consist of the celebration of the International Human Rights Day, and in one case the International Commemoration Day in Support of Victims of Torture held by PUSHAM UNIMED⁴ in 2012. Other human rights centers that focus on specific sectors (such as women, and children) may also be organizing events commemorating specific human rights concerns.

Both broadcast and print mediums of the mass media are employed for public awareness-raising. Several human rights centers have radio programs (PUSHAM UNAIR⁵ has interactive dialogue program in Kosmonita and SCFM Radio Stations [2002] in Surabaya city [Indonesia]; CTUHR in the Philippines has weekly radio program “Ganito Ngayon” [This is the Situation Today]; INSEC6 in Nepal has human rights education programs in AM and FM radio frequencies; Jagaran Media Center (JMC) also in Nepal has Radio Jagaran; and the Dr. Jovito R. Salonga Center for Law and Development has “Salonga Center on Air” in Dumaguete city [Philippines]). Radio Jagaran “operates from Butwal (western region of Nepal) in 93.6 MHz with the capacity of 500 watts and can be heard as far as Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Nawalparasi, Palpa, Arghakhanchi, Pyuthan, Dang, Tanahu, Chitwan and Gulmi districts of Nepal.”⁷ The staff of the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (SHAMS) interview academics, on-the-ground professionals and activists pertaining to current projects and issues surrounding those projects for radio broadcasting in the Palestine. The Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) participates in the radio broadcast, “Voice of Democracy” (VOD) aired through Sambok Khmum FM 105 Mhz in Cambodia. The radio broadcast allows live audience participation through live roundtable discussions where members of the public can express their concerns and opinions, while keeping the public up-to-date on pertinent human rights issues.⁸ Also in Cambodia, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) broadcasts on the radio articles from its magazine, *Searching for the Truth*, and excerpts from books such as *The Dairy of Ann Frank* (translated Khmer version) to discuss the experience during the Khmer Rouge regime.⁹

Human rights centers utilize the television as a medium for disseminating human rights information and discussing human rights issues. The “PUSHAMS” in Indonesia have examples of such television programs. PUSHAM UIR had weekly discussion program on law and human rights using electronic media but recorded the discussion in digital format at the RTV television station during the 2003-2004 period. PUSHAM UNAIR has inter-

active dialogue program at the State Television Station (TVRI) in Indonesia. The Center for Human Rights Research and Studies, Hasanuddin University, also holds discussion/dialogue in a television station.

SHAMS has biweekly television program called “Cases and Opinions” broadcasted on local TV channels (Ma’an Network, and Mix satellite channel) and mostly presents legal, youth, and rights issues, where academics and experts discuss the relevant topics. SHAMS has also produced and distributed various rights issue-based television reports to other TV programs.¹⁰

The Women’s Legal Education, Advocacy & Defense (WOMENLEAD/Philippines) releases public statements on various issues on women’s human rights, through print, radio and television media. It issues position papers and press releases on various reproductive rights issues arising in the media, including the condom ad ban and the passage of the reproductive health and population management ordinance of Quezon City, Metro Manila.¹¹

The Beijing Zhicheng Migrant Workers’ Legal Aid and Research Center (BZMW) gets exposure on television programs. It has also¹² developed a positive working relationship with many well-known media outlets, through which it advocates on behalf of migrant workers. Its cases and lawyers’ stories regularly appear in newspapers or on television programs. The exposure helps the BZMW in carrying out public campaigns for the protection of migrant workers’ rights.

The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society uses the television (alongside the radio and newspaper) in disseminating information on human rights and on the “efforts exerted to fight all forms of discrimination, including sectarian and religious discrimination.”¹³

The Human Rights Foundation Aotearoa/New Zealand has a plan to utilize the community television in its education and training program. The Institute for Community Rights in Thailand has planned a feasibility study on the establishment of a “radio station and a people’s television channel.”¹⁴

PUSHAM UIR had a regular weekly discussion of human rights in the *Suara Kita Daily* newspaper and the *Riau Mandiri Daily* newspaper in 2000. PUSHAM Univ Andalas¹⁵ submitted opinion articles on human rights to *Padang Ekspres* entitled “Human Rights, Human Resources and Corruption Portrayals.” PUSHAM UNAIR, on the other hand, utilizes its membership in a network that includes media establishments (newspaper, television stations) and media associations for its (PUSHAM UNAIR) activities. SHAMS prints the “quarterly newspaper supplement named “Democratic Readings” that

tackles issues relating to human rights, good governance, women's rights, youth, etc." It also issues press releases and gets coverage from several local newspapers.¹⁶

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM/ Burma/ Myanmar) has a media project on producing the monthly 'Guiding Star' Mon newspaper.

Human rights centers also utilize the digital mass communication medium. Most of them have websites that contain human rights information. They also use the digital social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.¹⁷ The websites make the materials they collect (as part of the library or database) or produce available online. Some human rights centers have "active" online service on human rights information dissemination. INSEC disseminates information on cases of human rights violation through its online news portal (www.inseconline.org); while the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP/Philippines) maintains the onlinewomeninpolitics.org that provides data, information and other resources about women in the region involved in politics, governance and decision-making. It is a digital working space for Asian and Pacific women leaders to share and exchange knowledge and information.¹⁸

A few human rights centers exist as "digital forums" such as the Human Rights Monitor-Korea's (HRM-Korea) online blog news portal, Drik Picture Library's online photo-library in addition to its online resource center on human rights issues featuring reports on the human rights situation in Bangladesh called Banglarights, the Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights's (MCCHR) MyM, which "provides information on Members of Parliament, tracks their comments and pledges on human rights issues and provides a platform for citizens' engagement with their Members of Parliament,"¹⁹ and Sarangbang Group for Human Rights's (South Korea) weekly online human rights magazine since 2006 called Human Rights OREUM.

The Center for Human Rights Studies of the Islamic University of Indonesia, on the other hand, plans to establish an online library. Also, the Center for Documentation of Refugees and Migrants (CDR) in Tokyo University has an online data sharing system that contains a variety of collected and sorted contents relating to refugee and migrant issues.

Human rights centers also use the traditional modes of increasing general public attention to human rights. They organize study meetings, seminars, workshops, and publish reports and newsletters on human rights.

To mobilize public opinion, they organize public lectures, debates, dialogues and symposiums. They show human rights documentaries or movies that have relevance to human rights, and also hold multi-media presentations. They add open forums in these activities to allow discussion of human rights with members of the general public. In some cases, they use religious activities as venues for discussing human rights. PUSHAM UIR has prepared two scripts of Holy Friday Sermon for Muballigh/Moslem Preachers, while SHAMS “worked with the Ministry of Awqaf (Religious Endowments) to introduce female preachers to the concept of human rights, which is often put in stark contrast to Qur’anic teachings or dismissed as a tool of Western imperialism.”²⁰

Several other activities are done such as B’Tselem’s advertising campaigns and “reality tours” of the West Bank, the Thursday Forum of Dr. Jovito R. Salonga Center for Law and Development, mobile human rights class for children of UN NGO Yokohama International Human Rights Center (YIHRC), and the Human Rights School of the Humanitarian Legal Center (Uzbekistan).

The mobile human rights class began in the autumn of 1994 and has been held at a total of one thousand seven hundred sixty schools in Yokohama and involving approximately three hundred thousand students. The mobile human rights class introduces the humanitarian activities of doctors involved in groups such as the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) and Doctors Without Borders, and promotes the importance of life.²¹

The Humanitarian Legal Center promotes human rights education among the population of the Bukhara region in Uzbekistan through a Local Initiative Project called Human Rights School. The school provides basic knowledge on human rights and launches special seminars for target groups (youth, workers, farmers, etc.).²²

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) implements human rights training programs for thousands of individuals across the country each year, produces high-quality educational curriculums in Hebrew and Arabic, and organizes conferences and lectures on human rights education.²³

PRASHANT²⁴ (India) periodically organizes seminars, workshops, street-plays, and film festivals on topical issues, highlighting human rights viola-

tions which exist in society, in order to conscientize people.²⁵ Similarly, Al Marsad²⁶ offers lectures, workshops and training courses to the members of the Palestinian community to raise their awareness on human rights. It organizes human rights training courses in cooperation with the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) for local community groups such as the Arab Development Organization and Women Organization of the Golan Heights.²⁷

Common characteristics

Many of the human rights centers use traditional activities and technology-based mediums of communication to reach as many people as possible. Some have programs that cover not only a particular region but also the whole country.

Though they may focus on the human rights of a particular section in society (women, children, ethnic group, etc.), human rights centers still aim to make a cross-section of the general public become aware of human rights in general.

They recognize that awareness of human rights is a basic requirement in inciting public discussion, mobilizing public opinion, and seeking public demand for concrete measures (legislative, government policy, government action) on particular issues.

Local Communities

Supplementing efforts at raising the human rights awareness of the general public, there are initiatives that train members of the local community on human rights work. Human rights centers have programs that concentrate on people in the local community to address local human rights concerns.

Community players

The community-focused programs of human rights centers are aimed at various types of people in the community. There are programs meant for specific members of the community such as community leaders, sectors (such as women, children), victims of human rights violation, and those with potential capacities to do human rights work.

In situations with on-going armed conflict, the program may have to deal with basically all members of the community to enable them to protect

themselves from human rights violations. This is what the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG, Burma/Myanmar) does in promoting the “villagers’ self-protection strategies.” It “works directly with villagers to help them overcome outside perceptions of them as ‘helpless victims’ by focusing on their strengths and the strategies they already use successfully to resist human rights abuses and retain control over their own lives, land and livelihoods.”²⁸

Indigenous communities, on the other hand, need support in addressing problems specific to their situation. An example of support for indigenous communities is the capacity-building program of the Cordillera Indigenous Peoples’ Legal Center (DINTEG, Philippines) that focuses on²⁹ “Promotion of human and Indigenous Peoples’ rights; and Enhancement of the role of elders in the promotion and assertion of the indigenous justice system.”

In the same vein, CORE has educational activity for indigenous peoples in India consisting of training on documentation and record keeping, case record maintenance, referrals and support for accessing services, counseling and human rights.³⁰ Ekta Parishad (India) has capacity-building program that is meant for members of organizations of indigenous peoples and include training and education, networking, and participation in relevant forums.

There are capacity-building programs that apply to a large extent to community leaders and/or members with capacity to take action on community issues. Human rights centers train community leaders and/or members on human right work as:

- Paralegals – as part of legal literacy/paralegal training program, they train community leaders as paralegals to raise their awareness and educate them about the country’s legal framework and mechanism (Education and Research Association for Consumers Malaysia [ERA Consumer Malaysia]),³¹ and more specifically to strengthen the communities’ understanding of laws and policies affecting indigenous peoples and natural resources (Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, Inc.-Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth Philippines [LRC-KsK]).³² They can be known also as community-based paralegals (Mindanao Human Rights Action Center, Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT)), or Community Law Facilitators (HuMA) under the Indonesia School of Community Law Facilitators (Sekolah PHR Indonesia) program who provide limited legal service to members of the community;

- Quick reaction team members – the DINTEG program is an example of community members that act promptly on any report of human rights violation such as arbitrary arrest or detention;
- Human rights defenders – they constitute a general category of human rights workers that include those who work in their own communities (HURFOM, Odhikar). Human rights defenders may also be referring to human rights activists (ADDAMEER³³);
- Women leaders – they can be grassroots women (Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action [CRTD.A]/Lebanon), trafficking survivors (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women - Asia Pacific [CATW-AP/Philippines]), and members of community-based organizations (Shirkat Gah/Pakistan) who are given training on various topics such as “leadership and political participation,” building “capacities as leaders, organizers and advocates,” and how to “claim and exercise rights;”
- Members of community human rights mechanism – they can be recruited and trained to become members of Community-Based Trafficker-Watch (*Bantay-Bugaw*) [CATW-AP] or village quick reaction team (DINTEG).

Navsarjan/Dalit Shakti Kendra (India) has a program on local governance and political rights that aims to empower Dalit and women *Panchayat* (village government) members and *Sarpanches* (leaders of the village government) by educating them on relevant laws, their legal rights, and the necessity of standing up to represent their issues within the *Panchayat*. Navsarjan provides legal advice in case of violation of an individual’s legal rights within the *Panchayat*. The goal of these activities is to make lasting changes in village power structures according to the purpose of the Panchayati Raj Act.³⁴

A number of human rights centers with community-focused programs do not limit the participants to community leaders. They also involve other people who have a role in resolving community issues. They can be officials in the local community government such as village administrators (PSA-HAM UNDANA), members of the local/town police, prosecutors and judges, social workers (CATW-AP), members of local organizations, women working in the public sector/non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/other community groups (CRTD.A), and also members of political parties (PAHAM FH UNPAD³⁵).

Educational content

The community initiatives may contain general discussion on human rights (PSAHAM UNHALU,³⁶ PSA-HAM UNDANA,³⁷ Chiba Prefecture Human Rights Awareness Raising Centre/Japan, Child Information and Research Center KSL/Nepal). But there are also more specific contents depending on the type of the human rights centers involved. ADDAMEER, for example, focuses on increasing knowledge of human rights activists in the community on civil and political rights from an international humanitarian law and international human rights perspective in support of its program for prisoners.

Human rights centers that provide legal service and those in law schools or law faculties of universities focus on legal empowerment. Aside from education about relevant laws (such as laws and policies affecting specific group/community or sector like laws regarding indigenous peoples and natural resources [LRC-KsK]), they provide training on other aspects of law and legal work related to human rights such as the following:

- Legal framework and mechanism (ERA Consumer Malaysia);
- Legal drafting, conflict resolution and policy advocacy (HuMA/Indonesia³⁸);
- Normative and sociological analysis of human rights law (PUSHAM UNP³⁹).

Other human rights centers have community-focused programs that offer training on

- Skills on preventing trafficking from the source areas (CATW-AP);
- Self-protection strategies on how to resist human rights abuses and retain control over their own lives, land and livelihoods (KHRG);
- Strengthening “local village leadership” (Ekta Parishad);
- “Enhancement of the role of elders in the promotion and assertion of the indigenous justice system” (DINTEG); and
- Leadership and political participation (CRTD.A).

Community action

Many of the community-focused programs of human rights centers are meant to mobilize the members of the community into action. Some human rights centers have concrete community mechanisms through which such action can be undertaken.

The existence of community mechanisms, or the stress on community-based action, points to the aim of addressing concrete issues that plague communities.

Aside from community leaders, some community-focused programs of human rights centers aim to mobilize other members of the community to assuming active role in addressing human rights issues. Thus women and even children are given training on how they can contribute to the promotion, protection and realization of human rights at the community level.

This explains why many of these programs have both knowledge and skills development components. Members of the community are given the opportunity to learn ways and means of acting on human rights issues at their level.

It is also notable that some of the community-focused programs of human rights centers consider the important role of other people who have authority or capacity to help resolve human rights issues. They can be government officials and other professionals who are being sought to cooperate with members of the community in their human rights work.

Local Government Initiatives

In March 2014, the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council disseminated a questionnaire to United Nations member-states, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions, local authorities and international organizations to determine the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights. One city in Japan, Sakai city, responded and sent the following statement:⁴⁰

Taking the opportunity presented by Japan's ratification of the International Covenants of Human Rights, in 1980 Sakai City Government recognised the sanctity of human rights, affirmed that it would enlist the efforts of all citizens to establish a social basis for human equality, and declared that it would work towards the realization of a "Human Rights Protection City".

What is notable in this statement is the recognition in 1980 of the "sanctity of human rights" in view of the ratification of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1979. This local government adopt-

ed policies on human rights promotion (or “human rights enlightenment” in its terminology). In 2007, Sakai city⁴¹

enacted the “City Ordinance for Community Development Respecting Peace and Human Rights” which stipulated that all city government policies should be implemented with peace and human rights in mind. In accordance with that stipulation, in 2008 the city adopted the Sakai City “Human Rights Policy Promotion Plan” and has since comprehensively and systematically advanced [its] human rights policy.

Under these circumstances, a human rights center located in Sakai city would have a very significant opportunity of supporting the local government in human rights promotion.

At the same time, Japan has a significant number of cities and towns with human rights and related ordinances. They generally refer to child rights and anti-discrimination issues; each issue has separate supporting human rights movements. The human rights centers played crucial role in these movements. The lobby for the enactment of child rights ordinances, for example, was led by people identified with the General Research Institute on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Institute).⁴² The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (BLHRI), on the other hand, was actively involved in the lobby for the enactment of the ordinances that address the anti-discrimination issue. The websites of these human rights centers contain the list of cities and towns that have enacted the human rights ordinances.⁴³ These human rights centers continue their local government lobby to ensure that human rights programs are adopted to implement the ordinances.

The PUSHAMS in Indonesia have also been supporting different initiatives with the local governments in their areas of operation. PUSHAM UNP has supported the following initiatives:

- Women empowerment and the establishment of Women Empowerment Body within the West Sumatra Local Government (dialogue with Ministry of Women Affairs Staff) (2000);
- Workshop at Development-Community Protection Body of Padang City - human rights enforcement and promotion by the government and the community;

- Seminar on techniques in applying human rights principles in village-level regulations in Agam, Sawahlunto Sijunjung and Padang Pariaman Districts (2001-2003);
- Human Rights Enforcement and Promotion Efforts at West Sumatra, local government of various districts (2001).

PSA-HAM UNRI,⁴⁴ on the other hand, has supported the following initiatives:

- Human rights awareness-raising for the community, local bureaucrats, political parties and social-political organizations in Kuasing District (2001-2003);
- Human rights awareness-raising for Riau provincial officials in cooperation with Riau Department of Justice and Human Rights Affairs.

On the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee survey question on how to enhance local governance for human rights, KontraS (Indonesia) noted its engagement in “capacity building of local staff in local institutions in the area of human rights, including the police institution at the local level.”⁴⁵ The human rights training programs of other human rights centers for local government officials also include the members of the police, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, NGO workers and members of the general public in their training activities. The training programs of the PUSHAMS, Kontras and other human rights centers with and/or for the local governments show a wider agenda of addressing issues that require the intervention of other public institutions including the national agencies, the courts, and the local branch of the police agency. They also involve bar associations, NGOs, political parties and other organizations in the activities.

This reflects the crucial role of human rights centers in facilitating the participation of relevant institutions operating at the local level. The human rights centers are probably enjoying a certain degree of credibility and competence that help them undertake the training activities with/for local governments.

However, there are likely cases where local legislative bodies constitute a major cause of human rights issues. While there are local ordinances that are explicitly denominated as human rights ordinances, there are also local ordinances that explicitly violate the international human rights standards.

KontraS, for example, see local ordinances as causes of violent conflicts affecting minorities. The ordinances prohibiting worship by a religious group became justification for violent confrontation between members of this group and those belonging to other religious groups or sects. The local legislative body considered the local ordinances legitimate based on religious belief, and yet they violate national laws.⁴⁶

Human rights centers find ways and means of educating officials of local governments and local legislative bodies on international human rights standards as well as related domestic laws and policies that uphold human rights in order to address local restrictions on human rights.

Sectoral Groups

While majority of the human rights centers in the HURIGHTS OSAKA-Directory serve different sectors or groups of people in society, a significant number of the centers have been established to serve a particular sector. These latter centers develop expertise on the rights and issues affecting the sector being served. They also adopt education programs that help empower the members of the sector, especially in enabling them to act on their rights.

A few of the human rights centers' education programs for specific sectors are presented below.

Migrants

The Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Center in China has a Migrant Children Project that helps Chinese migrant children actively participate in community life and take action to improve the community. It also organizes educational activities related to urban life, safety, health and sanitation for migrant children. The Center has a project for parents of migrant children. Since these parents raise and educate their children while working, the Center does not only host talks on legal knowledge, health and sanitation but also organizes seminars on parenting and provides parents with information about schooling and day care. The Center organizes a parent discussion group to create a support network among migrant workers and to help them lead a better life in the city.

BZMW has two programs for Chinese migrant workers, the Migrant Worker Weekend Legal Education School and the Migrant Workers Empowerment Education Program. The weekend school was established on 26 April 2006 to provide classes to migrant workers on important le-

gal knowledge that would enable them to protect their own interests. The empowerment program has training sessions for migrant workers both in construction sites and at law offices. By 2009, approximately four hundred migrant workers had participated in the training sessions.

BZMW has produced and distributed more than four thousand practical rights handbooks to migrant workers in order to raise their awareness of and capacity to protect their rights.

The Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM/Hong Kong) has the Education and Research Program that seeks to raise migrant workers' consciousness, and encourages the growth of the migrants' own organizing, leadership and social services skills like counseling and paralegal skills.

Women

The training programs for women have varied focuses. They can be helping women on the use of technology, developing capacity for leadership, prevention of trafficking, and other skills. These training programs are meant to facilitate women's assertion of their rights as women.

CRTD.A has the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Social Development Program that trains women on the use of information and communication technology to enable them to access information about their rights as well as build solidarity linkages with other women. The Committee for Asian Women (CAW/Thailand) has the Women Workers' Leadership Training and Education Program that aims to build women workers' leadership capacity on national, regional and global issues towards the strengthening of women workers' movements in Asia. CAPWIP holds trainers' training for women's political empowerment and transformative politics. It also develops modules and training programs for women's leadership and responsible citizenship based on the framework of transformative politics.

CATW-AP organizes camps for young women to reduce their vulnerability to sex trafficking and other forms of violence against women. The Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC) organizes women's study tours to learn the issues and activities of women's groups in other Asian countries and to share information and experiences.

Aside from holding women's rights training sessions for individuals supporting equality in Iraq, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) tries to reach out to various women in the Iraqi society through

monthly and seasonal meetings on methods of protecting women from postwar phenomena such as trafficking, forced prostitution, tribal violence, religious extremist misogyny, and discriminatory laws.

The Women's Empowerment and Social Justice Program (WESJP) of Shirkat Gah - Women's Resource Centre (Pakistan) has a defined framework of good governance, livelihood and rights with an integrated approach towards supporting women to exercise their rights and making informed choices. Under this program, Shirkat Gah provides education on personal laws and on reproductive health and rights, along with understanding of specific issues such as violence against women, women participation in governance, and traditions of tolerance in Pakistan.

Youth

Education programs of human rights centers for the youth employ the new information and communication technology along with field work and training activities.

The Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights makes use of modern information and communication technology to reach out to the youth. It uses infographics, video blogs and digital forums to provide information on human rights and civic education to the urban, semi-urban and indigenous youths. It also maintains a Resource Centre for the same purpose. However, it also holds workshops to promote understanding of human rights and citizen activism to the youth.

The Child Rights Research and Resource Center at KSL organizes youth sensitization activities on different child rights issues, such as interaction program among youths, and documentary presentation on the issues of child rights. CATW-AP, on the other hand, holds young men's camps on gender issues, sexuality and prostitution to discourage young men from patronizing the sex industry and reduce demand in the long-term. JMC trains youth from Dalit community on journalism and the Dalit issue.

The Migrant Workers' Education and Action Research Center has a youth project that addresses the needs of youth in the community, including both those who are still in school and those who have left school and are working. The project consist of educational activities on basic legal knowledge, and health and sanitation; and psychological counseling to enable the youth to handle the difficulties and challenges they face while they are growing up in a healthy and constructive way.

The Youth Human Rights Group (YHRG/Kyrgyzstan) has the Promotion of Civic Initiatives Program that is aimed at empowering youth in the promotion and protection of their interests and rights, active civic position, shaping youth values in the spirit of democracy, promoting and protecting human rights, and supporting inter-ethnic tolerance and cultural diversity. YHRG also promotes youth participation in the decision-making processes at the local and national levels.

The Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA) has a Human Rights Education and Community Outreach Program that aims to help the Palestinian Arab youth who live in Israel develop a critical understanding of human rights and responsibilities, as well as develop the attitudes, behaviors and skills to apply them in everyday life. It also has a program that is implemented through youth forums and groups in local secondary schools and centers run by young facilitators. The program recruits university students as facilitators, offers them training and teaching experience in the field of human rights, and trains them on leadership skills, working with groups and concepts of community building. These facilitators then run forums of secondary school students imparting knowledge on human rights issues, students' rights, leadership and counseling skills. The forums allow the students to meet and learn about human rights and together with the facilitator plan out activities for their community, reaching around 12,000 – 15,000 persons per year.

DC-Cam has “Student Outreach [that] aims to promote youth volunteerism, educate the youth about the Khmer Rouge period, and facilitate conversation between the survivor generation and their children about a sensitive and traumatic past.”⁴⁷

Children

Human rights centers also provide activities for children as students. The Guangzhou University Research Center for Human Rights (China) provides human rights training for primary school and middle school students under the sponsorship of the Guangzhou Bureau of Education. The Center for the Study of Law and Human Rights of Mularwarman University (PKH-HAM FH UNMUL) in Indonesia provides training and awareness-raising activities on human rights for senior secondary school students and the people of East Kalimantan.

The Democracy School in Yemen trains student-members of the children parliament on advocacy, brings them to different places, and engages them in awareness campaign in all governorates on different issues. It has awareness campaigns to increase awareness about mines and children in armed conflicts, and the risks of child participation in armed conflict.

Other sectors

Some human rights centers provide “empowerment” activities to specific sectors such as the following:

- Empowerment-based educational activities: conducting more than five thousand educational trainings for children, their parents and also for additional trainers (BCLARC/China⁴⁸);
- Workshops for motivators, activists and others to develop insight/skill/know-how in respect to chosen human rights activity (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan);
- Empowerment of survivors -
 - Crisis intervention in trafficking, prostitution and other sexual exploitation cases
 - Conduct of healing conversations with victims-survivors of trafficking and prostitution, and development of peer-counselors among the survivors
 - Conduct of women’s human rights trainings among survivors to help build their capacities as leaders, organizers and advocates (CATW-AP).

Other human rights centers have training programs for the following sectors:

- Internally-displaced people (IDPs) - PSAHAM UNHALU;⁴⁹
- Political party activists - PP-HAM & Dem. FH UNIBRAW (Indonesia);⁵⁰
- Ethnic groups - Altsean-Burma (Thailand);
- Socially discriminated sectors – BLHRRI, Hyogo Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research (Japan).

Conclusion

The human rights centers in the Asia-Pacific are important institutions that work at various levels and fields in the countries in the region. Many of

them were established as “human rights centers,” which invariably means “human rights resource centers.” As such, they have defined functions of gathering, processing and disseminating human rights information.

The nature, objectives, programs, organizational structure and staff of human rights centers make them suited to respond to different needs of human rights work. This is seen in their human rights education programs and activities.

They support human rights education through the numerous programs and activities appropriate to their respective constituencies. They engage all types of institutions including NGOs, community structures/organizations, schools/universities/training academies, police/security force organizations, judicial bodies, and relevant government agencies in human rights education activities.

Majority of the centers profiled in the 2013 *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers* serve the general public, communities, specific sectors in society and also staff of institutions in clarifying the meaning of human rights and how they should be enjoyed, protected and realized. The human rights centers support public and private institutions on integrating human rights into their programs; while professionals receive training on how their work can protect and/or realize human rights.

What sets the human rights centers apart from other human rights institutions is the existence of resources (human, material and informational) that they accumulate as part of their human rights information gathering and processing function. These resources are bases for human rights education programs and activities.

The experiences of the human rights centers in human rights education are significant components in the general human rights promotion work in the region. The human rights centers, along with other human rights institutions (such as the human rights NGOs and the national human rights institutions), are providing not only awareness on human rights but also enabling people to act on human rights – theirs and those of others.

Human rights education is just one aspect of the work of the human rights centers in the Asia-Pacific. There is more to expect from the human rights centers as institutions in their own right – the fourth player in the field.

Endnotes

1. Visit this url of the website of HURIGHTS OSAKA for more information on the *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers*: www.hurights.or.jp/english/directory-of-hr-centers.html. There is also a wiki version of the Directory. Visit <http://hurights.pbworks.com/w/page/11947500/FrontPage>.
2. In the second edition of the *Directory of Human Rights Centers in Asia-Pacific*, HURIGHTS OSAKA identified more than one hundred thirty institutions that may qualify as human rights centers. These are centers that HURIGHTS OSAKA either has no profile or with incomplete profile.
3. *Directory of Human Rights Centers in Asia-Pacific*, first edition (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA), page 4. The same definition of a human rights center has been used in the second edition of the Directory, published in 2013.
4. The Centre for Human Rights Studies at State University of Medan (Pusat Studi Hak Asasi Manusia Universitas Negeri Medan), Indonesia.
5. Center for Human Rights Studies, Airlangga University, Indonesia.
6. Informal Sector Service Center
7. Directory, op. cit., page 148.
8. Ibid., page 49.
9. Ibid., page 101.
10. Ibid., page 114. See also its website, www.shams-pal.org/pages/english/aboutus.aspx.
11. Ibid., page 211.
12. Ibid., page 47.
13. Ibid., page 44.
14. Ibid., page 136.
15. Center for Human Rights Studies, Andalas University of Padang (West Sumatra), Indonesia.
16. Directory, op. cit., page 114.
17. See CCHR's use of "website and Sithi Portal, the public can also follow the activities of CCHR on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube." Ibid., page 50.
18. Directory, op. cit., page 51.
19. Ibid., page 166.
20. See the website of Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (SHAMS), www.shams-pal.org/pages/english/aboutus.aspx.
21. Directory, op. cit., page 215.
22. Ibid., page 128.
23. Ibid., page 37.
24. PRASHANT (A Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace)
25. Directory, op. cit., page 182.
26. AL-MARSAD- The Arab Center for Human Rights in the Golan Heights
27. Directory, op. cit., page 17.
28. Ibid., page 154.
29. Ibid., page 100.
30. Ibid., page 83.
31. Ibid., page 105.

32. Ibid. page 165.
33. Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association, Palestine
34. Directory, op. cit., page 172.
35. Human Rights Association, Faculty of Law, Padjadjaran University
36. Center for Human Rights Advocacy and Studies, Haluoleo University
37. Center for Human Rights Studies and Advocacy, Nusa Cendana University
38. Association for Community and Ecologically-based Law Reform
39. Center for Human Rights Studies, Padang State University
40. For more details, see Human Rights Council Advisory Committee,

at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/AdvisoryCommittee/Pages/LocalGovernmentAndHR.aspx.

41. See response of Sakai city to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee questionnaire, *ibid.*

42. See for example Akihito Kita, "Child Rights Education in Japanese Schools," in volume 2 of this publication and the article of Isami Kinoshita on pages --- of this volume for details on the work of the local governments regarding child rights and the support of the CRC Institute in this regard.

43. Visit the website of the General Research Institute of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Institute) at http://homepage2.nifty.com/npo_crc/ (only in Japanese), and the website of the BLHRRRI at www.blhrrri.org.

44. Center for Human Rights Studies and Advocacy, Riau University

45. See Kontras submission on local government and human rights to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee.

46. The Kontras submission to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee lists the ordinances that violate the international human rights standards:

Among the restrictive regulations on the prohibition of the Ahmadiyya worship, *inter alia*;

- a. Letter no. 223.2/803of South Sulawesi Governor /10 February 2011
- b. Letter no. 450/PUM/2011/68 regulation of Riau Regent/ 16 February 2011
- c. Letter no. 5 on 2011 / 21 Februari 2011/ Pandeglang Banten
- d. Letter no. 200/160/BKPPM.I/II/2011 (Mayor's Decree) 25 February 2011 Samarinda
- e. Letter no. 188/94/KPTS/013/2011 (Governor Regulation) 28 February 2011 East Java
- f. Letter No. 12 on 2011 (Governor Regulation) on 3rd March 2011 West Java
- g. Letter no. 300.45-122/2011 (Mayor' Decree) 3 March 2011 Bogor, Jawa Barat
- h. Letter no. 9 on 2011, Depok, West Java.

While, in Aceh, the enforcement of Islamic Shari'a Law in Aceh province was officially enacted in 2002 by issuing *Qanun* (The main legal instruments for the govern[ance] of Aceh). The punishment of *Qanun* violations are in the form of caning and fines which [are] regulated in Aceh [by the] Governor Regulation No. 10 of 2005. The caning punishment [...] only applies to Moslem people in Aceh. It covers [...] several issue[s], such as[:] consumption of alcohol, gambli[ng], fornication/prostitution, and so on.

We believe that Aceh Shari'a Law [...] contradict[s] the standard of national and international human rights norms and laws.

Source: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/AdvisoryCommittee/Pages/LocalGovernmentAndHR.aspx.

47. Directory, *op. cit.*, page 101.
48. Beijing Children's Legal Aid and Research Center
49. Center for Human Rights Advocacy and Studies, Haluoleo University
50. Center for Human Rights and Democracy Development, Brawijaya University