

Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific: A Brief Review

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THE UNITED NATIONS in 1948 called on “every individual and every organ of society” to “strive by teaching and education to promote respect for [the] rights and freedoms” laid out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This call provided the basic foundation of human rights education as a major field of human rights work, and of the commitment of peoples and governments everywhere to undertake the task.

For a period of sixty years, so many initiatives have come and gone. Some have resulted in formal statements of governments reiterating their commitment to fulfill the call of the UDHR while many other initiatives are ground-level efforts to make human rights known and also realized. Nevertheless, there are many more tasks to do, and many issues to resolve in fulfilling the UDHR call.

Reiterating the Commitment

In 1968 in Tehran, member-states of the United Nations attending the first major global human rights conference since the end of the Second World War listed as the first of their solemn proclamations the following:

1. It is imperative that the members of the international community fulfil their solemn obligations to promote and en-

courage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinctions of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions.

This is the first major reminder to the member-states of the United Nations about their human rights education commitment, yet to be fulfilled twenty years after the UDHR has been adopted.

In 1982 in Colombo, in the first Asia-Pacific regional seminar on human rights, all represented Asia-Pacific member-states of the United Nations though unable to agree on the establishment of an Asia-Pacific human rights mechanism “agreed that consultative arrangements could be established in various areas such as education, teaching, training, research, documentation, dissemination of information and exchanges of experience.”¹ There was still much reluctance to create a regional mechanism for human rights protection in the Asia-Pacific, thirty-four years since the adoption of the UDHR. However, the promotion of human rights at the regional level was recognized as an acceptable task (as well as need) by the member-states of the United Nations in Asia-Pacific.

In 1993 in Bangkok, an even bigger number of Asia-Pacific member-states of the United Nations recognized that the “promotion of human rights should be encouraged by cooperation and consensus,” and stressed the “importance of education and training in human rights at the national, regional and international levels and the need for international cooperation aimed at overcoming the lack of public awareness of human rights.” In this regional conference, they further reiterated the need to “explore ways to generate international cooperation and financial support for education and training in the field of human rights at the national level and for the establishment of national infrastructures to promote and protect human rights if requested by States.”²

Started in 1990 in Manila as a mechanism to discuss the suggested establishment of a regional human rights mechanism in the Asia-Pacific, the United-Nations-initiated regional workshops evolved into workshops on regional cooperation on human rights.³ In 1993 in Jakarta, the Asia-Pacific member-states defined the objectives of the regional workshop, including the following:

To increase awareness among countries in the region of international human rights standards and procedures and of the role of States in implementing human rights norms.

Its so-called Tehran Framework (1998)⁴ identifies human rights education as one of the four pillars of regional cooperation.⁵ In each workshop, the represented Asian governments reiterated their commitment to human rights education.⁶

Subregional inter-governmental formations, particularly the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum adopted their respective human-rights-related documents that support human rights education.⁷ Most of these documents were adopted during the 2002-2005 period. ASEAN has the most advanced subregional human rights document that covers the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, which has a strong human rights promotion mandate.⁸

Representatives of human rights organizations, members of the academe, and government officials have likewise held regional activities on human rights education from mid-1990s till recently. They defined the content of human rights education, the requirements for its promotion, the primary beneficiaries, the mechanisms and the supporting institutions.⁹ They represent both ideas about and experiences in making human rights education a reality in the region.

The declarations of Asian states reiterated the 1948 pledge and made human rights education an important part of their human rights commitment. They raised the expectation that they would play an active role in it at the national level. Did they fulfill their commitment?

People's Initiatives

Compelled to address situations of injustice and oppression in the three decades from 1948, non-governmental institutions undertook much of what would now be called human rights education. They invariably tried to enable communities to take action on their problems.

Many educational initiatives from the 1960s to the 1980s included human rights as content but were known by names other than human rights education. This indicates the variety of educational interventions to address particular issues, peoples and systems.¹⁰ The community conscientization, animation/organizing and mobilization programs of NGOs for the rural and urban poor have been including human rights. Many development-oriented organizations undertook the task of addressing problems faced by the poor,

and of creating systems toward people-centered development. The so-called social development organizations, with community animation/organizing as main program, fall under this category.

Democracy education among the youth in the 1960s and 1970s was much sought in the context of the then prevailing repressive and authoritarian governments in a number of Asian countries. Beyond the idealism on the part of the youth, democracy education was needed to protect the right of people to participate in their own government as much as to ensure that non-violent protest and dissent were recognized by governments as legitimate acts of people.

Among the legal professionals, legal education was a tool to counter human rights violations committed by members of the police and military forces at a time when “national security” became the excuse for repression and authoritarian rule.¹¹ Legal education became a tool to counter massive violations of civil and political rights during the era of “emergency rule,” “constitutional authoritarianism,” and “guided democracy.” It was also an important tool for socio-economic change by empowering poor communities on the use of law. Paralegal training became a popular form of developing capacity among NGOs in South and Southeast Asian countries to avoid arbitrary arrest, illegal detention, torture, and other human rights violations as much as to facilitate community empowerment.

Social action programs that included education of the workers, the urban poor and other marginalized sectors for their empowerment likely covered human rights. Social action programs of religious groups (mainly Christian organizations) are important examples in this regard.

Popular culture played a role in the informal and non-formal modes of human rights education. Traditional or old plays, poems and songs were used to express ideas to the community. They spoke of national freedom, social justice, community welfare and also personal tragedies and hopes. As much as they were used in educational activities, popular songs on ordinary aspects of life were important icebreakers and intermission numbers while traditional protest songs constituted valuable discussion materials. A number of non-governmental organizations collected these songs as part of training materials.¹² As explained by a study on the role of popular music in politics in Southeast Asia:¹³

Music was always a social tool in many traditional and colonized societies of the region (e.g., the Indonesian *wayang kulit*

and the Malay *bangsawans*), playing a crucial role in fostering community cohesion while promulgating values and spreading information.

Traditional songs and other cultural forms were used during the turbulent period from 1960s to 1980s in raising awareness and taking action on social issues including human rights violations.

In schools, teachers took the initiative of teaching about human rights. The earliest initiative of teachers took place in the 1950s with the Japanese teachers starting to work on discriminated Japanese called *Burakumin*.¹⁴ The teachers realized the need for both *Buraku* and non-*Buraku* students to not merely enjoy their right to education but also to understand the meaning and effect of discrimination. This started the anti-discrimination education (known later on as Dowa education) in Japan.¹⁵ The repressive government in South Korea in the 1960s through the 1980s led the Korean teachers to promote democracy education to make the students become aware of the problems (including human rights violations) under an authoritarian rule and to act towards a more democratic political system.¹⁶ Some Filipino teachers in the 1970s and 1980s promoted an “educational response to oppression”¹⁷ (during the period of Martial Law in the Philippines) and held consultations and seminars for teachers on various topics including human rights education.

The Sri Lanka Foundation started in 1983 a human rights education program for Sri Lankan schools, one of the first government-sanctioned programs of this kind in Asia. In the Philippines, the University of the Philippines’ Law Center started in the 1980s to train teachers on human rights and published lesson plans on human rights.¹⁸

1990s Onward

The 1990s witnessed significant developments in the field of human rights in general that made an impact on human rights education at the national and regional levels.

During this decade, the recognition of educational initiatives with human rights content broadened. The 1993 parallel non-governmental conference on human rights in Bangkok, on the occasion of the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights, provided the venue for a variety of NGOs working on educational programs that covered vari-

ous sectors (such as women, indigenous peoples, children, workers, urban poor, peasants, fisherfolk, youth, lesbians/gays/bisexuals/transgenders), and issues (development, environment, culture, discrimination, civil and political rights) to meet under a broad human rights theme.¹⁹ The participation of varied types of NGOs indicated the broadening during the 1990s of the concept of human rights work, from civil-political-rights focus to economic-social-cultural-rights agenda. Thus also the concept of human rights education became broader to cover the wide variety of educational initiatives of NGOs.

New human rights education initiatives (focusing on particular human rights) supplemented the human-rights-related educational initiatives that started prior to the 1990s and continued at the national and community levels.²⁰

During the 1990s, some legal services organizations decided to be involved in human rights education in schools. They saw the limitation of “firefighting” (legal assistance activities) and the need to do education work in the school system. Madaripur Legal Aid Association and Ain o Salish Kendro in Bangladesh, the Movement for the Defense of Democratic Rights and the Lawyers for Human Rights and Development in Sri Lanka, People’s Watch-Tamil Nadu in India,²¹ and the Union for Civil Liberties in Thailand are good examples of such legal services organizations involved in school programs. They train teachers, develop teaching materials, and hold other school-related human rights education activities.

The series of global conferences in the 1990s on human rights, women, population, habitat, environment and development gave the NGOs the opportunity to pressure the governments to consider human rights education as a significant component in addressing the problems taken up in the global conferences.

The idea of a United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education was well supported by the Asia-Pacific NGOs by calling upon the United Nations to declare a “People’s Decade of Human Rights Education”²² or the “World Decade for Human Rights Education.”²³ They supported the implementation of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education that the United Nations General Assembly adopted in December 1994. This United Nations Decade became a platform for Asia-Pacific NGOs to pressure governments to fulfill their commitment not only in Vienna but also in Beijing, Istanbul, Cairo, and Rio de Janeiro.

In support of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, several Asia-Pacific governments adopted their respective national action plans on human education. Some countries adopted “National Action Plan on Human Rights” with human rights education components.²⁴

Most of these governments implemented their human rights or human rights education plans through their ministries of justice and education. The latest national human rights action plan was adopted by China in 2009 with the State Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the major government agencies involved.²⁵

“Third and Fourth” Players

Prior to the 1991 United-Nations-sponsored conference in Paris on national human rights institutions (national institutions), the Pacific had two national institutions (New Zealand and Australia) while Asia had at least one such institution in the Philippines in the 1980s. The Philippine national institution was established with a constitutional mandate to establish “a continuing program of research, education, and information to enhance respect for the primacy of human rights.”²⁶ This constitutional provision reflected a standard role for national institutions in the field of human rights education. By 2009, Asia-Pacific had nineteen national institutions.

A number of Asia-Pacific national institutions drew up plans for human rights education, some of them were called “strategic plans,” that should have provided at least a guide in developing national human rights education programs, or complemented laws and national action plans on human rights or human rights education.²⁷ These plans are separate from plans of special institutions for women, children and other sectors. These special institutions also play a role in human rights education.

Another category of human rights institutions is the human rights center. There are around two hundred human rights centers²⁸ now existing in more than twenty countries in Asia-Pacific.²⁹ Over all, these centers are doing significant amount of work in their respective fields of interest. They have accumulated an enormous amount of published research work, other human rights materials, and systems for information dissemination. They also produce human rights education materials, hold seminars and workshops, and provide needed information for NGOs, national human rights institutions, relevant government agencies and the general public. But their activities are largely unknown beyond national borders or networks. This

limits the dissemination to, and use of research output by, a much wider audience.

They support human rights education in the school system. The Centre for the Study of Human Rights of the University of Colombo, for example, has been implementing for many years human rights education programs in a number of schools in Sri Lanka. It has been working with Sri Lankan NGOs and other institutions.

A regional office of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights helped establish centers for human rights education in local colleges and universities. These centers function as resource centers on human rights education not only for the members of their respective academic communities but also for people in the city or province (with the cooperation of government agencies and NGOs in the area) where they are located.³⁰

The national institutions and human rights centers in Asia-Pacific constitute the third and fourth major players respectively in the field of human rights in general and human rights education in particular. Governments carry the state obligation to fulfill international human rights commitment, while NGOs provide an important medium of addressing and expressing people's demand for the protection and realization of their human rights. There is a growing trend of cooperation among these four major human rights players (national institutions, human rights centers, NGOs and governments), particularly on human rights education.

The national institutions, human rights centers, NGOs and also governments have by and large undertaken human rights training for members of the police and military forces. The National Human Rights Commission of India has been providing training courses on human rights in police academies in various states of the country. The Philippine Commission on Human Rights produced the *Philippine Army Soldier's Handbook on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law* and also engages in training the members of the police and military. The Centre for the Study of Human Rights (University of Colombo) has been implementing separate programs for members of the Sri Lankan police and military, while NGOs (in cooperation with human rights centers) such as the Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. Foundation in the Philippines and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) in India have been doing the same. Some initiatives on police and military training on human rights have been held with the support of institutions outside the region.

Newer initiatives

Human rights education initiatives at the tertiary and higher level of education have been developing in the region since the 1980s. The University Grants Commission (UGC) of India has been implementing its 1985 human rights education blueprint that contained ³¹

proposals for restructuring of existing syllabi, and introduction of new courses and/or foundation courses in Human Rights. This was for students of all faculties at the under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate levels for both professional and non-professional education.

This is a good example of a state-sponsored program (with a funding component) on the teaching of human rights at the tertiary and higher levels. This is likely a major reason for the introduction of human rights courses in many Indian universities.³² Universities in other countries in the Asia-Pacific also offer undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate human rights courses. Some law school curriculums³³ include human rights subjects; while some universities offer masteral programs and diploma courses on human rights for government officers and other professionals. A few universities in the Asia-Pacific offer masteral programs and diploma courses on human rights. Some universities offer international graduate courses. Mahidol University in Thailand offers the “only PhD program of its kind in Asia [PhD in Human Rights and Peace Studies (International Program)], while the MA [MA in Human Rights (International Program)] is the longest running graduate degree program in human rights in Asia.”³⁴ The Faculty of Law of the University of Hong Kong also offers a masteral program on human rights targeting Asian students. The Center for the Study of Human Rights in the University of Colombo is planning to offer an Asia-Pacific masters program on human rights and democratization by 2010.³⁵

With the support of European human rights centers (particularly the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and the Danish Institute for Human Rights), a growing number of universities in China are offering graduate courses on human rights. The European human rights centers also support human rights training of Chinese judges, lawyers, prosecutors and government officials.

The expansion of human rights work continues with the adoption of new international human rights instruments, the incorporation of human rights into issue-based or sector-based programs, and the strengthening of

movements of specific groups. The taking into effect of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities led to the growth of regional networking among groups working on this issue, with a new perspective of using the rights-based approach in their programming. Training programs have been developed that focus on how people with disabilities would be able to lead normal lives, realizing their human rights in the process.³⁶

National and regional movements against trafficking in human beings brought together the protection and promotion efforts of governments, NGOs and international organizations.

The movement of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) has grown in recent years at both national and regional levels. The movement has been focusing on the right of PLWHA against discrimination, particularly in the health service area.

The movement for the promotion and protection of the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders is getting stronger, and offers a developing area for human rights education. The *Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* (2006), formulated by a group of human rights experts, provides “a universal guide to human rights which affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply.” This is a new material for human rights education as well.³⁷

The networking among Asian media practitioners provides support to those who are facing threats of human rights violation, and also supports the protection of the freedom of the media from state censorship.

The use of the new information and communication technology for human rights education has started. Websites of various types of institutions provide human rights information, while some have been created specifically for human rights education purposes. The following are examples of the latter:

- a. The Asian Human Rights Commission website (www.hrschool.org) called *Human Rights School* provides teaching modules on human rights;
- b. The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center website (www.hurights.or.jp) contains information and materials related to human rights education (especially for schools).

The Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC) website (www.rrc-hre.com) contains directories of groups in Asia and the Pacific related to human rights education work, a catalogue of existing materials on all types of human rights education activities and programs, and materials ARRC has produced. It is however not in operation at present.

The websites of some Asia-Pacific national institutions and human rights centers likewise provide human rights education materials.

Cooperation between Asia-Pacific governments and international organizations including United-Nations agencies on human and drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, child rights, migrant workers, women's rights, environment, etc. creates opportunities for the development of more human rights education programs not only for the "victims" but also for the government officials who have to work on the issues.³⁸

Regional Efforts³⁹

With the experience on working for the protection of human rights under an authoritarian government in the 1970s to 1980s, a leading human rights organization in the Philippines initiated a training program for human rights workers in Asia. The Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) established the annual International Training Program on Legal Aid and Human Rights in 1987, designed to "train Asian and African lawyers and paralegals to render effective legal aid using the Philippines as an example."⁴⁰

The 1990s brought more regional training opportunities with the establishment of the Diplomacy Training Programme (DTP) focusing on "people's diplomacy", and the South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) addressing human rights and peace issues, among others.⁴¹

The mainly NGO regional programs generally fall under the following categories:⁴²

Capacity-building for grassroots communities

The Asian Coalition on Housing Rights (ACHR), a broad regional coalition of NGOs, community-based organizations and individuals, promotes exchange of information and experiences on housing conditions and helps develop alternatives to eviction. It holds training workshops on capacity building (focusing on community organizing and survey of housing rights situation) for members of grassroots communities. It also organizes exchange visits for young students such as those taking engineering, medical and law courses in order to relate technical science to social realities. It advocates for educational curriculum change to include the housing rights issue.

General study course on human rights

The Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (FORUM Asia), a regional membership organization, held a series of regional and national workshops on fact-finding and documentation in the 1990s. It holds workshops on economic, social and cultural rights. It started an annual human rights study session, which takes up general human rights course for NGO workers in Asia.

Seminars for journalists and judges

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), though mainly focused on mobilizing international public opinion on human rights issues, has been undertaking training activities. It holds seminars for journalists and judges.

Teacher training and teaching material development

The regional human rights education activities of HURIGHTS OSAKA, a local institution supported by the local governments and the social movement in Osaka, have concentrated since 1997 on the school system. It undertakes research and publishes experiences on human rights education in the school systems in the region.⁴³ It holds occasional training activities for schoolteachers and other educators, and develops human rights teaching materials.

The Asia-Pacific Center for Education on International Understanding (APCEIU), established by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO has been focusing on teacher training and the development of teaching material. It holds training workshops for Asia-Pacific teachers dwelling on peace, environment, sustainable development and human rights issues.

The Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE), a network of educators, produces values education sourcebooks for teacher education and tertiary level education. The sourcebooks cover human rights.

Training on women's issues

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), a network of non-governmental organizations in the region working on issues

of women and law, focuses on legal literacy for women's rights advocates. Its programs promote the importance of law and feminist perspective in the women's struggle for change. Its Beyond Law program examines various strategies in using law to protect and promote women's rights. Its program on Feminist Legal Theory and Practice focuses on law reform and litigation. It holds regional- and national-level training activities.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Asia-Pacific (CATWAP) has launched a Human Rights Documentation Training on Violence Against Women (in partnership with Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems or HURIDOCs) to develop tools for documentation and information handling for human rights advocacy. It has national and regional training activities. It also supports national-level training for NGOs and urban poor communities on the issue of trafficking of women.

The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), an international organization based in Bangkok, provides training on Feminist Participatory Action Research methodology and on the use of human rights framework in dealing with trafficking in women issues.

The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) develops modules and training programs for women's leadership and responsible citizenship based on the framework of transformative politics, conducts trainers' training for women's political empowerment and transformative politics. It offers three programs: a) Empowering Women for Transformative Leadership and Citizenship, b) Women in Politics Seminars, and c) Asian-Pacific Leadership Training Institute.

The Committee for Asian Women (CAW) offers its Women Workers' Leadership Training and Education Program, which builds women workers' leadership capacity on national, regional and global issues towards the strengthening of women workers' movements in Asia.

Training on children's issues

The Child Workers Asia (CWA), a regional network of grassroots organizations involved in the working children issue, provides a forum for sharing experiences among these organizations. Through field visits, it tries to expand the knowledge base of these organizations on human rights and strengthen their campaign programs. The month-long field visits involve groups from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, India and Nepal. It also holds regional and national seminars and workshops.

The End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking in Children (ECPAT), an international network of organizations with the secretariat based in Asia, engages in activities that build awareness on child prostitution. It supports the activities of its national contact organizations in twenty-five countries worldwide through information dissemination. It holds capacity-building activities on child protection measures, and offers training for the police on handling cases of victimized children.

Training on the use of the United Nations human rights mechanisms

The Diplomacy Training Programme (DTP), one of the oldest training institutions in the region (based in the University of New South Wales, Australia), holds the Annual Training Course on human rights for NGO workers. Its training curriculum includes Various Frameworks of Analysis of Human Rights Issues (includes review of International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, human rights instruments and mechanisms, and current debates in human rights movements), Peace-Building and Resolution of Conflict and other Strategies in Human Rights Work, Socio-Economic Crisis and Strengthening Peoples' Movement for Social Change, Skills in Peoples' Diplomacy and Tools of Human Rights Education. Field visits are also part of the activities.

The Forum Asia annual training program also deals with the study of the UN human rights mechanisms.

Training on migrant workers issues

Several organizations hold regional training on migrant workers issues. Equitas (formerly the Canadian Human Rights Foundation) held (in cooperation with organizations in the region) workshops for Asian labor attaches, the Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC) has internship program for Asian labor organizers and activists on documentation and information management, research, publication and project- or issue-based programs.

Complementing, and in many cases in cooperation with, the NGOs are the human rights education programs of the national human rights institutions.⁴⁴ They are generally good in initiating dialogues with governments on the development of human rights education programs for government personnel, the members of the police and military, prison officials, and public school teachers. They have also produced human rights teaching/

learning materials on various issues. To further develop their human rights education programs, they send their personnel to the training programs organized by NGOs such as the Equitas (formerly the Canadian Human Rights Foundation)⁴⁵ and the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF).⁴⁶

Training on domestic laws

In addition to NGOs doing training on human rights and domestic laws such as APWLD, there is also a regional initiative on legal education in general. The Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) runs training workshops for Community Paralegals, the judiciary, lawyers, medical practitioners, teachers and police on human rights and gender equality issues, community-based women and men on their legal rights, government departments and personnel on human rights issues and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Training for staff and members of national human rights institutions

APF offers training programs and capacity-building projects to help increase the capacities of the staff and members of national human rights institutions in carrying out their “core functions of investigating and resolving complaints, reviewing laws and policies and undertaking human rights education programs.”

Moving Forward

The existence of so many human rights education initiatives will not resolve all human rights problems or lead to full understanding, exercise, protection and realization of human rights of all peoples, especially the poor and the marginalized. There will always be a need for continuing assessment and planning on how to move the efforts to reach more people, affect more institutions particularly those of the government, and contribute more to the resolution of deeply entrenched and longstanding human rights problems.

Many of the good initiatives were project-based and thus had limited duration and impact. Many government programs suffer from changing government policies as well as inadequate personnel and budgetary support.

The 2009 national consultation on human rights in Australia provides a sobering reminder that there is no room for complacency. The human rights education work is never done.

The documents of the national consultation explain the existence of a number of measures in Australia that promote human rights:

A human rights culture in Australia is encouraged in a number of ways including:

- through the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly known as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) which plays a key role in providing human rights education in Australia and promoting awareness of, and respect for, human rights in the community. This includes an emphasis on human rights education programs in our schools
- a strong human rights non-government organisation sector which has a role in advocating for human rights and educating the community about human rights programs and protections available to them
- a 'Civics and Citizenship' education program which promotes school students' participation in Australia's democracy by equipping them with the knowledge, skills and values of active and informed citizenship. The program develops knowledge and understanding of Australia's democratic heritage and traditions, its political and legal institutions and the shared values of freedom, tolerance, respect, responsibility and inclusion, and
- internationally, by engaging in bilateral human rights dialogue, and through our Australian aid program which contributes to the advancement of human rights through its focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development.

But there was a recognition that these were not enough and thus a national consultation was deemed necessary to get the view of the people in deciding how Australia could further protect and promote human rights. The Australian government through the Attorney-General's Department supported the National Human Rights Consultation to ask people about the following questions:⁴⁷

- which human rights (including corresponding responsibilities) should be protected and promoted?

- are these human rights currently sufficiently protected and promoted?
- how could Australia better protect and promote human rights?

People sent submissions or attended community roundtables that were held throughout “regional and remote Australia, as well as... major cities.” This consultation process was not merely an exercise of the right to take part in the affairs of society but an educational activity as well. The public submissions, public hearings/community roundtables were important means by which people could think about, debate and learn human rights in their most practical sense.

On the other hand, the Philippine government’s 2008 operation plans for a rights-based approach to policymaking, planning and program implementation (*Human Rights Agenda 249*) has been described as “evolving” to stress the need to update and revise them based on the “current human rights situation.” *Human Rights Agenda 249* likewise supports the necessity of continuing evaluation of the adequacy of existing efforts to address human rights problems.

Moving human rights education forward requires a serious assessment of the experiences, rich and laudable as they are, in relation to the widening field of human rights as well as to the persisting human rights issues that every society in Asia and the Pacific has to contend with.

No institution can claim to have fully achieved the goals of human rights education in line with the call of the UDHR. There is a wide space to work on in terms of reaching more people, taking on more issues, creating synergies among institutions involved, and learning from the experiences so far obtained.

But we certainly need to have the primary duty bearers, the UN member-states, to take more active role in heeding the call of the UDHR. We are also very much aware that while we celebrate achievements in the human rights field in general, we also lament the changing (or even return of) situations that lead to human rights violations.

Indeed, to achieve a decent level of involvement of “every individual and every organ of society” in the human rights education call, we need every resource that we can get, every political will that exists.

Endnotes

¹Seminar on National, Local and Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian Region, United Nations, ST/HR/SER.A/12, 1982, page 20.

²*Report of the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights*, A/CONF.157/ASRM/8, A/CONF.157/PC/59, 7 April 1993, also available at www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/ViennaWC.aspx.

³The workshop is officially titled “Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region.”

⁴Annex II, *Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Including the Question of the Programme and Methods of Work of the Commission* (E/CN.4/1998/50 - 12 March 1998).

⁵The other “pillars” are the following:

- National Plans of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the Strengthening of National Capacities
- National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
- Strategies for the Realization of the Right to Development and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

⁶See “UN Workshops on Regional Arrangement for Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific,” *Focus Asia-Pacific*, issue 7, March 2007, also available in http://www.humanrights.or.jp/asia-pacific/no_07/07unworkshops.htm

⁷The SAARC has adopted the South Asian Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002), the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia (2002), and the Social Charter (2004) that have provision on promoting human rights. ASEAN adopted the Vientiane Action Programme (2004) with a particular provision on “[e]ducation and public awareness on human rights,” and its ASEAN Charter states that one of its purposes is “to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, with due regard to the rights and responsibilities of the Member States of ASEAN.” In the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum adopted the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration (Pacific Plan) in 2005 that provides for steps toward regional integration. Human rights are covered in the Pacific Plan particularly in the provisions on harmonization and promotion of awareness of domestic laws with international human rights instruments, regional training courses on human rights and other issues, and as part of the Principles of Good Leadership and Accountability, in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* 12/185-193.

⁸See *Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights* in www.aseansec.org/22769.htm

⁹See Jefferson R. Plantilla, *Asia-Pacific Regional Meetings on Human Rights Education*, originally prepared for the workshop entitled “Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific: Defining Challenges and Strategies” held in Bangkok, Thailand on 10-12 November 2003 for a summary of the major points in the discussions of the meetings and conferences.

¹⁰For the categories of these groups involved in human rights education and the nature of their programs see Jefferson R. Plantilla, "Asian Experiences on Human Rights Education" in *A Survey of On-going Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*. (Bangkok: Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education, 1995).

¹¹For a discussion on the work of such Asian legal professionals see Harry M. Scoble and Laurie S. Wiseberg, *Access to Justice* (London: Zed Books, 1985).

¹²See for example *We Shall Overcome – Songs of Humanity* (1984) produced in Malaysia by Aliran Kesedaran Negara, as well as a video on action songs entitled *POP! Collection of Action Songs for Organiser-Facilitators* produced by Southeast Asia Popular Education Program (1997).

¹³Craig A. Lockard, *Dance of Life – Popular Music and Politics in Southeast Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1998), page 263.

¹⁴The Burakumin are Japanese who are descendants (or associated with them through marriage or residence in their communities) of people discriminated in a caste-like system that started hundreds of years ago. They live in separate buraku (community) and thus they were called Burakumin. There are many areas in Japan that are still considered Buraku areas at present.

¹⁵See Yasumasa Hirasawa and Yoshiro Nabeshima, editors, *Dowa Education: Educational Challenge Toward a Discrimination-free Japan* (Osaka: Buraku Kaiho Kenkyusho, 1995).

¹⁶Won-il Heon, "Human Rights Education in Korean Schools" and Soon-Won Kang, "Human Rights Education in South Korea," *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* 2/61-67, 68-72

¹⁷Claude, Richard Pierre, *Educating for Human Rights: the Philippines and Beyond* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), page 56.

¹⁸See Purificacion Valera-Quisumbing and Lydia Navarro-Agno, editors, *Teaching Practical Law* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Law Complex, 1987). This lesson plan publication is part of the Popularizing the Law (POPLAW) program of UP Law Center that started in 1977 at the height of Martial Law in the Philippines.

¹⁹See *Asia Pacific NGO Conference on Human Rights, Our voice: Bangkok NGOs' declaration on human rights* (Bangkok: Asian Cultural Forum on Development, 1993).

²⁰For an example of such experiences in the Philippines see G. Sidney Silliman and Lela Garner Noble, editors, *Organizing for Democracy: NGOs, Civil Society, and the Philippine State* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998). For a comprehensive discussion of paralegal training see D.J. Ravindran ed., *A Handbook on Training Paralegals*, (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 1989).

²¹For more information on the work of these legal organizations, visit www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human_rights_education_in_asian_schools/

²²Asia Pacific NGO Conference on Human Rights, op. cit, page 49. It must be noted that the idea of a "People's Decade for Human Rights Education" was started by a non-governmental organization led by Shulamith Koenig in late 1980s. She visited Asia and initiated the discussion of this issue years before the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

²³See *Rethinking Human Rights Education Strategies to Challenge Present Asian Realities* (Bangkok: Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education, 1994).

²⁴Philippines (1997/2008), Lebanon (1997), Japan (1997/2000/2002), Indonesia (1998/2004), India (2001), Pakistan (2001), Mongolia (2003), Cambodia (2005), South Korea (2007), and People's Republic of China (2009).

²⁵See "National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010)," in *Human Rights* 8/3/5-20.

²⁶Section 18 (5), Article XIII (Social Justice and Human Rights), 1987 Philippine Constitution.

²⁷The following national human rights institutions have adopted their respective plans on human rights/human rights education: Philippines (1994), Mongolia (2001), Thailand (2001), Nepal (2003), Korea (2003), Jordan (2004), Maldives (2005), Afghanistan (2005 – not confirmed). Data taken from Jefferson R. Plantilla, *Creating Synergy: NGOs and NHRIs for HRE*, powerpoint presentation in the Regional Workshop on NHRIs-NGOs Cooperation, 30 November-1 December 2006, Bangkok organized by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development.

²⁸A human rights center, according to the definition of the *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers* (Osaka: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, 2008), is 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.

²⁹See the *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers* (Osaka: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, 2008). The updated list and profile of these human rights centers are available in <http://hurights.pbworks.com/Center+List>

³⁰See Anita Chauhan, "Center for Human Rights Education: Philippines," in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* 10/107-125 for more details in the local centers. This article is also available in http://www.hurights.or.jp/pub/hreas/10_02/index.html

³¹See *Guidelines for Human Rights and Values in Education, University Grants Commission (UGC)*, in www.ugc.ac.in/financialsupport/human_rights.html

³²See the list of Indian universities with human rights courses in the website of the National Human Rights Commission of India, <http://nhrc.nic.in/HRCourses.htm>

³³For a review of the human rights content of law school curriculums in Indonesia see R. Herlambang Perdana Wiratraman, "The Dynamics of Human Rights Education in Indonesian Law Schools" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools* 10/89-96.

³⁴See www.humanrights-mu.org for more details on both masteral and doctoral courses.

³⁵See the Annual Report 2008 of the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, page 10. This project is the same project mentioned in the CHRSD article page 218 in this publication.

³⁶See for example the 2009 report of the Disabled Peoples' International Asia-Pacific, available in www.dpiap.org/reports.

³⁷Visit www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.htm for more information on the Yogyakarta Principles.

³⁸See for example Lao PDR Country Briefing Guide, UNICEF - www.unicef.org/eapro/UNICEF_Lao_PDR_Country_Briefing_Guide.pdf, and ILO, *First Hand Knowledge – Voices from the Mekong*, 2005.

³⁹This section is mainly drawn from the author's submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament of Australia, 16 May 2003.

⁴⁰Free Legal Assistance Group, *Report on the Activities of the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) 1991* (Quezon city: FLAG), page 9.

⁴¹The following institutions are either previously active in implementing human rights education program or are in the position to undertake such program:

- The Asia-Pacific Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC) holds workshops for human rights educators. It focuses on the propagation of participant-centered educational method to support the programs of national groups in the region. It likewise collects materials on human rights education for regional information/material dissemination. It publishes a directory of groups related to human rights education work, catalogue of human rights education materials, survey of human rights education experiences in Asian countries, and human rights education handbook. It campaigned for the implementation of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) in the region.

- The Child Rights Asianet, a regional network for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, held training workshops in the region for representatives of government and non-governmental organizations involved in child rights protection. It focused on the strengthening of national-level system on juvenile justice, and monitoring/reporting on progress of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- The Law Association of Asia and the Pacific (LAWASIA), though with a mandate to disseminate knowledge on human rights, has not been actively doing human rights education work.

- The Jesuit Refugee Service, an international organization with an Asia office, engages in human rights education as a component of its direct services to refugee communities. It plans to have a more sustained human rights education program to complement intermittent human rights education activities along the Thai border. It collaborates with other human rights organizations on human rights education activities.

- The Asia-South Pacific Bureau on Adult Education (ASPBAE) has identified human rights education as one of its key programs. It has however not been able to develop the human rights education program, which can be offered to its members in the region.

- The Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), a membership organization, published a book on human rights education. It tried to bring the human rights component to the programs of development NGOs. It held workshops on specific human rights and development/culture issue.

⁴²The description of the different regional programs is taken mainly from the author's article, "HRE and NGOs" in *Human Rights Education Review*, Institute of Human Rights Education, number 5 (Osaka: October 1998). The article was published in Japanese language.

⁴³See www.hurights.or.jp.

⁴⁴As of 1998, the then existing national human rights institutions had developed a number of human rights education programs. For a discussion on these programs see the author's article "National Human Rights Institutions and Human Rights Education," in *Human Rights Education Review*, Institute of Human Rights Education, number 4 (Osaka: 1998). The article was published in Japanese language.

⁴⁵CHRF held a series of training workshops for senior staff and commissioners of the national human rights commissions in Manila from 1999 to 2001. This was in cooperation with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights.

⁴⁶The APF held a number of workshops on various issues such as the use of the media, and investigation skills.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, page 3. Visit the national consultation website for more information: www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/www/nhrcc/nhrcc.nsf/Page/Home