

Introduction

THE NEED to continue searching for human rights education experiences is validated by the collection of articles in this volume. There seems to be no end to the possibility of finding groups that implement human rights education programs and projects.

Two articles provide snapshots of the different types of groups that “empower” people or facilitate their action on their human rights issues. Different access to justice/legal assistance/sectoral groups in Thailand and Bangladesh and the human rights centers in different countries in Asia and the Pacific have education programs that cater directly to the local communities and groups. Their experiences show the diverse educational interventions, including the use of new information and communication technology, that are effective in reaching people in the communities or groups in society.

Several articles speak of the right of the children to participate in matters affecting them. They all discuss the value of supporting students/young people in forming their own “parliament” through which they can discuss important issues in their school and/or community. The “Children Parliament” in Niseko town in Japan discusses issues affecting the town, the “School Parliaments” in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) provide the venue for elected student-members to raise their voice on school matters and even to mediate conflict among students, and the “Student Parliaments” in Yemen allow the students to visit communities and learn about the problems of the people there. These student parliaments facilitate learning about the child’s right to participation by experiencing how these mini-institutions work in addressing real issues.

Three articles discuss human rights education focusing on economic issues. The displacement and other problems brought by corporate projects highlight the need to understand how such development-related problems should be addressed from a human rights perspective. The need to eliminate child labor requires a good understanding of the ways by which the relevant business firms can change their systems of production based on human rights principles. A good understanding of the United Nations (UN) principles on human rights corporate responsibility constitutes an

important element of human rights education in this regard. A third article discusses a project on “trust-building and cooperation among local governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and extractive industries by strengthening the capacity and credibility of NGOs as partners in corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.”

There are also articles that discuss international human rights standards in relation to enforced disappearances and educational policies for indigenous peoples. Human rights defenders need to undergo training on how the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance can be applied in their work, while government educational policies for indigenous peoples should adhere to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as international declarations on education and the Millennium Development Goals.

This volume has a special section on evaluation of human rights education projects. Three articles present the results of evaluation of projects funded by the United Nations for Democracy Fund (UNDEF). These articles provide examples of ways by which human rights education projects can be evaluated on their relevance, effectiveness and impact. The three articles cite the challenges that have either been considered or failed to be recognized that subsequently affected the projects. They also have recommendations on how the project holders can improve their project implementation system. The articles remind educators of the difficulties faced in working to achieve the objectives of human rights education.

As shown by the UNRWA article, there are many elements that comprise a human right education program or project. And these elements have to be given appropriate attention in the planning and implementation phases of the program or project. But there should be proper consideration of the reality that many other institutions do not have the resources (human, financial, material, etc.) to keep the program going for a significant amount of time – or such length of time that allows the educational intervention to have a proper impact on the people to whom the program or project is aimed at. This is seen in the experiences of the human rights centers in implementing projects that last only over a short period of time. Nevertheless, these short-term projects are important and should be provided continuing support.

Finally, the Appendix has the human rights declaration of a university, the Osaka City University. The declaration is an example of the policy com-

mitment of academic institutions in applying human rights in the academic system and environment. This is in itself a very good human rights education material that the students in the university should study.

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Editor