

Human Rights Programs of Human Asia

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FOUNDED in January 2006, Human Asia is striving to establish an Asian regional human rights protection system and to realize a peaceful coexistence of the diverse cultures of Asia. In order to improve the human rights situation in Asia, Human Asia carries out human rights advocacy activities and campaigns, organizes field activities utilizing humanitarian aid, coordinates educational and training programs to nurture young human rights activists, and regularly publishes human rights reports. In July 2015, Human Asia became associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) that enabled it to collaborate with the UN Information Centers in the area of communications and outreach.

Human Rights Education Program

Human Asia offers a wide range of educational and training opportunities to support and train the youth (particularly teenagers), young adults, and human rights activists, and help them to acquire experience and knowledge of human rights situations in Asia. Valuing the youth who are ultimately leading the future, Human Asia believes that the youth are the ones who have to know their human rights, and take responsibility to protect themselves, their peers and their communities. Thus, Human Asia developed a series of human rights programs for different age groups and tailored to their level of understanding. The programs aim to raise awareness about the challenges faced in Asia, and to make them active in the cause of human rights.

Human Rights School for Teenagers

This program takes place once every spring and autumn with various human rights topics targeting lower and upper secondary students. Lectures on human rights and group activities allow the students to learn and share knowledge with peers. The three-hour classes are held in Korean language. Students who participate in this program are generally more interested in human rights than average peers, and likely to join every human rights class due to their interest on various topics being offered. Students are not only

able to learn contemporary human rights issues, but also engage in activities that promote equity, justice, and human dignity for all people.

The most recent human rights school for teenagers took place in September 2017. Titled “Women’s Rights through Films,” students learned the history of women’s rights and how the rights of women were portrayed in current films. Topics on women’s rights include suffrage, fight against discrimination and sexual abuse, and initiatives to realize women’s rights. Students watched short clips of movies, expressed their thinking about the main theme or topic related to the movies, and listened to lectures related to the topics that arose in the movies. For example, students watched two-to three-minute movie clips of *Suffragette* (2015) and learned the meaning of women’s suffrage followed by a discussion of the opposition to women’s suffrage in the past. In discussing the fight against discrimination, some students brought up problems that they themselves witnessed inside classes or school. As a final activity, students presented their opinions discussed in small groups on movies assigned to them.



Human Rights School for Teenagers.

Global Human Rights School

This program is held in English every summer for Korean students studying abroad or non-Korean speaking students in Korea who have interest in human rights issues. Lectures on various human rights topics and group activities are held to allow the students to gain in-depth knowledge of human rights. The classes under this program run for eight hours including

lectures, lunch and group activity. They are encouraged to take advantage of the invited lecturers and staff to fully understand the human rights topic and to closely work with fellow participants in the group discussion. Similar to the *Human Rights School for Teenagers*, students in this program are not only able to learn the contemporary human rights issues, but also learn how to take action that promote equity, justice, and human dignity for all people through a street campaign activity.

The Global Human Rights School of 2017 was a joint activity with the 3rd Korea Refugee Film Festival that took place in Deahan Theater in Chungmuro, Seoul on 24 June 2017. The students worked as volunteers by promoting the film festival to passersby early in the morning before the start of the festival. They attended the morning session of the 3rd Korea Refugee Film Festival, and watched two documentary films (*Salvation* and *Limbo*). After showing the movies, the director and the movie star, Jung Woosung, shared the stories behind them. The discussion was meant to make the participants become familiar with the term “refugee” and what people around the world were working on to make the situation better. In the afternoon, a lawyer gave a lecture while a former refugee from Australia did a hands-on learning activity. The film festival participants were able to understand how refugees were removed from their homes against their will for various reasons and the difficulty of preparing the appropriate personal belongings to bring in their precarious journey ahead. After the lecture, students joined a street campaign by holding signs and information panels to raise public awareness on refugee rights.



Global Human Rights School.

Visiting Human Rights School for Teenagers

Similar to above programs, Human Asia organizes visits to schools or their human rights clubs upon request to undertake educational activities. These activities are tailored to the request received. A minimum number of thirty students is required for the school visit to be held.

Human Asia recently visited Hankuk Academy of Foreign Studies located in Yongin (outside Seoul). The school was celebrating its annual “Human Rights Festival,” and the human rights club in the school specifically wished to learn about the North Korean human rights situation and the plight of defectors. The club members made posters to show the human rights violations faced by North Koreans. Human Asia invited the President of New Korea Women’s Union, an organization promoting the rights of North Korean women defectors to speak before the students. As a former soldier, she told vivid stories on the life of ordinary people in her home region, Hamkyeongbuk-do, in North Korea and the human rights violation cases involving the army. The students were very knowledgeable on the North Korean human rights situation, and asked questions regarding freedom of religion or freedom of movement based on the documentaries they previously watched.



Visiting Human Rights School, Yonging.

Asia Human Rights Forum

The Asia Human Rights Forum aims to create a strong regional network that will contribute to the establishment of an effective human rights protection mechanism in Asia. Every year, the forum deals with human rights issues that are of common concern in the region. Human rights practitio-

ners, scholars, and government representatives come together to identify and contemplate on possible solutions to these problems.

The forum was first held in 2006 and has been held annually since then to deal with the following issues: Child Labor and Trafficking; Regional Cooperation for Migrant Children; Migrant Workers and Local Perceptions of their Contribution; Protection of Ethnic Minority Refugees; and most recently on Business and Human Rights.

It offers both general sessions on the international human rights norms and human rights protection mechanisms, and thematic sessions on contemporary issues and case studies in Asia.

In August 2016, the 10th Asia Human Rights Forum took place under the title of “Prospects and Challenges of Regional Cooperation for Human Rights Protection and Promotion in Asia.” The forum hosted a variety of extensive and comprehensive discussions while highlighting the need for governance and human rights improvements in the international community. The forum took a multilateral approach in promoting unity and peace by advocating for the practical and fundamental role of institutional and regional human rights regime, and by inspiring interest in its foundation not only by South Korea but by neighboring countries and the Asian region as a whole.

In April 2017, the 11th Asia Human Rights Forum took place under the title of “Human Rights and Asian Corporate Leadership.” The forum recognized the acceleration of the globalization of the world economy and the dramatic increase of the role of corporations in such a situation. The corporations were recognized as critical entities in realizing development goals, and not passive players that comply with rules and laws of states on labor and environmental issues. The forum brought together corporate and civil society stakeholders who shared perspectives, discussed challenges, and devised ways of ensuring greater business respect for human rights. In addition, there were discussions on ways to systematize the implementation of mechanisms that integrate education and research and enhance corporate capability in linking human rights to business.

Workshop for Young Human Rights Activists

Human Asia’s annual *Workshop for Young Human Rights Activists Program* has been running as a practical capacity-building program since 2006 with



10th and 11th Asia Human Rights Forum.

over two hundred prospective local human rights activists attending it. The training program is aimed at nurturing human rights activists in Asia who will contribute to making better places to live for the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors in the region. The topics of the program include child

labor, human trafficking, migrant children and workers, refugees across Asia, transitional justice and protection and promotion of human rights in Asia through regional cooperation.

In 2017, the 12th Young Human Rights Activists Workshop was held as a thirty-day project instead of a joint workshop with the Asia Human Rights Forum. It was sponsored by the city of Seoul and aimed to educate the North Korean defectors and South Koreans interested in human rights in North Korea. This workshop also worked to nurture future leaders who could improve the human rights of North Koreans and North Korean defectors through leadership development and empowerment as human rights activists. The participants learned of the basic concept of human rights, issues being faced today, and the experience of human rights defenders who were actively working in the field. They also put into practice their newly-acquired knowledge and skills through group activities, role plays, case studies and discussion. In addition, the participants interacted with other committed individuals facing shared challenges in working for change in their communities and shared tools and resources through building a network of human rights activists.



12th Young Human Rights Activists Workshop.

Model UN Human Rights Council UPR

The Model United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR), launched in 2013, is an annual program designed to provide a good opportunity for participants (mainly university or graduate students) to broaden their awareness of international human rights issues and promote understanding of the cooperation between international organizations and states. It allows them to explore ideas on how to solve human rights issues through international cooperation and develop diplomatic approaches to human rights issues. The Model UN Human Rights Council UPR gave way to two programs: Model UN Human Rights Council UPR Competition for High Schools and International Model UN Human Rights Council UPR.

Background

Since its establishment in 2006 as a new universal mechanism, the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process has become an important instrument for the promotion and realization of human rights in general as well as a uniquely comprehensive monitoring system. After the two cycles of the UPR, a comprehensive source of information on the overall national situation of human rights and the critical concerns relating to all of the UN member-states has developed. The UPR likewise encouraged the engagement of non-state actors including civil society and citizens on human rights issues that contributed to the strengthening of the national human rights system. In this regard, UPR is playing an increasingly important role in initiating and resuscitating multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation on contentious human rights issues.

Along with these developments, there is a growing number of students interested in human rights and actively participating in human rights activities, yet there has always been a lack of interconnected programs to translate knowledge into practice. Students might have learned important human rights concepts and issues through our human rights education programs or from other channels, but they have insufficient opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge or better understanding of human rights protection mechanisms.

To that end, in 2013, Human Asia along with Korea Human Rights Foundation and Seoul National University Human Rights Center (with

the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea) initiated an annual human rights training program simulating the procedure of the UPR. Since then, Human Asia has successfully been hosting the model UPR for college and graduate students, which provided better understanding of the inner workings of the UPR of the Human Rights Council through hands-on-learning experience. Its international version is designed to lay the foundation for cooperation among states to promote and protect human rights, which is a worthwhile endeavor in maintaining peace and security in Northeast Asia. Moreover, with the ability to operate and implement the program, Human Asia expanded its scope to the youth in secondary school by successfully hosting the first and second model UN UPR competitions with grants from the U.S. Embassy in Seoul in 2016 and 2017.



4th Model UPR.

Human Asia firmly believes that the continuity of this project is important in order to further develop and broaden the scope of younger “human rights resources” through a comprehensive educational program that the project offers.

It will inaugurate the first International Model UN Human Rights Council UPR in 2018.

International Model UN Human Rights Council UPR

Participants from Northeast Asian countries in the International Model UN Human Rights Council UPR are expected to become responsible mem-

bers of the international community because of higher level of awareness of contemporary human rights situations in Asia and to contribute to the creation of a regional mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights in Asia. Moreover, Human Asia strongly believes that the International Model UN Human Rights Council UPR, the very first simulating program of UPR in the region, will become a pioneering initiative that can be expanded to other regions where the framework of this project is applicable.

This project, a simulation of UPR of the UN Human Rights Council, aims to increase understanding of the importance of the UPR process as an effective mechanism to strengthen the national human rights system, provide a basis for regional cooperation, and broaden the view of the world through interactive discussion of current human rights challenges in Northeast Asian countries. Through the experience of assuming the roles of representatives/diplomats of different countries and discussing specific human rights issues, students/youth are expected to develop an appreciation of differing viewpoints, develop a system for cooperation in the field of human rights in Northeast Asian countries, and foster human rights sensitivity. They will also be exposed to diplomatic language and environment, where they can develop academic and practical skills such as research, public speaking, writing, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership ability through negotiation agenda preparation, meeting new friends from neighboring countries with similar interests, and experiencing the use of diplomatic language in a diplomatic environment.

Program Methods and Design

The sessions in this project are designed to enhance understanding of the UN Human Rights Council UPR process in three ways.

First, an information session will be held to provide overall information on the UPR and to introduce the Model UN UPR system (along with its objectives and modalities) as a new experiential human rights training methodology. The information session will be held for both the participants and the public to draw the attention of a wider audience.

Secondly, a series of lectures will be offered to participants who will advance to the finals. Human rights experts will lecture on the international human rights protection system and the diverse aspects of human rights. A simulation of model UPR will be also held to make participants increase familiarity with the UPR mechanism.

Lastly, the finals will have a similar format as the UN Human Rights Council UPR process, comprising of a State under Review and the Recommending States. Through a simplified UPR process, the participants will have the opportunity to review some UN member-states. The working language of the finals sessions will be English.

Activities of Model UN UPR

Participants taking part in the project will compete as a paired-up team and as a national team. They are expected to research as a team on the contemporary human rights issues and foreign relations policies of the state they represent as well as the recent UPR recommendations (or those from current on-going cycle) and their implementation status. This will help them prepare for answers when asked to represent a government agency of the "State under Review (SuR)." Participants are also expected to raise questions, comments, and make recommendations to the state being reviewed, when they take on the role of "Recommending States (RS)." This interactive exercise will offer in-depth learning of human rights situations in represented states and contemporary challenges faced in Northeast Asian countries.

This project will also develop the academic and practical skills of participants by engaging in research, public speaking, writing, critical thinking, teamwork, and taking leadership role through a series of assignments. During the preparation period, it will require immense teamwork in researching national reports, reports from the treaty bodies, special procedures and UN agencies, such as UNDP and UNICEF, and recommendations from the previous two cycles of UPR or current on-going cycle of UPR. Students will have opportunities to develop their ability to articulate social issues from a human rights perspective and to broaden their view of the world by taking diplomatic relations and international human rights norms into account. They will also be able to learn and develop public speaking skills using diplomatic language by delivering statements at the finals. Finally, participants will learn about responsibility and cooperation while working as a team.

Concluding Statement

Training and education employing the experimental cognitive approach proved to be useful in building solidarity and activism for social justice at local, national and international levels among the youth. Human Asia will

continue to innovate and act as the leader in the human rights education movement in Asia for the next few years through programs that are greatly enriched by the participation of Asian human rights activists working on diverse human rights challenges, and intensively engaged in human rights programs.