



HUMAN RIGHTS  
EDUCATION  
IN ASIA-PACIFIC  
VOLUME ELEVEN

HURIGHTS OSAKA

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IN ASIA-PACIFIC  
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*Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific—Volume Eleven*

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## Foreword

It is our pleasure that we issue the volume eleven of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*.

We have been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic for the last two years, which encompasses every aspect of our life. One thing that is clear is that all the challenges posed by the pandemic have human rights dimensions, and we also have to admit that many of those had already existed even before the pandemic. This very fact makes us realize, once again, the importance of human rights education.

We hope the wide range of articles of this edition will inspire every reader to “build forward better”, instead of “build back better”, from the pandemic. Human rights education will certainly be a core to drive that recovery and transformation.

ATSUKO MIWA  
Director

# Introduction

**T**HIS VOLUME compiles a number of reports that speak of experiences and lessons learned in implementing educational programs.

## Programs

The articles cover programs that are differentiated by participants, objectives and issues involved. The program participants include migrant workers in Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Hong Kong, non-governmental organization workers in the Philippines, youth from rural communities in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, community leaders from Timor Leste, Indonesia and the Philippines, school teachers in Japan, education and government officials in Australia and other countries.

In all these programs, the objective is empowerment. Transit Workers Count Too (TWC2) and Justice Without Borders (JWB) both provide the migrant workers appropriate information regarding labor-related issues, their corresponding legal/human rights and the remedies. JWB goes further by training the migrant workers to become paralegals who can talk to their fellow migrant workers and prepare the necessary information on their claim for unpaid salary and damages due them.

The programs for the youth in Pakistan and Sri Lanka provide exposure to different communities (Pakistan) and ethnic groups (Sri Lanka) that facilitate better understanding of issues that cause the poverty and marginalization of their communities. The program of Institute of Development Studies and Practices (IDSP) stresses the need for reflection on both their thinking and behavior regarding issues that affect their communities. The program of Search for Common Ground encourages the youth to remember (memorialize) the conflict that had divided ethnic groups for decades and facilitate reconciliation and avoidance of further conflict. But such remembering or memorialization has no particular model to follow. It is done in accordance with the culture and tradition of the community that remembers or memorializes the victims of the conflict.

A similar exercise, as form of empowerment, is done at the AJAR Learning Centre at Kampung Damai of Asia Justice and Rights. People from communities in Timor Leste, Indonesia and other countries that suffered conflict and violence are guided on how they can analyze and respond to

their suffering. The trained community representatives are then able to act in their communities as advocates of peace and human rights. Non-governmental organization workers and community leaders being trained by the members of the Alternative Law Groups (ALG) are also being empowered to be able to protect the rights of marginalized communities through existing legal mechanisms.

The Japan Teachers Union (JTU) provides avenues for their members to share and discuss experiences in teaching about issues and related human rights. Such experience sharing helps teachers gain practical knowledge from fellow teachers on teaching human rights and enables them to continue the task.

The Liberation War Museum, on the other hand, provides the opportunity for school children to understand the violence and injustice of the past through its mobile museum and to know how the past affected their own families and neighbors by collecting stories about life during the war for liberation. For students at the tertiary level in Southeast Asia, engaging them in debate on human rights issues is a beneficial exercise in learning (through research) about human rights issues and discussing them in a debate platform.

Both the training of teachers and the extra-curricular activities of children are highlighted as important components on education about peace (and human rights) in the analysis of educational policies of India.

The pilot project of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) shows examples of ways of making government officials gain the confidence to raise the issue of harassment and other forms of abuse and discrimination that occur in the workplace, and for the office managers to provide the appropriate environment to make this happen. The dialogues among government officials from ASEAN member-states, on the other hand, provide the opportunity for experience sharing and discussion of practical measures to protect, promote and realize human rights.

## **Learnings**

Several articles provide significant lessons learned in the implementation of educational programs related to human rights. The article on memorialization in Sri Lanka discusses the importance of personal encounter among people belonging to different ethnic groups in minimizing prejudice and



discrimination that constituted the root cause of the armed conflict. Visit to the homes of people from other ethnic groups dispels fear and creates bond among them. This activity leads to a better appreciation and acceptance of differences in culture and thinking of ethnic groups, and a more nuanced understanding of the suffering endured during the period of armed conflict. Similarly, visits by youth participants to communities other than their own in Sindh and Northern areas in Pakistan provide opportunities for dialogue on a number of issues. The community visits “helped the participants to debunk cultural stereotypes, see the plight of Hindu minority, understand the feudal system and experience interaction with people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.” Stories and views expressed by members of the communities provide essential understanding of issues that beset people in rural areas.

Educational efforts at preventing extreme violence require measures such as “mitigating feelings of isolation or exclusion by establishing positive connections between students’ own worlds and the worlds of others,” and providing “alternatives to violence and violent extremism by cultivating attitudes and values that encourage students to participate as active citizens in their communities.” Educational efforts for those who suffered from conflict and violence, on the other hand, provide the “opportunity to learn about how non-formal education influences healing for victims of trauma and how to help those individuals become empowered to assert their rights for transitional justice and accountability for human rights violations.” Hedayah points to practical measures of changing thinking and behavior in this regard.

In training people on how to properly react to situations of abuse or violation of human rights, that is, raising a voice to stop the acts of abuse or violation or to change practice and system, the VEOHRC pilot project reveals the need for a “more iterative implementation of the program [that] would provide more support by enabling participants to further practice these skills and troubleshoot some of these challenges in a supportive environment.”

The same project also stresses the need to tailor training program or module to the specific situations of the participants to make them more effective. Similarly, the experience of the Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) in training field workers shows the need to create “training modules for individuals working with AJAR to better understand how to work with survivors of trauma, including key skills and principles for working with them effec-

tively.” The Education for Shared Societies (E4SS) headed by Hedayah echoes the same rule regarding its educational recommendations: “A guiding principle in the implementation of these recommendations is that they should not be considered universal, but rather guidelines that should be tailored to fit local needs and contexts.” Knowledge and skills have to be appropriate to the context of the participants to ensure their application after the training.

Raising awareness of the general public is a big challenge. There can be numerous messages for different purposes that compete with the human rights messages. However, specific human rights issues may attract more attention, especially when they relate to the daily life of people or to an important player in the national economy. The issues regarding domestic help who work in private homes and migrant workers who are a key resource in construction, service and manufacturing industries in Singapore attract public attention through appropriate educational activities. This public attention is useful in pressuring the government to change policy. As experienced by Transit Workers Count Too (TWC2), “[P]ublic engagement to broaden popular awareness of migrant workers and their rights and encourage support has played a role in bringing about such changes as have occurred, and we think that it has been laying a good foundation for further advances in years to come.” The changes refer to government policies regarding “better securing workers’ pay, days off for domestic workers, and improving accommodation, transport and safety standards.”

In the case of the Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis (ATOMS), engaging the public has at least two major objectives: a) to make the Japanese public in the city understand the situation of the non-Japanese residents; and b) to gain public support for the protection and realization of their (non-Japanese residents’) rights. In line with these objectives, ATOMS sees the necessity of focusing on specific issues of non-Japanese residents and offers services beyond “mere provision of information... [but]... are meant to empower [them] ... in engaging the Japanese residents towards “Creating a fair and sustainable, multicultural symbiotic society.”

### **Practical Suggestions on Educational Programs**

Several articles provide concrete recommendations on how to effectively implement educational programs. These recommendations are based on

program or project evaluation and take the form of practical measures that facilitate better program or project implementation.

The evaluation of the Sri Lanka project of Search for Common Ground recommends that “[O]verall, skills building should be more practical, more hands-on, and draw more from real life examples so that the youth can see their applicability to their own lived circumstances better.” It also recommends that “[M]ore needs to be done after workshops end, to promote networking and developing structures of mutual support between participating youth.”

Regarding the use of the “Champions model,” the evaluation of Community Memorialization Project in Sri Lanka recommends “[S]upport [for] the champions to build their knowledge and conflict resolution skills by engaging with small-scale conflicts in their own communities, before engaging with large-scale conflict at the national level.” VEORHC recommends more training to be provided to “Champions on how to be effective facilitators.” And “ongoing opportunity to debrief/get support from the Commission staff” could make the Champions model “an even more effective approach to [project] implementation.”

These are some of the major contents of the articles in this volume.

JEFFERSON R. PLANTILLA  
Editor

# Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgment</i>	4
<i>Foreword</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	6
<b>I. SECTORAL EDUCATION</b>	
Public Outreach for Migrant Workers' Rights in Singapore TRANSIENT WORKERS COUNT TOO	13
ATOMS: Creating a Fair, Sustainable and Multicultural Symbiotic Society 31 ASSOCIATION FOR TOYONAKA MULTICULTURAL SYMBIOSIS	
Alternative Law Groups: Empowering Communities Towards Greater Access to Justice in the Philippines ALTERNATIVE LAW GROUPS SECRETARIAT	47
Community Memorialization Project, Sri Lanka SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND	71
Learning from People: IdSP Experience INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND PRACTICES	115
Education for Peaceful Transformation: The AJAR Learning Centre at Kampung Damai ASIA JUSTICE AND RIGHTS	151
Making Justice as Mobile as Migrant Workers DOUGLAS MACLEAN	163
Promoting Human Rights through Dialogue in ASEAN YUYUN WAHYUNINGRUM	177

## II. FORMAL EDUCATION

Liberation War Museum and Human Rights Education 183  
MOFIDUL HOQUE

JTU: Working towards Non-discrimination and Inclusion in School and Society 201  
JAPAN TEACHERS' UNION

## III. SURVEYS AND RESEARCH

Raise It! Evaluation Insights and Enhancements from the Pilot Program 217  
VICTORIAN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Countering Violent Extremism through Education 237  
HEDAYAH

Sustainable Development through Education for Peace: An Appraisal of Indian Policies and School Education Curriculum 259  
SAROJ PANDEY

The Unending Task of Human Rights Promotion 271  
JEFFERSON R. PLANTILLA

## APPENDICES

Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism 297

AICHR Activities at the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic 304  
YUYUN WAHYUNINGRUM

*About the Authors* 317

# Public Outreach for Migrant Workers' Rights in Singapore

## Transient Workers Count Too

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**A**S THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SPREAD, Singapore's government reacted with a strong sense of urgency, introducing measures that quickly isolated and treated citizens and Permanent Residents who fell ill and checked infection rates. All seemed to be going well, until the virus swept like wildfire through dormitories housing male migrant workers. For all its systematic efforts to protect Singaporeans from the worst effects of the pandemic, the fact is that the government had given little or no thought to the migrant workers who numbered nearly a million men and women and made up one in three of the island state's workforce. What had looked like a highly successful response to COVID-19 was suddenly found wanting.

This experience is illustrative of a long-term problem with Singapore's attitude towards the migrant workers it employs. Their labor has come to be vital to the country's economy and this much is acknowledged, but they are often treated as though they are invisible, except on occasions when they are seen as causing problems or suffer accidents or abusive behavior that momentarily commands attention.

## Transient Workers Count Too

Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) is a Singaporean non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes the rights and wellbeing of these workers.

Part of the work of TWC2 consists of trying to change the mindset that often enables abusive and unjust treatment of migrant workers to occur, even when that violates Singapore's laws and the standards that are commonly taken to apply to Singaporean nationals.

TWC2 originated in 2003 in what was intended to be a one-year initiative to promote improved conditions for domestic workers. This followed the death of Indonesian domestic worker, Muawanatul Chasanah, through beating and starvation at the hands of her employers. The Working Committee Two (there had been a previous "Working Committee" of civil society groups - hence the name) hoped to influence the public in favor of

better treatment of domestic workers and to promote changes in the law and regulations concerning their employment. It achieved some media coverage, enhanced by the publication of letters to the press from members, gave talks at a few educational institutions and distributed leaflets on several occasions.

One initiative was a children's essay competition, which secured cooperation from the Ministry of Education. Children were invited to choose from a small range of topics, including "Why I like/hate my maid" and "My maid, my friend", which it was hoped would encourage the children to think more about their relationship with the foreign women then employed in one in seven Singapore households.

Proposals were made concerning better legal protections for domestic workers, including that they should have a weekly day off and be covered by Singapore's Employment Act, which would have established a legal limit to their working hours. A dialogue was opened with the key government body handling migrant worker matters, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

Nevertheless, despite some evidence of an impact on public opinion, this initial effort was drawing to a close at the end of 2003 and some members thought that a more sustained initiative should be launched. They resolved to establish a legally-constituted society which would function until it was no longer needed. This was the origin of Transient Workers Count Too, whose name preserves in its initials those of its predecessor. TWC2 was formally registered as a society in 2004.

One key difference with its forerunner was that the new TWC2 expanded its scope to work for the rights and wellbeing of all low-paid migrant workers, male as well as female. This followed the recognition by the founding group that many male workers also faced abuses, such as non-payment of salaries, arbitrary dismissal, unhygienic and crowded accommodation, as well as prejudiced attitudes, but received less public sympathy than female workers, due in large part to the presumption that women need protecting but men should be tough enough to cope with any problems they might face.

In practice, TWC2's work with male workers was slow to take off, but a radical change came through the establishment of The Cuff Road Project (TCRP) in 2008. This program was started in Singapore's Little India district to provide food for destitute workers, most of whom were awaiting the settlement of claims against employers. It provides meals six days a week for destitute workers (breakfast and dinner on weekdays, lunch on Saturdays:

alternatives are available on Sundays), and assists workers who need help in pursuing claims, mostly relating to salary or medical problems.



TWC2 volunteers registering and speaking with workers at TWC2 food program.



TWC2 volunteers working with migrant workers.

### Advocacy for Rights of Foreign Workers

Foreign employees in Singapore are distinguished according to their skills and salary levels. The great majority of the workers with whom TWC2 is concerned are defined as work permit holders, who not only are paid the least, but are attached to specific employers, who are at liberty to fire and repatriate them without giving any reason for doing so. This gives them considerable power over the workers, who fear that if they object to how they



are treated or complain if, for example, they are not paid the salary that they were promised, they will lose their employment and might be returned to their home country. New male workers, in particular, could be worse off than ever, having paid considerable recruitment fees equivalent to a year to eighteen months of their salaries to middlemen to obtain a job.

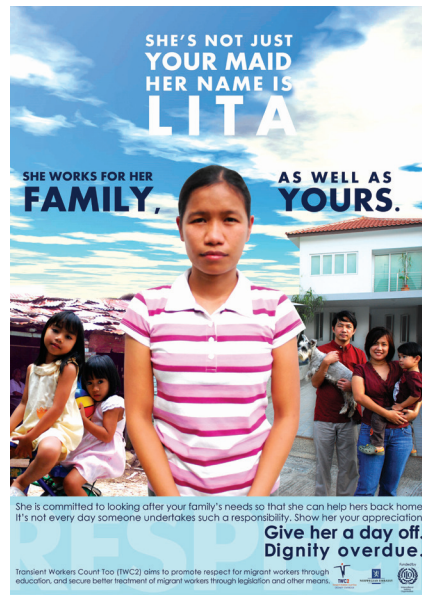
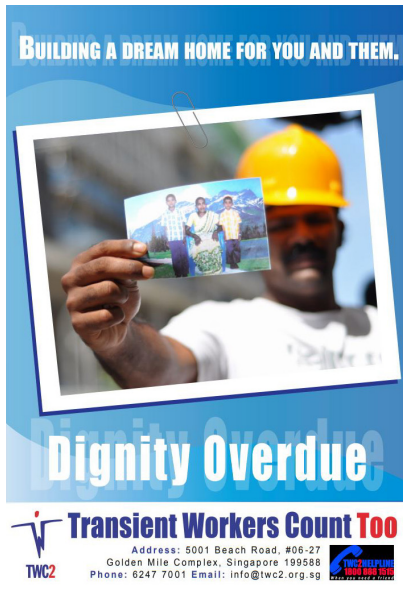
### **Awareness-raising Activities**

TWC2 set out to achieve its goals through advocacy (including public engagement), research and direct services. It would have been easier to find volunteers and raise money simply by focusing on direct services, since providing humanitarian assistance to individual workers who were abused, injured or unpaid would have made for a more comfortable relationship with the authorities and also had a readier appeal to the significant segment of the public that is wary of any initiative that it regards as contesting government policy or prevailing societal norms. We did not take that route, but insisted on the centrality of advocacy to our work. We argued that rather than endlessly seeking to repair damage that was already done, we should aim to bring about the changes in official policies and practices and in public attitudes that would prevent the problems that surfaced every day from arising.

From this perspective, providing direct services was therefore not only of value to individual workers, but was a means by which TWC2 could better understand the whole range of problems faced by workers and, with the help of research, formulate realistic and practical proposals for reform.

This was important when it came to undertaking outreach work to the public, whatever form that took. It mattered that we were speaking from a position of engagement with migrant workers, and could cite real examples of workers' experiences; it also mattered that we were not simply pointing out what we thought was wrong, but had definite practical proposals for reform: both at an official and a public level, we would be taken more seriously for making constructive criticisms of official policies and practice.

The media through which we have communicated have changed somewhat since TWC2's foundation. In our early days, we produced a fair amount of printed material, such as leaflets and background papers. Though we soon established a website, it was quite basic, offering information about TWC2, statements released by the society and various short articles setting out our views on specific issues or offering focused factual information.

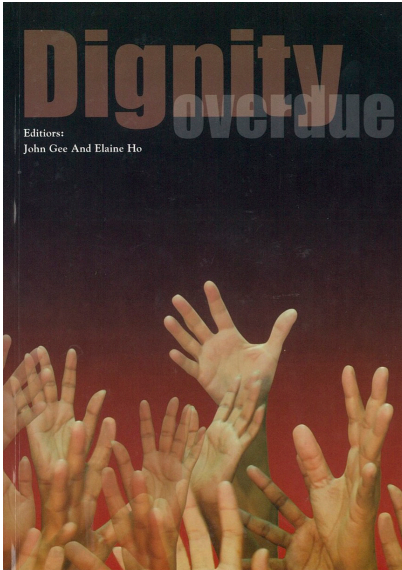


### Advocacy posters (2009)

In October 2011, a redesigned website was launched. It was planned as a much more dynamic site than its predecessor, with a steady flow of new articles on it, mostly drawing on workers' own experiences as related to our interviewees, with an emphasis on content that supported key advocacy objectives. Articles typically draw an initial readership in the hundreds, but some have gained considerably more, particularly when they cover something that is seen as controversial or as a burning issue of the moment: to give a recent example, as COVID-19 spread among male migrant workers in Singapore in 2020, an article challenging received wisdom, "The dorms are not the problem", attracted so many views in the twenty-four hours after its publication that the website was significantly slowed down and it came close to crashing.

However, cause-related websites universally tend to mainly attract readers who are already broadly sympathetic to them, and TWC2 recognized the importance of continuing to do outreach work beyond this constituency, to reach people who might not be hostile, but might take little interest in migrant worker matters and not know a lot about them. This includes, as from the start, providing journalists with information for articles, writing letters to the print media and providing spokespeople to the media as a whole,

usually on matters currently in the news, but sometimes, we have tried to stimulate media interest, such as through the release of research findings.



*Dignity Overdue* (2006)

## Public Engagement

Some of our public engagement work is necessarily reactive. In normal times, we are often invited to provide speakers for educational institutions and other bodies, and they normally determine the topic of a talk. Most requests come from schools and junior colleges. Speakers generally need to have a fair amount of experience working with migrant workers, not only so that they can provide good informative and factual talks and answer any questions that are raised, but also for their own self-confidence. Even for a relatively experienced volunteer, standing up

and speaking can be daunting. We have a Public Engagement Team which is notified of speaker requests, and it is normally up to them to sort out who responds: a volunteer simply emails other members to say, “I’ll do this” and it gets covered.

Quite a few school and junior college students undertake projects on migrant workers and ask for our assistance. Some may not take much interest in the subject: it can feel as though we are doing work for them that is not appreciated, and will be forgotten as soon as their project is completed. Nevertheless, there are some who ask questions that reflect a fair amount of thought and concern with their subject. Most responses to student information requests are handled by the Public Engagement Team. They work on the basis that it is worthwhile to do whatever we can to have a positive impact on their views towards migrant workers, which will have long term consequences for public attitudes. Perhaps, among the many with whom we are in touch, we would reach a few who may make a stronger commitment

to migrant worker rights in years to come. We have, in fact, had volunteers come to us who mention having contacted us years before for information.



Walking tour through Little India



Singaporean students

### Outreach Sessions

Much of our work is handled by volunteers. Since 2016, we have held monthly “Heartbeat” gatherings for those who express an interest in volunteering, where they are introduced to our activities and informed of our current volunteer needs, which ask for various levels of commitment and prior experience. Besides work such as writing for the website, and helping with research or the Public Engagement Team, this includes running TCRP and conducting monthly outreach leafletting to migrant workers to publi-



(This page and opposite page) Outreach activities



cize TWC2's services. For each outreach session, a migrant worker nationality and their usual gathering places is targeted, with outreach leaflets in the relevant language – Bangla for Bangladeshi workers in part of Little India, Tamil and other languages spoken in India for Indian workers gathering in other Little India locations, for example. Sometimes these sessions might incorporate a short survey of workers: questions are kept short and few and answers are logged on mobile phones.

Ever since Singapore had the first COVID lockdown on 7 April 2020, the male migrant worker population has not had the freedom to roam the

community. They are only allowed to exit for work, or to visit the nearest “Recreation Centre” (RC) once a week.<sup>1</sup>

TWC2 has been holding events at the RCs to engage with the workers there. These are usually small scale events, but TWC2 organized one large “funfair” in February 2021 that attracted a good number of workers.

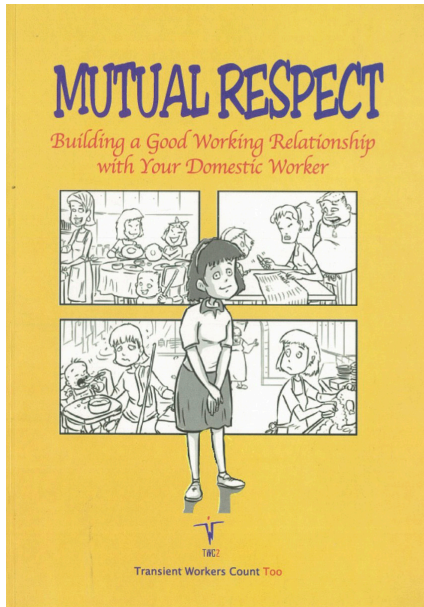
Most of the TWC2’s volunteers are young people who join us on a short or medium term basis. Some tell us that this was their first ever contact with migrant workers and few have interacted with migrant workers before. They can learn a lot in a short time about migrant workers’ lives and they will take that knowledge away with them to family, friends and community. It might be thought that the number of such people would be small, but it probably comes to between one hundred and one hundred fifty new volunteers each year.

### **Weekly Day Off Campaign**

The longest-running TWC2 campaign has been for a weekly day off for all domestic workers.

Fundamental to our stand on a weekly day off is the view that all human beings are entitled to certain basic rights, and among them is a right to have time for rest and recreation, including a day every week when they do not work. If that is what we wish for ourselves, we are ethically bound to accord it to others. However, we recognized that there was a range of arguments advanced by many employers in justification of not giving their domestic workers days off (She might get into bad company, she might run away, I need her there to look after my children/elderly parent...), and we had to respond to those, which we did very thoroughly, so that there is no anti-day off argument to which we do not have a sound answer. We might not convince many of those employers, but we needed to make a good case in the eyes of members of the public who do not employ domestic workers and might not hold strong views one way or the other about the day off question. To the extent that we could convince a growing sector of the public that all domestic workers should have a weekly day off as of right, the better placed we would be to secure that right by law.

The campaign involved year on year initiatives. In 2005, for example, we published *Mutual Respect*, a guide for people considering or already employing a domestic worker, which, among much else, contested ten myths



about domestic workers, four of which directly or indirectly concerned days off. The following year, we hosted a visit by an Indonesian speaker who talked about the issue to several audiences and we held a sports event for International Migrants Day through which it was publicized. We provided support for the making of a film on the theme of a day off. In 2007, most of our day off work was low-key, but included distribution of a pro-day off leaflet in Orchard Road, Singapore's top shopping area: this

Use the term "domestic worker" rather than "maid."

## 2

### Myths and Facts

There are 140,000 foreign domestic workers here, which means one in seven households employs one. A large majority of these workers are from Indonesia and the Philippines. Nearly all the rest come from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, India and Bangladesh. Most employers and domestic workers get along quite well, but certain myths don't help get these relationships off to a good start.

**MYTH #1**  
If the agency is registered, it must be OK.

**Fact:** Registration is not the same as accreditation. Accreditation is important because it ensures that businesses such as employment agencies adhere to ethical business practices and render professional services.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has made it compulsory for all employment agencies handling foreign domestic workers to be accredited. Currently, MOM recognizes two accreditation schemes. These schemes are offered by CaseTrust and the Association of Employment Agencies Association (AEAS). Look out for the stickers of these bodies at the front office of employment agencies. You can also check if employment agencies are really accredited by surfing through websites of these organizations. Central regulating bodies such as CaseTrust and AEAS could check on



was done jointly with another NGO, the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME).

In 2008, TWC2 joined with HOME and UNIFEM-Singapore in the most ambitious public engagement Day Off initiative yet. A press launch generated seven print media articles, as well as broadcast reports. A Day Off website was established, managed by UNIFEM-Singapore, to which over two thousand people signed up in support. Five thousand leaflets aimed at employers and three thousand postcards were distributed and we continued to campaign through our existing channels.



**DOMESTIC WORKERS  
NEED THEIR  
DAYS OFF TOO**

Upon the launch of this campaign, the chief government body dealing with migrant worker employment issued a press release that opened:

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is committed to ensuring that the interests and welfare of all foreign workers, including foreign domestic workers (FDWs), are safeguarded while working in Singapore. In this regard, the “Day Off Campaign” to raise awareness among employers on the importance of a rest day for their FDWs is in line with MOM’s effort to ensure that FDWs are accorded adequate rest.

Later that year, *The Sunday Times* invited readers’ responses to the question, “Should maids get a mandatory day off?” Two hundred thirty readers responded: 81 percent said ‘Yes’, 19 percent said ‘No’ (*Sunday Times*, 13 July 2008)

The MOM statement and media coverage were testimony to the progress made in raising support for a weekly day off for all domestic workers.

A multiple year campaign is challenging. The pro-Day Off arguments had been made: there was little new to add and it was hard to come up with attention-winning, thought-provoking ways to raise more public interest.

One initiative that we were able to build upon was the publication in June 2011 of “Made to Work: Attitudes Towards Granting Regular Days Off to Migrant Domestic Workers in Singapore.” A joint report by UNIFEM-Singapore, HOME and TWC2, the 70-page report was based on survey responses from five hundred eighty two households. It found that only 12 percent of the domestic workers surveyed had a weekly day off, and that 70 percent of Singaporeans who did not employ domestic workers themselves were in favor of them having a weekly day off. It recommended making a weekly day off mandatory.

At last, a mandatory day off was introduced, to come into force on 1 January 2013, but the impact of the new policy was muted by “escape clauses” for employers averse to giving days off; one made it inapplicable to existing contracts (which might have a duration of up to two years) and the other, which continues to severely limit access to days off up to the present time, allows days off to be relinquished in return for payment through the agreement of the employers and workers. This takes no account of the power imbalance between employers and workers, particularly young women who may be working away from home for the first time, indebted through recruitment expenses and face the threat of being repatriated, unemployed, if they refuse “no day off” terms.

Though no definite figures exist, a fair calculation would be that, between 2003, when we started to campaign for a weekly day off, and 2020, before the COVID-19 outbreak, the proportion of domestic workers having no days off at all fell from around 60 percent or more to between 35 and 40 percent. On 22 July 2021, Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower announced



TWC2 staff and volunteers organized in 2014 the International Domestic Workers Day (June 16th) event that was attended by Filipina and Indonesian domestic workers. (Photo by Davy Animas)

that from the end of 2022, domestic workers must be given at least one day off a month.<sup>2</sup>

A contrasting campaign, centered on male workers, has been focused on measures to better ensure that they are paid what they are supposed to be paid according to what was stated when they were recruited. This has been sustained for nearly ten years.

We called for three measures to be introduced and implemented:

- a. Workers to receive a statement of what pay they should receive, in a language that they understand, at the time of their recruitment;
- b. All low-paid workers to receive itemized pay slips when they are paid, setting out basic pay, overtime pay and hours worked; and
- c. Salaries to be paid into bank accounts in workers' own names.

None of these measures seem far-reaching in themselves, but together, they would help to counter some of the devious ways in which unscrupulous employers cheat workers of the money that they are due for their work.

The case for these reforms was argued, as usual, in talks and through contact with the mass media, but largely through our website, which has run article after article based on interviews with migrant workers who have experienced problems obtaining the salary payments they were due. Interspersed among these articles occasionally were others that argued the issues and stated our proposals for reform.

Over the past six years, regulations have been introduced that go a long way towards introducing the changes we called for: workers are supposed to be given a copy of the In Principle Approval document issued when they are recruited, and this states their agreed salary. Employers are obliged to provide itemized pay slips. The introduction of payment of salaries into bank accounts was speeded up by the COVID-19 outbreak, when the anti-viral advantages of contactless payment became very apparent.

Despite this progress, public outreach around these basic pay questions is still necessary, not least because of inadequate enforcement. For example, workers recruited on the basis of being paid a certain amount can still be faced with demands that they sign a contract that gives them substantially less once they arrive in Singapore, but until 2018, the Ministry of Manpower treated this as a valid voluntary agreement that superseded the existing



agreed terms, despite the obviously disadvantaged position of any newly arrived, indebted worker faced with a “sign or go home” demand.

### **Advocacy Through Film – “I DREAM OF SINGAPORE”**

In 2018, local filmmaker Lei Yuan Bin documented the activities of TWC2 for an entire year. He filmed TWC2 staff, volunteers and residents who stayed at the male shelter. The filmmaker eventually focused on one worker who was injured at work and was on his way home after going through the entire recovery process. He documented his post-injury life, his interactions with those at TWC2 who helped him, and his return to Bangladesh after a long recovery from serious internal injuries.

The resulting film was titled “I DREAM OF SINGAPORE (IDOS)” and debuted at the Singapore International Film Festival in November 2019. It then made it to the prestigious Berlinale in February 2020.

### **Future Plans**

Our plans for the future are being made in the shadow of the COVID-19 outbreak, which had consequences whose full impact remains to be assessed. Most male workers were physically isolated from contact with other people during the outbreak and their freedom of movement remains restricted as of the beginning of 2022. Domestic workers also faced movement restrictions. We communicated with many workers by mobile phone, but still feel that something is lost from reduced face-to-face contact. Activities such as our monthly outreach sessions to workers and talks at schools, universities and other institutions, largely came to a halt, though we continued to meet online information requests through emails, phone calls and even met a few students and researchers through videocalls.

Overall, online activity assumed a much greater importance than previously and, while we look forward to the resumption of the kind of public engagement we had in the past, we anticipate that online communication will continue to have an enhanced role.

The website was redesigned shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak to be more user-friendly for people who wish to access it using mobile phones. It attracted increased interest during the pandemic and the facts and figures it has provided have been increasingly cited in other media outlets.

A new staff member was taken on in January 2021 tasked with rejuvenating our Facebook page, with a target of posting new material every three or four days.

In June 2021, in cooperation with Migrant Forum in Asia, we held a webinar titled “Hunger Games for real: The Bangla worker abroad” and “TWC2 Tamil Facebook Live”, aimed at Tamil-speaking workers. While neither was directed to the Singapore public, they employed communication technology and gave us experience that we expect to be able to use in public engagement work.

Since TWC2 was founded, we have pursued our goals through advocacy, research, public engagement and direct services. We considered these fields of work to be complementary and always treated them as such. We never expected quick results and understood that commitment to year-on-year activity was essential to bring about change. We cannot say that any aim has been achieved in full, but progress has been made on better securing workers’ pay, days off for domestic workers, and improving accommodation, transport and safety standards. Public engagement to broaden popular awareness of migrant workers and their rights and encourage support has played a role in bringing about such changes as have occurred, and we think that it has been laying a good foundation for further advances in years to come.

## Endnotes

1 The recreation centres are usually close to worker dormitories and far from residential areas. They are heavily guarded and workers are checked upon entry. They offer a few small shops for workers to buy necessities, but no opportunity to mix with the local community or access public commercial areas.

2 The Ministry of Manpower recently announced the following measure:

d. Implementing mandatory rest day for MDWs. Employers will be required to provide their MDWs with at least one rest day a month that cannot be compensated away. This will provide more opportunities for MDWs to form a network of support outside the household, as well as rest and recharge from work. We understand that some employers may need time to adjust to the new rest day arrangements. Hence, the mandatory rest day policy will take effect in end-2022.

“New Measures to Strengthen Support For Migrant Domestic Workers”, Ministry of Manpower, 22 July 2021, [www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2021/0722-better-support-for-mdws](http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2021/0722-better-support-for-mdws)



# ATOMS: Creating a Fair, Sustainable and Multicultural Symbiotic Society

Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis

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**T**HE ASSOCIATION for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis, popularly known as ATOMS, was established in 1993 in Toyonaka city as a base for international exchange and multicultural symbiosis. It adopted the motto “Creating a fair and sustainable, multicultural symbiotic society” to emphasize the role that it wants to play in Toyonaka city and beyond.

The basic objective of ATOMS is to create a symbiotic society with connection to the world by facilitating exchange activities between the Japanese and the non-Japanese residents based on respect for human rights and with broad participation of the citizens.

The primary concern of ATOMS is the provision of support to all non-Japanese residents in the city that would lead to independent living and participation in society. ATOMS also aims to have a “no-support-needed” future for these residents by making a society where cultural diversity is appreciated, and the different characteristics of people are understood. ATOMS aims to collaborate with the local community including schools and the educational sector in achieving its goals.

## Activities

ATOMS operates under the Toyonaka International Center. It undertakes several activities for the non-Japanese residents that cover cultural exchange, language education, support for the education of children, and support for the parenting of children.

The Japanese Language Activities for Cultural Exchange program creates a space for interaction between non-Japanese and Japanese residents to enrich relations between them and learn Japanese language at the same time. Non-Japanese parents can also learn Japanese along with their children through the *Toyonaka Nihongo Moku-hiru* (Thursday Japanese class), *Toyonaka Nihongo Kin-asa* (Friday Japanese class), *Nichiyou gachagacha-*

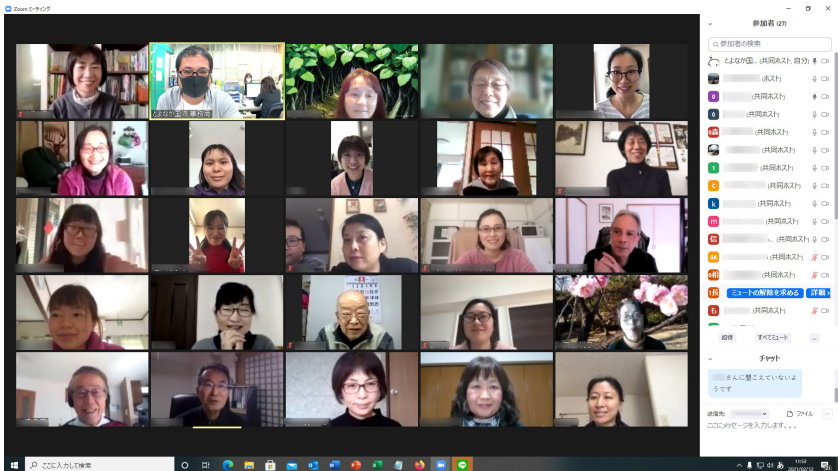




Sun Plaza: Area for activities.

*dan* (Sunday Japanese class), etc. In case of need for child care during the activities, there is the *Tabunka Hoiku Niko-niko* (childcare for zero year old to before primary school age children) held only on Thursday and Friday at the same time as the Japanese program.

A project called *Mokuhiru* provides the non-Japanese the opportunity to learn Japanese language by interacting with the Japanese residents and at the same time learn to know each other and the community where they live.



Kin-asa via Zoom.

*Oyako de Nihongo* is held for non-Japanese mothers who are currently raising their children to experience multicultural childcare activities in parallel with Japanese language exchange activities. The non-Japanese mothers can exchange information and talk in Japanese language about life in Japan and raising children while making friends. There are also events such as reading picture books, cooking classes and making handmade toys. The activity is led by volunteer Japanese women who are currently raising their children too. The activity welcomes pregnant non-Japanese women and individual participants who are not yet proficient in Japanese.

In addition, there are voluntary Japanese groups in the city offering Japanese language activities using the Toyonaka International Center facilities: Night Kanji Class (learning how to write Chinese characters), *Nihongo Kouryuu Salon*, *Nihongo Bochi-bochi* and *Nihongo Hiroba*. Some activities are held in other public facilities (such as community hall and library) to reach those who live far from Toyonaka International Center. ATOMS help non-Japanese residents participate in the community activities such as on disaster management (including evacuation drills) and other community gatherings that allow them to meet the Japanese residents. These activities bring the non-Japanese residents in close contact with the local Japanese residents and break both language and mental barriers and help create a multicultural community.

ATOMS support activities that allow the non-Japanese residents to meet and speak their own languages, and undertake their own activities that help relieve the sense of isolation that some of them might experience. In line with this perspective, ATOMS supports the organization of non-Japanese residents as seen in establishment of the Filipino Young at Heart Club (FYAHC) in 2017 with the aim of supporting ageing Filipino residents. ATOMS through FYAHC organizes seminars and other activities for Filipinos and other non-Japanese residents.

ATOMS also organizes activities for the young who came to Japan without knowing the Japanese language or who have foreign background and raised in Japan. In the activity called *Wakamono no Tamariba* (*Tamariba* means Place of Hang-out), these young people gather on Sundays, meet fellow nationals, eat together, and do activities such as doing rap through which they express their problems and plans for the future. During “Hang-out,” ATOMS staff members are able to talk to the young people about their problems relating to school (especially entering secondary school), part-

time work and other matters. At the same time, ATOMS helps children (with Japanese descent or foreign background) not to forget their mother tongue by providing a place for them to appreciate the language of their parents that they used to speak but has been neglected as they become more proficient in Japanese language. The activities, such as learning traditional dance and speaking in their mother tongue, of young people with their parents from Latin America such as Peru help them reconnect to their own culture and language, and their identity. And as they perform their dances in public, they also gain recognition of the Japanese public about their roots.



Visit to a Filipino store.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, ATOMS provides information (through its website and social media such as Facebook) in different languages on COVID-19, the services available in cases of financial difficulties due to loss of job (that lead to the difficulty in buying food, paying house rent and other problems) such as social welfare programs. It also organizes meetings regarding the discrimination against non-Japanese due to fear that there were infected by COVID-19 virus.

## **Issues and Response**

ATOMS offers necessary information and provides a multilingual consultation service to non-Japanese residents on a number of issues. The consultation service is provided in several languages (Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Thai, English, Indonesian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Nepali, and Japanese) by professional counselor and staff members who speak these languages as mother tongue. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, consultation service was available by telephone and face-to-face on Fridays. Close to one thousand cases are handled each year in this consultation service.

The consultation service has so far been covering the following issues:

- Husband and wife relationship (divorce, domestic violence, discord, international marriage, etc.);
- Legal/administrative procedures on immigration matters (residence eligibility, family invitation, etc.);
- Daily life (housing, money matter, insurance · pension · tax and other administrative procedures, Japanese language learning, and other things that concern daily living);
- Human relationships (friends, work place and households);
- Health (mental health, pregnancy and childbirth, etc.);
- Children (child rearing, nursery, kindergarten, schools, etc.);
- Labor (job hunting, unemployment, etc.);
- Human rights.

The consultation service helps the non-Japanese residents understand their problems and decide among the options presented on the actions to take.

In certain cases, ATOMS introduces specialists (including lawyers), labor standards inspection office, welfare office, board of education, or related government offices and other organizations to help resolve the issues.

In the case of Filipino residents, the major problems sought for consultation over the years and the frequency of consultation are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1. Issues Consulted by Filipinos**

Issues	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
1. Divorce	20	9	89	37	122	47	32	8	17
2. Child custody	4	5	9	22	74	73	28	2	1
3. Domestic Violence	22	12	28	14	24	1	21	27	19
4. Japanese citizenship acquisition	50	43	49	37	35	28	1	0	
5. Unpaid wages	4	5	8	0	77	95	48		1
6. Other labor issues	54	41	52	14	15	3	14	5	6
7. Human rights violations	1	2	2	0	1	32	6	---	---

## Divorce

One of the major issues faced by non-Japanese residents is divorce.

As of 2020, a total of 115,545 of the non-Japanese residents in Japan were married to Japanese nationals.<sup>1</sup> Female non-Japanese spouses in these divorces “were nearly 80 percent, with the spouse most commonly being from China, the Philippines, or ... Korea, in that order.”<sup>2</sup>

Divorce by mutual agreement (*kyōgi rikon*) constitutes more than 90 percent of divorces in Japan. The popularity of this type of divorce is attributed to the ease with which it can be done – mere filing of application for divorce (*rikon todoke*) in the city hall. This fast and easy procedure is also the cause of many fraudulent divorces in international marriages.

**Table 2. International Marriages in Japan**

Year	Number of international marriages <sup>3</sup>	Number of divorce of international marriages <sup>4</sup>
2010	30,207	18,968
2011	25,934	17,832
2012	23,657	16,288
2013	21,489	15,196
2014	21,131	14,138
2015	20,984	13,676
2016	21,189	12,949
2017	21,464	11,663
2018	21,852 <sup>5</sup>	11,044
2019	21,919 <sup>6</sup>	10,647

Table 2 shows that the number of international marriages in Japan has been decreasing since 2010 from 30,000 marriages per year to almost 21,000 in 2015, but rising a little bit to almost 22,000 in 2018 and 2019. During the same period of time, the number of divorces per year has a clear decreasing trend year after year from almost 19,000 divorces in 2010 to less than 11,000 divorces in 2019.

がいこくじん いちにちりこんでんわそうだんほっとらいん  
**外国人のための一日離婚電話相談ホットライン**

主催：大阪弁護士会  
 協力：リコン・アラート  
 （協議離婚問題研究会）

**"1 Day Phone Consultation Service on Divorce for Foreign Residents"**

ねん がつ にち ど  
**2021年2月13日(土) 10:30~16:30**

**Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 10:30-16:30**

**☎06-6364-9950** (Only available on D-Day)



〔日本語〕  
 『外国人（がいこくじん）のための一日（いちにち）離婚（りこん）電話（でんわ）相談（そうだん）ホットライン』  
 2021年2月13日（土）10:30～16:30  
 TEL: 06-6364-9950（この日しか使えませんが）  
 配偶者（はいごうしゃ）との関係（かんけい）や離婚（りこん）についての電話相談会（でんわそうだんかい）です。専門家（せんもんか）があなたの言葉（ことば）の通訳（つうやく）をつけて 対応（たいおう）します。気軽（きがる）に電話（でんわ）ください。無料（むりょう）（むりょう）。秘密（ひみつ）は守（まも）ります。

〔Filipino〕  
 Isang Araw na Konsultasyon sa Telepono Ukol sa "RIKON" (Diborsyo) para sa mga dayuhan  
 Katanika 13 ng Pebrero, 2021 10:30-16:30  
 Telepono: 06-6364-9950 (ang numerong ito ay para sa araw na ito lamang.)  
 LIBRE! Pangangalagaan ang inyong mga pribadong impormasyon.  
 Huwag pong mag atubiling tumawag para sa inyong mga katanungan at para sa tamang impormasyon, anumang bagay na may kinalaman sa relasyon ng mag asawa, pag hihiwalay. May mga nakalaan na tagapag

〔Russia〕  
 Ответы на вопросы связанные с разводом. По телефону! 13 февраля 2021 г. С10:30-16:30 по тел. 06-6364-9950  
 Данный номер используется только в указанный день.  
 Отношения между супругами, тонкости и сложности развода. Свои вопросы вы можете задать экспертам в области развода, на русском языке. Бесплатно! Анонимно!  
 Общество Ассоциация адвокатов Осаки / Исследования Проблем

Divorce consultation flyer



Divorce consultation by phone

A major problem regarding divorce is the fraudulent application for divorce. Fraudulent divorce (*mudan rikon*) happens when one spouse files an application for divorce at the city hall with forged signature, or unauthorized use of personal stamp (*hanko*) or signature obtained by misrepresentation. The use of forged signature and signature obtained by misrepresentation happens mainly in international marriages. Any application for divorce at the city hall is accepted without question even in the absence of one of the spouses. The absent spouse (non-Japanese) may receive a notice about the divorce application in Japanese language, but fail to understand what the notice is all about.

There is no requirement for the divorce application document to be signed by both spouses in the presence of the city hall official. Neither is the absent spouse asked about the application for divorce prior to its acceptance (unless a request not to approve such divorce application until the other spouse has been properly informed and has agreed to it – called *rikon fujuri moushide* in Japanese language– has been filed previously). And once approved, the decision can no longer be withdrawn or cancelled. The person whose signature was forged or obtained through misrepresentation or whose *hanko* was used without permission has to file a petition in court to annul the approval of divorce application.

For non-Japanese spouses, fraudulent divorce has two possible consequences:

1. Residence permit – those who have spousal visa cannot anymore extend the permission to stay in Japan using this visa because their marriage has ended;
2. Child custody – the divorce application may include a provision that child custody is with the Japanese parent – depriving the non-Japanese parent access to the child/children.

Even when the fraudulently divorced non-Japanese spouses who have spouse visa changed residence visa into “temporary visitor” or “designated activities,” they would not be allowed to work to support themselves while in Japan. And if they stayed on to file an expensive court petition to annul the divorce, they face financial problems due to lack of source of income.<sup>7</sup>

For the right to have child custody, the non-Japanese spouse faces the same problem of filing a petition in court. And if the child had stayed with the former spouse (Japanese) for years, the court would likely rule to main-

tain such custody since the child had grown up with the Japanese parent for a significant time.

The problem of divorce of non-Japanese residents has been the focus of the consultation service of ATOMS. Since 2010, ATOMS has been providing consultation service to many non-Japanese residents on fraudulent divorce application as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Consultation on fraudulent divorce**

Year	Cases per year
2010 - 2013	20 per year (average)
2014	67
2015	110
2016	109 <sup>s</sup>
2017	70
2018	31
2019	34
2020	84

### **Seminars and Other Activities**

ATOMS organizes seminars, symposiums and other educational activities to address the issues affecting non-Japanese residents as shown by the data on issues discussed in its consultation service (see Table 1).

ATOMS, organized a symposium on fraudulent divorce in February 2015. The speakers in the symposium (a clinical psychologist and a law professor) discussed the rising number of fraudulent divorce affecting non-Japanese residents. After the symposium, one of the speakers, Professor Shuhei Ninomiya (a professor on Family Law in Ritsumeikan University), raised the question, “What can we do to eliminate fraudulent divorce?” This question led to the idea of forming a group that would address the fraudulent divorce issue. This eventually led to the establishment of Rikon Alert (Action Group for Divorce by Agreement) two years later.

ATOMS held a workshop entitled “Current Situation and Issues of Children with Foreign Roots: Rights, Poverty, Education, Culture, Nationalities and Coexistence” on 10 June 2017 to provide an opportunity



for people in Osaka interested in the plight of children with foreign roots to meet. This symposium was held in cooperation with Akashi Shoten to launch a book published in April 2017 entitled *Osaka: Current Situation*



Symposium on children with foreign roots, 2017.

*and Issues of Children with Foreign Roots ~ Rights, Poverty, Education, Culture, Nationality and Coexistence.*<sup>9</sup>

On 7 December 2019, ATOMS held a symposium where non-Japanese residents who became victims of *mudan rikon* presented their stories. Many of the symposium participants commented that there were still many issues



Symposium on fraudulent divorce.

in the Japanese judicial system that prevent the victims of fraudulent divorce from getting proper remedy.

Through FYAHC, ATOMS held seminars on a number of issues such as welfare (“Pension System in Japan”), labor (“Labor Rights in Japan”), divorce, immigration and education.

Divorce was the topic of two seminars held by ATOMS (and FYAHC) in 2017 and 2020. On 1 July 2017, ATOMS (in cooperation with the Philippine Consulate General in Osaka and the Philippine Community Coordinating Council) organized a seminar entitled “Divorce and Remarriage – Information and Legal Procedures in Japan and the Philippines.” The seminar discussed the requirement for divorce obtained in Japan to be recognized in the Philippines in order to change civil status (married to divorced) and allow the divorced Filipino to remarry. A Japanese lawyer and two Filipino lawyers (one of whom was a Vice-Consul in the Philippine Consulate General in Osaka) discussed the divorce and remarriage legal procedures in the two countries. On 4 October 2020, the seminar on divorce and how to register it with the Philippine government was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentation covered the Japanese law on divorce (its effect on the spouses and their children, the different types of divorce, the different processes of obtaining it and the means to prevent fraudulent

divorce application), and the requirements for judicial recognition of divorce decree in the Philippines. The seminar was broadcasted “live” in the Facebook account of ATOMS, which allowed people to ask questions and give comments while the seminar was going on.

Another seminar held with FYAHC was on 28 November 2021 about long-term care insurance, national pension system and medical insurance. This seminar provided information to the non-Japanese residents on the social welfare programs that they (non-Japanese residents) could avail of. Ageing

  
 Kung ikaw ay na-  
**DIVORCE,**  
 Anong mangyayari?  
  
**RESOURCE SPEAKER: ATTY. JEFF PLANTILLA**  
 Catch us via Facebook Live: Filipino YAHC or send a facebook message or email us at [atoms@a.zaqq.jp](mailto:atoms@a.zaqq.jp) to join our Zoom session  
 TOYONAKA INTERNATIONAL CENTER | OPERATED BY ASSOCIATION FOR TOYONAKA MULTICULTURAL SYMBIOSIS  
**OCTOBER 4, 2020, SUNDAY**  
 1-2 PM : DIVORCE  
 2-3 PM : ZUMBA  
 Email or call: [filipinoyahc@gmail.com](mailto:filipinoyahc@gmail.com) / 06-6843-4343  
Made with PosterMyWall.com

Seminar on divorce and judicial recognition of divorce decree.



**LIBRE!**

**SEMINAR PARA SA MGA NANINIRAHANG DAYUHAN**

"ROUGO wo Kangaeyou"  
Buhay ng mga Silver at Golden Ages

"Kaigo Hoken" (Long Term Care Insurance)  
"Nenkin" (National Pension System)  
"Iryou Hoken" (Insurances pang Medikal)

**Ika 28 ng Nobyembre ( Linggo ) 2021  
2 PM to 3:30 PM.**

Guest House Nilhon Yadoya  
(Hankyuu Line Shounai Sta.) 2minutong lakad  
Toyonaka Shi Shounai Higashi Machi 2-3-11  
No.2 Sunrise Bldg.3rd Floor

Speakers:  
1. Ms. Fukuchi, Yuki (Money Lab, Kansai )  
2. "Toyonaka Shi Chouju Anshin Ka Shoukuin"  
( Toyonaka City Longevity Division Staff )

Ang Handouts ay malahanda sa Wikang Pilipino at Ingles.  
Ang Seminar ay isasagawa sa Wikang Hapones.

**First Come, First Serve 110 Persons.**

ATOMS (Association for TOYONAKA Multicultural Symbiosis)  
Designated Administrator of Toyonaka International Center  
Sa reserbasyon: atoms@azq.jp / Tel:06-6843-4343  
(Sarado po tungang Miyakotos)

### Seminar on retirement systems.

presented in a seminar on 6 November 2020 for supporters of the Nepalese residents such as staff of international organizations like ATOMS, teachers, etc.

## Social Media

ATOMS uses social media to reach the non-Japanese residents. It has a Facebook account, named "ATOMS English-Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis,"<sup>10</sup> which contains many announcements of its activities, as well as information from other institutions. Many announcements regarding services and benefits being provided by the local and national governments during the COVID 19 pandemic are being uploaded on the Facebook account.

A post on the right of non-Japanese workers to be treated fairly despite slowdown in business due to the COVID 19 pandemic was uploaded on the Facebook account. The information was from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan (MHLW), likely in response to violations of workers' rights. The post states that non-Japanese workers have the right to leave allowance, subsidy paid by the national government to companies that should benefit both Japanese and non-Japanese workers, and paid vacation days. The post also states that

non-Japanese residents need to be familiar with these programs that they would need in the future.

As part of the supporting activities in the "Support Project for the Youth" of ATOMS, a survey on the situation of Nepalese youth was held in 2020. Similar to other newly-arrived non-Japanese youth, the Nepalese youth face adjustment in their schooling in Japan. The results of this survey would help determine the kind of support that could be provided to the Nepalese youth as well as inform the Nepalese community in Toyonaka city of the situation of the young members of their family. The survey results were presented

4. Companies cannot freely fire you at will. When a company wants to fire a foreign worker, the same rules [for] Japanese workers must be followed.

The post also included the QR code of the website of MHLW where information for non-Japanese workers can be found including assistance available to them.<sup>11</sup>

## **Publications**

ATOMS organized in 2017 a research group called Rikon Alert with staff of other support groups, researchers and lawyers as members. Rikon Alert aimed at informing non-Japanese residents of the problem of fraudulent divorce application. Rikon Alert produced videos and a leaflet in different languages that explained Japan's divorce system. It also published in September 2019 a manual (*Mudan Rikon Taio Manuaru*) that explains the procedure for filing *rikon fujuri moshidesho*, a form for requesting the local government office not to approve any application for divorce without the applicant's (non-Japanese) knowledge and agreement, and the procedure for divorce mediation and litigation. It uses YouTube<sup>12</sup> as well as Facebook to disseminate information on fraudulent divorce.

In addition, in March 2019, Akashi Shoten published a book entitled *Creating a Community to Live Together with Foreigners: What We Have Learned from the Practices of Toyonaka, Osaka*. This book contains ways of providing support to non-Japanese residents that can be learned from the practices of ATOMS based on the principle of "creating a community to live together". The book discusses the perspectives and possibilities of connecting multicultural conviviality and welfare for administrative and welfare professionals and members of local international associations who are interested in supporting non-Japanese residents but lack the tools to do so.

## **Audience of the Educational Activities**

The Toyonaka primary school foreign language program, started in 2006, invites non-Japanese residents living in the city to serve as volunteer teachers and introduce their own culture and language to students at third up to sixth grade. Through this program, children and teachers have opportunities to meet people with different language, culture and values who live in

their neighborhood. It brings out the positive attitude of wanting to know each other.

This program becomes the first step to improve the communication skills of the Japanese students while helping students with foreign background lessen their feeling of unease with their foreign roots and not attempt to hide it.

These encounters by people who have different language, culture and values are expected to empower them to become proud of their own culture and values.

Complementing this formal education program are the educational activities of ATOMS that are directed at both non-Japanese and Japanese residents in the city. They are meant to enlighten city residents on the many issues affecting the non-Japanese residents, and to find ways of resolving them.

Educational activities for the non-Japanese residents provide information not only on the issues they are concerned with such as immigration, labor and family issues but also on their rights and the means to realize them.

Activities aimed at the Japanese residents also present issues affecting the non-Japanese residents and seek their understanding and support in resolving them.

The educational activities form part of the objective of ATOMS of making the Japanese residents involved in issues affecting the non-Japanese residents and create opportunities for them (non-Japanese and Japanese residents) to work together in resolving the issues. This is illustrated in the 2015 symposium on fraudulent divorce that led to the formation of Rikon Alert in 2017, a project that seeks the help of the Japanese public in addressing a problem that seriously affects international marriages in Japan. This is also shown in the workshop on children with non-Japanese descent or non-Japanese parents (“Current Situation and Issues of Children with Foreign Roots: Rights, Poverty, Education, Culture, Nationalities and Coexistence”) held in June 2017.

## **Challenges and Future Plans**

In 2019, the Japanese government started the expanded program on accepting non-Japanese workers. And to support the non-Japanese workers, the government adopted several measures. A centerpiece measure was about

creating a symbiotic society with the non-Japanese residents through “multicultural coexistence one-stop consultation service.”

Takashi Yamanoue, Director of ATOMS,<sup>13</sup> raised several questions on this idea: Can it (Japanese government program) be a window that not only provides information, but also supports the lives of various people and appreciates their thinking? Can it turn calls for help, such as “I want information” and “I want you to listen to the story,” into trust and passion for the local community?

The educational activities of ATOMS are part of the exchange activities between the Japanese and the non-Japanese residents based on respect for human rights. They do not constitute mere provision of information. They are meant to empower the non-Japanese residents in engaging the Japanese residents towards “Creating a fair and sustainable, multicultural symbiotic society.”

In the future, ATOMS would like to see the importance of support for non-Japanese residents positioned more strongly in Japan’s social welfare policies. In order to achieve this, ATOMS would continue its consultation and awareness-raising projects, as well as focus its efforts on social actions that represent the voices of non-Japanese residents in revising policies for non-Japanese residents in cooperation with related organizations.

## Endnotes

1 Eugene Lang, “Duped into divorce: Foreign nationals plead for help in Japan,” *Nikkei Asia*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Society/Duped-into-divorce-Foreign-nationals-plead-for-help-in-Japan>.

2 “Divorced without consent: System stacked against foreigners, support groups,” *Mainichi Japan*, 14 May 2017, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170514/p2a/oom/ona/002000c>.

3 Numbers for 2010-2017 taken from Table 9.18 Trends in marriages by nationality of bride and groom: Japan, [https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00450011&tstat=000001028897&cycle=7&year=20170&month=0&tclass1=000001053058&tclass2=000001053061&tclass3=000001053069&result\\_back=1&tclass4val=0](https://www.e-stat.go.jp/en/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00450011&tstat=000001028897&cycle=7&year=20170&month=0&tclass1=000001053058&tclass2=000001053061&tclass3=000001053069&result_back=1&tclass4val=0).

4 Numbers for 2010-2017 taken from Table 10.13, Trends in divorces and percent distribution by nationality of wife and husband: Japan, <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hw/vs01.html>.

5 Number of marriages in 2018 taken from VITAL STATISTICS OF JAPAN 2018, page 42, <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hw/dl/81-1a2en.pdf>.

6 Number of marriages in 2019 taken from Table 9.20, Volume 1 Marriages Table 9.20 Marriages by nationality of bride and groom: Japan Ceach prefecture (special wards and specified cities) C2019.

7 “Divorced without consent: System stacked against foreigners, support groups,” *ibid.*

8 The number of consultation on divorce in Table 1 in 2016 refers only to Filipino residents and includes divorce issues other than fraudulent divorce.

9 This book is based on “White Paper on Children of Foreign Origin: From the Perspective of Rights, Poverty, Education, Culture, Nationality and Coexistence,” which contained eighty-five articles, seventy-three authors, and fifty pages of information. It is considered to be an epoch-making white paper that provides an overview of the current situation of “children connected to foreign countries” in modern Japan and the issues they face in terms of support.

10 ATOMS English-Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis: <https://www.facebook.com/ATOMS.English>.

11 The MHLW English website contains information such as the following:

□ Frequently asked questions are listed here.

□ [Q&A for workers](March 6th, 2020 version)

□ The labour bureau is where you can consult about the following:

- When you are worried about your company or work, but do not know where to consult

□ The labour standards supervision office is where you can consult about the following:

- How to receive leave allowance
- How to use paid vacation days
- Rules for being fired
- Other things related to working conditions such as wages and working hours

□ The public employment security office (Hello Work) is where you can consult about the following:

- How to find and be introduced to jobs
- How to get employment insurance benefits when you quit your job

[Public employment security office (Hello Work) contact information]

□ Please see here if you have any concerns or want to know about the coronavirus.

MHLAW English website: [www.mhlw.go.jp/english/](http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/)

12 RIKON ALERT (Action Group for Divorce by Agreement), [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilM5SDoL2xc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilM5SDoL2xc).

13 Director and Secretary General of Toyonaka International Association. Born in Osaka in 1977 and raised in Kobe. When he was a secondary school student, he experienced the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. His main work is Creating a Community that Coexists with foreigners: What We can See from the Practice of Toyonaka, Osaka (Akashi Shoten).

# Alternative Law Groups: Empowering Communities Towards Greater Access to Justice in the Philippines

Alternative Law Groups Secretariat

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**T**HE PHILIPPINES witnessed in 2007 the 1,700-kilometer symbolic walk of farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon in Mindanao to Manila in sixty days to reclaim their one hundred forty-four-hectare ancestral land. Lawyers of member-organizations of Alternative Law Groups (ALG) walked with them, a powerful action employed for and with the “powerless” aimed at pressuring the government to resolve the issue. After years of legal-political struggles, the Sumilao farmers succeeded in reclaiming hectares of rich land that they and their future generations could cultivate. Lawyers from ALG not only represented Sumilao farmers in the courts but also physically joined them in the streets to march to the Philippine’s capital. This is what alternative lawyering means for the ALG—it goes beyond what is meted out within the formal bounds of the judicial system. It means walking with the clients and the underserved. This kind of lawyering finds alternative ways of resolving issues when institutions fail. It is making the law work for justice, and lobbying for change when existing law does not advance justice for the vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Alternative lawyering means the dual work of empowering the marginalized and effecting justice system reform. This defines the core work of the ALG, a coalition of Philippine non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that use law or legal resources to attain social justice. ALG works with marginalized groups, identities and communities towards their empowerment and greater access to justice. The member-organizations of the network collectively work as they harness each other’s strengths in the developmental use of the law<sup>1</sup> and critical engagement of the legal system.

ALG believes that empowering communities entails enhancing the knowledge and capacity of their members in utilizing judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms to protect their rights. This component inevitably goes hand in hand with the pursuit of a favorable policy environment that promotes the rights and interests of those in the margins of society.



Staying true to the core of ALG's work, the network envisions a Philippine society that is democratic, just and humane, where there is equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, gender equality, and sustainable development.

## History of ALG

The history of ALG is inspired by the experiences of lawyers and advocates who rallied together for the common goal of a dynamic and inclusive justice system. During the period when the Martial Law was in force and the Philippines was under the rule of a dictator (1972-1986) and prior to the creation of ALG, human rights lawyers mainly focused on civil and political rights, such as defending the victims of illegal detention and torture. When the dictatorship ended, other non-traditional and creative legal services became necessary.

In the 1980s, a number of NGOs were implementing legal programs (litigation, education and lobbying/law reform) that were known as "developmental legal aid," "alternative legal assistance," "legal resources approach" and other forms of legal support.<sup>2</sup> The main idea of these legal programs became the core idea of what was adopted in early 1990s as "alternative law," and these NGOs later on adopted the name "alternative law groups" or ALGs.

Lawyers and advocates of many of these NGOs met for the first time on 29 May - 2 June 1990 in Subic, Zambales province to discuss their respective programs and identify common goals and activities. They met again on 3-5 May 1991 in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro province and articulated the idea of the then emerging concept of "alternative lawyering."<sup>3</sup> They had a consensus that their NGOs were all formed for the "empowerment of basic sectors and other disadvantaged sectors such as the women, prisoners, laborers, fisherfolk, peasants, indigenous people, children, political detainees, and victims of human rights violations." They also defined the concept of alternative lawyering by stating that it "means the attainment of justice and development through the creative use of law" and taking a critical standpoint on the existing legal system. In the same workshop, Atty. Jose Aspiras of the Participatory Research Organization of Communities and Education Towards Struggle for Self-Reliance, Inc. (PROCESS) mentioned that the purposes of alternative lawyering were about facilitation of the empowerment of the basic sectors, promoting human rights, developing policy initiatives

including law reform, developing alternative law practice, and promoting it as a viable career among law students and practicing lawyers.

In this workshop, they also agreed to establish a network that would unify these NGOs and create a space for alternative lawyering in the Philippines.



First Alternative/Developmental Law Workshop, Zambales, Philippines, 1990.

The founders of the ALG were NGOs with lawyers and advocates who were active in various sectors such as labor, subsistence fisherfolk, farmers, indigenous peoples and issues such as environment and law.

Motivated by the desire to continuously advocate for justice more effectively and efficiently, the ALG was formally incorporated with the Securities and Exchange Commission as a non-stock, non-profit organization on 2 May 1995. The incorporation of ALG was also meant to streamline coordination between the member-organizations, the funders and the projects. In its earlier years, ALG rotated the convenorship among its member-organizations. The convenorship scheme ended with the establishment of the ALG Secretariat that served as support center and implementing body of ALG and filled the gap in the institutional needs of the network.

The potential of ALG as a budding organization working for the pursuit of justice was recognized by its earliest funders in the mid-1990s that included The Ford Foundation and The Asia Foundation. They provided assis-



The ALG Secretariat, 30th anniversary celebration.

tance to NGOs advocating the empowerment of the disadvantaged sectors. Their support strengthened the formative years of ALG, and even extended financial grants not just to ALG, but also to the member-organizations of the network.

Through the years, ALG provided significant contribution in capacity-building and strengthening paralegalism work that empowered communities. It has gone far in its grassroots work of bringing law into people's hands. ALG has also been pursuing policy advocacy by having a proactive role in drafting and advocating regulations on urban poor residential rights, indigenous peoples' rights, environmental and fisheries issues, anti-rape law, and agrarian reform.

### **Setting Roots All Over the Country**

One of ALG's main thrusts as a network is to cover key urban and rural locations in the Philippines. ALG has presence in all the three major island groups of the country (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao). This key feature serves as leverage as it brings more geographic diversity and inclusiveness,

like reaching far-flung areas of indigenous peoples, that goes together with the network's multi-sectoral work.

In Luzon, the largest island in the country, member-organizations are based in the Cordillera Administrative Region (North Luzon), Metro Manila (National Capital Region), Quezon Province, Bicol (South Luzon) and Palawan (Southwestern Luzon).

Meanwhile, members-organizations in Visayas are based in Cebu (Central Visayas), Leyte, Negros Occidental, Panay Islands, Samar, and Tacloban City.

In Mindanao, the southernmost part of the country, member-organizations are present in Davao and Cagayan de Oro.

The network is seen as a model by other legal resource organizations not only in Southeast Asia but also in other parts of the world. This is because of ALG's unique work that combines grassroots empowerment (primarily through education and litigation support) with policy reform work that engages different branches of government. Moreover, while there are similar legal resource NGOs in other countries, ALG has been successful in doing work as a collective body. This is evident in their work that combines the efforts and resources of the member-organizations towards collective action.

The following is the current roster of ALG member-organizations, their active programs, and sectors they work with:

- Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) - AHRC is a university-based institution which was founded after the historic People Power Revolution that ended the twenty-year dictatorship of the tyrant Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. AHRC is involved in public interest litigation, research and publication, law and policy reform advocacy, education, and training for law students.
- Balay Alternative Legal Advocates for Development in Mindanaw (BALAOD) - BALAOD works with marginalized sectors and communities in Mindanao through alternative lawyering and paralegalism for the advancement of justice and gender equality, among others.
- Children's Legal Bureau (CLB) - CLB works towards the empowerment of children and communities while engaging with the different branches of government and the private sector to protect the rights of and promote justice for children in the Visayas region.

- Educational Research and Development Assistance Foundation (ERDA) - Erda focuses on assisting out-of-school youth, children in conflict with the law (CICL), children who are engaged in child labor, and those who live on the streets.
- EnGendeRights - EnGendeRights advocates the women's sexual and reproductive rights through domestic and international legal and policy advocacy, research and training, and impact litigation.
- Humanitarian Legal Assistance Foundation (HLAF) - HLAF advocates the proper implementation of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act as they work towards the protection of the rights of persons deprived of liberty, especially those who are most vulnerable such as children, the elderly, women, the sick and the differently-abled.
- KAISAHAN Tungo sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan at Repormang Pansakahan (KAISAHAN) - KAISAHAN works to empower marginalized sectors, especially the farmers and farm workers in rural areas. To facilitate agrarian reform implementation and sustainable rural development, KAISAHAN provides legal and paralegal formation, education and information, policy research and advocacy, and project development services.
- Kanlungan Centre Foundation - Kanlungan focuses on direct service, advocacy work, research, and policy interventions for Filipino migrant workers who are survivors of human trafficking, illegal recruitment, and workplace abuse.
- Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center – Kasama sa Kalikasan/ Friends of the Earth – Philippines (LRC-KsK/FoE-Phils.) - LRC advocates the protection and promotion of indigenous and upland rural peoples' rights to land and other natural resources through strategic progressive legal intervention, research and policy development, and advocacy.
- Participatory Research Organization of Communities and Education Towards Struggle for Self-Reliance (PROCESS) Foundation-Panay - PROCESS-Panay focuses on community organizing to transform and empower marginalized sectors in Western Visayas. It has programs on community development, economic self-reliance, legal resource development, disaster risk reduction and management, and climate change adaptation.
- Philippine Earth Justice Center (PEJC) - PEJC is a group of environmental lawyers that promotes environmental justice and a balanced

and healthful ecology through legal assistance, policy research, policy reforms, and local capacity-building.

- Rainbow Rights Project Philippines (RRights) - RRights works towards a legal system that upholds the human rights of all and ensures equal opportunity for everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC).
- Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN) - SALIGAN specializes in developmental legal work with farmers, workers, the urban poor, women and local communities. It is one of the ALG's oldest members and has urban and regional offices in Bicol (South Luzon) and Mindanao (Southern Philippines).
- Tanggapang Panligal ng Katutubong Pilipino (PANLIPI) - PANLIPI, an organization of lawyers and advocates, is actively involved with development work among indigenous peoples in the Philippines. Its programs include: developmental legal assistance, legal education and outreach, institutional capability-building, ancestral domains delineation, and resource management planning.
- Tanggol Kalikasan (TK) - TK is a public interest and environmental law office and advocates for the empowerment of communities and institutions to manage their ecosystem through programs that encourage greater citizens' participation in environmental law enforcement and policy-making.
- Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) - Tebtebba promotes a sustainable and self-determined development of indigenous peoples. Its programs include: enhancing capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, effective promotion and implementation at the national, regional and global levels of International Human Rights Law using the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), among others.
- Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB) - WLB, a feminist legal NGO, engages in feminist legal advocacy with women's social movements and other progressive institutions in pursuit of greater access to justice. WLB works with rural women, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, women with disability, women living with HIV/AIDS, and indigenous women, among others.

Collectively, the network's operations cover the entire country, with some members having nationwide coverage and operating in different areas throughout the country, and others focusing on operations in a particular locality or region.

ALG's work encompasses a wide area of concerns involving social justice and socio-economic issues. These include issues affecting women, labor, peasants, fisherfolk, children, urban poor, indigenous peoples, persons living with HIV/AIDS, LGBTQIA+ community as well as local governance and environmental issues.

### **Key Alternative Law Strategies**

ALG's work can be categorized into six major components: 1) Legal education and paralegal formation; 2) Policy reform work; 3) Strategic litigation; 4) Internship; 5) Research and publication; and 6) Partnerships with other development organizations.

The network believes that these key strategies are vital to employing a collaborative and holistic approach to close the gap on access to justice, empower grassroots communities, and attain social justice.

- a. Legal education and paralegal formation  
Through the years, community paralegal education and formation has been one of ALG's strongest pursuits. The member-organizations believe that community paralegals have historically been key players in advocating and forming concrete solutions to injustices in their communities. With this, the network maintains programs on developing and sustaining paralegals with constant training for their better understanding and knowledge of legal and metalegal ways<sup>4</sup> of obtaining justice.
- b. Policy reform work  
ALG is directly and actively involved in major legislative developments and policy advocacy in the Philippines. Member-organizations participate in Senate and House Committee hearings and various technical working group sessions. They also engage in crafting and criticizing proposed bills and other legislative documents.
- c. Strategic litigation

While most of ALG's programs and projects are anchored toward alternative means of lawyering, litigation is still seen as an essential arm for the attainment of its goals. Litigation is still viewed as one of the key ways to bring change at the grassroots level, especially when the marginalized sectors directly take part in it.

d. Internship

The recruitment of young blood and second-liners in the field of alternative law is as important as maintaining strong and organized paralegals on the ground. Because of this, ALG has internship activities that engage young people and law students in the alternative lawyering work of the network.

e. Research and publication

ALG views research and academic endeavors as vital components of a successful approach in obtaining access to justice. Through the network's collective work in different fields and projects on legal empowerment, several publications have been produced on key issues in the country such as: Bangsamoro Law, justice reform, judicial philosophy, women in justice, and community-based dialogues on human rights promotion and protection.

f. Partnerships with other development organizations

ALG uses its vast linkages with other development organizations to create a more holistic approach to achieving its goals and endeavors. It harnesses relationships with other groups that have more in-depth expertise, services, and resources in matters that are outside the usual programs of ALG member-organizations.

## **ALG and Human Rights Education**

ALG implements numerous projects that address multi-sectoral issues in society using the six key alternative law strategies. This unique approach is seen in its social justice and legal empowerment projects as presented below.

### **1. Human Rights (HR) Defense Project**

With the support of the American Bar Association - Rule of Law Initiatives (ABA-ROLI), the ALG launched the Human Rights (HR) Defense Project in 2019. The overall goal of the Project was to enhance access to qual-



ity legal assistance and representation of vulnerable communities through the efficient management of a strategic funding mechanism for litigation and related legal actions that seek to protect and promote human rights.

The Project aimed to support human rights protection cases or human rights defenders (HR Defense Fund), build and strengthen a national network of paralegals for sharing and documentation of best practices, cross-learning and participation in regional activities in the Philippines, and build and strengthen pool of lawyers, law students and paralegals working on human rights issues (Legal Resource Build-up).

### *Human rights education component*

Through the HR Defense Project, ALG organized public education seminars, trained paralegals, and participated in various forums involving human rights issues in the Philippines. The Legal Resource Build-up component of the Project had following activities:

#### *a. Legal trainings*

The legal trainings conducted by the ALG under the HR Defense Project aimed to develop basic knowledge and skills of the participants on laws that were relevant to the sector they were working with. For example, to be able to assist in handling cases involving child abuse and exploitation, CLB provided orientation on the Anti-Child Abuse Law,<sup>5</sup> and other pertinent laws. Meanwhile, participants for the protection of women who are into abusive relationships were given orientation on the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act.<sup>6</sup> For the farmers who were into tenancy relations, they were given Agrarian Reform Law Trainings. The content of the trainings were developed based on the legal issues confronting the participants or the community they work in. Skills training was provided to participants who wanted to become paralegals. They were trained on basic skills such as legal interview, affidavit drafting and basic evidence gathering. On the learning methods used, the ALG has generally adopted the Popular Education Framework developed by Paolo Freire, with the participants as the center and context of the learning process. Training methodologies were participatory and fun with the employment of structured learning exercises such as games, storytelling, case studies, writing

workshops, among others. These exercises were also adjusted to the age, gender identity, regional affiliation, etc. of the participants.

In many cases, schedules and timing of the trainings were adjusted according to the routine and free time of the participants. For example, trainings of farmers were done in between farming seasons, while trainings of mother-participants were done after their children had left home for school, or during times that did not interfere with their chores. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic and with the advent of the online platforms, trainings were done in series and for a shorter period. As a result, the Paralegal Training on Anti-Trafficking was done for two hours every Saturday for four Saturdays.

Online trainings or webinars as learning platform created a problem between the trainer and the participants. The dynamics of having an open and interactive discussion among the participants and resource speakers and making the activity more transformative were reduced to powerpoint presentations; while many community-based participants found the use of online platforms challenging.

*b. Fellowship program*

The fellowship program was a platform for new lawyers or law graduates to be exposed to various human rights issues and cases handled by the member-organizations. The lawyers or law gradu-



Banasi Agrarian Reform Farmer Beneficiary Association members and leader (Randy Cirio) with SALIGAN staff.

ates participated in consultations, case conferences, legal clinics, and litigation of cases of vulnerable communities within their island group (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao). They also worked for the establishment or strengthening of linkages between local communities, ALGS, law schools, legal aid offices, the IBP (Integrated Bar of the Philippines) Legal Aid office and Community Legal Aid Service (CLAS) programs, Public Attorney's Office (PAO), Philippine National Police (PNP), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and other justice sector stakeholders who were partners in providing legal assistance to the basic sectors.

The program was initially a one-year program (October 2019 to September 2020). But due to the disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was extended for three months. The Fellowship Program was hosted by SALIGAN-Bicol for Southern Luzon, PROCESS-Panay for Visayas, and BALAOD Mindanaw for Northern Mindanao.

Fellowship activities included the conduct of trainings such as basic paralegal trainings on gender sensitivity, and trainings on anti-violence against women and sexual harassment. The audiences for these trainings included university students and members of grassroots communities.

c. *Online legal help desk*

Meanwhile, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2020, the ALG Secretariat also put up a 24/7 legal assistance line via the Facebook platform for those who have legal concerns on the enforcement of the Enhanced Community Quarantine and the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.<sup>7</sup> This effort provided an opportunity for the public to pose questions when faced with a situation that put their human rights at risk.

This allowed the Project Manager of the HR Defense Program to assist and respond to different online queries. One case involved a local government worker asking about her right to refuse to report for work because of the risks involved, and whether she could opt not to become part of her office's skeletal workforce. Another was a query on how a detainee could be released in view of non-availability of court or legal officers and difficulty in travelling to check on the detained person. Other queries involved general ques-

tions about the Enhanced Community Quarantine and later on about the Anti-Terror Law.

In line with this, the Project also supported the development of an online application called e-SUMBONG app (a play on the Filipino word “isumbong” which, in this context, translates to “report to the authorities”). The online application served as a platform for reporting cases of domestic violence and child abuse in the community. It was designed to help report as well as build up cases, and to secure immediate response through direct referral to agencies such as the Social Welfare and Development Office, PNP, Health and Population Department, Metro Public Employment Service Office (Metro PESO), Department of Justice, and civic and non-governmental organizations. These agencies provided victims with medical, psychological, psychosocial, economic, legal and spiritual assistance services. The online application enhanced the existing mechanism of local governments in taking cases of violence against women and children (VAWC) during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when access to remedies was limited by lockdown policies of the government. The e-SUMBONG app is an example of the ability to create innovative approaches that adapt to challenges, especially in terms of accessibility, brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

*d. Internship program for law students*

The internship program involved training law students from different law schools in the country on human rights practice, strategic litigation, and transitional justice. Interns were assigned tasks such as drafting legal opinions and participating in training sessions to enhance their knowledge on human rights issues.

The ALG’s Internship Program has the general objective of exposing law students to alternative lawyering work as a possible future career path. The main period for the internship is the two-month summer break in between school years, although the internship may continue beyond the summer break, and throughout the entire school year.

The internship program operates at two levels. At the first level, interns gather for orientation by the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC), an ALG member-organization. The Basic Orientation

Seminar (BOS) for the interns covers the overview of the human rights situation in the Philippines and the specific human rights topics involved, alternative lawyering, LGBTQIA+ rights, labor and migrant workers' rights, child rights, women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and environmental rights, among others.

At the second level, the interns are assigned to ALG member-organizations in different parts of the country where they work on different tasks and responsibilities (legal resource build-up, public education seminars, and other activities) specific to the sectors served by the member-organizations.

Currently, due to the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ALG secretariat accepts interns who would directly apply to the ALG for internship. Interns are oriented and given weekly training on a specific aspect or sector of ALG's human rights work. After which, they are assigned to work on ALG projects involving case build-up, research, public education seminars, conferences and meetings, and similar activities.

### *Lessons learned*

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a great hurdle to the implementation of the Project. Physical meetings were limited because of health and safety protocols. Digital divide arose as activities and



ALG interns and Secretariat meet with Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) Chair Jose Manuel Diokno.



ALG interns, Secretariat, and other ALG members in a Zoom meeting.

events were forced to go online. Indeed, technology became a double-edged sword, very helpful as well as obstructive. In many regions, poor internet accessibility and user comfort in navigating online platforms were significant problems. Moreover, solidarity between students and participants (created in face-to-face meetings) appeared to have weakened in the online context. Because of this, measuring the impact of the Project is more difficult because the factor of human interaction is eliminated.

Another major issue is the continuing violence and human rights violations during the pandemic health quarantine that could not be addressed by the affected communities due to difficulty of filing complaints caused by the temporary closure of courts. Even with online programs in place, like e-SUMBONG and online courts, communities could not access these platforms due to lack of internet connection. In addition, with only a few lawyers practicing alternative law, complainants with financial constraints had limited choices of counsel. These experiences amplified the need to further educate communities about their rights and also stressed the importance of promoting alternative lawyering as a valid and meaningful path to take for lawyers.

## 2. OMCT Project Support for Remedial Action

The ALG actively plays an important role in providing human rights education in the Philippines. Through the years, ALG has implemented various

human rights education projects for the empowerment of lawyers, community paralegals, members of law groups and human rights defenders (HRDs). The ALG received funding support from the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) for its human rights education projects for the October 2020 - September 2021 period.

### *Human rights education component*

The human rights education projects of ALG cover various human rights issues. In the past three years alone, the ALG has implemented projects relating to extrajudicial killings, digital security, anti-terror law, women's rights, and access to justice.

The ALG engaged its partners in implementing the OMCT-supported project. Partnership with like-minded organizations is a key ALG strategy in providing a comprehensive array of services to human rights violation victims and their families. For example, while ALG focuses on the legal needs of the victims, other groups provide other services: the IDEFEND (In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement) network documents cases; the Medical Action Group (MAG) provides psycho-social support; the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) provides other auxiliary services; and other organizations provide livelihood trainings and scholarship programs to the children of victims.

#### *a. Legal and Practical Approach to Human Rights*

The ALG uses various learning methods deemed appropriate to a particular objective, topic or audience. The projects of ALG are executed by way of paralegal trainings, education campaign seminars and webinars, practical skills trainings (e.g., affidavit-drafting and client interview), legal forums, meetings on proposed legal amendments, and sessions with members of communities to prepare for legal action or on pending cases. In this way, the educational projects of ALG cover not just the applicable legal frameworks, but also the practical aspects of the law.

For the paralegal trainings, the topics included transitional justice, criminal procedure and arrests, reporting human rights violations to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), rules on evidence, affidavit-drafting workshop, and legal remedies in extrajudicial killings cases. The participants were assisted by commu-

nity-based paralegals and members of ALG partners from the IDE-END network such as MAG, PAHRA (Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates), TFDP (Task Force Detainees of the Philippines), and AMRSP.

*b. Human Rights Education Streamlined for Diverse Audience*

The ALG promotes human rights in a comprehensive manner and aims to reach a wide range of audiences so that the human rights of various sectors of society are observed and respected. In this regard, the audience of human rights education projects also varies. ALG, for example, conducted an anti-terror law webinar for its member-organizations. The webinar dealt with the 2020 amendment to the 2007 Human Security Act that contained provisions which ALG deemed detrimental to human rights.

ALG also conducted paralegal training for community leaders to equip them with necessary skills in documenting extrajudicial killing cases in relation to President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. Case conferences were organized to build cases for future use by the families of victims if they would like to pursue accountability. Furthermore, ALG conducted trainings on client interview and affidavit-drafting for law students from various law schools in the Philippines. It also held training on access to justice to HRDs and government officials regarding jail management and penology.

In ensuring that its projects reach different audiences, ALG works to influence the legislation or revision of laws, to streamline the execution of the laws, and also to empower the community by providing information to grassroots communities and community leaders.

*Lessons learned*

The prompt initiation of an education campaign on the implications of the Anti-Terror Law allowed ALG to gain support from partners and community leaders in filing a petition to assail its constitutionality in the Supreme Court, which eventually struck down some provisions of the law. The investigation by the National Bureau of Investigation of the drug enforcement unit of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan province emboldened some victims to pursue cases against members of the police who were involved in the extrajudicial killings. The ALG also trained at least ten new paralegals



after holding the “Paralegal Training on the Documentation of Extrajudicial Killing Cases.”

The ALG aims to continue covering a wide range of existing and emerging human rights issues, such as extrajudicial killings and suppression of HRDs. The ALG will also continue to maintain its active ties with various sectors of the community (including the government) to ensure that its human rights education projects reach a diverse audience and create a wider impact on the society.

Finally, working with another network of human rights defenders such as iDEFEND, a grassroots movement that upholds and defends the human rights of Filipinos, allowed ALG to expand its activities and complement other on-going projects. The iDEFEND project on transitional justice for example benefited the ALG project in providing legal support to victims of extrajudicial killings, and vice-versa. iDEFEND provides services that the ALG could not do. This allowed the ALG projects to proceed more efficiently and effectively.



ALG Secretariat in front of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, 24 July 2020.

### 3. Community-Based Dialogue Sessions on Human Rights Promotion and Protection Project

The Community-Based Dialogue Sessions on Human Rights Promotion and Protection Project is a partnership project involving the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (through the AFP Center for the Law of Armed Conflict or CLOAC), the Philippine National

Police (through the PNP Human Rights Affairs Office or HRAO), PAHRA and the ALG, with support from the Hanns Seidel Foundation of Germany. The project aims to help improve the human rights situation by creating and strengthening venues for dialogue between the security sector and the civilian community where they can collectively discuss ways or strategies to address human rights-related issues and concerns.

The project was launched at the time when the Philippines grabbed the attention of the international community with an alarming rise in unresolved cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The government was prompted to initiate concrete actions to address the situation, and among the notable government initiatives related to the effort to curb unresolved cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances was the creation of human rights offices within the AFP and the PNP. These offices became part of the network of project partners.

The first phase of the project primarily focused on the conduct of a series of community-based dialogues (CBDs) in different areas nationwide. The dialogue sessions were a venue for the local partners (representatives of the CHR regional office, AFP and PNP field units, local civil society organizations) to come together, get to know one another, and discuss collaborative efforts to promote and protect human rights.

The partners collectively developed training handbooks on civil and political rights (CPR), and economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR). Using these training handbooks, the CBD partners launched regional trainings. The modules in the training handbooks were subsequently incorporated into the training programs of both the AFP and PNP.

The project led to the creation of Top Level Policy Dialogues (TLPDs) which evolved out of a need to discuss issues that were constantly encountered in the different regions and to deliberate on possible policy reform initiatives on the operating guidelines and procedures of the security sector.

### ***Human rights education component***

#### ***a. Training of Trainers on ESCR***

The project organized a series of trainings and Training of Trainers utilizing the training handbook that was developed for a multi-sector audience from civil society and the security sector (military and police personnel). The module primarily contains

cases and materials involving economic, social and cultural issues that would enable the application of human rights principles to specific situations encountered by the civilians and the military/police officers.

*b. Webinars during the COVID-19 pandemic*

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its travel restrictions, most programs shifted to utilizing online platforms. Activities such as the CBDs, trainings/webinars, and Top Level Policy Dialogues, which were traditionally held as face-to-face activities, were implemented as online activities.



Human rights workshop, Region 10, Mindanao, Philippines.

#### 4. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)

Through information and publicity materials, ALG aims to bridge the gap between legal knowledge and the public through easily digestible infographic materials that would appeal to general audiences. Special Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials on different subject matters were created and posted on social media and distributed to local partners.

##### *Human rights education component*

*a. Digital and online presence*

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, ALG was active in publishing infographics and primers online as a way to



ALG's human rights workshops in key locations in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, Philippines.

engage citizens. ALG published materials ranging from Anti-Terror Law, Criminal Complaint Procedures and Rights When Arrested to issues concerning economic, social and cultural rights. On the other hand, ALG also conducted Zoom webinars featuring different topics on public interest law and human rights issues and concerns through its Facebook page.

Statements and digital infographics were created on a need basis. While the ALG Secretariat and members stay on top of current events, suggestions were welcomed on pressing issues that should be analyzed and presented as statements, educational primers, or infographics for public consumption.

*b. Publications*

On the other hand, several publications were produced under the ALG leadership concerning transitional justice, environmental litigation cases, media training on monitoring the judiciary, judicial philosophy research in the Philippines, and court cases on different themes (labor, agrarian reform, extrajudicial killings, environment, and violence against women). These IEC materials were often produced in cooperation with ALG member-organizations and partners whose expertise on the topic involved was needed.

These publications are in digital and printed formats and have been distributed to partner communities and organizations.

## **Ways forward**

Currently, the ALG secretariat and network are lacking the proper tools and system for a more streamlined and organized way of implementing its digital communications. With this, ALG has partnered with The Asia Foundation in its Initiatives for Advancing Community Transformation (I-ACT), a US-AID-funded project that promotes “public interest and citizen engagement in support of human rights in geographic priority areas and key audience segments.” With I-ACT, ALG aims to build and institutionalize a Strategic Communications Committee to guide the network in implementing its digital communications matters.

The ALG’s strength has always been its member-organizations. Diverse and autonomous though they may be, they are like-minded and support each other in many ways. Their lawyers and advocates have honed skills



ALG publications on court cases relating to human rights and a social media card about citizen's rights in case of arrest.

through many years of practice, and sharpened their understanding of what legal resource institution means, and how it can support and implement strategies to empower the partner communities.

Reflecting on the work as individual organizations and as a network, the ALG has come to realize that despite the differences in mandates, programs, and target partner sectors or communities, the member-organizations have common strategies that work well to empower the communities and close access to justice gaps. These strategies include: 1) Strategic litigation; 2) Paralegal development, and; 3) Policy reform advocacy.

The ALG will continue to use and hone these strategies.

## References

Jennifer Franco, Hector Soliman and Maria Roda Cisnero. "Community Based Paralegalism in the Philippines: From Social Movements to Democratization" in *Justice and Development Working Paper Series*, World Bank, 2014, page 15. Paper available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/17825/860000NWPoComm00Box382162BooPUBLICo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. *Community Paralegals and the Pursuit of*

*Justice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018, [www.cambridge.org/core/books/community-paralegals-and-the-pursuit-of-justice/219EB6294721B11BB25B1C8A3A2ACE29](http://www.cambridge.org/core/books/community-paralegals-and-the-pursuit-of-justice/219EB6294721B11BB25B1C8A3A2ACE29).

Committee of Alternative Law Groups and Structural Alternative Legal Assistance for the Grassroots (SALAG), Inc., *Proceedings - Alternative/Developmental Law Workshop II*. Makati: 1992.

## Endnotes

1 The use of law on development issues is similar to the concept of rule of law and development, see Rule of Law and Development, United Nations and the Rule of Law, <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/rule-of-law-and-development/>.

2 Jennifer Franco, Hector Soliman, and Maria Roda Cisneros write that these terms can be used interchangeably because they all mean “the use of the law by the poor with the assistance of legal service nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or lawyers, so that the ends of justice may be fully served and the poor’s rights and entitlements fully realized.” See note 5 in “Community Based Paralegalism in the Philippines: From Social Movements to Democratization,” *Justice and Development Working Paper Series*, World Bank, 2014, page 15. The paper was republished as a chapter in *Community Paralegals and the Pursuit of Justice* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

3 See workshop report, *Proceedings - Alternative/Developmental Workshop II*, Committee of Alternative Law Groups and Structural Alternative Legal Assistance for Grassroots (SALAG), Inc., 1992. SALAG organized the first Alternative/Developmental Law Workshop held in White Rock Resort in Subic, Zambales, Philippines on 29 May-2 June 1990 and attended by thirteen NGOs.

4 Metalegal ways (also known as metalegal tactics) refer to using legal measures that are outside the judicial system such as dialogue, negotiation, filing petition with administrative offices, and group pressure (protest march) to resolve issues. Franco, Soliman, and Cisneros provide another definition: “Legal-metalegal strategies involve a combination of purely legal work with actions that are lawful but not traditionally considered legal work. For example, when the lawyers are debating a heated proposal in Congress, their supporters could hold a public rally or demonstration outside, or even silently drop a banner in the gallery to support a certain advocacy.” Note 17, “Community Based Paralegalism in the Philippines: From Social Movements to Democratization,” op. cit. For a discussion on metalegal strategy see “Paralegal Training Manual for Protected Areas,” *Essentials of Protected Area Management in the Philippines*, Volume 12, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, October 2000, pages 1-5, <https://faspselib.denr.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Publication%20Files/paralegal%20training.pdf>.

5 Republic Act 7610 - Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act.

6 Republic Act 9262 - Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004.

7 Republic Act 11469 - Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.

# Community Memorialization Project, Sri Lanka\*

Search for Common Ground

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**S**RI LANKA emerged from a twenty-six-year war in 2009 with a military victory over the Tamil separatist rebels, LTTE,<sup>1</sup> but is still struggling to promote national reconciliation and prevent the recurrence of violence. The long years of violent conflict created deep divisions within the country, exacerbating some grievances and creating new ones. Immediately after the end of the war, the Government at the time embarked on a process of post-war economic development with little emphasis on addressing any of the root causes of the conflict, some of which went back to the time the country gained independence in 1948. Undercurrents of tension, such as the struggle for political voice, systemic discriminatory practices and feelings of ethno-cultural superiority one group felt over others, remained buried beneath the surface.

Constructively dealing with the past is an integral element of reconciliation and moving forward beyond violence. How this can be done in Sri Lanka is still an open question, with a multiplicity of initiatives in the national/public sphere as well as the community/personal spheres, but often with little connection in-between.

Foremost of these initiatives is the state-led Transitional Justice (TJ) mechanisms introduced by the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) unity government. Based on the United Nations (UN) Resolution of October 2015, TJ is an umbrella term for efforts to promote securing truth, justice, accountability and reconciliation. As part of the TJ process, four mechanisms were identified, namely (i) Commission for

\*This is an edited excerpt of the final evaluation report (Final Evaluation Report - Community Memorialization Project, Phase I and II, April 2020) of the Community Memorialization Project (CMP), implemented by Search for Common Ground, Sri Lanka and HerStories project, together with local partners Akkaraipattu Women's Development Foundation in Ampara, Viluthu Centre for Human Resources Development in Mannar; Prathiba Media Network in Matara and Sarvodaya in Anuradhapura, Moneragala and Kalutara, with funds provided by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL). This report was compiled by Nilakshi De Silva and Mohammed Sadaath. Full report available at [https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CMP-Phase\\_I\\_and\\_II\\_Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CMP-Phase_I_and_II_Final_Evaluation_Report.pdf).



Truth, Justice, Reconciliation, and Non-recurrence; (ii) an Office of Missing Persons (OMP); (iii) a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel; and (iv) an Office for Reparations. Further, in accordance with pledges made at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Government set up a new Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM), to “design and create mechanisms to achieve truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence” (Pannalige, 2017). The SCRM coordinates all the official bodies working on transitional justice. However, the TJ process has not delivered on its initial promise; of the four mechanism envisaged, Parliament has passed the necessary legislation to establish two, that is the OMP and the Office of Reparations, and only the OMP was functioning by the end of 2019 (Salter, 2019).<sup>2</sup>

The need to know and document the “truths” of the violent conflict is an important element in the Sri Lankan context because on the one hand the State has played a fluid role, shifting between that of protector and perpetrator, and on the other, external influences have sought to impose their own narratives on the country’s conflict. However, the experience of Sri Lanka suggests that due to entrenched competing interests and competing narratives there may never be a single truth or a single version of history, and that availability and acceptance of unedited, multiple narratives is the greater priority (Hettiararchchi, 2018). It is possible that what matters more to victims is to be heard, that the very act of telling one’s own history democratizes “truth and legitimizes one’s own life-history and agency” (De Mel, 2013). In the past decade, various opportunities have been provided to victims to tell their stories, through national mechanisms such as the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), and the Office on Missing Persons (OMP). What is unclear though, is whether these initiatives have provided what the victims want: an opportunity to be heard in the spaces important to them and obtain information that they are desperately seeking, in particular about the hundreds of people still listed as missing (Salter, 2019).

At the national level, little progress has been made in relation to the right to justice or the duty of the state to hold accountable those who are responsible for human rights violation, or the right to reparations which refers to restitution, compensation or rehabilitation provided to victims of such violations. While TJ mechanisms envisaged a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel to prosecute human rights violations and an Office for Reparations, neither has been effectively established. However project-

based support, offered through State, donor and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have provided practical assistance to enable the displaced to be resettled and rehoused, economic assistance to restart livelihoods and rebuild basic infrastructure. These efforts appear to be largely effective in bringing back a sense of normalcy to the war affected areas, albeit with questions about their deeper effects on society; a panel survey of resettled communities in the North and East conducted by the Centre for Poverty Analysis reveals positive changes in people's access to basic services but inadequate focus on soft infrastructure, such as community building, psychological support and human rights, may undermine the longer term conflict transformation impacts of these initiatives (Karunadasa, 2016).

To remember and to grieve our losses is an important aspect of moving beyond trauma, and in Sri Lanka there is a culture of memorialization practiced by all communities living in the country. A regional consultation on the issue suggests that Sri Lankans may be seeking memorialization of the war through a combination of physical as well as non-physical memorials (Hettiarachchi, 2017). At the consultation, participants from the North noted that while intangible practices of remembrance which the Tamil community had been practicing throughout the war years (such as days of fasting, alms-giving, ritual lighting of oil lamps) could still continue, there should also be physical memorials (such as statues, cemeteries and graveyards, bus stops, schools and pre-schools built in memory of the dead) and intangible cultural memorials (such as documentary films, songs about incidents, registers of events, posters and handbills that are from the war). Southern consultations revealed a similar desire for both physical and non-physical memorials. Some participants noted that memorialization can serve different outcomes, with non-physical memorials focusing more on spiritual elements and the process of healing, while physical memorials would ensure that memory lives on. The regional consultations highlight that while it is clear that most people believe that memorialization and remembrance is necessary, there is no consensus on the form of such memorialization. The report notes that “[g]enerally, the Tamil communities would prefer physical memorials while the Sinhala communities would prefer non-physical, religious and cultural forms of memorialization.”

While the scars of the decades-long conflict with the LTTE had barely begun to heal, the country was again the target of a terrorist attack. On 21 April 2019, a series of suicide bombings killed over two hundred fifty

and injured hundreds of mainly Christian worshippers and foreign tourists. The bombings targeted three Christian churches in the western and eastern provinces, and three hotels in Colombo, and were carried out by the National Tawhid Jamaat (NTJ), a jihadist group with alleged ties to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Almost immediately after what became known as the Easter bombings, there was a sudden increase in anti-Muslim feeling and rhetoric (Keenan, 2019). In itself this was not new; nearly a week of anti-Muslim rioting by Sinhalese mobs in March 2018 was contained only after the government declared a state of emergency and deployed the army. After the Easter bombings however, Sri Lanka's Muslims began to experience an unprecedented degree of public pressure and insecurity, with Sinhalese nationalist politicians, religious leaders, mainstream and social media commentators seizing the moment to inject new energy into longstanding efforts to undermine the status and prosperity of the Muslim community.

Overall, Sri Lanka remains riven by ethnic and religious differences. It is still struggling to overcome the effects and impact of years of violence due to the conflict with LTTE as well as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP),<sup>3</sup> and the newest fault line, between Muslims and Sinhalese, shows signs of becoming an increasingly deep rift. Deep and unaddressed trauma as well as fear and suspicion of other communities is quite common and many issues remain buried, but simmering, under the demands of day-to-day living.

The Community Memorialization Project was introduced and implemented against this contextual background of complexity and fluidity with the overall aim of contributing towards the process of constructively dealing with the past to move forward towards a better, less violent future.

### **Rationale and Relevance**

The Community Memorialization Project (CMP) was initially conceived as a civil-society-led, people's memorialization project, which sought to bridge the gap between official State-sponsored post-war processes and the need for ground-level initiatives to facilitate multiple truths and multiple voices to deal with Sri Lanka's past. The project prioritized public acknowledgment of multiple "subjective truths" and preservation of people's histories and remembrance. Some of the key questions that drove the development of the project were:

- How can a memory project move from an archival product to a process that uses documented narratives to contribute to justice and peace?
- How can story-telling and sharing of life histories create a sense of catharsis, empathy and compassion? And can such emotion be used towards peacebuilding and reconciliation?
- How can memory be used to understand the root causes of conflict in Sri Lanka?
- Can story-telling be used to facilitate an acceptance that there are many “truths” and that the absolute truth may not matter as much as the ability and the space to tell one’s story, and to be acknowledged?
- How can we build on the spontaneous acts of memorialization and rituals of memory that exist at the grassroots level, in order to complement rather than restrict them?
- How can we make it not simply about passing on memory and experience to the next generation, but also about creating a discourse of what this means for Sri Lankans emerging from a culture of violence and conflict?

At inception, the CMP emphasized preserving historical memory and memorialization, which is due in part to the legacy of the previous HerStories Project,<sup>4</sup> which collected the narratives of mothers and was based on the idea that peoples’ histories should be self-authored and unedited. It found that there is a fundamental human connection between mothers, from all ethnicities and across geography; the shared loss, even if the degree of suffering or experiences differ, encourages empathy for each other as mothers, and in the end, a sense of shared hope for a better future for their children. Learning from the previous project, CMP expanded to collect the narratives of both women and men, and has a greater focus on taking people’s histories back to their communities, to foster community-level dialogue and engagement.

CMP aimed to preserve historical memory, but it also looked beyond archiving to promoting people-to-people engagement to deal with one’s own and other’s memories. This took the form of “using” memory to explore how it might impact, support and sustain a longer-term peacebuilding process. There was no definitive proof that storytelling and experience sharing could lead to meaningful dialogue for non- recurrence of violence in Sri Lanka and

as such, the theory of change devised at the very beginning of CMP was rife with assumptions. Some of the initial assumptions were:

- That ordinary people contribute to conflict by being ignorant of each other's experiences and of the root causes of conflict, which in turn makes them vulnerable to manipulation by those with vested interests;
- That a few people with skills and interest in mitigating or transcending conflict can counteract aggressive elements at a grass-roots level;
- That ordinary people need to engage across ethnic and other divisions in order to first understand how to bridge gaps, in their own community groups before working towards non-recurrence of violence at a larger scale;
- That awakening memories of personal experiences can, not only create catharsis, but empathy towards others who have experienced violence at varying degrees;
- That shared "Sri Lankan" values maybe an entry point to developing resilience and agency at individual and village level. Having common values, knowing the other's experiences, and understanding root causes of conflict, and a recognition of the other's needs would appeal to the peoples' yearning to "never experience another war;" especially when faced with emerging conflicts and unrest;
- That creating awareness of experiences of violence and shared values across ethno-social groups could create connections and opportunities for future peace, especially among the next generation that might not have directly experienced violence in their lives;
- That understanding conflict may provide skills to recognize early warning signs and strengthen community resistance.

### **Objectives and Activities**

As set out in the project proposals, the specific objectives of CMP Phases I and II were:

- To create platforms for individuals and communities, from across ethnic, political and regional divides, to share their stories and engage in community dialogue and memorializing;

- To preserve historical memory through archiving and disseminating the narratives to a wider audience; and
- To facilitate a process of common understanding on policy outlooks and programs on managing and using historical memories.
- To achieve these objectives, project activities included collecting and archiving peoples' histories, as well as using the histories through workshops, exhibitions, television and radio programs, websites and social media to create a public discourse on history, memory, violence and personal responsibilities in preventing violence by returning to a discipline of value-based living (Box 1).

#### Box 1: CMP Objectives and Activities in Phase I

Specific Objective	Results	Activities
1. To create platforms for individuals and communities, from across ethnic, political and regional divides, to share their stories and engage in community dialogue and memorializing	1.1 A grassroots movement for action on memory and remembrance is initiated by people across dividing lines 1.2 Community-owned public memorials are developed in three districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media Campaign to elicit public response on memorialization.</li> <li>- Community-based Dialogue about memory and story sharing.</li> <li>- District-based Dialogues to engage the community in in-depth memory work through creative methods.</li> <li>- Inter-District Dialogues to bring people together across dividing lines around shared experiences.</li> <li>- Building Community Memorials by the communities, with support from artists.</li> </ul>
2. To preserve historical memory through archiving and disseminating the narratives to a wider audience.	2.1 The importance of historical memorializing is widely communicated and accepted 2.2 People's histories are achieved and preserved for posterity as an online archive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing an Online Archive for the Memory Project by translating, digitalizing, cataloguing, and collating.</li> <li>- Documentation of Dialogues and Memorials to be shared with policymakers and other stakeholders.</li> <li>- Sharing the Stories with public and school libraries accessible to community members and students, civil society organizations (CSOs), policymakers, and diaspora.</li> </ul>
3. To facilitate a process of common understanding on policy outlooks and programs on managing, including, and using historical memories.	3.1 A white paper on managing, including, and using historical memories is consultatively developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Series of Meetings with Regional and National Stakeholders to discuss the importance of grassroots memorializing for peacebuilding.</li> <li>- Writing a White Paper with recommendations on doing memory work.</li> <li>- Final workshop, which will focus on advocating for policy on memory work.</li> </ul>

Source: project proposal, 2015

As the project progressed, its approaches, content and expectations shifted and changed shape. Using Developmental Evaluation methodology,

the project was designed with flexibility and reflexivity built-in. Through constant feedback from the stakeholders (participants, non-governmental organization [NGO] workers and community leaders at the grassroots level, project partners, people's consultations), the project team reviewed, revised and dropped project activities to suit the needs of memorialization in context.

At the same time, the socio-political context within which CMP functioned remained complex and dynamic with the State's TJ mechanism evolving slowly, and structures and systems being prioritized over deliberate action on memorialization. By the end of 2017, after substantial post-activity review, feedback from the participants and partners, and internal deliberations,<sup>5</sup> the following adaptations and theory of change emerged as the core elements of the project presented in Boxes 2 and 3.

**Box 2: Learning by doing - Some key adaptations in CMP**

Issue	Tool which helped to identify this issue	Adaptations
There is no consensus within communities at the grassroots level on whether and what kind of memorials they want	After Action Review of regional consultations, team reflections	Building physical memorials replaced with more focus on building skills at the grassroots level for non-recurrence of violence
Changes in context at the national level and new initiatives introduced for reconciliation and historical memory, but less attention at grassroots level	Iterative Theory of Change, team reflections	White paper on memory work replaced by multiple practice papers. Project focus shifted from policy influence at the national level to local level, specifically by creating "champions" who can promote memory work, reconciliation between communities and prevent the recurrence of violence at the local level
Project goal is vague	Iterative Theory of Change	Goal adjusted to go beyond preserving memory to include preventing the recurrence of violence
Organic intergenerational transfer of memory happens when youth and elderly are present	After Action Review of village level dialogue workshops, team reflections	Minimum quotas introduced for participants by age and gender
Some facilitators are not following the facilitation guide	After Action Review of village level dialogue workshops, diary tool	Change of facilitators
Some workshops have a few illiterate participants	After Action Review of village level dialogue workshops	Use of video, more than written content, to share stories

Poor selection of venues	After Action Review of inter-divisional level dialogue workshops	Provision of improved guidelines relating to workshop logistics to partners
Securing the participation of Muslims in Matara	Diary tool, After Action Review tool	Various measures, such as providing transport facilities to help them get to the workshops, requesting prior confirmation of participation, changing venues and dates to suit the community
Attrition of participants, in particular Champions	Case studies, team reflections	Greater efforts to stay in touch with champions in between project activities. Greater focus on "creating" new village level champions rather than existing community leaders who already have high demands on their time.

### Box 3: Project Theory of Change (Fourth Iteration)

Objectives	Main Activity Strands	Assumptions	Outcomes	Assumptions	Goal
<p>Reduce passivity at local level during conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less likely to be manipulated</li> <li>More agency</li> </ul> <p>Create resilience and leadership at local level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to understand the conflict within their community</li> <li>Have the necessary values to prevent the conflict going far</li> </ul> <p>Preserve historical memory</p>	<p>Platforms for creating awareness and knowledge of the other / other's experience</p> <p>Building and strengthening skills for understanding conflict, value-based thinking</p> <p>Archiving, memory walks</p>	<p><i>Dealing with one's own experience: catharsis</i></p> <p><i>Looking at their own experience and that of others creates empathy (it happened to all of us)</i></p> <p><i>Awareness of shared values shows the underlying similarity as well as awareness of differences in needs</i></p>	<p>Increased cultural literacy</p> <p>Reduced racism, mistrust</p> <p>Increased awareness of other's experiences (what happened to them, why, what are their needs)</p> <p>Increased feeling of connection between people, engagement/ collaboration</p>	<p>That ordinary people can reduce conflict by being able to identify emerging local conflicts, have more agency</p> <p>That a few people with skills can counteract the aggressive elements</p> <p>That we need to engage across ethnic / other divisions to have non recurrence of violence</p>	<p>Non-recurrence of violence</p>

The outcomes expected were to contribute to non-recurrence of violence through the reduction of passivity, increasingly individual and community agency, providing awareness and skills in order to make community groups less malleable to manipulations by forces with vested interest in con-



flicts, re-establishing links across boundaries and a return to “core values,” with the individuals and community groups with whom the project works.



(This page and opposite page) Media campaign.





(Top and bottom) Village dialogues.



Youth and intergenerational dialogues.

Implementation of Phase I was a learning experience which provided nuance to the assumptions made at the design stage of CMP and highlighted many lessons for future programming, such as:

- **Dialogue should begin with homogenous groups:** The strategy of having homogenous groups at the start of the dialogue process was effective and cathartic, as people were able to express themselves and their prejudices freely which made the subsequent sessions of working through painful experiences towards non-recurrence of violence for all communities through values a more useful conver-

sation. The safe and open space created by having members of their own community present enabled deeper discussion.

- **The logic of the dialogue workshop, which built on each session, was validated:** The dialogue process of: - a) expressing personal experiences, b) seeing others' stories, c) building on empathy felt for each other towards expressing the need for non-recurrence of violence, d) agreeing that a value-based society will help towards this and identifying simple, practical values for co-existence and peace in daily life – was validated in the responses and level of engagement from participants across the districts.
- **People who were vocal and engaged in civic activism naturally became spokespeople on the need for establishing values and morals in their communities.** The workshop content had more traction with those identified as “champions.” They helped to create a more energetic and engaging dialogue at the divisional level and inter-district exchanges.
- **Promoting reconciliation required a people-centered approach:** The idea of building memorials was contested during CMP's consultations, which reinstated the need for careful consideration of this concept by civil society as well as the government. This highlighted the importance of consulting people at the local level and engaging their feedback in adjusting project activities, whenever required.
- **To generate a public discourse, the media engagement needs to be broad:** Rather than limiting the media engagement to journalists, social activists, bloggers and educators, exploring possible linkages with youth groups, media or communications staff of different entities such as faith-based organizations generated a wider hype on both traditional and new media. These efforts were helpful in creating a public discourse on the topic of non-recurrence of violence by sharing the collection of stories about the costs of war and violence which lead people to go beyond their comfort zones and expose them to engage with the “other.”

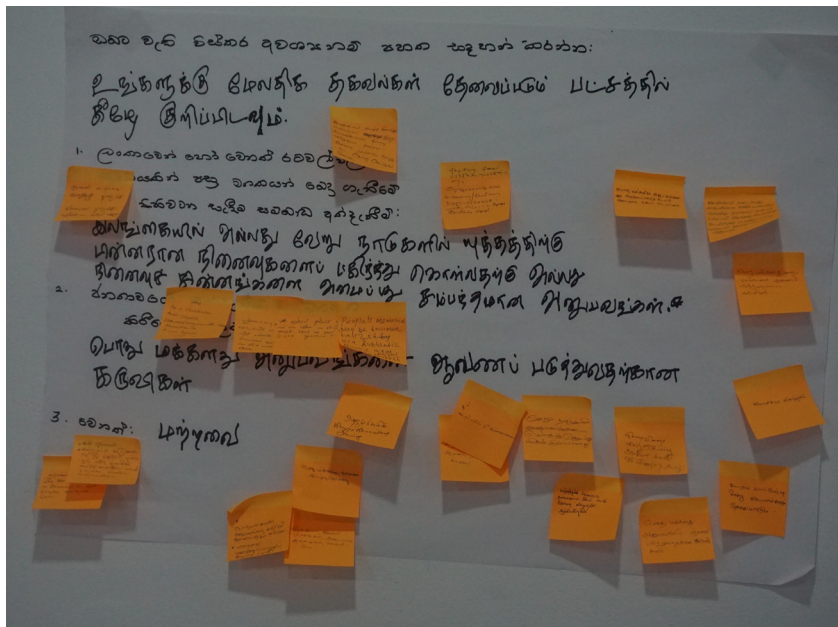
CMP Phase II was designed to consolidate the achievements of Phase I. The project goal and objectives remained the same, but focus shifted to Objectives 1 and 2, consolidating and extending the project by covering new locations, adding new activities and specifically targeting young people (Box 4).

**Box 4: CMP Objectives and Activities in Phase II**

Specific Objective	Outcomes	Activities
1. To create platforms for individuals and communities, from across ethnic, political and regional divides, to share their stories and engage in community dialogue and memorializing.	1.1 Increased people-to-people engagement within and across communities through dialogue on non-recurrence of violence. 1.2 Increased ability and interest of participating youth to promote non-recurrence of violence through strengthened understanding of memory, transitional justice and peace building tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multilevel people-to-people dialogues around non-recurrence in existing districts</li> <li>- Multilevel people-to-people dialogues around non-recurrence in new districts</li> <li>- Intergenerational dialogue and youth-led community facilitation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. One-day intergenerational dialogues</li> <li>b. Peer exchange</li> <li>c. Facilitation Training</li> <li>d. Youth-led community dialogue</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Small grant schemes for community led initiatives</li> <li>- Sharing workshops at district and national level</li> </ul>
2. To preserve historical memory through archiving and disseminating the narratives to a wider audience.	2.1 Increased public discourse on memorialization, narratives, shared values and non-recurrence of violent conflict through diverse media platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public exhibition on non-recurrence</li> <li>- Establishment and engagement with dispersed archives</li> <li>- Media Outreach and engagement</li> </ul>













### **What has been achieved? Outputs and Outcomes**

Strategic Objective 1: Create platforms for individuals and communities, from across ethnic, political and regional divides, to share their stories and engage in community dialogue and memorializing

### **Activities Planned and Completed**

Several types of platforms have been created through the CMP project for individuals and communities to share their stories and engage in commu-

nity dialogue. The most notable of these are the dialogue workshops held at village, divisional and district levels.

The objective of CMP's dialogue process was to engage diverse communities in order to ultimately create a group of "champions" or community leaders who are aware of the potential of nonviolence, have a basic understanding of conflict resolution skills and are interested in non-recurrence of violence. The "champions" should have been exposed to multiple narratives of the war, accept that war or violence is not what they want for their future, and agree about the need for a value-based society that chooses nonviolence, empathy, compassion and understanding of "the other" as a basis for future peace.<sup>6</sup> The dialogue workshops were held with the same communities over a period of time and the participants who attended the district dialogue workshops had also attended the village and divisional dialogue workshops previously.

### **Outcome: increased people-to-people engagement within and across communities through dialogue on non-recurrence of violence**

CMP provided a platform for people of both genders, diverse ethnicities and ages, and from various locations, to come together and exchange their experiences of violence and hopes for the future. With the end of war between the Government and the LTTE in 2009, many physical barriers were removed and there were greater possibilities to travel and move around within the country. As a result, there is much greater interaction across ethnic and religious divides. Yet, most of these interactions do not provide an environment conducive to sharing or discussing the war or one's own experiences of the war. Data from CMP suggests that while many of those affected by violence have shared their stories and experiences within their own community, few have done so with other communities. For example, youth baseline survey data collected at the start of Phase II finds that over 60 percent of youth who attended the divisional level dialogue workshops did not know even one single person outside their own ethnic group, who had suffered directly due to ethnic violence, war or communal clashes.

The CMP provided opportunities for people to meet and share their experiences across communities. Workshops, especially at the district level, had face-to-face participation of all three ethnicities within the same space and over a two-day period. In all, six hundred twenty-eight people came

forward to formally narrate and document their stories through the CMP and many others shared their stories informally at the workshops. *Ex post* survey data at the end of Phase I show that CMP participants are twice as likely as non-participants to know many people from other ethnic groups who have suffered due to ethnic violence, war or communal clashes. Case study data further show that while participants at the dialogue workshops knew or had heard of the major incidents of the war before they came to the dialogues, what they encountered at the dialogue workshops were personal stories, shared directly by those who experienced it or documented in the form of letters, in “tree of life” format or in banners and in video format. These stories carried greater weight as they were shared in the first person, in the words and perspective of the person who experienced it. This makes the past real and not an abstract event in history and helped to change long held attitudes and prejudices.

Overwhelmingly, the response to hearing about the experience of violence is sadness and empathy. More than 98 percent of participants who responded to the *ex post* survey at the end of Phase I said they felt sadness for the other’s pain and sometimes anger that people had to undergo such suffering. When they put themselves in another’s position, it also helps to put their own pain and suffering in perspective. A 52-year old Tamil man from Mannar said

we (Tamils) say we have undergone severe hardship and loss in Mullivaikkaal. Why don’t we feel for the people (Muslims) who were evacuated within 48 hours, carrying all their belongings in plastic bags? Why don’t we feel the sorrow they left behind? Because of their displacement they lost their properties and lands. These things happened to them.

Case study data also show how new friendship bonds have been created across divisions. During the district workshops, participants in the host district opened their homes to participants from other districts. For many participants this was a watershed experience, especially for the Sinhalese; a Sinhala man from Matara said

I stayed in a Tamil house in Ampara. Initially when we got to Ampara and they handed us over to the host families I was little scared. But when [my host] started talking in Sinhala I had no problem. They are very nice people.”

His experience suggests that friendship bonds are stronger when there is a common language and common interests.

“We ended up speaking together a lot. We still speak on the phone regularly. I called him back first, after I got back home, and then he called. He is a very knowledgeable person, he knows a lot about politics and we talk about those things. We speak about the war, and the elections.

Participants at the Youth dialogue workshops on the other hand, stayed in a hotel or dormitory setting and this impacted the nature of friendships they may have otherwise made. While they acknowledged that there may have been parental opposition if the arrangement was to stay in a stranger’s house, especially for the girls, many felt that their experience of CMP would have been richer if they were able to stay in a home and not a hotel. A Sinhala young man from Ampara said

my mother went for the workshop (in Phase I). When she got back she told us about how she stayed with a Tamil family, how she sat on the floor and the food she ate. I was really keen to have a similar experience which is why I came.

Another young man from Moneragala said *“if we stay at a hotel we only associate with the person who is our roommate. We should go stay in the villages and stay in the homes of the people there. We need to get used to mingling with all this and win challenges no matter what, especially when one is a youth.”*

The district visits also required long distance travel and participants from diverse ethnicities travelled together on long road trips; a young Sinhala man from Ampara said *“I met a Tamil boy from a neighboring village when we travelled to Matara together. It was a long bus ride and there was time to get to know each other and share our thoughts and feelings. Since that trip, we have stayed in touch. He calls me often and he is helping me to learn the Tamil language.”* For several participants, these friendships made with other participants from one’s own district have developed and strengthened through regular interactions after the workshop. As a Sinhala woman from Ampara noted

I still meet the Muslim ladies I met in the Eragama dialogue all the time, when I go to town, on the road, etc. Earlier we didn't know them, but now we know them and they say hello and talk to us. I meet the Tamil sisters I met in the Eragama dialogue, when I go to Kovil. They come to the Kovil and we go there as well, and when we meet we talk. Earlier we didn't know them so we never talked.

This face-to-face engagement has helped to break down some of the mistrust between ethnicities. For example, among the youth case studies thirteen out of fourteen interviewed said it would be fine for them to live in an area where their ethnicity was not the majority (Table 1). Twelve out of fourteen said they had no problem shopping in stores owned by people of other ethnicities, thirteen said they have no problem with getting medicines from a doctor belonging to different ethnicity and all fourteen said they would be fine to work for an employer with ethnicity different from their own. However less than half felt that marriage with someone from a different ethnicity would be appropriate for themselves or their family members.

**Table 1: Youth perceptions about engaging with people from other groups**

No.	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Living in a neighborhood where half of your neighbors are (not own group) people	Shopping at stores owned by (not own group) people	Having to work for (not own group) people	Having a relative marry a (not own group) person	Being treated by a (not own group) doctor in an emergency situation
1	Tamil	Female	20	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine
2	Tamil	Male	21	Fine	Fine	Fine	Don't ask this question	Fine
3	Tamil	Male	30	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine

4	Sinhala	Female	24	Fine	Fine	Fine	Nobody in our family has been married that way. The only issue is that if a girl marries a Muslim man, that girl will have to face a lot of issues according to their religion. They have very strict laws and minimal respect for women and because of that reason I don't really like this.	Fine
5	Sinhala	Female	20	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine
6	Sinhala	Female	23	I wouldn't like to live in a Muslim village. No I won't like that. The women are very restricted in those communities	After the April 21 incident, people didn't go to Muslim shops. I didn't go either. There was a story that some girls who went to the Lover (a Muslim shop) were pelted with rotten eggs. I didn't want that to happen to me, so I didn't go. But now that's not there anymore, and now I go.	Fine	Parents will not like it, so I won't like it either. Youth are impulsive but the parents' generation think long term, so we should listen to them	We go to Sinhala doctors, there are no Muslim doctors around here so I haven't really considered this.

7	Sinhala	Male	27	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine	I went to a Muslim doctor recently and I got sick with another illness. He was not a good doctor.
8	Sinhala	Male	22	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine	Fine
9	Sinhala	Male	17	Fine	I mostly buy from Sinhala shops though. I go to Muslim shops but not to buy clothes. I also eat from Muslim shops.	Fine	Nobody in the family has married like this. If my sister says that she wants to marry somebody like that I will have to see according to the situation, but I don't really like the idea. They do not match our Buddhist religion and their traditions are different from us.	Fine
10	Muslim	Female	23	Fine	Fine	Fine	No response	Fine
11	Muslim	Male	20	Fine	Fine	Fine	Don't ask this question	Fine
12	Muslim	Male	19	Fine	Fine	Fine	The other group person would need to convert to Islam	Fine
13	Muslim	Male	20	Fine	Fine	Fine	It's good. But if she could change into our religion and marry, it's good I think.	Fine
14	Muslim	Male	20	Fine	Fine	Fine	I personally don't mind (marrying a Sinhalese), but the people at home won't like it. Anyway, it will create a lot of problems, so maybe Sinhalese shouldn't marry Muslims.	Fine

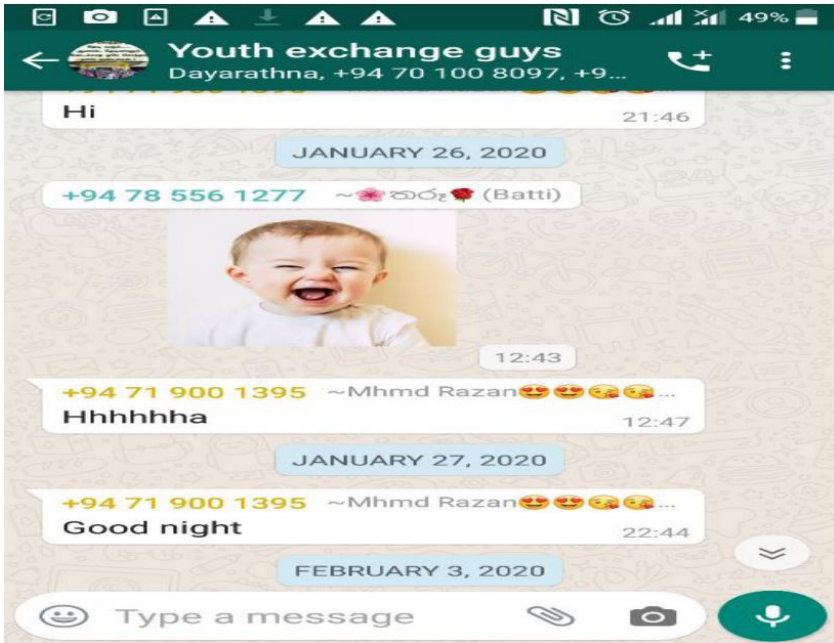
Most new friendships and connections are with others of one's own gender. Examples abound of women creating new friendship bonds with



other women, across ethnicity and even age. But there are hardly any examples of new friendships outside of one's ethnicity as well as gender, which is probably a reflection of strict cultural norms discouraging friendships between women and men outside of family. This appears to be less of an issue among youth however, and there are many instances of friendships created across gender and ethnicity, after the CMP program.

Where participants have made no connections with participants of other ethnicities, language is often the most difficult barrier to overcome. Many Sinhalese only speak Sinhala and this has been a barrier to them to make friends, but to a large extent, this is overcome by the fact that most Muslims and increasingly more Tamils, are able to speak Sinhalese. Youth on the other hand were able to use technology to bridge the language barrier. At their own initiative the youth who participated at the inter-district youth exchange visits formed WhatsApp/Viber groups after the CMP where they manage to communicate using English text as well as through visual media (Box 5). Participation is voluntary and they keep in touch on a regular basis. While the content of the group chat is not about issues relating to reconciliation and peace, there is a constant dialogue which is more focused on keeping in touch with their friends through sending wishes, memes, jokes and so on.

**Box 8: WhatsApp Group Chat of the Moneragala District Youth Visit Participants**



Youth, unlike adults, have greater opportunities to engage across communities. Baseline survey data with youth who participated in the first round of workshops at the inter-division levels show that 74 percent of Sinhala youth have visited the house of someone who was not of their own ethnicity at least once in the past five years (Table 2). Among adults the comparable figure is about 46 percent.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2: Youth Baseline – engaging with other communities**

	Many times	A few times	Once	Never
1. During the past 5 years, how often have you visited the house of someone who was not of your ethnicity?				
Muslim	29%	49%	6%	16%
Sinhala	22%	38%	14%	26%
Tamil	37%	46%	3%	5%
2. During the past 5 years, how often have you shared a meal with someone who was not of your ethnicity?				
Muslim	29%	43%	10%	18%
Sinhala	17%	40%	15%	29%
Tamil	47%	37%	3%	7%

Source: Youth Baseline Survey

This baseline data suggests that either youth who came for the CMP are generally more inclined to engage across ethnicities and/or that youth in general engage more across ethnicities. Case studies among youth suggest that it is both. A young Sinhalese woman from Anuradhapura said

I usually go for social work and I have helped to build toilets and small bridges in and around our community. I make friends very easily and therefore I always make new friends no matter what ethnicity and I also maintain those friendships closely with them. I have Tamil friends that I met around 10 years ago. We were taken to Mannar and we met new friends there. Our temple monk took us there. I was in grade 9 then. We still keep in touch and they have helped me too. They could speak in both Sinhalese and Tamil so there was no communication issue. I can also speak a bit in Tamil now.

In all, over 3,600 people have participated in the dialogue workshops organized by the CMP in six out of the twenty-five districts in Sri Lanka. While CMP has covered less than 0.02 percent of Sri Lanka's population of twenty million people, those who have attended the workshops have experienced a change in knowledge, attitude and behavior. Such changes are most significant for those who attended the dialogue workshops at all three levels who are considered as CMP "champions." Overall CMP "champions" number around four hundred fifty people.

**Outcome: increased ability and interest of participating youth to promote non-recurrence of violence through strengthened understanding of memory, transitional justice and peacebuilding tools**

Among youth who participated in CMP, there was a high level of interest to understand the causes of ethnic violence. The baseline survey shows that between 84 – 88 percent of youth, from all three ethnicities felt it was important to understand why the ethnic violence, war or communal clashes occurred (Table 3).

There were also high levels of agreement on the importance of memory. As many as 78 percent of Tamil youth felt it was important to preserve the memory of what happened during ethnic violence, war or communal clashes compared to 63 percent among the Sinhalese and 64 percent among the Muslims.

**Table 3: Youth Baseline – importance of Memory**

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Do you think it's important to understand why the ethnic violence, war or communal clashes occurred?			
Muslim	85%	4%	11%
Sinhala	84%	2%	12%
Tamil	88%	3%	2%
2. Do you think it's important to preserve the memory of what happened during ethnic violence, war or communal clashes?			
Muslim	64%	22%	14%
Sinhala	63%	21%	14%
Tamil	78%	14%	2%

Source: Youth Baseline Survey

While the baseline survey suggests that the youth who participated in CMP were already interested in reconciliation related activities, there is evidence of increased interest among participating youth in promoting non-recurrence of violence. Out of fourteen case studies, two youth spoke of instances where they have already had the opportunity to practice the skills they learned at the workshops to understand and rise above conflict. While one situation described involved face-to-face confrontations and the other occurred on social media platforms, in both situations they have engaged with people of their own community to de-escalate potential conflict.

When there is a group of like-minded youth, it appears to be easier to take decisive action to de-escalate conflict. A Sinhalese man who belongs to an active Youth Society in Moneragala narrated an incident after the Easter bombings: *“there was one person who was posting unwanted jokes on a WhatsApp group and we told him if you continue this, we will remove you from the group and he stopped immediately.”* Others also felt that while they cannot act alone, they would be able to resolve conflict as a group: a young woman from Moneragala said *“I can talk to [people engaged in a conflict] with the support of others such as my friends. Then I will have people to discuss how solve the conflict and how to execute the plans and so on. That’s the meaning of the saying ‘Unity is strength.’”*

There are multiple barriers and challenges which discourage youth from taking action to promote non-recurrence of violence. For example, several youth respondents spoke of being ridiculed for taking a stand against racist attitudes after the Easter bombings. A Sinhalese woman from Anuradhapura said

I usually speak up when there is some issue like this and I get scolded for doing so and I get asked if I don’t care about my own kind. Such people are difficult to deal with. Some Sinhala people think that there should only be Sinhalese Buddhists and if we associate with a Muslim we are called traitors.

Several young people spoke of the difficulties they face when they try to resolve conflicts between older adults. A young woman from Mannar said *“when the two elderly people are fighting, definitely they will say to me ‘you are a child, you go to a side, your words don’t matter.’”* A Muslim man in Kalutara felt that the older generation has not adapted to the new context and was creating problems for everyone including the youth:

Elders have to be told by us. This is a crazy situation – usually the elders should advise the young people. But in this case we the youth have to correct the elders. I need to speak to [an elderly gentleman who was being intolerant of others], otherwise it will happen again. Now we see the mentality of these people.

While only a small number of youth have had an opportunity to use the skills they have learned through CMP successfully, the majority said that they have not had such opportunities but feel they can engage if a conflict situation arose. In particular, they felt that ability to identify the cause of the conflict, the knowledge and tools to manage a conflict and techniques to de-escalate a conflict are skills that they found useful.

In one case, the youth directly linked his newfound interest and ability to engage with conflicts around him, to the CMP project. The man, who is a Muslim from Anuradhapura, said

... I was a person who [avoided problems and would leave] the place when a problem arises. After [CMP], little by little I started thinking about the causes of the problem. Now when I see a problem, I try to act as a mediator or a judge, trying to solve that problem as far as I can.”

Another young woman said “*before [the CMP], we didn’t know [how to resolve a conflict], but now I have courage as I have the knowledge.*”

However, several youth pointed out that there were some conflicts they could not resolve and that there was no point in even trying. None have so far engaged in trying to resolve conflicts with people of other ethnicities or religions. A young man from Kalutara noted

there is no point in speaking up. Sometimes people call out bad things to us when we pass by, we laugh or look down and walk on. People who do that are not the type of people who listen, so I don’t go to speak with them. I didn’t speak about what happened on April 21 with anyone who is not a Muslim. Sometimes, they ridicule us and joke about things like why we wear a hat. I don’t like it so I don’t go to speak with them.

A Sinhala man from Ampara echoed a similar sentiment when he said “*I can’t speak to the people who haven’t had this [CMP] experience. They won’t understand.*”

## **Strategic Objective 2: Preserve historical memory through archiving and disseminating the narratives to a wider audience**

In Phase I, the first stage of the project was devoted to collecting the life histories which form the base of the memory archive created through CMP. In all, CMP was able to document three hundred fifty-four stories, which include letters, photos, village maps, children maps, video and audio stories, collected and uploaded in the digital archive, [www.memorymap.lk](http://www.memorymap.lk).

During Phase I, CMP explored the possibility of extending dialogues and conversations about memory, memorialization and their connections to reconciliation and transitional justice, through traditional and new media as follows:

- **Workshops with media personnel:** These aimed to promote the use of *memorymap.lk* content in media outputs relating to peace-building and reconciliation. Three workshops were held for the specific groups of media professionals, that is, print journalists, electronic journalists and social media activists/bloggers, and youth (such as the curriculum development personnel for co-existence education and in religious education). As a result of the workshops, forty-seven articles on topics relating to reconciliation and non-recurrence of violence were published in three languages, eight in Sinhala, thirty-four in Tamil and five in English language.
- **Social media outreach through ROAR webzine:** Ten articles appeared in Sinhala, Tamil and English and focus on various aspects of how memorialization and stories on the *memorymap.lk* website are related to issues of transitional justice.
- **TV and Radio Talk show:** There were seven TV episodes and eleven radio talk shows produced and aired during the course of the project. The thematic areas of these talk shows were (i) civic responsibility; (ii) focus on next generation; and (iii) value-based society. The talk shows were aired through national and state radio and TV outlets.

Statistics indicate that the media campaigns on print, radio, TV and social media reached over two million people, with thousands of them re-sharing, particularly the content that was posted on

the Facebook pages of CMP, Searchlight and ROAR. This indicates a good start towards initiating a discussion on memory and peace-building, which needs to be sustained. In terms of reach, the TV programs had an average audience of 333,000 per episode and radio had 263,760 per program. Written articles, particularly those that appeared on the established website ROAR, generated interesting and positive discussions on topics ranging from negative peace and positive peace, to values and empathy towards the killing of three hundred people in 1958 riots. Overall, however, it was clear that in the current media context, it is difficult to engage the attention of an audience long enough to communicate complex issues such as memory, memorialization and its link to reconciliation.

This learning was used to design the media strategy in Phase II which focused on developing fifteen thirty-second video clips in Sinhala and Tamil languages which were telecast through the three private TV channels. These videos were also disseminated via social media. The clips were telecast over a period of two months and infrequently, given the costs associated, which may have undermined the effectiveness of this strategy. None of the case study respondents recall seeing these spots. The social media dissemination of the videos probably had greater reach.

The CMP website – [www.memorymap.lk](http://www.memorymap.lk) – hosts the stories that have been collected in the project, and serves as a memorial in and of itself. All uploaded stories are available with Sinhala, Tamil and English translations, and have been uploaded and tagged along a map of Sri Lanka. Over 15,000 people have accessed these stories so far. In addition, the CMP leaves behind the dispersed archives in six districts; these are contained in a printed A3 version of all the stories collected in Phase I of CMP and a collection of all videos and audios in a digital format, which were presented to district and divisional libraries in project areas. Similar to the website [www.memory-map.lk](http://www.memory-map.lk), the dispersed archives also serve as memorials to the experience of individuals and communities during the past thirty years.

These efforts are important and relevant given the political context within Sri Lanka that does not prioritize memory or memorialization. There are few events or activities to remember past violence and most of these are focused on a community experience. In this context, the archives collected through the CMP may increase in importance over time, possibly if future

generations are interested in understanding and learning from the violence of the past three decades.

**Strategic Objective 3: Facilitate a process of common understanding on policy outlooks and programs on managing, including, and using historical memories.**

During the implementation of CMP Phase I, changes in the context at the national level saw the introduction of multiple new mechanisms under the Transitional Justice (TJ) process. These include mechanisms such as the Office of Reparations which covered issues of reconciliation and historical memory. At the same time, while there was a plethora of activities at the national level, there was less attention paid by the state as well as other implementers to promote reconciliation at the grassroots level. Reflecting on these context level changes using the iterative Theory of Change tool, the project team decided to replace the production of a White Paper on memory work which was planned under this objective, with multiple practice papers. This shift is also in line with the more general shift in project focus, from the national level to local level, specifically by creating “champions” who can promote memory work, reconciliation between communities and prevent the recurrence of violence at the local level.

In all, fourteen publications were issued by the CMP, of which two are discussion papers, two are practice notes, four are facilitation guides and one is a toolkit. These have been disseminated widely within the development community in the country and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that they have been used to design similar projects by other donors and other non-governmental organizations working in Sri Lanka.

**What did we learn? Reflection, Lessons and Recommendations**

**About promoting person-to-person engagement across divisions**

It is now over ten years since the end of the war and many things have changed in the country. During the war, spaces and mobility were restricted in multiple ways but now there is much greater movement of goods, people and ideas, across ethnic, religious and geographic divisions. CMP case studies show that except in a few areas in Kalutara and Moneragala, ethnicities do not live in isolation and there is engagement across ethnic and reli-



gious divisions. Communities engage with other communities when they shop, when they engage with service providers such as doctors, when they attend universities, when they go to common areas of worship and so on. However, while these connections have made people from different groups more familiar to each other and broken down some barriers, they do not often lead to deep connections of friendship. Language and lack of opportunity to meet in spaces and conditions suitable to forming such connections have acted as barriers. Exceptions can be seen in some areas in Ampara, Anuradhapura and Mannar where communities live in closer proximity to each other, language is not as much of a barrier and there are opportunities for communities to mix at social functions such as weddings and funerals.

The CMP experience shows several ways in which contact across various divisions can lead to a deeper engagement. CMP dialogue workshops were conducted under relaxed, friendly and positive conditions, there were many breaks where participants could mingle with other participants, the content focused strongly on values and eliciting the commonality of those values, and finally workshop content was activity oriented, and included many games, role plays and group work. All documents were provided in three languages and workshop facilitators were bilingual. However language remained a barrier as formal translation services were provided mainly to communicate the workshop content and rarely to promote friendship and communication between individuals. While youth found ways around this through the use of technology and social media, language was more of the barrier for adults to engage with each other as they were less likely to know a second language or the link language of English. A fifty-six-year old Sinhala woman from Kalutara said *“I did meet many Muslim and Tamil persons but there was a massive language barrier, even with the translator. Even if we get their phone numbers, how will we speak with them? So we told the translator to tell them that we are not able to communicate because of the language.”*

One of the most successful methods promoting deeper engagement was having participants from outside the district staying with a participant from another community for the duration of the district visit. The project provided financial support to the hosts to defray costs, but the level of hospitality shown by the hosts suggests that they did not do it just for the money but because they genuinely wanted to do it.

Having gone through two rounds of workshops before the district visits was critical in ensuring that the hosts and guests were both of the right

mindset before staying in each other's houses. The guests recall feelings of vulnerability, because they were asked to stay, sometimes alone, with strangers, but the contrast between their fear and their host's friendliness and care, acted as a catalyst for many participants to change previously strongly held negative attitudes and prejudices. Looking back on the CMP experience, bonds of friendship which appear most likely to be sustained are those created between host families and their guests.

District visits also helped to promote deeper people-to-people engagement because participants travelled for long periods of time, sometimes as much as nine hours, to get from their district to where the workshop was being held. Many hours spent travelling together in an atmosphere of a pleasure trip helped to promote friendship bonds, especially among youth participants. Because they are from the same area and they can meet again easily, these new friendships may be sustained. As one young man from Ampara noted *"I made friends on the bus, and we sat next to each other at the workshop too. One Tamil boy from my area that I met on the bus, still calls me often. When I get to know him better I am planning to visit him at his home. At the workshop itself, there wasn't much time to make new friends."*

### **LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- To promote deeper connections, people-to-people interactions should happen over a period of time (at least several days) and be based around activities such as games, role plays, visits to places of interest and so on.
- Participants need to be encouraged to have a positive mindset about other communities before they engage with each other very closely, such as hosting a person from another community.

### **About using memory and values to change attitudes and behavior**

The starting point for CMP was collecting individual memories of violence. During CMP Phase I, three hundred fifty-four stories, which included letters, photos, village maps, children maps, video and audio stories, were collected and uploaded in the digital archive and preserved in dispersed archives. CMP has gone beyond archiving memories to using these memories to promote reconciliation. The series of workshops with project participants began by focusing on one's own memories which acted as a catharsis to open up and feel empathy when in the next stage when other people's memories

of violence are shared. As a fifty-eight-year old Tamil woman from Ampara said *“I have shared my personal story. Personally I have a lot of worries. I released these worries through sharing my story. Later, I realized people are living with a lot of worries and problems. Compared to those issues and worries, mine are nothing (thoosu - dust)”*. Awakening memories of personal experiences can create catharsis, and also empathy towards others who have experienced violence to varying degrees.

In many cases, when the participants from one community are faced with personal histories and memories of other communities, it requires them to face uncomfortable realities, that their version of “truth” may not be the only truth. For example, inter-district visits compelled them to confront the violence perpetrated on others by their own community. Sinhalese visiting the site of a grenade attack on a church by the Navy or Tamils visiting the site of the massacre of twenty-eight Buddhist monks by the LTTE were forced to revisit their black and white view of the war, with clearly identified “good” and “bad/evil” parties. This muddying of how the war is perceived breaks down some of the mental barriers and increases the openness to hear multiple truths. For many, especially in the south, it may be an important milestone in the journey towards accepting and acknowledging the suffering of others due to the war. As a sixty-eight-year old Sinhala man from Matara said *“people were able to release grievances which were deeply rooted until now. I also felt that the stories were true, and all this time we heard what the TV said, but these were heartfelt stories coming from the people themselves... I think these stories may be true.”* When memories are shared in person at the location where the incident happened, there is greater receptivity to it. However, not everyone was equally open to hearing other “truths” and set a high bar to accept them. As a sixty-seven-year old Sinhala man from Moneragala said

showing is always better than just trying to convince people through talking. When explaining what happened in our village, it was good the blood stains were still there at the house where the incident happened so these people who came from other areas could see them. We also went to another village where a man from there explained what had happened to them. To my mind, the incident he related was not very clear. They didn’t have anything to show as such. We just listened to him. I think that incident was not as serious as what happened here.

CMP also uses common values as the entry point to imagine the future the participants wanted, on the basis that shared “Sri Lankan” values may be an entry point to developing resilience and agency at individual and village levels. This conversation on values generated a good response at the workshops. As the ex post survey at the end of Phase I showed, there is commonality among the three ethnicities in terms of the values they prioritize; for example, respect, patience and humanity was valued by all three ethnicities. The dialogue workshops helped to bring this commonality out and also to draw a link with preventing the recurrence of violent conflict. When survey respondents were asked “*if these values that you have identified earlier are shared across ethnic, religious, political divisions, do you think it will be easier to prevent violent conflict?*” 99 percent of Tamils, 90 percent of Sinhalese and 80 percent of Muslims said yes.

Overall, the logic of the dialogue workshops, which built on each session, was validated: The dialogue process of: - a) expressing one’s own story; b) seeing others’ stories; c) building on empathy felt for each other towards expressing the need for non-recurrence of violence; d) agreeing that a value-based society will help towards this and identifying simple, practical values for co-existence and peace in daily life – was validated in the responses and level of engagement from participants across the districts. Participants specifically noted that the structure and content of the workshops, helped to change their attitudes. As one young man from Moneragala noted “we need to have the first day to change our mindset. Then on the second day we went to Madugalle and Talaimannar to listen to the injustices done to a Muslim lady. In my opinion we need to listen and to see, in order to understand. Both are important.”

### **LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Sharing memories is cathartic and also provides a base to connect across divisions.
- Envisioning the future as a value-based society and what that should look like, helps to bring out the commonality across divisions.
- It is not enough only to talk about memories, or only to show places where events have occurred. Both elements are necessary in order to make the memories “real” for outsiders, which will help them to understand and change their attitudes.

## About engaging with youth for non-recurrence

There is a general consensus within Sri Lanka that in order to reduce the possibility of violence recurring in the future, the lessons from past eras of violence need to be communicated to the youth. But at the same time there is a danger that bringing up past events can lead to reigniting feelings of anger and hatred against “the other” among a new generation of youth, which in turn can lead to new conflicts. As a Muslim man from Matara said

the generation after 2009 knows war only as a history lesson. They have examples from other countries (Syria, Yemen) and they think war would have been similar in Sri Lanka. It is good that we tell them what happened, but we have to do it in such a way that we don't instigate anger in children's minds. Memory fades over time.

The CMP experience is valuable in that sense because it shows how the youth can be engaged on this issue at a deeper level, but without leading to new conflicts.

The CMP shows that there is a sizable cohort of youth interested in learning more about Sri Lanka's violent past, as well as engaging in activities to promote peace and reconciliation between communities. By and large, those who participated in the workshops tend to be those who were already interested in these topics; for example, respect, humanity, understanding, patience and coexistence were values youth prioritized at baseline, where as many as 85 percent also said that if given the opportunity they would prefer to live in mixed community neighborhood. They have also had some experience in engaging with other communities often on social work; as many as 55 percent had worked collaboratively on some activity with people belonging to other communities. However, the main attraction for youth to participate in CMP was the opportunity to meet other, like-minded, youth and make friends. They were also attracted by the prospect of a trip to another part of the country.

While youth participated in numbers at workshops, the question of what they learned through the workshops, remains. Did they learn conflict resolution skills, can they prevent conflict, did they learn to deal with hate speech especially on social media? The participating youth demonstrated a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of conflict resolution they

learned at the workshops, but only two out of fourteen case study respondents said that they had the opportunity to put this knowledge into practice. This is disappointing, given that 2019 was a year of heightened tension between communities, especially after the Easter bombings. It is possible that youth do not have the capacity to see opportunities to engage and it may be necessary for workshop capacity-building to include this element.

Overall, skills building should be more practical, more hands-on, and draw more from real life examples so that the youth can see their applicability to their own lived circumstances better.

It would also be helpful to find ways to reinforce the CMP messages once the workshops end. This could include helping to build networks of support, among participating youth as well as by connecting them to other existing networks of like-minded youth, so that youth can support and help each other engage to reduce and mitigate local level conflict, for example to push back against hate speech on social media. In CMP, it was hoped that such networks would arise organically, but the project experience suggests that a more proactive approach may be required to explore whether the networks that do arise, can become something more than forums for keeping in touch with each other.

There are barriers that youth face when attempting to engage to de-escalate or resolve conflict at the local level, which should be acknowledged and addressed in workshops. One major barrier is that cultural norms in Sri Lanka strongly act against youth getting involved in conflicts between adults. There is a distance between youth and adults which many youth find difficult to bridge. Youth trying to engage in such conflicts can inadvertently escalate a conflict and end up causing more harm than good. Workshops can provide space for youth and adults to come together to explore how to overcome these cultural barriers and norms. For example, intergenerational discussions during workshops have taken the form of passing memories from one generation to another, but it can be expanded to include an intergenerational discussion of conflict resolution. As youth have noted, most of the conflicts at the local level are between adults and if they are to engage in these conflicts they need the skills and capacity to do so.

**LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Skills development for youth should be provided through hands-on experience of engaging with conflict, especially on social media.
- Youth should be supported to learn how to engage positively in conflicts between adults, and they should be trained in aspects of Do-No-Harm as well.
- More needs to be done after workshops end, to promote networking and developing structures of mutual support between participating youth.

**About promoting reconciliation in a dynamic context**

CMP raises interesting questions about engaging at the grassroots level to promote reconciliation and prevent the recurrence of violence. It shows clearly that there is still insufficient opportunity for people to engage meaningfully across ethnic and other divisions in Sri Lanka. There is greater contact between communities, but this is superficial and without much understanding and appreciation of diversity, which is dangerous and can lead to new conflicts developing. For example, a Sinhalese woman in Ampara reacted to rumors about the Muslim community by noting that many young men in her village frequent Muslim restaurants and are also childless,

I believe that the story about the abortion pills is very true.

There are many young families in this village who do not have children. There must be some truth in this story, that is the only possible explanation. This must be the reason. One of the couples has been tested and it is a problem with the husband. He, as did many of the young men in our village, used to frequent a Muslim shop to have their soup on a regular basis. This must be the reason.

Such stories were repeated by several case study respondents, which suggests that what engagement there is across divisions in Sri Lanka at present, is largely insufficient to break down deeply held mistrust or act as a buffer against rumors and other potential conflict triggers.

The CMP is also based on the idea that a few people with skills and interest in mitigating or transcending conflict can counteract aggressive elements at a grassroots level. These “champions” are the target of the CMP dialogue workshops and skill building. There is some evidence from case

studies to suggest that these champions are in fact coming forward to mitigate and de-escalate conflict but these conflicts are usually small scale and often within their own communities. A 43 year old Muslim woman from Mannar recounted an incident as follows:

In my family, a conflict got worse. Two males were about to beat two girls. At that situation, I tried my level best to stop the violence and prevent those girls from [getting hurt by] the violence, but the men didn't listen to me. So, as my last option, I called the police.

There are incidents recounted by youth “champions” in relation to de-escalating conflicts over social media such as on WhatsApp groups. These efforts suggest that the “champions” are attempting to understand and engage with conflicts in their own community groups, and bode well for their development to working towards non-recurrence of violence at a larger scale. However, there is also a very real danger that unless they are supported with greater skills, hands-on experience and encouragement of like-minded others, these “champions” may disengage over time.

While the CMP focused on looking back and understanding conflicts in the past with a view to developing skills to recognize early warning signs of new conflicts, the dynamic nature of the country context often means new conflicts take on new forms and occur in new spaces. CMP shows that many people in Sri Lanka are ignorant of each other's experiences and the root causes of conflict, which the project helped to address albeit in a small scale. The links of friendship that have developed across ethnic and other divisions may help to spread greater awareness of how events and policies affect groups scattered across various parts of the country. For example, during the anti-Muslim reaction after the Easter bombings, some CMP “champions” have attempted to crosscheck rumors with friends they met during workshops. Through their contact with people from other communities, they are able get another perspective, which strengthens them against manipulation by outsiders. In many cases, there is progress in their attitudes; from condemning an entire ethnic or religious group, some “champions” have progressed to concluding that everyone within a given community is not the same and it is often a few extremist individuals who create the problems.

The case studies also show that people are capable of having individual friends they like and respect from another ethnic group, while at the same



time condemning that ethnic group as a community. One “champion” from Moneragala spoke about new Muslim friends she has made and with whom she is regularly in touch, and in the same conversation said *“No we will not work with Muslims. We believe that they will do damage to us. We don’t have a big issue about Tamils. But about Muslims we have a feeling like they are dangerous and we feel that they cannot be trusted.”* These attitudes where the community is seen as separate from individuals, undermine the extent to which creating people-to-people connections can act as buffers to reduce conflict at the national level.

As a country, the Sri Lankan context presents a complex system. There are multiples of actors and multiples of interest at stake and causes and effects are linked in multiple ways. In such a complex and dynamic system, inability of the evaluators to link the workshops and “champions” created by CMP with reconciliation and non-recurrence of violence, should not be taken to mean that such linkages are not there or will never be there. Cause and effect are rarely linear in complex systems and the knowledge, skills and connections created through the CMP can become the base of positive action in future.

## LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- More initiatives are needed to encourage people-to-people engagement across divisions under suitable conditions, as interactions that are happening organically can lead to worsening mistrust and tensions.
- Support the “champions” to build their knowledge and conflict resolution skills by engaging with small-scale conflicts in their own communities, before engaging with large-scale conflict at the national level.
- Encourage people to use their personal contacts to cross check rumors and media stories, to avoid being manipulated by forces with other agendas.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
- 2 The Sri Lankan government officially withdrew its support from the 2015 UN resolution in February 2020 and the transitional justice framework proposed in resolution UNHCR 30/1 is currently not being implemented.
- 3 The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is a Marxist–Leninist party and political movement in Sri Lanka. The movement was involved in two armed uprisings against the ruling governments in 1971 and 1987–89.
- 4 The Herstories Project ([www.herstoryarchive.org](http://www.herstoryarchive.org)) generated a memory and oral history archive containing the histories of two hundred eighty-five women from seven districts in the North, East and South of Sri Lanka. Over the period July 2012 through March 2013, the project collected the narratives of mothers from various parts of the country, on the basis that without oral histories, the gendered perspective of war, peace and security is inadequate. A curated exhibition of seventy narratives traveled to Galle, Jaffna, Batticaloa, Colombo, London and Canada, with smaller exhibitions traveling to Kabul, New York, Sydney and New Delhi. At each location, engagement with the material was encouraged through dialogue and discussion.
- 5 In addition to multiple informal meetings to share analysis of feedback received, three formal review meetings were held, in March 2016, May 2016 and September 2017, to reflect on the project experience and lessons learned and revisit its Theory of Change
- 6 Hettiarachchi, R. *Going Beyond the Archive: Facilitated Dialogue using Public History Collections. An introduction to the Series of Facilitate Dialogue Workshops*, CMP, 2019.
- 7 DE team, 2018. Survey Analysis Report, Community Memorialization Project (CMP), Internal Document.



# Learning from People: IDSP Experience\*

Institute of Development Studies and Practices

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**T**HE INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND PRACTICES in Pakistan (IDSP Pakistan) was founded in 1998 by Dr Quratulain Bakhteari after she experimented in two parallel development studies courses in Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan and Lahore, the capital city of Punjab. After earning her B.A. degree, she helped in providing access to basic health care and education of new refugees coming from Bangladesh. Dr Bakhteari worked as a volunteer, organizer, and researcher in the informal settlements in and around Karachi. She made major contributions both to public health and sanitation during this time, providing toilets to 5,000 households through community actions, effectively changing the sanitation and hygiene practices for more than 35,000 people from 1979 to 1987. She helped new refugees coming from Bangladesh by providing them with access to basic health care and education. After earning a master's degree and a Ph.D., she established with the assistance of the Provincial Government of Balochistan and rural communities 2,200 government primary schools for girls in rural Balochistan, resulting in the enrollment of 200,000 girls — a record in Pakistan's history.

Frustrated with a lack of efficacy in internationally sponsored development projects, she wrote a concept paper that became the blueprint for Institute for Development Studies and Practices (IDSP), and was subsequently funded by The Asia Foundation for three years. She formulated the curriculum, recruited and trained faculty in advance of the formal launch of IDSP in 1998.

Since then, she focused her attention towards safe spaces for young people in Pakistan, while IDSP set a major strategic goal of establishing a university in the field of community development in order to work with

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\*This paper is an edited and updated excerpt of the report entitled "Learning from People and Community" and jointly prepared by Dr. Quratulain Bakhteari (Founding Director), Faiz Ullah Khan (Research and Teaching Consultant), Arbab Taimoor Khan (Faculty), Saeed Shah (Co-Director), Safdar Hussain (Co-Director), Seema Malook (Research and Teaching Coordinator) and Jamshed Mehmood (Visiting Faculty for 'Youth for peace through film making').

marginalized youth for a greater social, political and economic change in societies. Currently, IDSP is designing its university curriculum and faculty development training in conjunction with the campus construction in Quetta. Dr Bakhteari is an Ashoka Fellow, Skoll Foundation 2006 awardee and has spoken at prestigious conferences, including the Global Philanthropy Forum and TEDx.

## **Province of Balochistan**

The province of Balochistan was the epicenter of development agencies, organizations and donors but it lacked professionally trained local human resources. Since its establishment, IDSP has continued conducting development studies courses, and mainstreaming gender in development studies courses, leadership courses and faculty development courses. IDSP basically functions as an open learning space for the young majority population to empower them for generating and regenerating responses to the existing challenges. It engages youths in courses on critical thinking and leadership, as well as professional development to shape a meaningful career path for them.

IDSP decided to establish the University of Community Development (UCD) in 2020 as a result of the outcomes of its overall Development Studies Course.

### **I. Development Studies Course**

Development Studies Course is a permanent learning program of IDSP. It is a theory and practice-based course, in which excluded and marginalized but motivated youths are provided with opportunities and spaces of learning, sharing, reflecting and realizing their dreams and ideas of social change under the mentoring of experienced faculty and resource persons. They are equipped with analytical and professional skills to prepare them for practical initiatives towards their dreams and ideas.

The course titled “Development Studies Course: Learning from People and Communities” continues the IDSP courses but designed and executed with a different approach, aimed at re-setting IDSP’s future direction in the face of changing national, regional and global socioeconomic and political circumstances. The design of the Course was based on Dr Bakhteari’s 2018

proposals. She argued that with the rise of China as a regional and global political and economic power, Western rights-based liberal economic model would be replaced by the Chinese model of production, control and conformity. Civil society and development organizations will be subjected to strict control and restrictions, which have already started happening in the form of newly introduced regulations by the Government of Pakistan.

The Course was designed through a series of meetings and discussions in collaboration with IDSP's senior management and the faculty including Ms Farkhanda Aslam, Associate Director, Mr Saeed Shah, Associate Director, Mr Safdar Hussain, Co-director and Dr Bakhteari the Founding Director of IDSP. In the discussions, different options were discussed.

In order to have a Course that is compatible with the local realities of Balochistan, the idea of "Learning from People and Communities" was proposed. This idea is aligned with IDSP's principles, values and focus on marginalized and excluded people and communities. Insights from Dr Bakhteari's concept note on "Learning from People and Communities" (2006) were considered. In that concept note, she argued that mainstream educational, political and economic systems were fundamentally meant to protect the interest of a tiny elite class. The majority of the people, on the other hand, exist, live and even thrive outside these systems. She saw a huge potential of learning from the wisdom, knowledge, and practices of these people. She proposed to effectively engage these people in the process of community development and social change. Hence, the method of learning from the people was adopted to find out today's realities and challenges through discourse with people in the communities.

#### **a. Aims and Objectives**

The Course aims at creating a group of young community leaders who are capable of critically understanding, analyzing and effectively approaching developmental challenges while applying holistic strategies and leadership skills. The participants will be engaged in the critical inquiry and observation of diverse socio-political and economic contexts to generate community-based discussions and discourses. The results and insights of the Course will be utilized to reset IDSP's direction as well as inform and evolve inclusive, bottom-up and participatory development approaches, frameworks and institutions. Last but not the least, the participants will

become conscious of cultural and historical pluralities and recognize and appreciate them as mutually enriching forces.

### **b. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the Course are as follows:

- To explore bottom-up and community-based people's meanings, preferences, practices, and processes of development to be incorporated in future UCD curriculum, pedagogy and practice frameworks;
- To generate research-based discussions and discourses to inform developmental policies, processes and practices at the local, national and global levels;
- To revise themes, contents and practice frameworks of Development Studies Course of UCD;
- To identify like-minded organizations as potential partners of UCD and potential visiting faculty and resource persons for UCD courses;
- To identify and engage renowned intellectual practitioners for the formation of UCD's Council of Intellectual Activists; and
- To launch UCD based on the results, insights, and recommendations of the Course.

### **c. Expected Outcomes**

In the planning phase, it was expected that the following outcomes would be achieved:

- A group of twenty young people has been professionally trained on the theories and practices of development and successfully designed and implemented their Ideas of Social Change in their communities;
- Research-based discussions and discourses have been generated to inform development policies and develop participatory processes, approaches, practices, and institutions;
- Community-based and people-centered meanings, preferences, practices, and processes have been explored to navigate IDSP's direction and vision;

- List of like-mind civil society organizations that can partner with UCD and potential visiting resource persons who can teach in UCD's Development Studies Course has been finalized; and
- UCD has been formally launched.

## **II. Course Phases and Learning Tools and Methods**

The “Development Studies Course: Learning from People and Communities” was offered in 2019. The faculty and Founding Director of IDSP undertook rigorous discussions around learning methods and tools for the Course. It was decided that, in addition to traditional methods, IDSP's courses would have readings, movie showings, presentations, learning papers, diaries, reflections, family history writing, story-sharing/telling as the main methods of learning from people. In addition, it was decided that participants and the faculty would go and live in participants' communities and listen to people's stories and understand their narratives and views of development. These learning tools and methods were applied during the different phases of the Course including (1) Knowing Each Other, (2) Documenting Family History, (3) Visits to Participants' Communities in Balochistan, (4) Reconnecting with the Family, (5) Visits to Participants' Communities in Sindh, and (6) Synthesis Process—Analytical Discussions and Learning Conference.



The Founding Director of IDSP, Dr. Quratulain Bakhteari, with the participants and course coordinator.



### Phase One: Knowing Each Other

The first phase of the Course was held in February 2019. All participants were required to stay at the campus throughout the duration of this phase. All the participants were first oriented about IDSP, its history and the Course in which they were enrolled. Then they were asked to share their life stories. IDSP graduates, faculty members and resource persons were invited to share their life stories too. This was one of the most important phases



Faiz Kakar, an experienced development professional sharing his story.



IDSP graduate Ms. Kamal Jan sharing her story.



Founding Director, Dr. Bakhteari, sharing her story with participants.



IDSP Co-director Farkhandan Aslam during a session.

of the Course since life story sharing was adopted as its main approach to learning. There was no strict or structured format for story sharing. They could adopt a method that best suited them. They were asked to discuss family background, social contexts, school and college experiences, professional history, achievements and challenges.

### **Phase Two: Documenting Family History**

IDSP believes that people's history with focus on their ways and means of resistance against exploitation and oppression is a very important theme to be explored. For this purpose, there is a complete theme namely "History, Regions and Resistance," in which participants are engaged in studying literature on histories of resistance in different regions. In addition, every participant is required to document a hundred-year history of his or her family. This activity helps participants to explore their family's historical roots, realize the importance of history from below and reconnect with families in a meaningful way.

After exploring and writing family history, participants reported the following learning outcomes:

- They came to know about the historical roots of their families;
- They enjoyed interacting with their family elders and helped them learn new things about family and tribes;

- They realized that their families were resilient and had endured lots of challenges; and
- They realized that people's histories were also important.

It was observed that though this method has been a very important tool for learning, IDSP did not have any structured method of documenting family histories. There was no analytical framework on engaging participants more deeply and analytically while re-connecting more effectively and purposefully with their families.

### **Phase Three: Visit to Participants' Communities in Balochistan**

In the third phase, participants and the faculty went and stayed in participants' communities in District Khuzdar, District Kalat, Quetta, and Qila Saifullah across Balochistan. The participants spent three to four days in each community where they met community members—both individually and collectively, listened to their stories and had discussions with them about their community—its history, community norms and institutions, cultures, development and challenges being faced. They were specifically asked about their views on development and how they could have their hopes intact considering the existing challenges.

It was a great experience living, interacting, playing and even working with people in their communities. In villages, people were hospitable, generous and caring. They provided food and accommodation for free. Their views on development and their challenges greatly varied from community to community.

### **Phase Four: Reconnecting with the Family**

In the month of Holy Ramadan, the participants were asked to live with their families and reconnect with them. This activity aimed to allow participants to practice the values they had learned at IDSP. For example, generally male members in the family do not wash dishes, cook food and do not wash clothes in Pakistan. But at IDSP, they did all these chores themselves. Reflecting on their experience, they said that they realized the significance of these responsibilities mostly conferred on the women of the residence. Before that, they assumed that only money-earning jobs fell in the male domain and were very important. In return, the participants said that they had a very different experience of interaction with the family members. Their

mothers and sisters were astonished at their changed behavior and their keen interest in domestic work. More importantly, helping family members in kitchens and homes helped them understand the hard work, commitment, and hardships of female family members. They had realized that the distribution of work was not a natural but cultural phenomenon and it plays a key role in determining the social power of both men and women. They challenged the concept of masculinity based on these gendered roles. They also pledged that they would try to empower the women in their family and treat them equally in all spheres of life.

### **Phase Five: Visits to Participants' Communities in Sindh and Northern Areas**

In this phase, the participants and course coordinator stayed in communities in Sindh. They lived in the communities of some participants in Tando Allahyar. They visited private and public institutions, met with writers and social activists and visited some other communities. Sindh is much different from Balochistan in terms of language, culture and history. This phase turned out to be one of the most insightful phases. It helped the participants to debunk cultural stereotypes, see the plight of Hindu minority, understand the feudal system and experience interaction with people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.



Participants during interaction with community members in different communities across Balochistan and Sindh.



Participants during interaction with community members in different communities across Balochistan and Sindh.



Participants during visits to different institutes and centers in Sindh and Balochistan.

After visiting the participants' communities in Sindh, they went to the Northern Areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to visit the Lake of Saif-ul Maluk, a famous tourist area in Naran District Mansehra. They interacted with tourists and local people and learned that most of the properties and businesses in Naran District Mansehra were owned by non-locals. The majority of the local people worked at restaurants and hotels and underpaid. The local people felt dispossessed and had antagonistic feelings toward tourists and outsiders.

### **Final Phase: Synthesis—Analytical Discussions and Learning Conference**

In this final phase, the participants and faculty undertook a rigorous process of analyzing course learning methods and learning outcomes. First, the faculty and participants conducted analytical discussions around each phase, learning methods and learning outcomes. These discussions were considerably enriched by the insights of the Founding Director, Dr Bakhteari.

In the last week, a two-day Learning Conference was organized in which IDSP graduates and board members were invited to analyze course impacts on participants and helped create guiding principles and indicators for future courses. At the end of the Learning Conference, the participants were formally awarded with course completion certificates.

During these phases, the participants were engaged through different learning tools such as daily reflection, supervised readings and presentations, thematic movie showings, dinner talks, experiential learning in communities, observation walks, reading books (*Pedagogy of Oppressed, Education for Critical Consciousness* by Paulo Freire, *The Art of Loving* by Erich Fromm, *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein and many more) and analytical papers, diary writing, learning seminars, yoga and exercise and so forth. The participants had never been engaged in a learning process with these tools, with such diverse individuals and groups in diverse contexts and spaces.

In brainstorming sessions, the participants expressed interest in people from almost all walks of life including development professionals, students, political workers, business people, teachers, writers, social activists, farmers, community elders, women, bureaucrats, artists and so on. They appreciated the interactions in different spaces including institutes, organizations,



cities, bazaars, homes, communities, towns, seminars, schools, academies, museums, parks and so on.





### III. Analysis of Course Learning Outcomes

Course learning methods and outcomes were analyzed in two ways. In the first part, rigorous analytical discussions were conducted by the course co-

ordinator, the faculty and participants. In the second part, a learning conference was conducted in which participants, graduates, faculty and board members participated to analyze course learning outcomes.

### **Part One: Analytical Discussions**

In the analytical discussions, the course coordinator, Mr Faiz Ullah, and IDSP's Founding Director, Dr. Bakhteari, engaged the participants in a rigorous process of discussing and analyzing course learning methods and outcomes. During these discussions, Mr Faiz Ullah and participants referred to their daily diaries, learning papers, notes and videos and documentaries of the Course.

#### *Analysis of Learning Outcomes from Story Sharing*

##### *- Emotional Catharsis:*

We live in a culture in which youths are not encouraged to openly discuss and share what they feel, think and like to do. In mainstream schooling systems, the learning processes are largely based on memorization of unquestionable facts. Critical thinking and creativity are considerably discouraged. When a young man or woman spends most of his or her early life in such a repressive culture of silent learning, they are quite likely to develop characteristics of an introvert, fearful, and hesitant person. Furthermore, self-repression of thoughts and ideas and absence of encouraging culture for sharing can lead young men and women to feel dejected, helpless and diffident.

But at IDSP the participants were provided with an enabling environment to openly share and discuss their ideas, opinions and raise questions. Participants felt encouraged to share their personal stories, which helped them relieve the burden of their hearts and minds, as one of the participants said,

Sharing my story with fellow participants and faculty emotionally touched me as I had never shared [before] my personal story with others.

Another participant added,

I felt the burden of my heart and mind relieved after I shared my story.

Yet another participant said,

It was very hard to share personal secrets but once I started sharing my story, I felt confident and ... light-hearted...

To sum up, the sharing of life stories helped participants to express themselves openly, which in turn helped them to relieve themselves emotionally.

### *Analysis of Learning Outcomes from Story Sharing*

#### *- Mutual Trust and Care:*

Trust works as glue in human relations and it leads to developing a sense of mutual care. Sometimes trust-building can be an awful process when people of diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds start living together, especially in an era when society has been considerably polarized as a result of distorted histories and abuse of social and mainstream media. In this Course, the participation, trust-building and mutual caring for each other by the participants from three different ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds were essential in creating a friendly and enabling learning environment. Again, life story sharing was the most useful method in this regard. The participants told that once they shared their stories and listened to each other, they were able to trust and care for each other. One of the participants said,

The moment I listened to the stories of fellow participants, it helped me much to understand them. And I started taking care of them as a family member.

Another participant said that story sharing sensitized him to his fellow participants' strengths and weaknesses, as he said.

I became sensitive toward their weaknesses and tried to help them.

Story sharing also helped them to develop feelings of friendship and mutual care, as one of them said,

We became best friends like brothers and cared for each other regardless of the little time we have known each other and cultural differences.

To conclude, story sharing can help participants to develop mutual trust which in turn leads to developing a sense of mutual care and feelings of friendship.

*Stopped Worrying about the Past:*

The participants in this Course came from humble and poor social backgrounds, they considered themselves as failures. Their self-esteem was very low. Each of them initially thought that they were left behind only because of their inabilities and lack of effort. But after listening to the stories, their perception about self-development and personal successes in life radically changed. They stopped blaming themselves for failures, unlearned certain fears and got encouraged to move ahead.

One of the participants said:

I thought my life was full of problems and challenges but when I listened to the stories of participants, I realized that everybody had a challenging life. Hence, I thought we were all in the same boat. What all one needs is to unlearn one's fears, stop worrying about past failure and start acting for self-growth.

Another participant told,

I was always worried about my past failures and mistakes but when I shared my story and listened to the stories of fellows, I realized that I must move ahead because I could not change my past. My frustration was released after I came to know that I was not alone in facing frustrations and tensions.

*Increased Self-confidence and Self-worth:*

In an educational system in which questions are discouraged as a sin and silence is appreciated as a virtue and in a culture in which failures are personalized, it is most likely that most of the youth will suffer from the problem of low self-confidence and low self-worth. This is what was ob-

served in the participants of the Course. Participants were reluctant to express themselves freely and discuss their ideas. In their opinion what they thought, believed and wanted was insignificant. They believed that their learning and experience were worthless. But after this Course, their perception of self-worth changed and they developed considerable confidence in themselves. One of the participants told:

After sharing the story, I felt confident and encouraged. I was very hesitant to speak about myself because I did not trust my skills and potential. I thought they [participants and faculty] would laugh at me. But after sharing the story I got motivated that I could also do something meaningful for myself and my family. Moreover, I thought my story was as important as that of others. And like others, I could also resolve the problems I am facing.

A participant added that listening to the stories of fellow participants encouraged him to share his own story without any hesitation and fear, as he said,

It was a great feeling that there were people who were listening to my life story with great interest.

Another participant told that he liked the friendly and enabling environment and felt encouraged to share his story, as he told,

I was never encouraged to open up my heart in such an enabling environment.

### *Self-Motivation:*

As discussed above, before the start of the Course, participants were not confident enough about their potential. Their level of self-confidence and self-worth was very low. But after listening to the stories of faculty members, resource persons and graduates, their level of self-confidence improved and they felt motivated, as one of the participants remarked,

One can achieve any goal in life no matter what challenges one faces, provided that one is dedicated and consistent in one's efforts.

Before the Course, most of the participants believed that systems were too inimical to common people. But after the Course, they realized that practicing honesty and following values of justice can result in positive outcomes. Drawing on one faculty member's life story, a participant remarked,

If one is honest, one can get his work done without any bribes and favors. What all one needs is to stick to principles and values of honesty and justice.

Last but not least, participants learned that life was not easy. Challenges are part of life and one can cope with challenges if one works hard. Drawing on the life stories of the Founding Director of IDSP, one of the participants categorically said, "Life is hard but hard work makes every challenge easy to handle."

*Critical Thinking:*

Critical thinking is necessary for youth to not only understand but also question and challenge social, political and economic realities. Before the Course, most of the participants were never encouraged to critically analyze or question existing social orders, political systems or cultural values and beliefs. In the Course, when they were exposed to diverse ideas, analytical discussions on development, education and politics through readings, discussions, life stories of different people, they realized that they were indoctrinated to remain silent as one of them said,

I never questioned systems, social norms and justice systems [that cause] injustices because I thought these were the normal and perhaps the only logical ways of doing things in society.

Another participant added that he never thought about power structures, the beneficiaries of these structures and the ways these structures were sustained.

However, this Course helped participants raise questions and analyze every issue logically and analytically. For example, one of the participants shared that the Course helped him understand the role of invisible power such as the power of ideology, religion, myths, distorted history, that is em-

ployed to mystify education, development, and systems to control people. He told,

I was silent and remained depressed and terrified because of cultural beliefs, but now I realized how I was chained by those cultural myths so that I could not think freely.

Critical thinking helped them think about their rights and justice in the society, as one of the participants said,

Critical thinking has helped me to think about my rights as well as the rights of people. I not only think about what is right and wrong but also the cause and effect and the consequences for society.

Agreeing with his fellow participants, another learner emphasized that while analyzing social phenomena we must think about gender, class, and ethnicity because these categorizations also morph our understanding of social realities. He concluded:

Being blinded by gender, ethnic and religious biases people often lose their sense of empathy.

### *Sense of Empathy and Responsibility:*

In a heartless world based on the rules and values of zero-sum game of the market economy, coupled with overwhelming information by corporate media to manipulate and mystify realities through sensational news and reporting, the sense of empathy is becoming a rare quality, as everybody feels the pressure of survival, success, and power on the individual level. The individual sense of responsibility towards family, community, and society seems to be of a secondary significance for most individuals. After watching constant news of war, terrorism, bloodshed, and poverty, people seem to have been immunized from feeling sorry for fellow humans. Mainstream education systems also do not have human values on their primary agendas. As a result, masses, especially the youth feel lost, fearful, greedy and ambitious and ignorant of community interests and collective wellbeing.

On the contrary, the Course had a very positive impact on the participants' sense of empathy and responsibility. With critical thinking coupled with sensitization about gender and human rights, participants said that they have developed a strong sense of empathy. They said that when they understood the game of privilege, the mystification of power and economic exploitation, ethnic and religious sectarianism, they realized how important it was to empathize with marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Drawing on his experience of helping family women at home, one of the participants said,

When I cooked food, I realized how difficult this job was.

A participant, drawing on reading from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, added,

Even the oppressors are themselves pitiable because they are themselves dehumanized for stealing the humanity of the oppressed.

Another participant was of the opinion that the best way to practice empathy was to engage people as active agents of change. He reiterated,

We need to work with people rather than for people.

To conclude, this is a strong realization and learning for the participants, for they will engage communities with a strong sense of empathy and responsibility towards their families and communities and create a participatory process of learning and actions, instead of mistakenly taking themselves as leaders and experts of development to fix problems of the communities.

### *Accountability Starts from Self:*

We live in a country where corruption and accountability have become buzz words. These words are repeated soundlessly on daily basis on mainstream and social media that Pakistan is poor and underdeveloped because of corruption and lack of accountability of political leaders. There is no doubt that corruption and lack of accountability are major problems of the



country but this discourse is often employed as a tactic to blame political opponents. Instances of serious and honest accountability have never been witnessed. As a result, a culture of blame game has emerged and everybody blames somebody else for the ills and problems of the society and the country.

During interaction with people, especially youth, we observed that they were also blaming systems and political leaders. When they were asked what they had done according to their potential and available resources, they did not have a proper reply. Participants also suffered from this dilemma before the Course but they realized that if true accountability at all levels was to be practiced, it must start from self. Nobody can blame others unless they undergo a process of self-accountability first.

One of the participants remarked,

I often blamed my family for my failures but now I think I am also responsible for what I am today.

Drawing on life story of the Founding Director of IDSP, another participant said, he has become very cautious of blaming others, as he emphasized,

I signify what I have done, instead of what others have not done.

To conclude, the sense of self-accountability is essential for a community leader to not only gain the trust of the community but also help replace the culture of blame game with the culture of self-accountability.

### *Balancing Duties and Rights:*

During this Course, the participants were engaged in reading and discussion around fundamental human rights. Participants told that they had never studied about their fundamental rights and duties during their formal education. But readings and discussions in the Course helped them to know about their fundamental human rights. Furthermore, they were also sensitized that there were no rights without performing duties. One must know that every right corresponds to a duty, i.e., every person's rights involve the obligations (which are called duties) on the part of other humans, to respect those rights. For example, if you have the right to life, it is the duty of all fel-

low human beings not to take your life. Similarly, everyone has the right to life and it is your duty not to take that life.

Furthermore, participants were told that they have certain rights and duties vis-a-vis the state. In other words, citizens' rights are the duties of a state and state's rights are duties of the citizens. These rights and duties are correlative and inseparable. The understanding and balancing of rights and duties are essential for not only ensuring justice and equality but also debunking popular myths and narrative that some specific ideologies are superior and true while others are false, the state is more sacred than humans, and the majority is always right and it has the authority to do whatever it pleases.

This awareness and balancing of rights and duties can save the majority from becoming tyrannical (majoritarianism) and the state from becoming a machine of oppression and repression (authoritarianism or fascism). The majority is authorized only to the extent of what is right. Minority's fundamental rights must be protected. Likewise, the state has power over citizens within the legal ambit of fundamental rights, and citizens must be protected from political and legal oppression and repression. Similarly, citizens are also bound to undertake their duties according to the state's constitution and laws. This arrangement of mutual obligations and rights is essential for a stable, peaceful and prosperous society.

### *Every Individual is Unique:*

Every individual has distinct personal qualities and different potentials and talents to be utilized in different fields of life. Correctly termed as the "Banking System of Education" by Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire in his famous book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, mainstream education systems kill ruthlessly diverse human talents in the students and obliterate cultural potentials in society. Most of the students just follow popular disciplines such as medical science, engineering, business administration, and information technology. These disciplines are portrayed as the best fields for secure and lucrative jobs. The hype and race around these popular disciplines of study and work do not allow students and parents to think freely and beyond these popular fields, based on realistic and objective criteria of students' passion, interests, and likes.

Every student who does not end up in one of these popular disciplines, considers himself a failure. The same was the case with the participants of

this Course, who thought they were incapable of doing anything meaningful for themselves, their families and communities. But their exposure to diverse ideas and fields from diverse disciplines helped them realize that a beautiful life outside these disciplines was possible. In fact, beauty lies in diversity because everybody has a different talent. Participants felt relieved from the burden of thinking themselves as failures. One of the participants said,

I thought I was a lifetime failure but now I think I can do something meaningful for myself and my community.

Another participant told,

In the past, whenever I saw a success story, I wanted to become that person. But for the first time in my life, I just took inspiration from people's stories and I understand that their destiny is not my destiny.

### *The Power of One:*

Individualism is the most dominant characteristic of the modern world and it is critiqued for being selfish and neglecting common interests. However, IDSP's focus on the individual is different. It believes in the individual as the starting point of development. During this Course, it was learned that investing in developing individuals who are professionally and personally strong is important and useful. In her story, one of IDSP's graduates told that her family and community did not allow girls to work with NGOs. When she started doing the course with IDSP, she was bitterly opposed by her family, especially her father-in-law who was a religious scholar. When she resisted, she was kicked out of their home and socially disowned. She still resisted all the pressure and moved out of the community and got settled in Quetta city. The community did not accept her unless she proved that even an individual can save the whole community from a disaster.

According to her story, her community had a conflict with the adjacent community over some land and the conflict escalated and all the male members had to stay in bunkers on nearby mountains to defend the community from attacks of the enemies. Male members could not go to the city because

of life threats from enemies. Their women were also unable to help them because they had never stepped out of their homes and communities.

When community members especially children and women were on the verge of starving, only then I went to help them, she said. "I went to the bazaar to buy food and then delivered the food to the community and even climbed the mountains to supply food to male family members," she added, that after this incident, her family members realized their mistake and their attitude drastically changed as they started supporting me in my cause. As a result, she was able to convince not only family members but also community members to send their daughters and sisters to school and colleges.

This story in particular and many other stories of IDSP graduates generally show that the individual is an important unit to start with. When individuals are empowered, they can change the fate of their families and communities.

#### *Fear Can Be Unlearned:*

Fear is an effective tool for social control. In the Course, it was learned that our culture employs fear from a very early age to socially condition and control children. Furthermore, it was learned that even though fear becomes part of one's psyche, it is possible to unlearn it. Reflecting on the society and religious beliefs, one of the participants said:

When I learned that lots of religious beliefs were tools for social control and power, I went through shocks and I was unable to make sense about what was happening to me. I was unable to understand whether I had liberated myself or I put myself in some new troubles because I was terrified by people's opinion about me. But now I am feeling internally liberated.

Another participant also agreed that fear that was injected in us when we were children is very hard to unlearn but after listening to the stories of the resource persons, he was compelled to reflect on their belief systems, stereotypes, and traditions and try to unlearn those things that impede their growth. He told,

We should not care about what people say but we should care about what is the right thing to do.

The participants and faculty agreed that since our early childhood education and development in our culture was based on using fear as an important tool of behavioral and social control, therefore, there is a need for conscious and consistent effort to change this culture through different initiatives including change in curriculum, sensitized parenting, and courses on fear and early childhood development. They concluded that fear developed during childhood is hard to unlearn and, in most cases, it stays until death. Thus, one should never use fear as a tool for controlling children.

### **Some Challenges in Learning from the Stories of the Resource Persons, Graduates and Faculty Members**

In the analytical discussions, participants said that they faced the following challenges during story sharing sessions:

- » Sometimes I did not understand what they were talking about;
- » I did not understand the context they were talking about;
- » Some stories were not interesting;
- » They used difficult terminologies;
- » I could not relate their stories with my context;
- » Sometimes I could not focus on the story because of noise especially in a busy place such as market;
- » Sometimes we were too tired in the field;
- » I observed that not everyone in the group was attentive to the stories;
- » Stories were lengthy and became boring;
- » Sometimes I was reluctant to ask questions;
- » I was hesitant to face and ask questions from female resource persons.

Keeping in mind the challenges, story sharing methods need to be designed in more interesting and interacting manners.

## **IV. Different Perspectives on Development**

### **a. Conversation with Local People in the Community**

During the discussion with local people in communities and with resource persons and the faculty of IDSP, the course coordinator and participants kept asking questions concerning development. The following perspectives were noted in those discussions.

*1. Views on Development:*

To explore different perspectives on development, especially the views of ordinary people, was one of the main objectives of this Course. Development remained a constant theme in the conversation with common people on the street, in bazaars and in our discussions with resource persons, faculty and IDSP graduates. There were some very eye-opening insights about development that were gained in the Course.

First of all, most common people did not articulate their problems in terms of development. It can be argued that development is an alien word and concept in the narratives of common people, who did not know much about development organizations or government in terms of development, except resource persons who emphasized the needs and role of education, health systems, infrastructure, agriculture, industry and job opportunities. Common people, on the contrary, articulated their problems in terms of social needs and social values, for example, lack of peace, lack of unity among people, greed and lust for power, weakening social ties among relatives and neighbors. In other words, it can be argued that for them, it was a question of the whole social system which they believed was declining.

Second, we observed that development was a contextual phenomenon. There is no single definition or understanding of development. Instead, there are many, diverse and contextual understandings and definitions of development. People see development in light of their social realities and challenges. For instance, for the Hazara community in Quetta, which has been the victim of the bloody sectarian violence, the attainment of security and safety is tantamount to development. One of the community members standing on the grave of his father remarked,

What is the importance of development when you don't know when and where they will kill you?

Similarly, the social activists said that the right to life was the most important development for her community, as she said,

We want nothing but just the right to life. Everything comes after the right to life.

Khuzdar is another city in Balochistan which has remained as one the most disturbed districts of the province in terms of law and order because

of ethnic violence. People in that city desired peace the most. One of the community veterans said,

What we all want the most is peace. If there is peace, everything will be OK.

In the rural areas across Balochistan where people lived in joint family systems, relationships and cooperation were the most important aspects of development. People emphasized that material development is useless without social and spiritual development. “[So what] if you have wealth but lacks respect in society and restless in soul,” remarked an old man in one of the communities.

For extremely poor people who struggled for food on a daily basis and who lived in rented and shabby houses, food and shelter were the most important developmental needs. One of the poor vendors in the refugee community told,

When you don’t have food to eat and a roof to live under, schools and roads are useless for you.

For the urban population, especially so-called youths from middle income backgrounds, infrastructure, nonetheless, was an important sign of development. They believed that development of schools and hospitals were the most important requirements of people. Furthermore, the discussions with youth were particularly interesting as we observed that they were passionate about doing something about their communities but they had no clue on what and how to do it. They thought if they got jobs, they would be able to serve their families and communities. But they expressed their concern that they might never be able to get any jobs because the system did not recruit people based on merit but nepotism, references and political affiliations.

In the community of Afghan refugees, some people had nostalgic feelings about their homeland. Here they felt extremely discriminated, disrespected and even tyrannized. A community member told,

The police can come and enter your home anytime whenever they wish. They can arrest and call you a terrorist without any

proof. Then they allow us [free] after we give them some money. We have nobody and nowhere to go for any help.

He added,

We have no identity, no documents, no respect, no access to most jobs and professions. We are not considered humans. You see these shabby homes; these overflowing drainage systems; those children picking up garbage there and the hunger in their eyes.

Finally, we observed that people's views of development were heavily influenced by the popular narrative of modernity and media. When participants from Sindh visited villages in Balochistan, upon seeing mud houses, one of them said,

The people of Balochistan are very poor and backward. The people of Sindh are comparatively more developed.

When he was asked about his criteria of development and backwardness, he said mud houses are a sign of backwardness whereas cemented houses are a sign of development. Similarly, when participants visited Islamabad, they believed it to be the most developed place they had ever visited. When they were asked about their indicators of development, they said that Islamabad has the best roads, skyscrapers and beautiful markets. They did not signify the intangible aspects of development including social inclusion, people's wellbeing and happiness.

However, as a result of this Course, participants' views of development drastically changed. They evolved a more holistic view of development. They started believing that development is not something that can be imposed from above or it can be delivered with the help of a toolkit. Development is contextual based on people's experiences and their social and material needs. Infrastructure is important for economic growth and provision of social services but people's level of happiness, contentment, gender sensitization, environmental awareness, etc. are other important factors which are necessary for stable social and political orders.

Taking development at face value is misleading. A backward social context may be rich in beautiful values of hospitality, care, and respect of aged



people, valuing social relations, contentment within minimum resources and cooperation. For example, one of the participants told that,

I always believed that we were poor and backward because we did not have better schools, roads and hospitals. I never thought about our values, i.e., how people cared for each other.

Similarly, a seemingly developed place may be replete with conflicting values of individualism, competition, mad race for money at the cost of family and social relations. As another participant said,

I was never content because I believed I was poor and my life was worthless and joyless. But now I believe that even though money is important, it is not everything. I might never spend a lavish life for lack of money but I can spend a meaningful and active life by contributing to the wellbeing of society through my writing, activism and other services.

To conclude, a good development professional is one who engages people and comes up with solutions based on contextual realities—i.e., social needs, available resources, people's strengths, their history, their views and understanding, knowledge, and experience, and so forth.

## *2. Development as Happiness:*

Happiness emerged and remained as one of the most dominant themes throughout the Course. Many people said that happiness was the most important thing for them in life. Participants also began to believe that development should increase people's happiness. However, nowhere in the discussion was it clear what people meant by happiness. Like development, it had many versions in participants as well as people's narratives. For some, the attainment of good health, food, and shelter was happiness. For others, peace was happiness. Yet for others, contentment and lack of greed was a source of happiness. One of the villagers said that with dwindling unity and weakening ties among people, happiness is vanishing from people's lives.

Hence these diverse definitions pose a great challenge of defining happiness and devising strategies to achieve happiness. In addition, it requires different strategies and resources to achieve happiness at individual and

collective levels. Sometimes happiness at individual level may not lead to happiness at collective level and vice versa. A community leader must be conscious of both individual rights as well as collective interests. In a traditional society, community interests are more important than individual happiness whereas in modern societies they are predominantly based on individualism—individual rights and happiness. In the traditional societies of Balochistan and Sindh, some people still think that honor killing and cruel Jirga decisions such as punishing a family for individual crimes, are forgivable crimes because they are essential for stable communal orders. These practices might help save communities from internal conflicts but they can inflict unbelievable pains and torture on individuals or families.

The participants and faculty agreed that development ought to increase happiness both at individual and collective levels. IDSP courses should include happiness as an important theme in the future with clarity on defining happiness and devising balanced strategies to achieve happiness at individual and community levels.

#### **b. Resource Person's View: Development as an Opportunity for Conflict Resolution**

Balochistan has remained the most affected province in terms of political instability, law and order situation and terrorism, because of which it has never been able to harness its human and natural potentials for development. During this Course, it was learned that development can be effectively used for conflict resolution. One of the resource persons, a bureaucrat, argued that development was an opportunity to approach people and resolve conflicts. Drawing on development experience in one of the disturbed areas of Balochistan that was hit by a destructive earthquake, he told,

It was a great challenge to work in that area and everyone was afraid to work there. I saw an opportunity there. Since people had lost their homes and they were jobless, I thought it was the right time to restore their trust in the system. I decided to train local men and empower them economically. So instead of giving them funds, we decided to construct their homes with the help of local laborers. We introduced an earthquake-proofed architectural design and techniques and trained local human resources to engage in the reconstruction of buildings. As a result, lots of armed men laid down their guns and became peaceful

citizens. When you have something meaningful to do, you don't have to pick up guns and fight.

It is true that inclusive development can lead to building more harmonious and peaceful communities. During community visits, we observed that in the areas where there was more deprivation, exploitation, negligence and exclusion, people were more hostile toward state institutions, more cynic, more asymmetric and more pessimistic toward life there. Nearly in all contexts, youths complained about their exclusion from development processes, the apathy of politicians and national leaders and the futility of state institutions. One of the community members in Khuzdar told,

We do not support armed struggle, but we don't think that those who are fighting are wrong. When you have nothing to do and you are dispossessed, you have no options but to fight.

To conclude, inclusive development can be used as an effective opportunity to restore people's trust and resolve a conflict. On the other hand, exclusion leads to bitter feelings and resistance against systems.

### **c. Resource Person's View: Importance of Development Practice**

Theoretical understanding of development alone is not enough. Community leaders must practice their newly gained knowledge and ideas for the wellbeing of their families and communities. Paulo Freire is right in asserting that theory without practice is mere intellectualism whereas practice without intellect is mere activism. It is one of IDSP's core principles too, that every idea must be put to a practical test to prove its worth. In the Course, the stories of faculty, development professionals, artists and change activists show that only those individuals who had practiced their ideas were able to succeed.

IDSP's Founding Director, Dr. Bakhteari told participants that no idea is worth calling an idea unless it is practiced. She argued,

If there is no practice, then an idea cannot be differentiated from chatter, [no matter] how philosophical it might sound.

Besides, she emphasized that whoever critiques an initiative, institution, or action of others, must make a practical contribution to the refor-

mative or alternative efforts. Otherwise, it becomes a mere criticism that leads to a counterproductive environment in which blame-game becomes a dominant rule and in which nobody is concerned with what they ought to do but with what others ought not to do.

After these rich and insightful discussions, participants reiterated that this Course helped them to become conscious of their actions and contributions. One of the participants remarked,

In the past, I often criticized others for not doing enough.  
Now I think about what I can do.

Another told that since he has learned that self-accountability starts from one's self, he has considerably overcome his bitterness and anger towards others. "I spend most of my time improving myself, rather than preaching others to improve themselves", he concluded.

To conclude, the stories of resource persons, faculty and IDSP graduates helped participants to understand the importance of practice and they pledged to practice their freshly gained knowledge and ideas in the family and in the community. For a successful development practice, the community leaders need to take risk, have strong character and positive mindset, and make consistent efforts as these characteristics were evident in the stories of different resource persons and IDSP Faculty.

## **Part Two: Learning Conference**

At the end of the Synthesis Process, a two-day Learning Conference was organized with the following objectives:

- \* To collectively analyze the findings of the Course regarding impacts on the individual life of the participants and faculty and conceptual, practical and institutional lessons for IDSP;
- \* To create guiding principles and indicators for IDSP's future direction based on findings of the Course and the learning history of IDSP;
- \* To award certificates to the graduating participants of the Course (Graduation Ceremony).

Course participants, faculty members, members of the IDSP governing body and IDSP graduates since 1998, who belonged to different professional, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and resource persons attended the conference.

The University of Community Development was properly launched on 25 December 2020 on mutual consent of all faculty, executive and general bodies.

### **Working for the Future**

The more than two decades of IDSP program implementation have created an impact on participants, their families and communities.

As of 2020, the number of graduates of IDSP courses has exceeded six thousand whereas the number of people it has directly impacted at community level has surpassed 200,000.<sup>1</sup> Course participants are being equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to promote human rights, political participation, gender equality, and global citizenship—aimed at improving safety and development in Pakistan. It is observed that the standard of participants' living and harmony within family units improved, resulting in lower domestic violence rates, a decrease in early child marriages, shared decision-making, and better social and financial support for all family members. Communities of participants tend to practice conflict resolution, promote youth civic engagement, expand the infrastructure and advance technologies of sustainable energy services, protect children from child labor and exploitation, and adopt sustainable agriculture techniques to improve their local economies. Local governments show willingness to better support progressive policies on public health, community development, and education. Civil society organizations become active and take on actions to safeguard people's fundamental rights, and pro-people and pro-community initiatives.

IDSP's UCD is preparing to become a proper university. UCD will design courses on the basis of detailed researches to be undertaken by its research centers. These researches will probe on the progress of the communities and their evolutions. What are their natures? What kind of cultures and traditions do they have? Has the behavior of their members undergone significant changes? What are the consequences of those changes? What is the literacy rate in these communities?

Courses designed strictly based on research results would help UCD to promote the core essences of societies.

Every society has its own specific, evolved journey that needs to be understood. Employing concepts molded for other regions would neither help nor provide beneficial results to the community that UCD would like to work with. Each community should be treated according to its own evolution, essence and origins.

The development of the perspective, vision and mission of UCD will be done by a core research team composed of Dr. Nazia Bano, Faiz Ullah Khan, Arbab Taimoor Khan and Seema Malook.

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## **Endnote**

- 1 See IDSP website for more information, <http://idsp.org.pk>.



# Education for Peaceful Transformation: The AJAR Learning Centre at Kampung Damai

Asia Justice and Rights

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**T**HE AJAR LEARNING CENTRE AT KAMPUNG DAMAI is a place for learning and reflection on human rights issues and conflict transformation. The Learning Centre is part of the Asia Justice and Rights Society (AJAR), a non-profit organization based in Jakarta, Indonesia, which is dedicated to strengthening human rights and easing deep-seated impunity among countries in the Asia-Pacific region that are experiencing periods of transition from mass human rights violations to democracy.

At the AJAR Learning Centre, grassroots communities and leaders can come together to develop their capacity to fight impunity, celebrate progress made on peace initiatives, enhance the lives of victims, and restore communities that have been damaged by conflict. Known as “Kampung Damai”, or “Peaceful Village”, the AJAR Learning Centre strives to work with these communities by linking them with policymakers and helping them to convey their needs.

## **The Establishment of the AJAR Learning Centre**

The establishment of the AJAR Learning Centre in Bali began with the founding of Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) in 2010 in Jakarta, Indonesia by Patrick Burgess, an international human rights expert with experience working on peace and post-conflict programs in over twenty countries, and Galuh Wandita, who served as the Deputy Director for the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste and as a Senior Associate for the International Center for Transitional Justice in Indonesia. AJAR was created with the goals of strengthening human rights and lessening long-standing impunity in countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These countries include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar/Burma, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste. In conducting its work for human rights and transitional justice, AJAR forms partnerships with other organizations in these countries,



such as Suriya Women's Development Centre in Sri Lanka, Assosiasaun Chega Ba Ita in Timor-Leste, and ND-Burma in Myanmar.

Based on the belief that a lack of accountability, impunity and intolerance are the primary contributors to mass human rights violations, through its educational programs, AJAR aims to embolden national and regional collaborators who strive to end impunity, create accountability for human rights violations, help these organizational partners enhance their knowledge and skills, and access resources necessary for their human rights work.

AJAR's programmatic work focuses on four main components— involving policymakers and representatives through conducting research and producing policy briefs, creating social capital through the development of connections and networks, cultivating abilities through educational opportunities such as workshops and internships, and fostering awareness of human rights issues through various forms of media.

AJAR engages in opportunities for advancing knowledge of human rights issues and bolstering accountability for rights violations through the following activities:

- Holding trainings and workshops related to transitional justice and education about human rights violations at the AJAR Learning Centre in Bali;
- Conducting research and doing advocacy work with other organizations;
- Supporting survivors through local organizations in the Asia-Pacific countries;
- Creating learning exchanges between survivors of violence, policymakers, and civil society members;
- Training survivors, youth and human rights activists in new skills, technologies, and methods such as participatory methodologies;
- Providing technical support to policymakers and civil society members.

Through these programs and activities, AJAR was able to involve 10,156 persons in human rights work across four countries in the Asia-Pacific region during the year 2019 alone. Within the last ten years, AJAR has engaged 29,000 participants in seven hundred thirty-six events and produced ninety publications on human rights issues in the region. More than 8,000 survi-

vors of human rights violations have been supported by its programs and over eight hundred youth from the Asia-Pacific region have participated in its activities. AJAR's online media has reached more than 8,000,000 people in total.<sup>1</sup>

Since its founding in 2010, AJAR's work on educating the public about human rights violations and transitional justice has included training and educational workshops held at the full-time residential Learning Centre at Kampung Damai in Bali. AJAR Learning Centre is located on the southern coast of Bali only five minutes' walking distance from the beach. The residential Learning Centre's facilities can house up to thirty participants at a time and is equipped with two training rooms, a library, audio visual equipment, high-speed Internet access, and spaces to hold break-out sessions.

### **Transitional Justice and Human Rights Education at Kampung Damai**

The AJAR Learning Centre engages participants in training sessions about human rights issues, aids in the development of curriculum for peace and justice, and organizes meetings for national, regional, and international experts on topics related to accountability and transitional justice. The aim of the AJAR Learning Centre is to provide a space for learning and reflection among grassroots communities and leaders on issues relevant to human rights and transitional justice. At Kampung Damai, over six hundred community members, leaders, educators, academics, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, researchers, lawyers, and individuals from governmental and non-governmental sectors have come together to share their knowledge and experience on human rights issues with the goal of improving their communities for those who are marginalized and at risk of facing human rights violations.

Training curriculums for peace and justice have been developed at the AJAR Learning Centre. These curriculums are then used by leaders and advocates for peace and justice in their communities. For example, in 2018, a Tetun-language manual entitled *Chega no Justisa Tranzisionál: Teaching Materials for Higher Education in Timor-Leste* was released for university educators and civil society institutions at Universidade da Paz, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorsa'e, Centro Nacional Chega!, and others for engaging with students about the historical memories of the conflict that occurred in Timor-Leste. The AJAR Learning Centre is also involved in using participa-

tory methodologies in its training. Through the use of these methodologies, the Learning Centre team engages a diverse group of people from different ethnicities and religions in workshops in which they are able to recognize their learning needs, communicate their experience with violence and persecution, increase their awareness and knowledge of human rights issues, and create a plan for activism.

Specific activities that the AJAR Learning Centre has organized since 2015 include:

- Short courses on human rights and transitional justice in Jakarta and Timor-Leste;
- Producing the *Chega!* comic books based on CAVR, the Timorese Truth Commission, for educational purposes;
- An educational exchange on human rights issues with Pakistani government officials and civil society members;
- A workshop on capacity-building with the Aceh Local Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Programs on capacity-building for communities in Buru Island, Kupang, Makassar, Maumere, Papua, Pidie and Yogyakarta;
- Gender Justice Training for activists, practitioners, and educators who work with women recovering from violence;
- A bi-annual course “Foundations for Peace: Revisiting Transitional Justice and Accountability in Asia”;
- An online course on human rights and transitional justice for youth in Bangladesh held in 2020;
- A workshop for the Stolen Children of Timor-Leste held in 2020;
- The development of the “Foundations for Peace: Transitional Justice in Asian Contexts” online course held in November and December of 2020.

The main work of the AJAR Learning Centre centers on engagement with local communities and their leaders on education about human rights, peace, and transitional justice. Holding the view that a lack of knowledge contributes to intolerance and indifference toward others, the AJAR Learning Centre team conceives of education as essential to peaceful transformation.

A key feature of the AJAR Learning Centre’s work is its bi-annual intensive six-day course on Foundations for Peace, through which participants

gain an understanding of human rights and transitional justice in the Asian context. The course aims to engage civil society members across Asia to learn about the key principles of human rights, share professional experiences from working in contexts that are in periods of transition, and gain knowledge on how to pursue accountability for human rights violations. In addition to developing knowledge about human rights and transitional justice, participants are also provided training from experts, the chance to network with others interested in these issues, and an engaging learning atmosphere. The course covers an exploration of participants' own experiences with conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, conflict transformation frameworks, the potential and challenges for various transitional justice mechanisms, specific case studies of transitional justice, and an examination of peace-building processes in theory and practice. By participating in this course, civil society members have the opportunity to learn about how non-formal education influences healing for victims of trauma and how to help those individuals become empowered to assert their rights for transitional justice and accountability for human rights violations.

Another important opportunity available at the AJAR Learning Centre is its annual Training of Trainers workshop. Through this workshop, survivors of violence as well as human rights activists and defenders participate in week-long activities to learn participatory methodologies for working with survivors of gender-based violence. Adhering to the belief in the need to "unlearn impunity", AJAR's Training of Trainers focuses on empowering victims of violence in societies in transition through the combination of legal, psycho-social, and human rights-based perspectives. AAAR utilizes a unique participatory action methodology called "Stone and Flowers" in its training to assist survivors and others in developing a greater understanding of their rights that are safeguarded by laws and constitutions. In this methodology, survivors become directly engaged as researchers who conduct research and develop action plans. Through engagement in this workshop, participants gain knowledge of human rights and transitional justice in Asia, network with others, interact with experts in the fields of human rights and transitional justice and develop skills in participatory action research. The intention of the workshop is for the participants to use the skills and knowledge they gain at Kampung Damai to help victims of violence in their own communities have a voice for peace and justice.

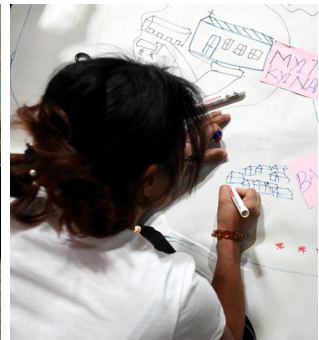
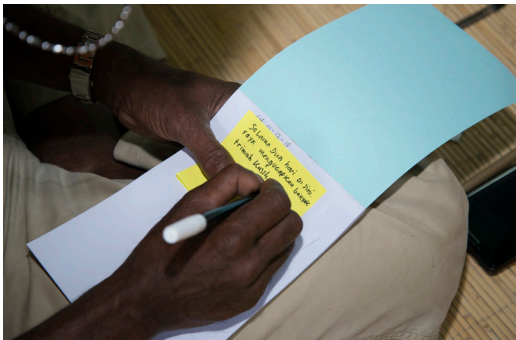
## Participants' Experiences

AJAR and the AJAR Learning Centre aim to help workshop and training participants develop skills and knowledge necessary for helping survivors of human rights violations improve their communities and advocate for transitional justice and accountability for these acts of violence. In conducting trainings and workshops, participants learned about several methods that can be used in creating discussions about transitional justice and healing after human rights violations have occurred. These tools have included: the stone and flowers training, memory boxes, photo storytelling, community mapping, community timeline and resource mapping. Participants in the AJAR Learning Centre's June 2014 workshop on community strategies for supporting victims of violence were particularly enthusiastic about the photo storytelling method, the memory boxes, and the community timeline activity as ways to engage with survivors of human rights violations.

Reflections from participants in workshops and training at the AJAR Learning Centre have provided the AJAR team with an assessment of these activities and methods. Participants have reflected on their work with survivors, finding that developing skills in helping survivors, engaging in self-care, and learning about basic principles can help them more effectively do their work and not harm the survivors. Many participants found the participatory action research methodologies to be beneficial for them and that they would be able to utilize these tools in their own communities. They also have indicated that there is a need to create national level referrals for survivors of trauma and violence within several countries. Participants have remarked that more specialized training could be created to help survivors. In addition to these reflections, some assessment regarding language use at workshop has been done. At the 2014 workshop on community strategies for supporting victims of violence, there were difficulties using Indonesian and English. The program staff altered the workshop activities to accommodate the difficulties by creating groups for English and Indonesian speakers. This allowed for greater understanding, engagement, and trust between participants. Other language speakers also found this change to be beneficial because the newly-created smaller groups were less overwhelming.

Participants in AJAR and the AJAR Learning Centre's various programs have provided comments and reflections on their experiences:





I learned that non-formal education can have a strong impact on healing trauma and informing the victims of their rights. I like what a speaker said about creating the conditions for transformation, but it's the victims who empower themselves. Not us.  
— Participant from the Foundations for Peace workshop<sup>2</sup>

This is the first time anyone has ever listened to us.  
— Participant in the Stone and Flower workshop<sup>3</sup>

This exchange has been enriching and insightful. It has strengthened our knowledge and built solidarity. The experience of Timor-Leste shows how they respect their history through memorials, creating digital archives, documentaries and museums, and building a narrative that is integrated into the school curriculum and textbooks. This is very inspiring and very significant for the learning process in Aceh.

— Tunn Mastur Yahya, member of Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission who participated in an exchange with Timor-Leste through AJAR's programs<sup>4</sup>

I am grateful for this activist school because it gave me the opportunity to learn [about human rights] even though I am from an agricultural background. I can learn together with my friends who have a human rights background... It makes me realize who an activist is: the eyes and ears that will help save the country's dignity and its people.

— Ruben dos Santos, participant in AJAR's "Human Rights and Social Justice for Young Changemakers" in Timor-Leste<sup>5</sup>

Through the work that has been done since establishment, both AJAR and its Learning Centre have accomplished many goals for improving human rights and transitional justice including:

- Creation of ACbit, an NGO in Timor-Leste which works with victims of conflict and gender-based violence;
- Becoming a partner of Indonesia's Coalition for Truth and Justice;
- Development of a television show in Myanmar called *The Sun, the Moon and Truth*;
- Establishment of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission for which AJAR and other civil society organizations heavily advocated for;



- Creation of a south-south network for exchange about how to create accountability;
- Assistance with developing a reparations policy in the Solomon Islands;
- Assistance with reuniting stolen children from Timor-Leste with their families.

## Challenges

Implementation of AJAR's and the AJAR Learning Centre's program has not been without challenges, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 virus in November 2019.

Ongoing challenges with accountability and transitional justice in the Asia-Pacific region continue. Since the beginning of the pandemic, countries in the Asia-Pacific region have continued to struggle with issues of accountability, corruption, and impunity associated with authoritarian governments.

According to AJAR President Patrick Burgess, resources have been stolen in the last several decades in countries across the Asia-Pacific region and given to leaders and their allies instead of going to ordinary people. Today, these resources, which are scarce, are needed to help pay doctors and nurses, purchase medical equipment, and create hospitals during the pandemic. In addition to this problem, healthcare responses to the pandemic have been thwarted by poor leadership, leading to issues such as violations by security personnel who are tasked with implementing measures for appropriate social distancing.<sup>6</sup>

A survey conducted in early 2020 with survivors of human rights violations from Thailand, Indonesia and Timor-Leste revealed the impacts of impunity on government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of survivors. The report based on the survey results indicated that the pandemic has worsened inequalities among survivors of human rights violations in the Asia-Pacific region. Experiences during the pandemic can also cause survivors to feel re-traumatized, particularly in countries in which emergency powers are being used to handle the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Way Forward and Future Plans**

Despite the challenges that the Asia-Pacific region faces with peace, justice, and accountability, AJAR still strongly believes that creating social movements for accountability is of the utmost importance. It is important to hold governments and individuals accountable for human rights violations that have been committed. Following the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal No. 16, which focuses on providing peaceful, just, and inclusive societies as well as holding institutions accountable for violating these rights, AJAR aims to work on these goals during the years 2020 to 2022:<sup>8</sup>

1. Upgrading AJAR's technical capacity to deliver virtual trainings, produce remote popular education materials and digitalize reports and testimonies;
2. Working with survivors, their organizations and communities, by putting them at the center of its work to seek redress for violations, to learn from experience and to put in place mechanisms to ensure these violations are not repeated;
3. Collaborating and building solidarity with like-minded individuals from civil society and state institutions to address identified human rights issues;
4. Closely monitoring and analyzing AJAR's plans and approaches to ensure that the organization continues to make effective contributions for sustainable change;
5. Speaking truth to power in order to unveil or uncover human rights violations;
6. Creating learning and knowledge opportunities through south/south and south/north exchanges;
7. Engaging women and young people as change agents using innovative ways of working;
8. Investing in building AJAR's capacity, and the capacity of its local partners, to develop joint plans and ways of working for greater impact and sustainability; and
9. Increasingly working with government agencies and international mechanisms, improving linkages between grassroots movements, regional voices and institutions.

In addition to these future plans, a collaborative seven-day workshop on community strategies for supporting victims of torture and violence conducted in June 2014 yielded further ideas for moving AJAR's work forward in the future. The recommendations for future work included:<sup>9</sup>

1. Creating educational materials that can be translated into multiple languages and for different contexts in order to recognize symptoms of trauma and other mental health problems encountered by survivors of violence;
2. Creating training modules for individuals working with AJAR to better understand how to work with survivors of trauma, including key skills and principles for working with them effectively;
3. Developing relationships with trained psychologists and organizations that can provide support to the AJAR team in working with trauma survivors, including giving them training on appropriate interventions, counseling, and referrals;
4. Providing ongoing training in participatory action methodologies to other organizations working with survivors of trauma;
5. Providing exchange opportunities for those who work closely with trauma survivors. The opportunities could last between one and three months long and provide hands-on training;
6. Creating an organized map of the current services available to trauma and torture survivors in countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Endnotes

- 1 Data from Asia Justice and Rights Annual Report 2019, 2020, pages 3-4.
- 2 Asia Justice and Rights Annual Report 2019, 2020, page 22.
- 3 Ibid., page 16.
- 4 Ibid., page 9.
- 5 Mobilising Youth for Change: AJAR Timor-Leste's Human Rights and Social Justice School for Young Changemakers, 6 March 2019, <https://asia-ajar.org/2019/03/timor-leste-human-rights-school/>.
- 6 AJAR President Patrick Burgess commented on the impact of COVID-19 on transitional justice and accountability in the Asia Justice and Rights Annual Report 2019.
- 7 Surviving on Their Own? The Impact of the Pandemic on Vulnerable Victims of Human Rights Violations in Asia, 2020. [https://asia-ajar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WED-20.05-2020\\_REV-1.pdf](https://asia-ajar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WED-20.05-2020_REV-1.pdf)
- 8 Asia Justice and Rights Annual Report 2019, 2020, page 23.
- 9 Ibid.

# Making Justice as Mobile as Migrant Workers

Douglas Maclean

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**M**IGRANT WORKERS contribute enormously to Southeast Asia's development. Remittances totaled US \$33.7 for the Philippines and US \$11.2 billion for Indonesia.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that US \$50 billion is stolen from workers in the worst forms of exploitation in East and Southeast Asia every year.

Singapore and Hong Kong are key local destinations for female Filipino and Indonesian migrant domestic workers (MDWs), with over 620,000 MDWs in these cities.

Locally, double-income families and an ageing population put MDWs in high demand to take care of ageing parents and young children. Many families live a more comfortable life, thanks to the women who work for them.

Unfortunately, these women are also tempting targets for exploitation. They generate over US \$3.56 billion in wages, but face months of lost wages in illegal agency fees. Those abused or assaulted suffer psychological, emotional, and mental trauma, harming their lives and hindering their ability to return to work.

Migrant workers lack the resources to hire lawyers when things go wrong. Legal aid is still local, so most must give up their claims when they depart. Most aid agencies back home do not yet have the capacity to support overseas claims. Abusers thus avoid responsibility while victims return home empty-handed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a disaster for migrant workers. Domestic workers faced the worst of the fallout — employers and their families trapped at home during the pandemic led to rising tensions, and with it, violence. All of this is on top of the exploitation domestic workers have faced around illegal agency fees, unpaid salaries, and other difficult working conditions. As foreigners dependent upon their employers, and with few job prospects back home, they were even more vulnerable than before.

## Justice Without Borders

This is where our organization steps in. Our position as a regional non-governmental organization (NGO) with local offices allows us to develop essential crossborder expertise. Our work with local stakeholders grows capacity among those who directly serve hundreds of thousands of workers. Finally, our legal focus means we can drive test litigation, turning the extraordinary actions of today into the ordinary claims of tomorrow.

Justice Without Borders (JWB) is a regional non-profit organization that supports victims of labor exploitation and human trafficking in seeking compensation against their abusers, even after they return home. In Asia, we work across Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines to grow the capacity for access to justice. We then drive groundbreaking civil litigation that turns the extraordinary of crossborder compensation claims into the ordinary.

## Vision and Mission

JWB has the following vision and mission:

### Our Vision

We strive for a world where migrant workers can seek legal assistance for whatever has happened to them, wherever they are now.

### Our Mission

JWB creates transnational access to legal assistance for victims of labor exploitation and human trafficking so that they can seek rightful compensation, even after returning home.

It has a specific set of stakeholders:

We serve migrant workers who have faced labor exploitation and human trafficking. As a regional organization, we work with frontline aid organizations, caseworkers, government agencies, law firms, lawyers, law students, legal aid associations, and university clinical legal education programs. We are immensely thankful for the support of our funders who ensure that we can continue this work.

## How We Achieve Our Mission

JWB works based on several key ideas:

### Networks

Migrant workers are mobile, which means that they must be able to seek help wherever they are. They need a network of frontline organizations across the region to meet workers where they are. We help build those networks by growing the expertise of frontline organizations and connecting them to our partners across migration routes.

### Knowledge

Case workers and lawyers, working with migrant workers in their home countries, often do not know how to access justice abroad. Many issues migrant workers face are new questions of law. Our legal research guides the way in these new areas of practice, even before cases get to court.

### Know-how

There is no substitute for experience. We coordinate ground-breaking casework across borders to develop best practices in the field. Our goal: to turn the extraordinary of international legal action into the ordinary for migrant workers.



In 2020, JWB held several training activities in Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Training Program, 2020**

Training Workshops held	13
People trained	158 Caseworkers
	Community Paralegals and Lawyers 60 - Singapore 82 - Indonesia 16 - Hong Kong





## Hong Kong<sup>2</sup>

JWB partnered with the Federation of Asian Domestic Worker Unions (FADWU) to develop their members' case management skills to better handle the high volume of cases they regularly handle. The work goes beyond trainings to long-term membership, aimed at expanding the pool of expert case managers who can identify potential legal issues and act on them rapidly.

With funding from the International Labour Organization (ILO), JWB organized a seven-month training project for twenty members of FADWU's newly formed case team. The project ran from February to August 2019, and consisted of tailor-made training sessions and legal clinics for FADWU's Hong Kong-based caseworkers — members of the migrant domestic worker community who spend their free time identifying potential cases and bringing them to frontline NGOs or JWB.

Justine Lam, Head of JWB in Hong Kong, observed:

We believe that caseworkers are in an ideal position to identify potential cases, as they themselves are part of the community of domestic workers. By training our caseworkers on



migrant domestic worker rights and common employment law violations, they would be able to actively help their own community by spreading that knowledge and finding more cases that can potentially be referred to JWB for further action.

### *Casework Training Sessions & Legal Clinics*

The major components of the training project included 2 caseworker training sessions (held on 17th and 24th February 2019) and 2 legal clinics (held on 21st July and 11th August 2019). While the casework training sessions covered Hong Kong labor laws and provided opportunities for caseworkers to practice their new skills via case studies, the legal clinics focused on client interviewing skills. The trainees started with role-playing exercises before quickly advancing to actual client interviews where they carried out case intake and gave advice on evidence collection strategies.

Over the March – June 2019 period, JWB also facilitated multiple follow-ups with the caseworkers on their outreach initiatives and client meetings. This gave the caseworkers confidence as they navigated through the client interviews.

### *Turning from Good Outcomes to Long-Term Support*

At the end of the training project, there was very encouraging feedback from both participants and trainers alike. It was heartening to see how the caseworkers were eager to improve and learn new skills. JWB volunteer lawyers who were invited to observe and assess the caseworkers' interviewing skills also gave largely positive comments, with only minor areas for improvement.

Having gathered and trained a group of FADWU caseworkers to work in tandem with JWB, we will next develop their paralegal abilities, with a view to enabling them to acquire the expertise and knowledge needed in reaching beyond the client interview stage, to more challenging tasks such as accompanying our clients to Labour Department meetings or conciliation meetings at the Equal Opportunities Commission. In the long run, we hope that these competent caseworkers will be able to directly represent clients before Hong Kong's Labour and Small Claims tribunals.

### *Online awareness-raising*

As the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected vulnerable migrant workers, we held a series of webinars in collaboration with our part-

ner NGO, HELP for Domestic Workers, and published infographics on MDW rights for workers subjected to unfair or ill-treatment during COVID-19 pandemic. We soon received multiple queries from workers who were, unfortunately, terminated due to their inability to travel back to Hong Kong after their vacation. We subsequently took on some of these cases while referring others to our partner organizations in Hong Kong.

*How did capacity-building efforts change during COVID-19 pandemic?*

We successfully launched a one-year mentorship program with the Federation of Asian Domestic Workers Unions in November 2020. We had to monitor the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong while organizing training events. Some events became virtual conferences, but we also managed to conduct two training workshops in-person with social distancing measures in place. Despite these changes, we have always endeavored to maintain a high level of engagement with our participants, and ensure that our efforts translate into real impact on the migrant worker community.

*The Frontlines of Access to Justice*

Migrant worker unions in Hong Kong are the first point of contact for many workers who are in trouble. As migrant workers themselves, their members are key allies in making access to justice possible. JWB's capacity-building programs aim to equip union caseworkers with the knowledge and know-how needed to help clients who stay in Hong Kong, as well as those who are soon going home.

Rather than just one or two-day workshops, JWB now runs full mentorship programs that take participants through a year-long journey of learning, practice and coaching by experts in the field.

In December 2020, JWB launched the first training session of its new mentorship cycle for FADWU, which included twelve case workers. Led by one of the mentors, Julianne Chan, the workshop revolved around three roleplay exercises, each designed to illustrate a different employment issue typically encountered by a domestic worker. These included unlawful deduction of wages for medical expenses or failing to provide rest days. Each roleplay also featured a different client demeanor to teach participants how to conduct interviews professionally while showing empathy and building trust.

After each roleplay, participants were led through debriefing sessions by their facilitator, which discussed the caseworker's professionalism and specific factual issues about the cases to ensure active learning and participation. Julianne also delivered a series of short presentations with analysis of the legal issues involved in each role-play.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the role plays were pre-recorded videos, while the third took place in small groups in separate rooms. This gave participants a chance to practice conducting an interview with the facilitator acting as the client. It also allowed participants to practice the lessons learned from the training in the context of a real-life situation.

Julian Ng, one of the facilitators and a Legal Fellow at JWB noted:

I was very proud of how my group stepped up to the challenge of the exercise.

They showed they had absorbed the material by touching on the main issues with clear questions, handling the clients' emotional concerns in a professional manner, and being systematic with how they led the session and communicated follow-up steps.





## Singapore

Since 2017, JWB has trained more than 1,200 caseworkers, community paralegals, and lawyers to enhance cross-border access to justice. In light of the COVID-19 controls, all forms of in-person meetings and training were cancelled. In August 2020, JWB rolled out its first series of online training workshops in Singapore in collaboration with NGO partners, Suara Kita and

Humanitarian Organization for Migrant Economics (HOME) via Zoom and Webex. Fifteen MDWs participated in each 90-minute session. 86 percent of the participants found the session effective and the information well-structured and easy to understand, according to feedback polls held after each session.

JWB prepared for this online training by experimenting with different online conferencing platforms and holding numerous dry runs with pro bono lawyer presenters and interpreters. To compensate for the lack of interaction, JWB adopted hypothetical scenarios from MDWs' experience to teach legal concepts.

Using online polls and breakout rooms, participants felt more at ease to respond. Muslim Albakri, a pro bono lawyer and session trainer, observed that in an online context, it is harder to read body language, gauge reactions and assess the level of understanding.

Nevertheless, the online forum also allowed for greater interaction with partners overseas. The remote nature of this training allowed Dian, a long time volunteer interpreter, to assist in one of the training workshops, despite being based in Australia. Tan Jun Yin, JWB's Head of Singapore, said we reached more workers than before because they saved the travel time and cost of attending a physical workshop. They did not need to wait for a rest day to tune in to the 90-120 minute session. Following the success of this online training, JWB is exploring other online opportunities, including recording informative podcasts for MDWs. Beyond Singapore, preliminary discussions are underway on rolling out similar workshops in Banyumas (Central Java), Banyuwangi (East Java), and West Java with our various NGO partners in Indonesia.



## Indonesia

### *#PercayaBersama: Our Indonesian Campaign on Access to Justice, Even After Returning Home*

Very few migrant workers returning to Indonesia know that they can seek justice after they return home. The Percaya Bersama, or “Together We Believe” campaign, sought to raise awareness that claims for exploitation or abuse were not only possible, but have been successful.

JWB partnered with public relations agencies, Cognito and Media Buffet, to deliver a powerful video story on our client Nisa’s journey, from abuse to justice.

The video and resulting media launch were a huge success. It reached over one million daily views via seventeen news stories in the Indonesian media. Its wide online promotion reached over 200,000 viewers in a very short time.

Best of all, the project generated more inquiries from workers and their families than before. With abuse of domestic workers on the rise during COVID-19, the Percaya Bersama campaign was a key component in letting those in need know that help is available.

The video depicts Nisa’s life as an Indonesian migrant domestic worker working in Singapore. Nisa suffered abuse, both physically and verbally, at the hands of her employer. She was isolated and not allowed to use a cellphone. After being bitten by the employer’s dog, she was forced to pay her own hospital bills. She decided to take her own life, but then found the courage to flee from her place of work to her friend’s place. From there, she reached out to the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), a Singaporean front-line organization, which made it possible for her to contact JWb. After fifteen months, she received compensation (which was seven times her monthly wage) despite having returned to Indonesia, and working in another country since the claim was made. The video is a tribute to justice prevailing and the protection of migrant domestic workers’ rights.

This short movie was directed by Sindy Febriyani and Alvian Eka Putra. The actor that played Nisa was Riri Silalahi. After careful consideration, the video shoot was moved to Bogor, West Java, because of the rising COVID-19 cases in Jakarta at the time. Afina Nurul Faizah and the JWb PR and Operations team spent three nights in a lodge which was turned into a mini studio. The campaign is the very first public relations campaign by JWb.

During the media launch attended by JWB’s frontline partners, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia, the campaign was commended for showcasing JWB’s cross-border civil litigation capacity. A number of new opportunities have already emerged as a result of the launch event, with MOFA openly communicating its intention to complete a joint work program with JWB in order to build knowledge of cross-border civil litigation among its diplomats in Singapore and Hong Kong. MOFA considers this to be an incredible opportunity to help its diplomats in completing their protective obligations in the two jurisdictions.





The campaign, #PercayaBersama, aims to ensure that Indonesians, especially migrant domestic workers, believe that just compensation is possible where rights have been violated and this was successfully communicated to the Indonesian media in our first PR campaign. To date, seventeen news stories have been published on the #PercayaBersama campaign; some of which have had more than a million daily views, far exceeding the campaign's key performance indicators. The campaign reached its peak in December 2020 with 200,000 views on our Indonesian Facebook page. As a direct result of this awareness campaign, JWB has been busy receiving inquiries from Indonesian migrant workers.

The initial idea of JWB's #PercayaBersama was to create awareness among the Indonesian media and the wider public about the abuses that migrant domestic workers face and to demonstrate that there are ways to challenge this through the power of cross-border litigation. Through news coverage and the use of social media, we hope that Indonesians will also spread the news by word of mouth to such an extent that it is a commonplace "coffee shop" topic. We would like to see many more Indonesian MDWs coming forward to pursue justice.

### **The Road Ahead**

The next two years may look a lot like 2020: an uncertain environment thanks to COVID-19. Migrant workers abroad may still be unable to return



home, or flight routes might reopen and a flood of returnees and new departures may create new challenges for them and the communities that support them.

We are facing this uncertainty with three concrete strategies: help those in need today, raise awareness online for workers and their communities, and support our frontline partners in preparing for the inevitable return of workers trapped abroad.

Together, these strategies keep us focused on the here and now while preparing for a future that may come soon or that may take some time to arrive. Thankfully, our partners and donors have remained a constant support throughout. We look forward to working together in 2021 and beyond to ensure that migrant workers can seek justice, even after they return home.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Migrant domestic workers drive growth and encourage female participation in Asian economies” — *ASEAN Today*, 13 March 2019, [www.aseantoday.com/2019/03/migrant-domestic-workers-drive-growth-and-encourage-female-participation-in-asian-economies/](http://www.aseantoday.com/2019/03/migrant-domestic-workers-drive-growth-and-encourage-female-participation-in-asian-economies/).

<sup>2</sup> Part of this report is taken from “Hong Kong: Workers Helping Workers as JWB Launches Caseworker Training Project for Local Domestic Worker Union,” 2 October 2019, <https://forjusticewithoutborders.org/hong-kong-workers-helping-workers-as-jwb-launches-caseworker-training-project-for-local-domestic-worker-unions/>.

# Promoting Human Rights through Dialogue in ASEAN

Yuyun Wahyuningrum

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**T**HE ESTABLISHMENT of a regional human rights mechanism by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2009 was welcomed with mixed responses from the general public. The mechanism, known as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), has been criticized for having more mandate for human rights promotion than for human rights protection.

While strengthening its power to protect the human rights of the people of ASEAN member-states is very important, the promotional role of AICHR should not be underestimated. There are many initiatives that can be categorized as human rights promotion activities such as mainstreaming human rights, capacity-building, and dialogue to name a few. This article focuses on dialogue as a form of human rights promotion.

## Human Rights Dialogue with ASEAN Member States

Various referred to as a modality, a project, an activity and a method, the term “dialogue” is not unfamiliar in ASEAN. It can be found in numerous ASEAN outcome documents, agreements and statements, including in the Terms of Reference (TOR) Article 4.8 that tasks AICHR to engage in dialogue and consultation with stakeholders on human rights.<sup>1</sup> While ASEAN member-states (AMS) are the main bearer of duty to uphold human rights, AICHR interaction with them is less compared to interaction with the civil society organizations, ASEAN sectoral bodies and scholars in the subregion.

The first Human Rights Dialogue with AMS happened in 2013 and was hosted by the government of Indonesia. This Dialogue (often called a mini-UPR [Universal Period Review of the United Nations]) was designed as a space for AMS and AICHR Representatives to discuss the human rights situation in the subregion. In 2013, the government of Indonesia shared the progress and challenges of upholding human rights since the political and

economic reforms in 1998. Member-states such as Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand probed Indonesia on some human rights issues.

This Dialogue was recognized as a good example of the fact that human rights discussion can be done effectively without employing the “naming and shaming” approach. Not only that it received positive responses from AICHR Representatives and AMS officials, but this Dialogue also introduced a new way of discussing human rights in the context of the “ASEAN Way” of non-interference principle.

After seven years of hiatus, AICHR included the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue as its priority program for 2021. On 21 September 2021, AICHR hosted the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue combining the physical meeting in Jakarta and video conference. This Dialogue was attended by forty participants from ten AMS, including the AICHR Representatives, and officials of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Law and Human Rights, Ministries of Internal Affairs, Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, and ASEAN Secretariat.

Different from the Dialogue in 2013, in the 2021 Dialogue eight out of ten AMS voluntarily provided human rights briefings on best practices and challenges in complying with the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and other international human rights instruments, including ensuring the inclusion of human rights in measures to address COVID-19. Cambodia and Brunei Darussalam participated in the Dialogue but decided to observe the process.

In the Dialogue, AMS interacted on each other’s human rights issues including best practices in fulfilling the right to education and the right to health during the pandemic, measures to ensure freedom of expression and opinion online, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of association, civil society engagement, death penalty, the implementation of the rights of migrant workers, the rights of the child, the rights of women, the rights of persons with disabilities, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), business and human rights, the rights of older persons, and measures on the prevention of torture.

The AMS officials also discussed the progress of their countries’ ratification of international human rights conventions, cooperation with the United

Nations and strategies in implementing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations.

At the end of the Dialogue, some AMS expressed the view that the ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue displayed the positive contributions to the development of human rights in the subregion and thus proposed to continue holding it. One of them wanted to include the participation of stakeholders such as civil society organizations in the dialogue process.

It is important that the Dialogue becomes a regular event in ASEAN to help establish a subregional practice of debating the member-countries' human rights situation without being accused of breaching the non-interference principle, and of seeking further subregional cooperation on human rights. To arrive at this point, there are requirements to be satisfied, including (a) the agreement among AMS on the conduct of the Dialogue, (b) willingness of AMS officials to interact, ask and answer questions without feeling threatened, (c) ensuring a safe space for AMS officials to share their concerns and (d) developing the agreed modalities together.

A Dialogue can be an effective human rights policy tool if it is based on cooperation, persuasion, trust and recognition that all participants of the Dialogue are equal partners. While the Dialogue can be directed to the formulation of regional goals on human rights, it is equally important to appreciate its step-by-step process and its role in maintaining cordial relations between and among AMS regarding human rights issues.

For AICHR, the Dialogue provides an opportunity to seek information and receive an update on the national human rights situations as implementation of Article 4.10 (To develop strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms to complement the building of the ASEAN Community) of the TOR. Dialogue may also provide "the most appropriate and efficient framework [for raising] human rights concerns" and contribute to a mutual understanding of AMS' social contexts. The regular convening of Dialogue among AMS with AICHR as facilitator would elevate its (AICHR) role in the subregion.

The coverage of the Dialogue can be expanded to include civil society organizations and its procedures can be improved when the AMS are ready for such changes. Holding Dialogue regularly may also lead to the shaping of a desired regional human rights body that fit the context of ASEAN.

AICHR's indispensable role as the overarching human rights body in Southeast Asia that promotes and protects human rights and fundamen-

tal freedoms cannot be overstated. The effective implementation of AICHR's mandate and functions as provided in its TOR is key to securing AICHR's meaningful contribution to the building of the people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN community.

### **Other Initiatives related to Human Rights Dialogue**

AICHR has also organized a series of dialogues on human rights with stakeholders such as civil society, national, regional and international human rights institutions and ASEAN sectoral bodies. For instance, AICHR engaged with different stakeholders when drafting the AHRD in 2011 and 2012.

In 2015, AICHR organized the Dialogue with ASEAN Community Councils on AHRD and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, AICHR hosted a Civil Society Organizations Symposium and in 2019 AICHR held A Roundtable Discussion with civil society organizations in an event called Jakarta-AICHR Human Rights Dialogue (JHRD). The participants of JHRD recommended having regular dialogue with stakeholders and exploring ways of ensuring ASEAN as a safe region for human rights defenders.

As for engagement with NHRIS, AICHR included in its regular meeting in 2019 a session with Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF). The 2019 meeting was followed by another meeting in 2020. AICHR also held regular human rights policy dialogue with external partners such as with the European Union since 2015 and with the United Nations since 2011.

### **Human Rights Dialogue: Indispensable in ASEAN**

Human Rights Dialogue is not only a promotional activity but also a diplomacy tool in dealing with human rights issues of AMS. It provides a space for peer pressure and is a powerful persuasion tool. Human Rights Dialogue has the potential of improving respect for human rights, facilitating a platform for diffusion of human rights norms among AMS, discussing challenges to complying with their international human rights obligations, and helping accelerate cooperation on human rights within ASEAN.

For the stakeholders, Human Rights Dialogue is also an effective way to surface issues that concern the people the most. As ASEAN is moving

forward to ensure that it works toward a people-centred, people-oriented community, the organization needs more dialogue platforms to make the voices of the people heard and respected.

## **Endnotes**

1 “4.8. To engage in dialogue and consultation with other ASEAN bodies and entities associated with ASEAN, including civil society organisations and other stakeholders, as provided for in Chapter V of the ASEAN Charter,” Terms of Reference of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, <https://aichr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/TOR-of-AICHR.pdf>.

2 For information on this Dialogue see Press Release: The AICHR Dialogue with ASEAN Community Councils on the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD, 25 – 26 May 2015, Jakarta, Indonesia, <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-the-aichr-dialogue-with-asean-community-councils-on-the-asean-human-rights-declaration-ahrd-and-the-phnom-penh-statement-on-the-adoption-of-the-ahrd-25-26-may-2015-jakarta-indones/>.



# Liberation War Museum and Human Rights Education

Mofidul Hoque

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**B**ANGLADESH gained its independence in 1971 after nine months of brutal war of liberation triggered by the Pakistani military junta's annulling of the results of the 1970 democratic election and genocidal attack on the population of Eastern Pakistan, which crushed the Bengali independence movement and exterminated all opposition to its power. While the war ended with Bangladesh's independence, it left behind three million dead, ten million displaced to India and 200,000 victims of sexual violence.<sup>1</sup>

Only four years later, President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in a military coup, and a long period of autocratic rule followed during which the history of the nation's independence struggle was distorted and democratic secular values were trampled. To combat this intellectual assault, eight activists<sup>2</sup> from different backgrounds joined together to establish the Liberation War Museum (Museum) also known as Muktijuddho Jadughar in 1996. They became the original Trustees of the Museum. Established to collect and disseminate a non-partisan history of the war of independence, the Museum connects this history to Bangladesh's contemporary struggles and advocates for humanitarian and democratic values. The Museum's chief goal is to bring the history of the war into focus for the present generation, so that they might understand the past and its present implications.

## **Collection of Historical Materials**

The Museum has an impressive collection of original documents, rare photographs, newspaper cuttings, weapons and artifacts from Liberation War. Personal diaries, guns, flags, mementos, letters and clothes belonging to the brave freedom fighters are on exhibit. The history of the long struggle for independence, including the language movement of 1952 and mass protests of the 1960s, is portrayed through different pictures and objects. Photographs of the historic 7 March 1971 speech by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his pipe, coat, pen, autograph and some other personal belongings are also on display.

The Museum regularly organizes exhibitions and events to highlight the freedom struggle of the country. It also has a library and an audio-visual



center. The museum library has a collection of around 7,000 books on the Liberation War. Visitors can sit and read the books inside the library, or buy them from the bookstore. The library has big collection of war-based novels, stories, poems, posters, and banners.<sup>3</sup>





### **Programs for Students and Youth**

The Museum initiated a number of programs for students and youth from late 1990s. The programs generally aimed at making students and youth become aware of the history of Bangladesh especially its Liberation War.

Two of its most popular youth programs have been the Outreach and the Reach Out programs. Through the Outreach program, started in 1997, students of educational institutions in and around Dhaka get the opportunity to visit the Museum, while through the Reach Out program, which began in 2001, Museum buses take selected exhibits to schools and colleges in other districts of the country.

In 1997, the Museum started bringing in students under the Outreach program from the various schools of Dhaka city to its facility for exposure to the museum exhibits, including watching films on the emergence of Bangladesh and joining a quiz competition on what they had learned about the Liberation War.

In 2004, the Museum included in the program (in addition to the short exposure to the museum exhibits), a quiz program, education activities on their rights as children and human beings and also on becoming global citizen, in which tolerance and a pluralist society were promoted.

These measures to maximize the impact of the Museum visit are explained in the following manner:<sup>4</sup>

Our programs have long emphasized the need for students to take a civic and moral role as responsible citizens of the nation. To inspire knowledge and understanding, our youth programs always begin with a tour of the museum and an “instant quiz” to get students reflecting on and interacting with the material. In order to stem future historical distortions and ensure a democratic secular Bangladesh, it is essential that the younger generation start owning the history of the war.

Up until June 2020, 280,147 school-children of Dhaka city have visited the Museum in this way.

### **Reach-Out School Program**

In 2001, to increase accessibility, the Museum started a program of bringing mobile exhibitions all over the country. Three years later, in 2004, the Museum redesigned the program to present history to the students in the towns and villages of the country. This is the Reach-Out School Program which aims to educate the students on the glory and the pain that the Bengali nation had experienced in 1971. Another component of the program is to combat the growing intolerance and human rights abuses in the present society. Through this program, students are taught that tolerance has been an intrinsic Bengali trait for centuries and in the globalized world today, one of the most important needs of the society is to respect the otherness of the other person.

The Reach-Out School Program has several components, namely:

- School exhibits;
- Film showing;
- Exhibition on “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and “If the world had been one village”;
- Focused group meetings with students and networking with teachers;
- Oral History project.

Since 2014 another bus has been added to the fleet. The Mobile Museums hold exhibits in the schools for the students. Students from nearby schools that are not in the itinerary of the Mobile Museum also visit the exhibits in the afternoon. Adults from the village also visit the exhibits. The exhibits consist of more than two hundred fifty artefacts, documents and photos. They also display few original items from the museum collection. This can be called a mini-museum.





The Mobile Museums also held screening of films on struggle for independence. The twenty-two-minute documentary consisting of original footages introduces the students to the real scenes of historical events and has great impact on them.

A separate exhibition on “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and “If the world had been one village” of the Mobile Museum highlights the pluralistic world that the students will encounter when they step outside their own world. The exhibits consist of two series of cartoons made by prominent painters on the themes “global village” and the “30 Universal Human Rights.” This special exhibition also aims to combat the growing intolerance and human rights abuses in society. Students learn about other people and human rights using the two series of cartoons being exhibited. Relevant examples are also drawn from incidents of the Liberation War to illustrate these two issues.

The Mobile Museums also hold focused group meetings with students and network with teachers. The meetings with students discuss the role they can play in retrieving history. They are encouraged to look for evidences of local history. Networking with the teachers helps the Museum to understand the challenges, problems and prospects of history education. The visit to the remote locations creates the opportunity for the Mobile Museums to gather support for the students there to join the Oral History project. Students above grade V are encouraged to interview elders in the family to recount their experiences and role during the Liberation War. The young students make written scripts of these interviews and submit them to the Museum.

The same program is applied to students who visit the Museum in Dhaka.

In doing oral interviews, students receive first-rate knowledge of a part of the national history. In this way, the Museum contributes to younger generations owning their history and in turn empowers them to fight back against the distortion of this history. In this respect, the increasing participation of youth in Museum programs kindles a ray of hope for the future.

Since the project started in 2004, more than 60,000 pieces of oral history have been collected. These written scripts are preserved in Museum archives and also posted in its website.<sup>5</sup> The most moving and revealing stories are printed as wall magazines and distributed to the schools (till date, thirty-two wall magazines have been published). The selected oral testimonies of the students have been published in nine volumes by the Museum.

The Museum communicates with the teaching representatives (known as Network Teachers) in order to collect the oral testimonies. Till August 2021, 2,449 Network Teachers have been working in this Reach-Out School Program.

The Program is valuable because it<sup>6</sup>

- a. helps to develop the writing skill and creativity of students;
- b. provides confidence to the students in undertaking individual projects they themselves selected, conduct an independent interview, make a written version of the statement and send their writing to the Museum through the Network Teachers;
- c. helps address the confusion among students about the country's history caused by the distortion and debate regarding the history of Liberation War and the tinkering with the textbooks by the respective governments. But through the process employed, the students can understand history not only based on what is written in the textbooks, but also history that they can find in their own local area.

The huge collection of statements has become a rich storehouse of historical facts. Oral accounts collected from a particular area reflect the local history as well. These collected oral accounts are organized into one folder and shared with the community where they are drawn from. This contributes to creating a new kind of synergy in the community by sharing historical experiences. Students and teachers are encouraged to invite selected

persons whose oral accounts have been collected to join the national day festivals in the schools and share in more detail their narratives. Students are also encouraged to identify local sites or killing fields and make arrangements to take care of them.

The number of students in the villages outside the capital city who have been exposed to this Reach-Out School Program so far is 1,324,471 (as of August 2021). Though not part of the education program, the exhibits of the bus are also visited in the afternoon by children from nearby schools and by the adults of the village. Till August 2021, around 9,43,881 adults from the localities have visited the exhibits of the bus in this way.

The Bangladesh Government, impressed enough by the success of this Reach-Out School Program, donated a second bus to the Museum, thus doubling the capacity to visit rural areas. The buses have covered four hundred thirty-two *Upazillas* (sub-districts) of sixty-four districts of the country including 2,035 educational institutions. They are doing another round of covering the whole country.

Currently, the Reach-Out Program is being funded by the Bangladesh government.

### **Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial**

The Museum inaugurated on 21 June 2007 the Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial. This is the site of mass killing by the West Pakistani army in 1971. The site was excavated in 1999 and revealed skulls and bones of men, women and children inside an abandoned pit of a pump-house. This place is just one of the many killing field sites in the country.

The Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial has become a place for victim-families who live in different parts of the country to gather. This gathering of victim-family members led to the organization of a Committee of Victim-Family Members. The Committee holds annual get-together at the site on Independence Day. LWM organizes a program at the site for students to meet members of the martyrs' families and hear their story. This sharing of stories has a healing effect on the trauma suffered.







### Visit by Undergraduate Students

In addition to school children, the Museum has attracted the attention of students in colleges and universities. Undergraduate students in these colleges and universities visit the Museum as a requirement in the different courses they have enrolled in.

The Department of Economics and Social Sciences (ESS) of BRAC University organized a visit to the Museum for students taking Bangladesh Studies (DEV101) course in June 2009. The students were informed about the history and culture of Bangladesh as well as historical perspectives, archeological evidence and importance of Lalbagh Fort during Mughal period.<sup>7</sup>

The Department of Sociology of East West University arranged a field trip to the Museum on June 29, 2019 as part of the course “GEN 226: Emergence of Bangladesh.” The following report on the visit states:<sup>8</sup>

On arrival, students came to know about the four galleries of the Museum which display the heroic struggle of our people for establishing their identity as an independent nation from the British regime as well as the struggle for democracy, political and economic emancipation from 1947 and finally their armed struggle during the 9-month long War of Liberation in 1971. Students were shown a documentary on the Liberation War. The documentary illustrated the background of the Liberation War, historic events, and sacrifices of the three million Bengalis respectively. Subsequently, they participated in a quiz competition which concluded with the prize giving ceremony and correction of the wrong answers. Ten students were awarded in the quiz competition. Students showed their utmost love and respect for the national heroes who sacrificed their valuable life for the establishment of the independent Bangladesh.

Ninety law students of the Department of Law, East West University (EWU) joined a half-day long Study Tour of the Museum on 22 June 2019. After visiting the Museum, the students took a written examination contest on what they learned from the Museum. The three highest scorers were awarded with books by the Museum for their excellent performances in the examination.

The student who received the highest score, Imran Hasan Shaikat, expressed his thoughts about the visit:<sup>9</sup>

at our visit at the galleries, we came to know about many historical artifacts including personal belongings, weapons and human remains in relation to our Liberation War 1971. We also went through many archived documents and personal histories of the freedom fighters. We learned about many unknown histories and realized that we still do not know the actual history and true facts about our Liberation War. The museum showed us, in

short, the images of liberation struggle, importance of leadership, inhumanity of Pakistani militaries, patriotism of Bengali people, and birth of a new nation. I believe that the visit to the LWM is a very important tool for teaching the youths and giving them a sense of pride about our Liberation War. I would like to thank the Department of Law, EWU for giving us such an opportunity to visit the LWM.

Students of the Department of Media and Communication of Independent University, Bangladesh taking the course entitled “Bangladesh 1971 through the lenses” (BDS 109) visited the Museum on 9 November 2017. The Museum visit has become a semestral activity to help the students relate the Museum exhibits to the topics taught in class.<sup>10</sup>

Students of Eastern University toured the Museum on 27 July 2017 as part of the Bangladesh Studies course. This tour is a common platform for students of various disciplines including law and English of the university. In this July 2017 tour, the students watched documentaries on historic events like the non-cooperation movement, genocide, general election of 1970s and the liberation of 1971.<sup>11</sup>

### **Liberation DocFest Bangladesh**

The Museum started in 2012 the International Festival of Docufilm on Liberation and Human Rights, which was subsequently renamed Liberation DocFest Bangladesh. This film festival is dedicated to documentary cinema, seeking to highlight the struggle for liberation and human rights of people in various parts of the world and its contemporary significance. It seeks to uphold new forms of viewing the human suffering and struggle for justice in global perspective. The film festival also focuses on breaking new ground and on the great diversity and vitality of storytelling and creativity of the documentary genre.

The film festival features various sections and workshops, and provides an opportunity to engage with young filmmakers and youth around the topic of human rights.

The main program consists of the International Film Panorama Section and the competitive National Section. There is also a non-competition section called Cinema of the World.

The Exposition Young Film Talents: Story Telling Lab (EYFT Lab) is a project development and funding workshop. Submissions on fresh project

ideas are accepted and fifteen projects are selected for workshop. Experts guide the participants in developing the project ideas. The workshop ends with a pitching session. The best two projects are funded by the Museum with five lakhs and three lakhs funding support respectively.

In the 7th Festival, held on 18-22 April 2019,<sup>12</sup> featured films were from Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, China, India, the US and Indonesia alongside those from Bangladesh.

Several Bangladeshi documentaries—"Jathorleena," "Lal Sabujer Deepabali," "Merciless Mayhem," "Janani Jantrana" and "Shabdoshena"—entered the competition section, Documenting 1971 and Beyond.

Foreign documentaries included "The Look of Silence" (Denmark), "Austerlitz" (Germany), "The Third Breast" (India), "The Girl and the Picture" (USA), "Stranger in Paradise" (the Netherlands), and "The Supreme Price" (Nigeria).

A Special Focus of the 7th Film Festival was on the Rohingya persecution.

A workshop on Documenting Mass Atrocity: Survivor's Testimony was organized in collaboration with the University of South California Shoah Foundation.

A series of workshops was held at educational institutions to teach students about making film with a smartphone. This activity resulted in the screening of twenty-five one-minute films on past atrocities made by students.

A project development workshop enabled twelve young Bangladeshi filmmakers to pitch and develop their project under the guidance of two renowned filmmakers from India. At the end, the best project received support to complete the film.

The 8th edition of the film festival was supposed to be held from 2-6 April 2020. But due to the outbreak of COVID-19 virus a countrywide lockdown was declared and the Museum like many other institutions was closed. The film festival had to be postponed, but later on held as an online film festival from 16 to 20 June 2020, the first such film festival to be held online in South Asia.

EYFT Lab 2020 was organized online from 28 April to 5 May 2020 with thirteen young filmmakers from Bangladesh pitching their film projects. Renowned Director of Manipur Film Institute, Nilotpal Majumdar, and awarded documentary filmmaker, Sourov Sarengi, mentored the pitching sessions. Two projects were given awards:

1. “Sumon Delwar” – “Jolgerilla” (জলগেরিলা)
  2. “Biplob Sarker” – “Bismritojon” (বিস্মৃতজন)
- One project received a certificate of Merit – “Goal” by Amena Akter.

### Special Day Celebrations<sup>13</sup>

The Museum regularly organizes programs on human rights issues. Muktir Utsob (Freedom Festival) is a significant event of the Museum that students from different schools, colleges and universities attend. Last year, the event was organized on the Dhaka University campus. Songs, dances, quiz and poetry recitation were the main highlights of the event.

Students of different schools, colleges and universities regularly participate in the programs organized by the Museum, and because of their vibrant presence, the programs are becoming huge successes.

Kazi Samin Yasar, a 16-year-old student was impressed about the Museum while it was housed in the smaller building:

I have come to this museum for the first time. I am studying O-Levels and I don't know much about this place. My father is a freedom fighter and he always tells us stories about our Liberation War. Recently, he suggested that I visit the museum before it moves from Segun Bagicha. We all know about our Liberation War. But I believe that unless you visit the museum, you really can't get a good idea and comprehend what was actually going on during those turbulent days. I am really excited to look through the museum's vast enriching displays. I truly understand the significance of this place.

I believe every student should visit this museum to learn about our Liberation War. Visiting the museum is a fun way to relax and learn about our history. My visit really inspired me to know and explore different unknown facts about our struggle for independence.

Visiting the Museum in its bigger facility can elicit more reactions about the history of liberation war. The Museum also addresses the confusion among many students between Independence Day (March 26) and Victory Day (December 16) by providing an opportunity to clarify the matter through the exhibits. It also hosts various events on special days, such as Independence Day, Victory Day and Pahela Boishakh.<sup>14</sup>



## Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice

The Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ) started its journey in 2014 under the umbrella of the Museum aiming to organize and promote research, documentation, study, education and networking on genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Bangladesh and other parts of the world. CSGJ offers regular certificate course, organizes the Annual Winter School, provides fellowship, and publishes scholarly publications since its inception.

One of the main functions of CSGJ is to educate the young academics, researchers, students, and related professionals about genocide and justice through the certificate course. Since 2014, six batches of students have successfully completed the program. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CSGJ initiated month-long online certificate course. In this course, eminent experts and practitioners give lectures on topics related to international crimes, transitional justice, legal aspects of trial of perpetrators of genocidal crime, etc. In 2020-2021, CSGJ organized four online certificate courses for more than one hundred students and young professionals.

### Winter School

Since 2014, the CSGJ has been hosting an annual week-long residential program for students and young academics known as the Winter School. The program is specially designed for students of Law, Sociology, International Relations, Peace and Conflict Studies, Women and Gender, etc., to provide an in-depth knowledge on genocide-related issues from national and international perspectives. So far CSGJ has organized six Annual Winter Schools.

### Research Activities

#### 1. CSGJ Junior Research Fellowship Programme

CSGJ launched the “Junior Research Fellowship Programme” in 2020 to promote young and independent researchers. The Fellowship Programme provides support to selected youth to do research under a supervisor based on their proposals. Till 2021, two batches of students under this program have successfully completed their research work. Priority areas under this Fellowship include genocide, transitional justice, liberation war, peace studies, etc.

## 2. Rohingya Research

After the sudden influx of the persecuted Rohingya people into Bangladesh in August 2017, the researchers of CSGJ visited the makeshift camps located in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. As a follow-up, the CSGJ team visited the camps five more times from October 2017 till July 2019 to conduct further research. The CSGJ team also participated in pre-field visit workshops conducted by United Nations Development Programme, the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and reputed experts. Primary data was collected from the victims and eye-witnesses and survivors through testimony and in-depth interview. In addition, the findings of the research were recorded and later transcribed by the CSGJ team.

## Publications

CSGJ publishes books, booklets, journals, etc. apart from playing active role in research. Notable publications are *Prosecution of Genocide for the Massacre of Intellectuals: A Legal Study* under the supervision of Professor Laurel E. Fletcher of Yale University (published in June 2021); *The Rohingya Genocide: Compilation and Analysis of Survivors' Testimonies* edited by Mofidul Hoque and co-edited by Emraan Azad, Shaoli Dasgupta and Naureen Rahim (published in January 2019); *The Testimony of Sixty on the Crisis of Rohingyas in Myanmar* (published in October 2017); and *From Genocide to Justice: National and Global Perspective* (journal of the first Winter School, published in 2014).

## The Future

It is fitting that I end this article with the statement I made in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic:<sup>15</sup>

Global crisis has given rise to global solidarity. The crisis brought forward the fundamental questions of existence, inequality, destruction of environment, harmony within human community as well as between nature and human habitat.

We do not know what the future holds for us but we are sure to enter into a new and much more difficult world where we need to build a global solidarity to be more responsible, more profound in our thinking and collaborative acts. We need to redefine memorialisation based on new reality.



## Endnotes

1 Texts from Akku Chowdhury, *Engaging Youth in an Unknown History*, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, [www.sitesofconscience.org/en/2017/03/engaging-youth-in-an-unknown-history/](http://www.sitesofconscience.org/en/2017/03/engaging-youth-in-an-unknown-history/).

2 Aly Zaker, Dr. Sarwar Ali, Mofidul Hoque, Asaduzzaman Noor, Rabiul Hussain, Ziauddin Tariq Ali, Akku Chowdhury, and Sara Zaker.

3 Texts in this section drawn from Sheikh Iraj, "Liberation War Museum," *The Independent*, 23 March, 2017, <https://m.theindependentbd.com/printversion/details/86677>.

4 Akku Chowdhury, *op. cit.*

5 The stories are accessible online in Bangla language: [www.liberationwarmuseumbd.org/oral-history/](http://www.liberationwarmuseumbd.org/oral-history/).

6 Based on Mofidul Hoque, "Role of Liberation War Museum in Memorialisation: Collection of Eye-witness Accounts by the Students," paper presented at the Forum to discuss the creation of TRC's National Research Centre, Vancouver, Canada, 1-3 March, 2011. Text available at [www.lord.ca/CulturalCapital/Spring2012/TRCS-National-Research-Centre-by-Mofidul-Hoque.pdf](http://www.lord.ca/CulturalCapital/Spring2012/TRCS-National-Research-Centre-by-Mofidul-Hoque.pdf).

7 Liberation War Museum visit by the Students of Bangladesh Studies, 21 June 2009, [www.bracu.ac.bd/news/liberation-war-museum-visit-students-bangladesh-studies](http://www.bracu.ac.bd/news/liberation-war-museum-visit-students-bangladesh-studies).

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13 Sheikh Iraj, "Liberation War Museum," *op. cit.*

14 Sheikh Iraj, *ibid.*

15 Mofidul Hoque, "Liberation War Museum Bangladesh In the time of Pandemic," <http://icmemo.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2020/05/2.-Mofidul-Liberation-War-Museum.pdf>.

# JTU: Working towards Non-discrimination and Inclusion in School and Society

Japan Teachers' Union

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**A**FTER WORLD WAR II ENDED, the All Japan Teachers' Unions Association, National Federation of Teachers' Unions and Association of University and Technical Colleges Educators' Unions representing around 500,000 teacher-members in different parts of Japan agreed on 8 June 1947 to unite into one nation-wide organization. This gave birth to Japan Teachers' Union (JTU).

The founding assembly was held in Kashihara Stadium, Nara Prefecture, where accommodation facilities were available due to absence of destruction from the war. The assembly went on from morning till evening to be able to adopt its statutes. While the organizations had many experiences on what they needed to do and how to achieve their mission, they built new roads in their journey through JTU. The founding declaration of JTU states:<sup>1</sup>

Upon the consensus of 500,000 teachers from all over the country, we have just formed Japan Teachers' Union with great joy and expectation ... We are committed to playing an important role in the construction of a new democratic order and the creation of a new Japanese culture ... With all the strength of 500,000 teachers who are now connected with each other, we will seek for reasonable improvement of teachers' treatment and for the advancement of their social and political status. We also pledge to strive for the construction of rich and democratic education and culture, by combating and eradicating all the bad conditions remaining in our country, in broad solidarity with workers and farmers all over the country as well as worldwide.

Since then, JTU found itself in the midst of different struggles. The Korean War started in 1950, which led to the establishment of the Reserved Police, the predecessor of the Self Defense Forces of Japan. The following year witnessed the emergence of considerable controversy about whether

or not Japan should conclude peace treaties with all the previous enemies or principally with the United States. In that year, JTU took the lead in the labor movement by adopting the Four Principles for Peace (full pacification, adherence to neutrality, opposition to the provision of military bases and against rearmament) and the slogan "Do Not Send Our Students Again to Battlefields."

### **Vision of Society**

JTU has made clear that it is working for a society that thrives in peace and non-discrimination. As stated by its Secretary General (Yuzuru Nakamura):<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental point is [that without peace,] education cannot be achieved. And also, [we envision] a society without discrimination. We should seek to educate our children in a way to ensure that they will grow up into adults with sensitivity to human rights, who can work for the elimination of discrimination, not only between men and women, but also on the basis of disability or family conditions. Our most important task is to help children acquire basic academic skills. At the same time, since we are witnessing worrying cases of juvenile crime, we also want them to develop healthy characters and relationships, so that they have self-awareness that they themselves will create a society in the future. We have currently many demands from the society, not only in terms of academic skills, but also concerning basic lifestyles, greeting and other disciplines and ways of using language. We need to talk with parents about each other's roles, telling them this is what we can do and this should be done at home.

JTU has members not only in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools but also in State, public and private universities/colleges and specialized schools. And aside from teachers there are members who belong to other professions working at school, including administration workers, nutrition staff and manual workers. JTU is a union for everyone who works at school.<sup>3</sup>

### **"Gathering Drops One by One"**

For more than fifty years since 1951, JTU has organized peer activities for the improvement of teaching all over the country. Teachers have gathered

for the annual National Meeting for Studies on Teaching to exchange the outcomes of their practices and reflections. Ms. Hideko Maruoka describes the National Meeting as follows:<sup>4</sup>

The National Meeting started at Nikko and is now going out from the springhead. Gathering drops one by one, introducing water from streams and coming together with other small rivers, it is getting more and more momentum.... One magazine wrote about the first meeting and said, "Consciences in Japan have got together at Nikko." While I was half-ashamed about it, I was sometimes moved almost into tears by the faces of the teachers who occupied the venues. For example, their shoes. When I was about to enter a workshop room, I found many shoes with patches and worn-out soles ... Even if the National Meeting is subject to mean criticism, no one will be able to cool down the hot heart of those who had come there along cold roads on which these shoes with a lot of holes [trod on.]"

The National Meeting drew much enthusiasm from teachers in Japan over the ensuing decades and, in January 2004, observed its 53rd anniversary in Saitama prefecture. 3,000 teachers from all over the country took part in the preliminary meeting on the first day. Members from Saitama Teachers Union and Saitama High School Teachers Union presented skits with children, introducing Maruki Gallery and its Hiroshima Panels (a museum that exhibits the paintings of Iri and Toshi Maruki on the Hiroshima bombing)<sup>5</sup> and stressing the importance of human rights and peace. On the remaining days, teachers were divided into twenty-six workshop groups and discussed some eight hundred fifty teaching practice reports.

In the special workshop on the issue of academic abilities, a panel was organized under the title of "Academic Abilities We Pursue: Redefining the roles of schools and teachers for the development of enriched academic abilities." The panelists expressed concerns, such as, "Propaganda about low academic abilities has led to growing influence of the education industry, such as *juku* (supplementary private) schools, as well as to more burdens on household economies and the widening gap between social strata." In addition, reports were presented from all over the country about practices of helping children to acquire the basics hard and fast and for promoting "comprehensive learning" in connection with academic subjects.

On the other hand, the Mothers' and Female Teachers' Association has held annual meetings in summer to confirm the importance of peace. JTU

also organized “Autonomous Curricula Development Courses” in order to improve teachers’ practices and capacities, which has continued to this day as “Educational Curricula Development Courses”.

JTU has offered many opportunities to its members to learn about their own rights through the years. JTU members learn about ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997) that ensure significant roles for teachers’ unions to play. Also, they have opportunities to join union trainings and seminars on what rights are stipulated by national laws and local government ordinances. Now that citizenship education is regarded as necessary, it is even more important for educators to know their own rights.

Recently, JTU focused on Reducing Working-hours Campaign and pointed out that the Special Measures Law on Salaries of Public Education Teachers should be amended or repealed.

This law poses a serious challenge on the rights of teachers. Public school teachers cannot be paid for over-time work except for students’ on-site training, school events, meetings of all staff and responding to emergencies. In fact, teachers overwork to be able to prepare for next classes, research teaching materials, and prepare examination papers, and other tasks. These tasks are regarded as voluntary work and are not paid at all.

JTU broadly focuses on basic labor rights as its fundamental agenda in working with both domestic and international teacher union movements.

Its affiliated unions issue booklets on the rights of teachers based on the concrete context of each prefecture. Members of JTU continuously learn about their rights through national and prefectural activities.

## **Peace Education and Human Rights Education**

Chinese, Korean and Japanese teachers gathered online at the 10th Peace Education Material Exchange Assembly on 3 August 2021 and discussed teaching practices of the three countries for peace in East Asia. The participating teacher organizations were JTU, the National Committee of the Educational, Scientific, Cultural, Health and Sports Workers’ Union in China, and the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU).

General reports on history education and peace education practices were presented. While it was held online, the participants were able to learn

from each other and engaged in heart-to-heart discussion. At the end, they concluded that

Peace education coincides with human rights education. It is significant for teachers of the three countries to gather and exchange views. We will continue this remarkable opportunity.

## **Human Rights Education**

JTU holds assemblies to learn about human rights, namely, National Conference on Educational Research (NCER) and National Assembly on Education on Human Rights.

NCER is held once in a school year with a breakout session on human rights education. The participants bring their practices at schools and discuss how to improve them.

The National Assembly on Education on Human Rights, on the other hand, is also held once per school year and focuses only on human rights education. At the plenary session, a keynote speech on the current situation on human rights education and/or relevant legal situation is delivered. The participants, on the other hand, discuss practices at school and how to improve them. At the last day, the participants usually do fieldwork such as visiting an isolated hospital for Hansen disease patients.



Plenary session, NCER, 2019.



Break-out session, NCER, 2019.

## Human Rights Education Guidance

In 2007, JTU issued the *Human Rights Education Guidance toward Non-discrimination and Inclusive Schools and Society* (Guidance).<sup>6</sup> This Guidance is meant to help JTU members teach human rights in relation to issues faced by their students and existing in their respective communities.

The Guidance was based on the discussions in the meetings of the JTU Institute for Education and its Subcommittees. JTU recognized that discrimination and human rights violations appear concretely in people's lives, and they are interrelated and complex. It also recognized the new forms of discrimination and human rights violations that occur due to structural changes in society.

The Guidance discusses human rights issues in the Japanese context related to human rights education. The list of human rights issues, however, is not an exhaustive one; other issues have not been covered by the Guidance.

The discussion of each issue includes the history of related educational initiative, the current status of the issue (as of 2007) and the problems that should be considered in understanding them.

The issues discussed in the Guidance relate to the following:

1. Buraku liberation;<sup>7</sup>
2. Gender equality;

3. Children with disabilities;
4. Resident Koreans and ethnic minorities;
5. Ainu people;
6. Child abuse and orphanage children;
7. Hansen disease patients;
8. HIV-infected persons.

The Guidance discusses matters that should be considered regarding education on the different issues. The discussions reflect the different problems of the students affected by the issues:<sup>8</sup>

1. Dowa education (education on the Buraku issue)
  - Career education to guarantee academic ability and open up career paths;
  - Creating a group (friends) which can support the Buraku students inside and outside the school;
  - Empowerment of children who are disadvantaged in education, including Buraku children;
  - Learning about human rights and Buraku issues;
  - Collaboration between parents, communities and specialized institutions (researchers).
2. Gender equality education
  - Are you giving guidance or advice such as division of roles or career decision based on gender?;
  - Gender equality education for faculty and staff;
  - “Check your own fixed way of thinking and prejudices (gender bias)” - understanding the fixed way of thinking and prejudices of each child and giving guidance and advice to foster a sense of self-affirmation.
3. Education for children with disabilities
  - Inclusive education as human rights education;
  - From “special needs education” to inclusive education;
  - Meeting and facing each other - What you need to do in a regular class;
  - Efforts of the school as a whole;



- Collaborative learning efforts;
  - Career security efforts;
  - Maintaining indispensable conditions supporting children with disabilities.
4. Koreans in Japan, ethnic minorities and education
- Realizing a multicultural society/school - necessity of changing the consciousness of the Japanese, who constitute the majority;
  - Impact of modernization policy based on the monoethnic state view after the Meiji era (1868-1912) that went against multi-ethnicity (culture);
  - Assimilation and exclusion that alienate coexistence with other ethnic groups;
  - Transformation of Japanese children's consciousness.
5. Ainu people and education
- Establishment of multicultural educational policy;
  - Promotion of livelihood security and improvement of educational conditions for school attendance;
  - Developing teaching materials on elimination of discrimination;
  - Creating an organization for voluntary activities such as local children's associations;
  - Development of career security;
  - Promotion of exchange and research activities for school faculty and staff.
6. Child abuse and orphanage children and education
- Early Detection – “Don't miss signs of abuse;”
  - Consultation with/notification to specialized agencies as the beginning of support for abused children;
  - Guaranteeing the child's right to express opinions and giving support to children;
  - Training request/participation and self-reflection;
  - Establishing conditions for support for teachers;
  - Establishing a system for cooperation with third-party organizations.

7. Education against Hansen disease discrimination
  - Continued violation of human rights despite scientific knowledge about Hansen disease;
  - “Discrimination and prejudice” - understanding the reality and hardships of healed Hansen disease patients, their families and their thoughts;
  - Prejudice and discrimination against Hansen’s disease – caused by Japan’s modernization policy, and related to discrimination against the Buraku people, Korean residents and Ainu people;
  - Forms of human rights violations and discrimination (exclusion), such as the national policy and sanatorium response to Hansen’s disease;
  - Movement of Hansen’s disease patients - activities for interaction and/or support regarding the state, Hansen’s disease patients, and the medical profession;
  - History of hardships of family of Hansen’s disease patients.
  
8. Education against discrimination of HIV-infected persons
  - Correct knowledge about HIV infection;
  - Perspective of “living together” - How to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients and create a society where they can live together with other people;
  - Dignity and support system for HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients.

Regarding the problem of assimilation and exclusion consciousness, the Guidance recommends organizing activities such as “Ethnic Fureai Festival,” “Foreign Culture Exhibition Announcement” as means to facilitate acceptance of differences in the language and culture of non-Japanese children, and foster a sense of solidarity that supports “Us as Friends.” These activities can also provide the opportunity to learn about inclusion from the perspective of anti-discrimination.

## National Conference on Educational Research

The breakout session 13 on Human Rights Education in the 69th National Conference on Educational Research held on 24-26 January 2020 discussed the curriculum and human rights education.

In 2016, three laws relating to human rights education were enacted and enforced, namely, Act on Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disability, Hate Speech Elimination Act and Act on the Promotion of Elimination of Buraku Discrimination. Some people viewed the laws as challenging teachers to use the laws' basic principles as resources when implementing human rights education at schools. At the same time, the legal response to online discrimination was very insufficient and thus a significant problem.

The "special subject on moral education," started in 2018 with the aim of evaluating the sense of values and way of life, should be recognized as dealing with a subject (moral) that could be a human rights issue. With this view, it would be possible to teach it as human rights education, though the difference between the two (moral education and human rights education) must be carefully kept in mind.

The Act on Securing Educational Opportunities and the Act on Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disability is a necessary material in analyzing how human rights issues could be included in laws. Discussion has to be made, for example, on whether or not children who do not go to school might be excluded from schools as the law ensures diverse learning places, and whether or not the laws define disability from the viewpoint of social model based on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The democratization of Japanese society is measured by solving discrimination against the Buraku people, the people with roots in the Korean peninsula, returnees and other minorities. Laws to solve those issues and to support democratic citizens are required.

## NCER discussion and reports

During NCER, teachers share and discuss problems faced by students including human rights issues. In the 2020 NCER, some members reported on students' situations and discussed them:

***#1 Recognize the reality of discrimination and aim at emancipation in children's behavior and lives***

a. Member of Tokyo High School Teachers' Union

The member reported on the case of student 'A' of a night high school. A's grandmother has Korean root and his father once stayed in jail. The father fell ill and A took care of him but he passed away. Finally A graduated after eight years and made a representative speech at the graduation ceremony.

b. Member of Fukuoka High School Teachers' Union

One student experienced the divorce of parents and the passing of her/his mother. The student wrote about them and shared it with fellow students who in turn supported her/him.

c. Member of Kumamoto Teachers' Union

Student B transferred to the teacher's class in an elementary school after her/his (B's) parents divorced. B improved her/his study and learned to speak about his/herself such as making speech on "what is my family's job" and studying the Minamata disease. When B met a person in the community talking about the disease, the person told him to "stay as you are," which encouraged her/him very much. The teacher said that "what children want others not to mention, they [children] want them to understand it most."

***#2 Share experiences of teachers changing their own selves***

a. Member of Saitama Teachers' Union

The member teaches at a junior secondary school. When a student said "I cannot believe the teachers," the member was shocked and questioned him/herself as a teacher. The student also said that she/he (member) did not talk about Buraku issues regarding her/his longtime friend though she/he knew that the friend was from the Buraku area.

b. Member of Kagoshima High School Teachers' Union

A student who uses violence on others has parents who also use violence. If teachers consider such student as an annoyance, other students

of such teachers would think in the same way and the student her/himself would think so too. Children are not happy bothering others. When a student behaves roughly, the circumstances make her/him so. We teachers need to accept her/him first.

*#3 Show the children's change toward anti-discrimination through our teaching*

a. Member of Nara Teachers' Union

The member working at a junior secondary school had a student (B) with ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder). The teacher tried to make her/his class comfortable for all students including B. The teacher encouraged the students to be the peers of B who could be asked for help. Gradually, the students accepted B.

b. Member of Kanagawa Teachers' Union

The member reported on the process of establishing a new night junior secondary school in Sagami-hara city. She/he made a survey to gather support for the need for such education and demanded cooperation from the local Education Board. The teacher emphasized the meaning of learning, which strongly links with the students' lives. Also, through human rights education (which cannot be evaluated by test scores) students were able to bond with families and friends.

*#4 Show teaching practices that promote emancipation and anti-discrimination as well as develop a culture and academic environment that encourage children to have a sense of human rights and zest for living*

*#5 Utilize JTu Human Rights Education Guidance toward Non-discrimination and Inclusive Schools and Society (2007) and build a "human rights culture" of anti-discrimination in school and community*

a. Member of Fukuoka Teachers' Union

It is important to recognize that discrimination is a problem of those who discriminate. The teacher let students write about their lives. Through writing, the children bonded to each other.

b. Member of Saga Teachers' Union

The member described in detail how a child with disability took an entrance examination for secondary school and suggested what reasonable accommodation should mean in such situation.

### Reports and Discussions

We teachers should not single out children but need to try to change school/class environment so that every child can study comfortably. Saying "This is good for this student" is an authoritarian decision. It is necessary to recognize those issues happening in the society. Without this view, the issues could be individualized and trivialized.

### 70th NCER

The 70th NCER was held on 23 January 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plenary and breakout sessions with educational reports were held online. The plenary sessions featured the keynote speech and panel discussion, among others, that were watched by a wide range of online viewers from all over Japan.<sup>9</sup>

In his opening remarks, JTU President Hideyuki Shimizu mentioned the new human rights issues that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic including discrimination against patients and prejudice against medical workers on social media. He called on educators to seamlessly teach human rights based on JTU *Human Rights Education Guidance toward Non-discrimination and Inclusive Schools and Society* (2007).

He likewise said that

[d]ue to COVID-19, teachers and school workers have been facing a lot of challenges to take care of children and teach them while responding to emergent requirements. Indeed, we have difficulties, but now is the time to stand up together sharing our wisdom and good practices to secure quality education and wellbeing for all children. Our educational research is the key.

He concluded by reconfirming the importance of educational research and expressing appreciation for the great efforts that JTU members have been doing for the last seventy years.

After the opening ceremony, a photojournalist, Ms. Mitsuki Yasuda gave the keynote speech on the theme “Children in Conflict and Disaster Areas Shown in Photos.”

A panel discussion on “COVID-19 Pandemic and Children, School and Society” was held with Mr. Minoru Sawada, Sophia University, as coordinator and panelists representing students, parents, teachers, and researchers, respectively. They discussed school situations during the pandemic and school education in the future while sharing their experiences.

### **Iwate Prefecture Teachers’ Union Membership Diary**

The Iwate Prefecture Teachers’ Union, a JTU chapter in Iwate prefecture, made a union membership diary in 2021 to guide its members on human rights.

The union membership diary contains provisions of the Constitution of Japan, the Education Basic Act (provisions of the law as enacted in 1947, not the amended one), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The union membership diary has chapters that explain the teachers’ rights. Below are the outlines of each chapter.

Chapter 1. What is the Special Measures Law on Salaries of Public School Educational Workers which has provided us a fixed allowance for a long time?

In 1960s, the members of JTU filed suits to demand overtime work allowance and won the cases. The Ministry of Education adopted rules which stipulated four conditions for overtime work and fixed the amount of allowance based on the real over-time work of teachers. The four conditions were: learning outside the school, school trip, staff meeting of teachers and emergencies. A teacher who overworks for any other reason is regarded to have acted as volunteer. The Iwate Teachers’ Prefectural Union objected to this rule and demanded to repeal the law.

Chapter 2. That might be harassment!

Power, sexual and maternity harassments exist. It is necessary to learn about them and try not to be an assaulter. If you suffer from harassment, please consult with peers and the union.

### Chapter 3. Rights of educators

This chapter explains the rights provided in the Constitution of Japan, Labor Basic Law, and the Ordinances of Iwate Prefecture that include complaint procedure, regulations on working hours, paid leave, sick leave, overtime work, the rights to professional development, special leaves, and maternity and childcare leave. For non-regular educators, the details on their rights are very specific in these ordinances.

### **Public Activities**

JTU has also held activities for children and the general public. On 3 April 2019, JTU celebrated the Global Action Week for Education by joining with other educational stakeholders the “Festival of Learning.” The festival offered various learning activities for children. 1,800 children joined the celebration.

JTU prepared quiz and game on the rights of the child. The participants played the game, learned what rights they have and realized the meaning of “My Education, My Rights.”

This kind of activity is in line with JTU’s strong move to make the right to inclusive, equitable, quality and free public education a reality.

### **Concluding Note**

Many social issues surround today’s children in Japan: poverty, child abuse, children with non-Japanese roots, SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) and others. JTU holistically responds to these issues and engages the children, parents, politicians and citizens in a social dialogue to achieve its political goal of building an inclusive society for the children’s well-being.

### **Endnotes**

- 1 Quoted from *The History of JTU*, Japan Teachers Union, 1981.
- 2 Interview of Mr. Yuzuru Nakamura, Secretary General, JTU, [www.jtu-net.or.jp/english/about-jtu/](http://www.jtu-net.or.jp/english/about-jtu/).
- 3 Interview of Mr. Yuzuru Nakamura, *ibid.*
- 4 *A Post-War Spirit*, Hitotsubashi Shobo, 1983.
- 5 Visit the website of Maruki Gallery and its Hiroshima Panels, <https://maruki-gallery.jp/en/>.
- 6 The full document, in Japanese language, is available at [www.jtu-net.or.jp/wp/wp-content/themes/jtu/doc/booklet.pdf](http://www.jtu-net.or.jp/wp/wp-content/themes/jtu/doc/booklet.pdf).



7 “The word Buraku means a village or a hamlet in Japanese language. Since feudal age, people in some communities in Japan had been classified as outcasts, outside the social hierarchy, which was closely related to the caste system. These communities became known as Buraku communities. Even in the modern age, people living in, or from Buraku communities, or are descendants of such people may be regarded as Buraku people by ordinary people and may suffer from discrimination, exclusion, etc., especially in marriage and employment.” Quoted from Jefferson R. Plantilla and Kazuhiro Kawamoto, “Remembering the Past: Henomatsu Community,” *FOCUS Asia-Pacific*, issue 97, September 2019, page 7, [www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section3/2019/09/remembering-the-past-henomatsu-community.html#1](http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section3/2019/09/remembering-the-past-henomatsu-community.html#1).

8 The texts in the list are edited versions of the English translation of the discussion of issues in the Guidance.

9 Text from “The 70th National Conference on Educational Research,” Japan Teachers Union, 4 February 2021, [www.jtu-net.or.jp/english/blog/the-70th-national-conference-on-educational-research/](http://www.jtu-net.or.jp/english/blog/the-70th-national-conference-on-educational-research/).

# Raise It! Evaluation Insights and Enhancements from the Pilot Program\*

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

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**T**HE RAISE IT! PILOT was a pilot project developed and delivered by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission), with funding from the Office for Women, a branch of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The aim of the Raise It! Pilot was to:

- raise awareness of sexual harassment and discrimination pertaining to pregnancy, parental leave and access to flexible working arrangements; and
- build confidence and competence amongst participants to have conversations about these issues.

Raise It! is a holistic program incorporating preparation, education and resources. The program was designed specifically in recognition that many workers and managers find it difficult to have conversations about the 'hard topics' like sexual harassment and requests for pregnancy leave and flexible work. The Commission's focus on changing behaviour and building confidence to have conversations was based on the well-established evidence that the primary drivers of sexual harassment and violence against women include attitudes and structures that entrench gender inequality, low rates of reporting of discrimination and sexual harassment, and poor responses by organisations. At the outset of the project, the Commission engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA) to assist with the development of a theory of change and program logics for the program, and to conduct an external evaluation.

\*This article is a reformatted version of *Raise It! Evaluation insights and enhancements from the pilot program* published by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in June 2019. The full report is available at [https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/static/a0ac50f642ea9f8b76da222c53436700/Resource-Report-Raise\\_it\\_Evaluation\\_insights\\_and\\_enhancements-Jun19.pdf](https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/static/a0ac50f642ea9f8b76da222c53436700/Resource-Report-Raise_it_Evaluation_insights_and_enhancements-Jun19.pdf).

This paper provides an overview of the evidence-base and design of the program. It also summarises the key findings and recommendations of SVA's external evaluation and sets out the Commission's additional insights, and program enhancements going forward.

### **The Evidence Base for Raise It!**

The Raise It! program was underpinned by evidence that education and training which is primarily compliance focused, rather than directed towards improved understanding, empathy, equality and culture, has limited effect, and once-off training sessions, which are not delivered in concert with ongoing processes of organisational culture and structural change, are unlikely to achieve results. In some instances compliance based training can instead create backlash, including increased victimisation of complainants or (wilful or inadvertent) misidentification of sexual harassment. Research also shows that education programs that do not have the genuine support of organisational leaders may be dismissed as 'token' or irrelevant.

Building on this evidence base and applying a user-centred design approach, the Commission developed a holistic suite of resources, supports, and education for the Raise It! pilot to catalyse proactive and preventative conversations in a safe and supported way. The pilot also aimed to build stronger pathways and knowledge for addressing sexual harassment and discrimination when it occurred.

The Raise It! Pilot was implemented in seven diverse pilot workplaces across Victoria. An external evaluation found that the pilot was highly successful in its aims to a) raise awareness of sexual harassment and discrimination associated with pregnancy, parental leave and requests for flexible and part-time work, and b) build confidence and competence amongst managers and staff to have conversations about these issues.

An important finding was that these outcomes were attributable to the combination of all stages of the program, which are summarised in the following section. The face to face education component was found to be critical, particularly in building skills and confidence for people to have conversations about the subject matter. Similarly, the preparation support provided to pilot sites was imperative to create a workplace culture where people made full use of the innovative resources and felt safe to initiate healthy and respectful conversations and report discrimination or sexual harassment when it occurred.

## The Raise It! Program and How it Works

The Raise It! program consists of key activities which can be categorised under three stages; Preparation, Education and Resource Provision.

### Stage 1: Preparation

The Commission worked with each pilot site to ready them for the program and assess their current degree of cultural safety. This stage is particularly important to ensure managers can access organisational supports and systems that comply with an employer's legal obligations, and that an organisation is ready to respond to and support people who raise concerns regarding discrimination and/or sexual harassment through the program.

The preparation stage included:

- Engagement with pilot sites to explain the program
- Policy and protocol status check (the Policy Wellness Check) with senior human resources representative from each of the pilot sites at the beginning of the intervention
- A communications kit and on-demand 1:1 support by Commission staff as required by the pilot sites, or anticipated by the Commission

### Stage 2: Education

The Commission drew on leading practice and research to develop an empathetic and interactive education program designed to increase awareness, knowledge and skills about addressing sexual harassment and discrimination related to parental leave and return to work, flexible work and part time work. Building an education program around key workplace trigger points for gender discrimination served to address harmful attitudes and norms that have been shown to underpin sexual harassment. The education program was activity based and enabled participants to build and practice conversation skills through safe role play and group activities.

The education program had a particular focus on **building bystander** and manager skills to identify, address and respond to incidents of sexual harassment.

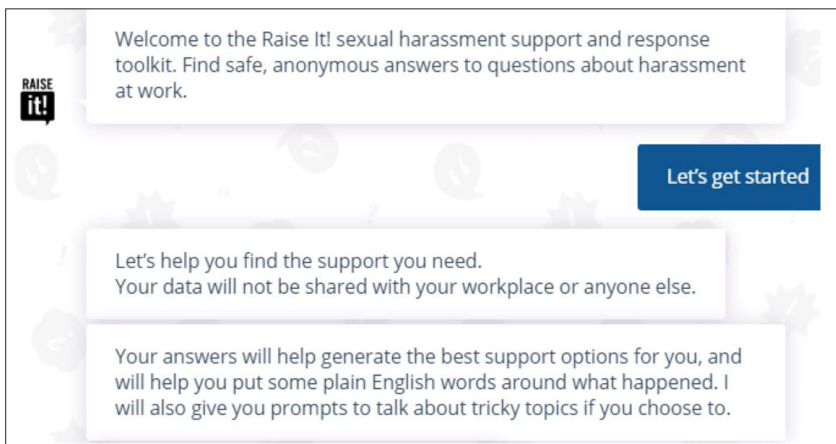
### Stage 3: Resource Provision

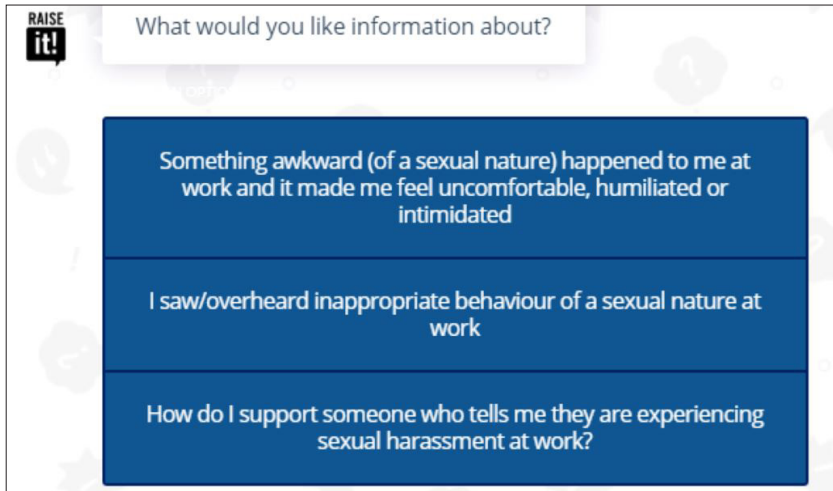
Pilot sites were provided with a series of 'Conversation Starter' kits that were developed through a human-centred design approach. The kits were

designed to complement the education program and increase confidence and skills to have safe and healthy conversations about sexual harassment and discrimination related to parental leave and return to work, flexible work and part time work.

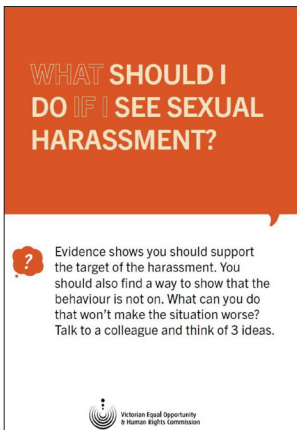
The kits included three online chatbots:

1. **A flexible work request planner**, with different pathways for employees and managers (users can access either or both). The chatbot provides users with a conversational guide to flexible work rights, entitlements and duties. It also enables an employee to plan, prepare and practice a well-considered flexible work request conversation with their manager; and provides helpful prompts for a manager to plan a conversation with a staff member who is requesting flexible work (including information about how to process a request).
2. **A parental leave and pregnancy planner** with different pathways for employees and managers (users can access either or both). This toolkit provides users with information about pregnancy, parental leave and return to work rights, entitlements and duties. It also enables an employee to practise a conversation about pregnancy adjustments, or (for all parents) parental leave and return to work; and provides helpful prompts for a manager to plan a supportive conversation with a staff member about these issues (including information about how to process a request).
3. **A sexual harassment support and response tool** with separate pathways for individuals who may have experienced sexual ha-





harassment from a client or colleague, individuals who may have witnessed it, or individuals to whom a colleague has disclosed an incident. The chatbot helps people identify behaviours that constitute sexual harassment and options to raise a concern or seek help, including support pathways and simple ways to call behaviour out or reporting culture issues in the workplace in a way that protects victims of harassment.



The fourth toolkit is a multimedia **Conversation Starter Kit** for managers, HR Staff and champions, made up of posters, challenge or ‘conversation starter’ cards, a planner for participants to note their use and distribution of toolkit materials, and an email newsletter on the Raise topics that participants can sign up for.

### The Champions Model

Two pilot organisations decided to use a more formalised approach via a ‘champions model’, where a select group of ‘champions’ participated in the program, with the idea that they would champion these issues within their teams by using the toolkits to start conversations and raise the issues.

These champions were also provided with the multi-media toolkit consisting of posters, challenge cards and weekly planners to distribute these materials to their teams, and they were encouraged to share a link to access emails and the chatbots.

The champion model proved to be highly effective in amplifying the reach and impact of the program, and warrants explanation to inform future programs designed to address sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace.

### **Example approach for Champion recruitment**

A champions model was set up in one pilot organisation, as this site had recently delivered training to their people leaders shortly before the Raise it! pilot was launched. To better enable the program's implementation the CEO sent an email to all managers, requesting the nomination of two 'champions' from their teams to participate in the 'Raise it' pilot. As a result, there was both a manager and staff member nominated to be a 'champion' for many different divisions and departments across the organisation.

The champions were all invited to attend a masterclass at the outset of engagement with the pilot, to learn about their role as champions to share the conversation starter toolkits with their teams and to use resources from the mixed media toolkit to start conversations in their team meetings. The masterclass also helped the champions to trouble-shoot any issues with using the 'Raise it' toolkits, set an action plan using the Raise it! planning kit, provided information on options to respond to sexual harassment and workplace discrimination, and highlighted the context and aims of the 'Raise it' pilot.

When examining participant engagement in pilot sites that adopted the Champion model, we found that:

- an average of 46% of endline survey participants used at least one of the chatbots
- an average of 84% of endline survey participants read an email (noting that many were Champions themselves)
- an average of 55% saw Raise It! dialogue cards and posters in their workplace.

There was also significantly higher private use of chatbots, particularly for flexible work requests. An average of 53% of endline survey participants accessed the Flexible work chatbot privately, and 17.5% of total Flexible work chatbot users in sites with the Champion model completed their pathway to develop a request and/or conversation plan (noting that some users were managers and some were employees).

The impact of the champions model was also realised on starting conversations.

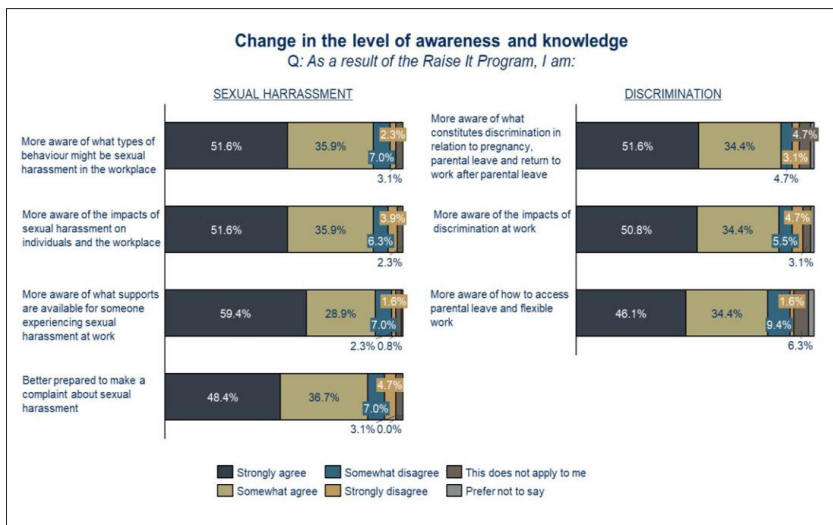
From a pilot site implementing the Champions model, 77% of their champions responding to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed that they had built new skills to talk about sexual harassment; and 85% of their champions agreed or strongly agreed that they had built new skills to talk about flexible work or parental entitlements with their teams.

### Evaluation Outcomes

SVA’s external evaluation indicates the Raise It! Pilot was highly effective in achieving immediate outcomes. This section contains a high-level summary of the evaluation data.

### Increased Awareness and Knowledge

At least 80% of endline survey participants indicated that the Raise it! Pilot had increased their awareness in relation to each specific area tested.





When asked for qualitative feedback regarding increased awareness and knowledge, participants responded:

“Importance of a victim centred response. Listen to allow and provide a safe space. Provide options not solutions.”

“Intention of harasser doesn’t matter. Importance of being victim-centred.”

“That sexual harassment doesn’t need to be a repeated offence, it can be a one-off. Awareness in managing a situation in the workplace so it doesn’t become ‘common knowledge.’”

“Know what to do as a bystander for sexual harassment.”

“Read more online resources and provide solutions for the manager to help with creating a [flexible work] plan.”

“If my circumstances change, I am more likely to request flexible work.”

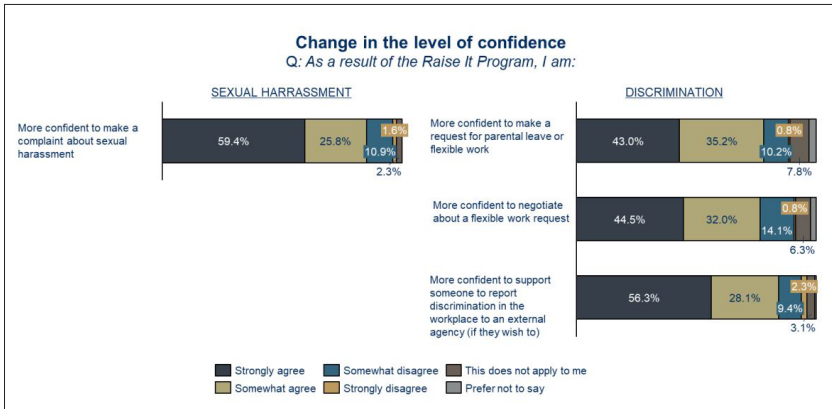
“[I will] speak up – there is help out there. [I will] make the victim feel safe and comfortable. Sexual harassment does happen even if it is not spoken about.”

“Be able to initiate and discuss conversations about flexible working arrangements.”

### **Increased Confidence**

Endline survey participants also reported **increased confidence** to raise the subject covered by the program, with:

- **over 85% reporting increased confidence in relation to making a complaint about sexual harassment**
- **over 84% reporting increased confidence to support someone to report discrimination in the workplace to an external agency (if they wish to)**
- **over 78% reporting increased confidence to make a request for parental leave or flexible work**
- **over 76% reporting increased confidence to negotiate about a flexible work request**



When asked if they would do anything differently at work, participants responded:

“Call out sexual harassment – for example jokes.”

“I’ll take sexual harassment much more seriously. I’ll think more about the impact on the affected person.”

“I will be more confident to approach these topics and more knowledge[able] to access resources to help assist managing / approaching these topics.”

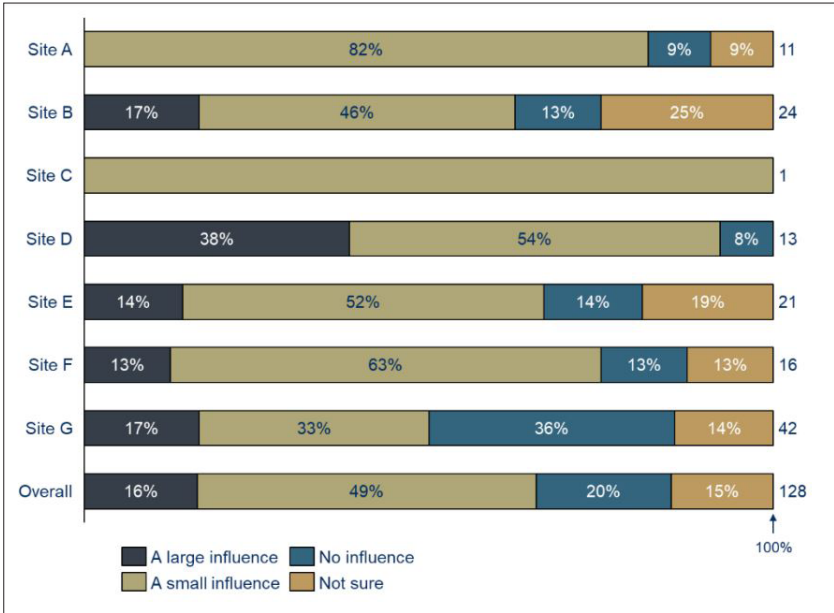
“I will ensure my team managers are more prepared with regards to planning FWA conversations with their teams.”

“Feel a bit more confident to call out or discuss inappropriate behaviours based on the importance of setting norms in the work culture.”

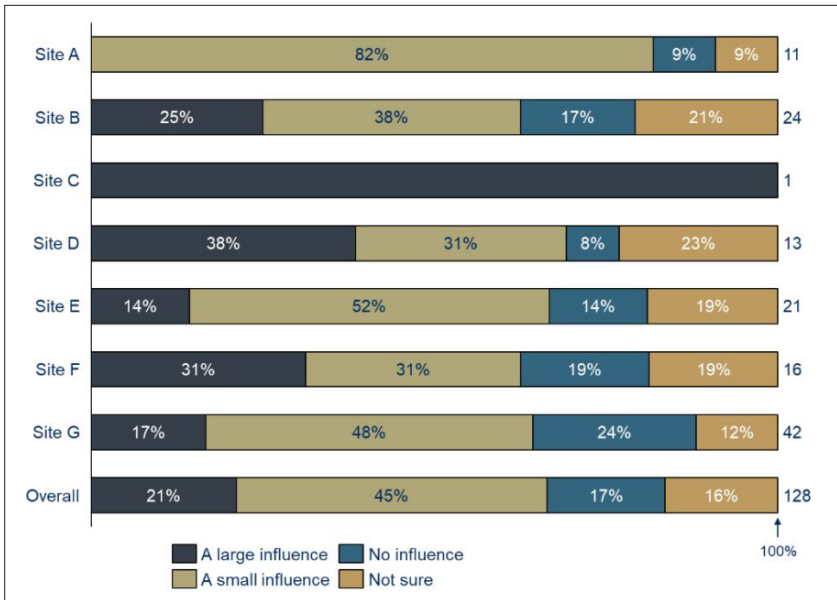
“Be active and raise it!”

“More inclined to call out behaviour on the spot, or to speak to victim about how they are feeling.”

“I just feel more confident in addressing instances of sexual harassment I witness. Concrete tactics were useful.”



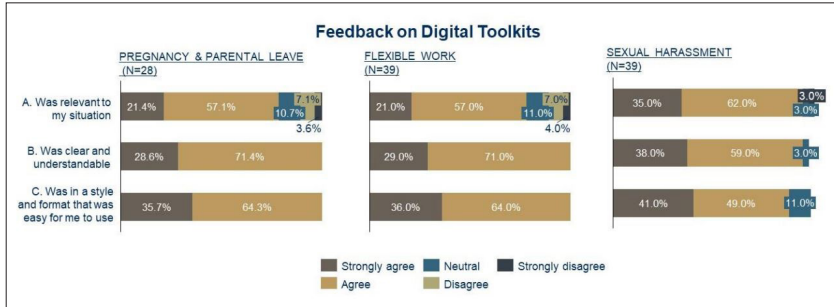
What influence did the Raise It! Pilot have on staff talking about sexual harassment in your workplace?



What influence did the program have on staff talking about discrimination in your workplace?

### Influence of the Raise It! Pilot on conversations

Early indications from the external evaluation show that 65% of endline survey respondents felt that the Raise It! Pilot had an influence on staff talking about sexual harassment in the workplace, and 66% felt that pilot had an influence on staff talking about discrimination in the workplace.



### Toolkit feedback

People who were exposed to the three chatbots provided positive feedback, with 97% of survey respondents reporting that they found them relevant, clear and understandable and in a format that was easy to use.

When asked if they would do anything differently at work, participants responded:

“Get the app out to start a conversation.”

“I would definitely refer to the toolkit to make sure I have all the relevant information and not be scared to report things or ask for things.”

“Utilise the toolkit more often and share with colleagues.”

“Continue to access the toolkit and engage other managers to use toolkits.”

“Talk to team more; collect toolkit items to display and discuss; become more familiar with official policies and procedures.”

“Provide bot as a place to practice a conversation.”



**I'VE NEVER ASKED ABOUT FLEXIBLE WORK BECAUSE I THINK THAT I WILL BE JUDGED HARSHLY.**

**?** Do you agree with this statement? Discuss some reasons for your answer with your colleagues.

**WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY AND WORKING FLEXIBLY?**

**!** In organisations where flexible work is seen as "normal" and taken up by both men and women, there are equal opportunities for success for both men and women at work.

# EVERYONE NEEDS FLEXIBILITY AT SOME POINT IN THEIR CAREERS.

**!** In Australia everyone can request flexible work options. Some people's requests for flexible work are protected by Victoria's *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, such as requests from a parent or carer. The *Fair Work Act 2009* also protects workers who request flexible work, such as those with a disability or who are more than 55 years old.

**!** Research also shows that flexibility is one of the top five employment drivers for men, and there are proven business benefits for having part-time workers as part of the workforce.

**?** If you're interested in part-time work, what's holding you back?

**RAISE it! | Flexible work**

The Raise it! project is funded by the Victorian Office for Women and implemented by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The project equips Victorian workers with knowledge and tools to ensure healthy, confident and safe conversations at work about preventing and responding to sexual harassment, and about pregnancy, parental leave and access to flexible work.

Get a complaint? If you believe you have experienced sexual harassment or faced discrimination at work because of your pregnancy or parental status, or if you have general queries related to discrimination, call the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission on 1300 522 153, email [enquiries@vceohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@vceohrc.vic.gov.au) or visit [humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/complaints](http://humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/complaints).

For more information see the FAQs on [humanrights@commission.vic.gov.au](mailto:humanrights@commission.vic.gov.au) or email [education@vceohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:education@vceohrc.vic.gov.au)

Your Raise it! representative is:

**Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission**

### Program Enhancements and Improvements

Evaluation findings indicate the Raise It! Pilot was highly effective in meeting immediate outcomes. However, it also provided valuable insight regarding opportunities to strengthen the program where it did not achieve an opti-

imum outcome. Furthermore, the pilot period was too short to accurately assess some short-term outcomes, or any of the long-term outcomes.

This section sets out the key findings, context and recommendations articulated through SVA’s evaluation. We have categorised these under the three key stages of the program; preparation, education and resources (toolkits).

We then set out further insights about what worked well and what can be improved, generated by the Raise It! Project Team. Against each insight, we summarise the enhancements and improvements we have made to the program to ensure it delivers on the short and long-term outcomes.

**Preparation: SVA Findings, Context and Recommendations**

<b>SVA External Evaluation</b>	<b>SVA Key Finding</b>	<b>Context</b>
	1. The project was well-managed and built a positive reputation for the Commission amongst the participating pilot sites	Despite the tight timelines and some delay in the early stages of the Raise It! Pilot, the project team delivered on all milestones of the contract and positive feedback was received from the pilot sites about the Commission.
	2. The timeline of the Raise It! Pilot was too short to ensure all participating sites could adequately engage with the content and resources provided	The Raise It! Pilot had a defined end point and ultimately, the timeline to develop and deliver the pilot was too short, with the resources available. This was due to several factors, including: the time required to adequately plan and design the education program and toolkits, and to recruit and on-board pilot sites to participate in a new program. As a result, core activities of the Raise It! Pilot were only ready to be delivered either just before or after the end of the year break, which was a busy time for many pilot sites.
	<b>SVA Recommendations</b>	
	<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Build more preparation time into the program for workplaces to overcome structural barriers and implement strategies to ensure that broader workplace culture is safe for people to have these conversations and/or report.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Ensure accountability for the actions arising out of the policy-wellness check is owned by leadership in workplaces who are committed to implementing these actions to support a safe culture for all employees on these issues.</p>	

## Preparation: SVA Findings, Context and Recommendations

## Preparation: VEOHRC Insights and program enhancements

	What worked well	Evidence	Program Enhancements
VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance	VEOHRC's Policy Wellness Check	During implementation, pilot stakeholders, including Human Resources Staff and Gender Equality practitioners reported that the Policy Wellness Check was highly valuable, and some referred to it as an <b>Action Plan</b> to improve cultural safety and gender equality.	During the onboarding process, VEOHRC will communicate that the Policy Wellness Check as a helpful, first step to assessing organisational systems, policies, knowledge and support with respect to identifying a positive and non-discriminatory environment.  In turn, organisations can use the Policy Wellness Check to establish some fundamental elements of a more comprehensive <b>Gender Equality Action Plan</b> .
	VEOHRC's Raise It! Communication Kit	Pilot sites who implemented the Communication Kit experienced significantly <b>improved attendance and awareness</b> of education sessions and use of toolkits.	VEOHRC will promote the Communication Kit as a supporting and fundamental component of the program, to ensure the <b>program is connected to organisational and corporate goals</b> .

VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance	What can be improved	Evidence	Program Improvements
	<p><b>Enhance onboarding process</b></p>	<p>Some SVA interview participants reported a lack of awareness at the outset regarding the resources and time required to implement the program. Timing of the program was also problematic for some.</p>	<p>Organisational capacity and support are critical to optimise benefits. We will <b>enhance pre-implementation planning</b> for workplaces, <b>clarify expectations and resources required</b> and ensure implementation is timed to minimise impost and maximise engagement.</p>
	<p><b>Ensure organisations have a longer lead in time</b> to implement Policy Wellness Check actions</p>	<p>The purpose of the Policy Wellness Check is to help organisations identify a positive and non-discriminatory environment through an assessment of the organisational systems, policies, knowledge and support for gender equality and addressing sexual harassment. A key benefit is an <b>improved safety culture at an organisational level</b>. However, SVA interview participants reported <b>insufficient time, influence and capacity to address many of the gaps</b> identified.</p>	<p>Senior accountability within workplaces to implement actions, in conjunction with sufficient implementation time and increased support from VEOHRC can overcome the missed opportunities. VEOHRC will partner more collaboratively with workplaces following the initial assessment of the Policy Wellness Check to identify tailored actions and timelines to address gaps and build on strengths. We will provide existing, helpful resources, such as VEOHRC EO Policy Development and Sexual Harassment Guidelines.</p>
	<p><b>Tailored communications</b> that connect the benefits of the program to an organisation's strategic and cultural objectives.</p>	<p>Limited feedback through the SVA endline survey and interviewees revealed <b>confusion regarding the purpose of the program</b>. This was most pronounced in pilot sites that employed a 'light touch' communication strategy regarding Raise It!</p>	<p>VEOHRC will incorporate <b>tailored messages and support for leadership</b> and middle managers in the Communications Kit, to link the <b>communicate the strategic and cultural benefits</b> and provide workplace role models with a consistent narrative.</p>



## Education: SVA Findings, Context and Recommendations

SVA External Evaluation	<b>SVA Key Finding</b>	<b>Context</b>
	4. The education sessions were effective at engaging participants and helped to increase awareness and knowledge of the issues	The education sessions were well received by the majority of participants, who were engaged in the sessions and increased their awareness, knowledge and skills associated with the issues covered by the Raise It! Pilot.
	5. An 'off the shelf' solution is unlikely to be successful for all workplaces. Training and resources need to be adequately tailored to reflect the workplace culture and working environment of the participants	While the resources developed by the Commission provided a good baseline for pilot sites, further adjustments could be made to better meet the needs of certain workplaces and cohorts.
	6. The delivery mechanism of the education sessions – face-to-face engagement in one or two lengthy sessions – was a constraining factor which prevented some workplaces and employees from participating	Notwithstanding the participants' response to the education program, the format and structure of the sessions made the Raise It! Pilot resource intensive for most pilot sites to implement. This prevented one organisation from opting into the pilot, and some employees from participating.
	7. The Champion-based implementation model showed real potential for greater impact	Two pilot sites adopted a workplace Champion model for the pilot. People generally enjoyed being Champions, and the opportunity to champion the issues covered by the Raise It! Pilot in their organisations. With more training provided to Champions on how to be effective facilitators and an ongoing opportunity to debrief
	10. It is not evident from the data collected what impact the Raise It! Pilot had on line managers and leadership	The post-education session feedback forms and endline surveys did not collect specific feedback on these outcomes for managers and leadership. Qualitative feedback from a selection of staff across the pilot sites indicated uncertainty regarding the impact on managers and leaders, and in some cases contradictory results. Improved participation from leaders in future iterations is strongly recommended, as is a tailored set of activities or tools for managers and leaders to achieve impact.
	11. Pilot participants needed more support with how to take action, even after being equipped with all the necessary information	Education sessions in the Raise It! Pilot did attempt to mix both awareness and knowledge with opportunities for participants to practice how they might respond to different situations related to the Raise It! Pilot issues. However, there was a sense that participants wanted more practice, as many still felt that they would not be able to effectively manage these difficult situations and needed more ongoing support. A more iterative implementation of the program would provide more support by enabling participants to further practice these skills and troubleshoot some of these challenges in a supportive environment.
<b>SVA Recommendations</b>		
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Develop a more sustained intervention with smaller but more frequent engagement with participants, particularly the education sessions.		

<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Consider alternative ways that the education session content could be provided (e.g. video or online modules) whilst preserving the interactive element of the sessions that people found most effective. This could mean separating delivery of these elements (e.g. as suggested in Recommendation 2 above).</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Document the champion-led model of implementation through closer engagement with the pilot sites using that approach to understand what worked, what needs to be improved and what is required to help workplaces to effectively adopt this approach.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Modify engagement and the Raise It! Pilot intervention to focus on leadership and line managers, to facilitate creating a safe environment and the right culture for people to speak up.</p>
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**Education: VEOHRC Insights and Program Enhancements**

	<b>What worked well</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Program Enhancements</b>
<b>VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance</b>	<b>F2F Education</b> with interactive role play to <b>build skills and confidence</b> to have conversations	The evaluation revealed the positive impact of the education program in <b>building awareness, knowledge and skills to have conversations</b> about all of the topics covered in the program.	F2F education must remain a component of the program, with <b>enhanced role play and troubleshooting</b> to bridge intent and application in the workplace.
	The Champions Model	Two pilot sites developed their own champions model to amplify reach across a diverse workforce.  Champions were identified. Qualitative feedback to VEOHRC and SVA demonstrates the success of this model and VEOHRC will continue engagement with one pilot to further support and build this network.	We will incorporate the champions model into the program where it is applicable to a workplace context, to <b>supplement influencer and role model cohort</b> .

	What can be improved	Evidence	Program Improvements
VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance	<b>Focus, clarity and the benefits</b> of the education modules.	The SVA endline survey revealed that some participants found the <b>full complement of content overwhelming</b> .	We will separate the full program into <b>heavily customised and specific modules</b> , and confirm workplace contacts have implemented communications regarding purpose, objectives, leadership commitment and benefits.
	<b>Sustaining the education</b> program and benefits, while <b>minimising the impost</b> on workplaces.	SVA endline survey and interview participants reported <b>insufficient time to apply their new skills</b> in the pilot period. Some SVA interview participants also reported that the 'block' style education sessions created an impost.	We will <b>deliver the education program iteratively</b> over a longer period of time, in <b>shorter, blended modes</b> , with repeated practice using the toolkits.
	Increased capability amongst <b>middle managers</b>	SVA interview participants reported reticence to exercise new skills due to uncertainty as to how their immediate manager would react.	We will tailor and target the education program towards middle managers to <b>build their skills as role models, influencers and culture builders</b> .

#### Toolkits: SVA Findings, Context and Recommendations

	SVA Key Finding	Context
SVA External Evaluation	<b>8.</b> During the Raise It! Pilot, there was not sufficient opportunity and time to fully test the digital and non-digital kits with end-users	Although some feedback was received, there were not enough opportunities for participants to use the kits in real-life situations at work during the pilot period, to give feedback on their usefulness and applicability.
	<b>9.</b> Raise It! Pilot had a positive impact on the immediate outcomes tested in this evaluation: increased awareness, knowledge and skills amongst the employees	The results from the evaluation indicate that the Raise It! Pilot had a positive impact on the immediate outcomes tested in this evaluation: increased awareness of the Raise It! issues amongst employees, and increased knowledge and skills to address the Raise It! Pilot issues.
	<b>SVA Recommendations</b>	
	<b>Recommendation 1:</b> Incorporate adjustments informed by this evaluation and conduct a further evaluation at a point where there is more likelihood that sustainable change will be observed.	

**Toolkits: VEOHRC Insights and program enhancements**

VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance	What worked well	Evidence	Program Enhancements
	Sexual Harassment Chatbot	Participants in education sessions described this chatbot as a valuable resource for bystanders, victims and first responders. This is supported by SVA data and longer-term evaluation, which shows increased utilisation over time. Such utilisation demonstrates the chatbot is delivering the long-term support to participants that it was designed to.	We will incorporate the Sexual Harassment chatbot as a <b>What to Do</b> prevention and response resource, rather than a conversation starter.
Flexible Work Chatbot	Participants in education sessions advised this chatbot is a valuable resource for staff and managers to plan. This is supported by SVA data and longer-term evaluation, which shows increased utilisation over time. Such utilisation demonstrates the chatbot is delivering the long-term support to participants that it was designed to.	We will describe the Flexible Work chatbot as an <b>FWA Request Assessment &amp; Planner</b> and enhance it where technology enables; for example via printed plans if possible.	
VEOHRC Insights: strengths to enhance	What can be improved	Evidence	Program Improvements
	Pregnancy & Parental Leave Chatbot	Few participants felt they were able to use this chatbot immediately, however longer-term evaluation has showing increased utilisation	We will provide this chatbot as a <b>free resource, available through the VEOHRC website.</b>
Conversation topic scheduler kit	During education sessions, managers and champions reported that this was a <b>helpful planner</b> but had insufficient time for full utilisation. Thirty-nine per cent of post-pilot survey respondents reported seeing conversation challenge cards or Raise It! posters in their workplaces.	We will embed this toolkit as a <b>planning and action resource</b> in the education sessions targeted towards middle managers and champions. We will follow up on actions to support middle managers and facilitate troubleshooting workshops.	

## Insights and Enhancements: Summary

### More time and support at pre-planning stage:

- Engage leadership
- More time to implement Policy Wellness Check actions
- Additional VEOHRC support and resources



### Increase safety culture at organisational level

### Maintain interactive F2F education

- Shorter, more iterative education sessions
- Enhanced role play to bridge intent and action
- Increase bystander and first responder content
- Troubleshooting workshops for peer-to-peer support



### Minimise impost & expense and sustain & extend skills

### Increase safety culture at a team level

### Identify & reduce barriers

### Team leaders/ managers are a key entry point

- Target middle managers
- Further develop a 'Champions model'
- Provide tailored messages and support for managers



### Build role model behavior

### Drive engagement with resources and amplify reach

### Clarify benefits and provide a consistent narrative.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Our Watch, 2015) 6, 8.

# Countering Violent Extremism through Education

Hedayah

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**W**ITH THE LAUNCH of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), “an international forum of 29 countries and the European Union (EU) with an overarching mission of reducing the vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism” in September 2011, the Members and the wider international community expressed the need for the establishment of a center dedicated to countering violent extremism (CVE) independently and multilaterally.

As one of the co-chairs of the CVE Working Group during this ministerial-level launch in New York, the U.A.E. offered to host the first-ever International Center of Excellence for CVE. In December 2012, the idea came to life with the inauguration of Hedayah in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. Hedayah’s location allowed it to reflect a neutral, apolitical and non-ideological center welcoming diverse perspectives in addressing the issue of violent extremism in all of its forms and manifestations.

Hedayah is seen as thought leader in the field of CVE through its dialogue and communications, capacity building programs, and research and analysis departments. It offers long-term, sustainable solutions through its areas of expertise, holistic CVE programs, and collaborative efforts with local partners, practitioners and subject matter experts.

As part of the follow-up action plan to the Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), Hedayah continues its efforts to further understand and strengthen the relationship between education and CVE. There are opportunities to leverage and include both formal and informal education in CVE strategies and programs to prevent radicalization leading to violent extremism (RLVE) and build resilience among communities most vulnerable to violent extremism.

Hedayah takes on opportunities to leverage and include both formal and informal education in CVE strategies. To stay up-to-date with the most recent research in CVE, it regularly engages with world-renowned CVE partners and experts by participating in various activities, including conferences, workshops and trainings.

Furthermore, Hedayah aims to expand the CVE and Education Program through tailored capacity-building activities for a variety of education practitioners in several regions. Notably, Hedayah developed an activities' guide for education practitioners, teachers and informal educators to include preventive approaches in school curricula and informal settings. It also seeks to investigate the most successful approaches in creating an impact on the ground through robust monitoring and evaluation of this program.

In recognition of the multi-faceted solutions to violent extremism, it is crucial to ensure the threat is approached in a comprehensive manner. To do this, government entities must share the burden of countering violent extremism with community actors. Accordingly, Hedayah prioritizes community engagement with multiple actors among its key expertise. Existing CVE efforts have begun to integrate perspectives of various local actors including youth, gender, families, police officers, community and religious leaders. Under community engagement, this also includes building the capacities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, semi-government organizations and international organizations to effectively implement CVE activities.

Hedayah focuses on taking these initiatives further by ensuring that local actors and practitioners are well equipped with the tools and knowledge through a variety of trainings and funding opportunities. It works to develop specific and tailored capacity building curricula to guide a wide range of practitioners, including social workers and law enforcement agencies in supporting families through the CVE-cycle.

For example, Hedayah engages with Police Academies in priority countries to embed culturally-literate CVE approaches into their training curricula. This program offers a considered process of curriculum development, aided by a train-the-trainers approach. Importantly, this offers a sustainable alternative to "one off" international trainings for on the ground police officers.<sup>1</sup>

Hedayah also conducts overarching programs that touch on various elements of its expertise. These include programs, such as the STRIVE Global Program, as well as activities, such as the Annual International CVE Research Conference.

## **Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism**

The Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) Global program was developed in 2015 by Hedayah and the EU and launched in May 2015. It concluded in May 2021.<sup>2</sup>

The overall purpose of STRIVE is to build the capacity of state and non-state actors to effectively challenge radicalization and recruitment to terrorism while continuing to respect human rights and international law. Further objectives include the promotion of non-coercive responses to terrorism, considering that traditional coercive responses can be ineffective or even counter-productive, and the widening of the pool of people involved in CVE by raising the awareness of state and non-state actors and building the capacity of credible voices within local communities. Hedayah's program is based on four different strands and focusses on eleven target countries, which were defined through twelve preliminary scoping missions on the ground, and where credible civil society organizations (CSOs) with access to key target groups were identified.

### **Four Strands**

#### **Strand Number One: Development of a culturally literate CVE curriculum**

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Hedayah jointly developed this curriculum. The purpose of this CVE curriculum is to raise awareness on collaborative CVE approaches, while enabling and training government officials and CSOs to be better equipped to prevent and counter violent extremism through ten modules, ten webinars, seventeen handouts and twenty-four videos. These ten modules introduce the field of CVE, help explain the drivers of violent extremism in a contextualized manner focusing on the MENA region and Central Asia, and offer guidance on how to design, implement and monitor constructive responses to violent extremism. It is available in English, Arabic, and Russian.<sup>3</sup> This curriculum can also be taught at a country-level, as Hedayah previously did in Turkmenistan, where a total of thirty government officials have been trained on two occasions.

#### **Strand Number Two: Empowerment of Civil Society Organizations**

This strand focuses on raising the awareness of and building support for CVE among CSOs and public officials and helping CSOs design, implement,



monitor, and fund localized projects on CVE. Hedayah provides constant capacity-building to the grantees. This starts from the inception phase and the proposal writing and goes until the end of the project implementation. This not only gives the grantees the opportunity for developing actions on CVE, but also helps them improve their project management skills and prepare them for future projects in this field. The same logic of intervention is also true for strands three and four.

Csos are encouraged to adapt existing materials on the topic to their local context where possible. The goal is to develop approaches that have a demonstrable impact on the threat posed by radicalization and recruitment to terrorism and to build the capacities and reinforce the role of csos in CVE, while encouraging collaborative approaches between csos and governments. To achieve this, interventions that are embedded in the national CVE strategy are encouraged, in order to promote cooperation between csos and governmental agencies. To ensure a participatory approach, csos also request supporting letters from local authorities or sign memoranda of understanding with them. Where possible, Hedayah also tries to build synergies between csos of different countries to increase their impact and for them to share their expertise and material. The final impact of the projects is measured through baseline and end-line reports. In total, the STRIVE Global program has already concluded seven different projects throughout the target countries and is currently implementing eleven more projects.

### **Strand Number Three: Improvement of media coverage**

The purpose of this strand is to address the challenge of media coverage on terrorism, as well as foster the capacity of state and media actors, in order to improve the quality of reporting, build the capacity of recognizing fake news and conspiracy theories, and reduce the use of hate speech and violations of privacy in the media. Furthermore, a voluntary code of conduct suitable for different locations has been developed by Hedayah. In this strand, Hedayah is currently supporting the implementation of seven journalism projects in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, Georgia, Tajikistan, and Jordan. To verify the outcomes and ensure the quality of the projects from the different strands, Hedayah has so far concluded twelve monitoring missions on the ground, adding to the monitoring of the projects done online on a monthly basis.

**Strand Number Four: Development of research resources**

The goal of this final strand is to develop resources that provide an evidence base for CVE interventions. For this, the STRIVE Global program has already concluded nine research projects and is currently implementing four more. Through this program Hedayah has also elaborated two research pieces on the impact of journalism on violent extremism. Furthermore, Hedayah and the Institute of Strategic Dialogue created a global CVE web portal, The Counter Extremism Hub, to collate CVE publications, as available per country. Its goal is to bring together all relevant actors working in the field of CVE, providing an opportunity for practitioners, researchers, governments, and policymakers to showcase their work, practices, and knowledge. Furthermore, users can create their own profiles and connect with other individuals and organizations through the Hub's global directory and engage in forum discussions on related topics. The website already contains around 2,000 resources in its library.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the STRIVE Global program already resulted in some unexpected and positive outcomes. SFCG used the CVE curriculum developed under strand one in Iraq and Guinea, where it trained a total of four hundred eighty-nine local actors. A local CSO also further adapted the curriculum to the local context of Georgia. There have also been synergies created between governments of different countries, as shown by the visit of an official government delegation of Turkmenistan to Albania. Furthermore, local governments or international organizations have also adopted several documents developed by CSOs, such as in the case of a CSO from Kyrgyzstan that developed a media literacy curriculum which the Krygyz government is now using to conduct media literacy trainings at schools. Another example is in the case of a CSO from North Macedonia that developed a referral mechanism which the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the country are now using.

Throughout the four different strands, in total thirty-six organizations have been supported through this program. The STRIVE Global program selected these organizations through seven different calls for proposals, where innovative or original ideas were especially valued, as well as through direct awards. The geographic focus is on the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia), Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan), the MENA region (Jordan), the

South Caucasus (Georgia), and Turkey, which have been defined as target regions for this program.

### **Annual International CVE Research Conference**

The Annual International CVE Research Conference convenes CVE researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to share the most current, up-to-date research and analysis of CVE on an international scale, and provides a platform for network members to meet and share good practices on drivers of radicalization and effective solutions. It provides a platform for the latest, cutting-edge CVE research, and to facilitate a discussion around CVE policy, programming and research.<sup>5</sup>

### **Education for Preventing Violent Extremism (EPVE)<sup>6</sup>**

Education and the education sector can contribute to PVE efforts by:

- Mitigating feelings of isolation or exclusion by establishing positive connections between students' own worlds and the worlds of others, building respect for diversity and providing young people with the skills to cooperate based on shared interests and commonalities and/or to negotiate or mediate differences;
- Promoting media and information literacy skills that enable students to challenge ideologies that foster feelings of division and difference, including prejudice, hate speech and violent extremist messages. By incorporating concepts of acceptance, multi-culturalism, diversity, and civic responsibility, into as much of the existing curriculum, it is possible to make these concepts pervasive and normal, rather than an effort to add them as additions to the regular learning agenda;
- Providing alternatives to violence and violent extremism by cultivating attitudes and values that encourage students to participate as active citizens in their communities, their nations, regionally and globally to address challenges in a nonviolent manner;
- Facilitating intercultural exchanges and encouraging students to feel anchored in their own beliefs and practices. Educational institutions can be a safe space where students feel confident to share and debate their beliefs with others;

- Equipping students with the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to develop a sense of civic responsibility and to positively engage with institutions and organizations and are empowered to make decisions related to their lives and communities;
- Raising awareness among educators and school communities about violent extremism, and, where appropriate, equipping them with relevant tools for responding to violent extremism, such as being able to properly identify those who may be most vulnerable or susceptible to violent extremist ideologies;
- Structuring education systems and classrooms appropriately to prevent situations in which educational institutions inadvertently reinforces differences or stigmatizes students.

### **Working Paper<sup>7</sup>**

The Working Group for “Education for Preventing Violent Extremism” (EPVE)<sup>8</sup> led by Hedayah under the umbrella of the Education for Shared Societies (E4SS) initiative developed a working paper on preventing violent extremism (PVE). It presents key recommendations, challenges, actionable solutions, and practical examples for policymakers to implement appropriate educational approaches to PVE in the formal education setting. It also seeks to integrate informal education, and suggests ways in which the formal education sector and informal education overlap with respect to EPVE.

It should be noted that as part of the E4SS initiative, two other Working Groups were formed that tackled issues related to education in emergency situations (e.g., refugee camps and displacement), and education as it relates to digital resilience. In this respect, the present policy paper has a “light touch” on these issues, although it should be stressed that EPVE should be part and parcel of these subjects in their contributions to building Shared Societies.

This paper is premised on the idea that access to quality education for all students, regardless of gender, culture, faith, nationality or ethnicity, is the starting point for PVE. However, access to quality education alone is not sufficient for PVE—school systems that do not provide quality education can also be counter-productive [and support] violent extremism [as a result]. Examples include school systems that may encourage classroom discrimination or provide unequal access to education based on ethnicity or religion lines, which could further polarize societies and fuel violent extremism.

At the same time, education can be a positive tool to build resilience against violent extremism, especially if the quality education incorporates appropriate pedagogies and teaching approaches that build global competencies in students that are not only good for PVE, but are also supportive of traits of global citizens and qualities employers are looking for in the job market. Appropriate quality education has the potential to tackle underlying factors of violent extremism, including feelings of exclusion, discrimination, lack of recognition of equal rights, prejudices towards diversity. In addition, quality education can also shape attitudes and behaviors that are either more susceptible towards violence, or more resilient against it. In this regard, EPVE requires the promotion and nurturing from an early age of a combination of values that are at the core of this initiative—building Shared Societies.

EPVE is a multi-stakeholder approach and involves engagement with different fields of practices, including development, human rights, peacebuilding, and counterterrorism. EPVE can contribute to and help support the implementation of a number of regional and international frameworks and existing programs that have emerged from these different areas. For example, EPVE supports UNESCO's work, which includes providing assistance to states in shaping their PVE policies and recently released a guide on PVE through education.<sup>9</sup> UNESCO is also working with UNODC on an Education for Justice (E4J) initiative to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness through education activities designed for primary, second, and tertiary levels, which includes a module series on terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>10</sup> Within the development sector, EPVE supports Goal 4 on providing quality education and Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, including equal access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>11</sup>

Within the UN counterterrorism architecture, the Secretary General's Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), identifies the education sector as a key stakeholder in PVE strategies and action plans and Security Council Resolutions such as UNSCR 2250 (2015) closely link security solutions to youth and education. Additionally, The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) recognized education as playing a vital role in CVE through its framework document the *Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism* and subsequent *Abu Dhabi Plan of Action*<sup>12</sup> on the subject. Moreover, the

Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) supported the adoption of the *Manifesto for Education - Empowering Educators and Schools*, endorsed by EU education ministries in 2015.<sup>13</sup>

Despite increased attention to the subject by multiple stakeholders, much work is still needed to determine what is working and what is not working in the overlap between education and PVE. Moreover, senior policymakers and world leaders need to be made aware of how EPVE approaches, strategies, and policies can be implemented in a practical way, while avoiding instrumentalization of the education sector and adhering to “do no harm” principles. This paper seeks to outline several of these strategies through five key recommendations, along with challenges and potential solutions to overcome those challenges.

A guiding principle in the implementation of these recommendations is that they should not be considered universal, but rather guidelines that should be tailored to fit local needs and contexts. In other words, while the recommendations in this paper are broad, implementation will manifest differently across countries and contexts. Care should be taken to ensure that EPVE is implemented in a way that is appropriate for the communities it is influencing, and that policies and programmes follow relevant international standards, such as those related to human rights and education. Recognizing the sensitivity around the language of “preventing violent extremism,” the approaches described in this paper may not be (and sometimes should not be) labelled as “PVE,” but can utilize less controversial language, such as reinforcing values of Shared Societies.

### **Recommendation 1**

*Incorporate, where appropriate, EPVE approaches into policy, legislation, funding mechanisms, and institutional structures.*

**Challenges:** Actors within the education and development sectors do not always view PVE as their responsibility or priority and are concerned about instrumentalizing, securitizing, or stigmatizing the education system for national security or intelligence purposes. At the same time, it is often a challenge to convince counterterrorism policymakers and practitioners to invest in long-term solutions to prevent violent extremism, as they usually prefer short-term, kinetic and military responses. While these approaches may achieve measurable results in the short-term, the underlying factors contributing to an enabling environment for radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism are often missed.

Given this complexity, there is often a lack of sufficient funding for educational approaches to PVE from any appropriate ministry or agency. In addition, while there is a small body of research supporting EPVE approaches, long-term and longitudinal studies evaluating the effectiveness of approaches on attitudes and behavior are lacking, making it even more difficult to justify to national and international donors that funding these activities has the intended effect on building resilient communities and reducing violent extremism.

**Solutions:** It is important at the outset that all sectors involved define their own roles and limits to educational approaches to preventing violent extremism. Senior change-makers, such as those involved in WLA-CdM [World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid Members], can advocate for EPVE approaches to be integrated across the education sector. This includes supporting appropriate legislative bodies to make necessary changes, encouraging, where appropriate, the changing of curriculum requirements at the national level, and supporting and advising ministries of education interested in implementing EPVE. At the same time, those bodies developing PVE strategies at the national level (typically ministries of interior, foreign affairs and justice) should include and incorporate a diversity of actors from the education sector in the development process.

In addition, there is a pressing need to collect data, as well as present sufficient data to policymakers to emphasize the importance of, and potential positive impact of, EPVE approaches both inside and outside the classroom. This means that the organizations working on EPVE need to prioritize the collection of appropriate data and research to support their case to policymakers.

EPVE in the classroom could involve investments in reforms to textbooks and national curriculum and appropriate training and resources to be provided to teachers and teacher-trainers. Funding for these activities could come from the educational ministries, but also from the development or counter-terrorism sector that may be interested in supporting longer term goals of preventing violent extremism.

***Practical Examples:***

- Evaluate current education policies to see if and how EPVE can fit into existing structures;

- Establish working groups between the education sector, development and security institutions to discuss EPVE;
- Establish regular channels of communication between EPVE actors, including within the education sector;
- Mapping existing initiatives on EPVE and collecting good practices;
- Write policy papers on the importance of getting the education sector involved in EPVE approaches where needed;
- Draft new education policies to include EPVE approaches in the national level curriculum;
- Fund research and evaluation of EPVE programs to investigate the effects of EPVE in the long term;
- Present research and evaluation of EPVE programs to skeptical policymakers in the education, development and/or counterterrorism sectors;
- Fund programs to evaluate and revise teaching materials with an EPVE lens at the national level.

## Recommendation 2

*Promote education that emphasizes open-mindedness, inclusiveness, and respect and understanding of different religions, cultures, ethnicities and other identities.*

**Challenges:** On one hand, each nation seeks to reinforce their own values and culture as unique and different than others through their education system. This means that education can become highly politicized, and dependent on the values and culture of the society at the time. This is also important in creating a sense of national identity and inclusion within a society—and the lack of a strong national identity or feeling excluded from the national identity can be something that violent extremist groups prey upon for recruitment purposes. On the other hand, there are also benefits to supporting curriculum that emphasizes global citizenship—breaking down national boundaries and supporting inclusive approaches to all nationalities, ethnicities, religions, cultures and genders. This is where the tension lies—between being a citizen at the local, national and global levels.

In terms of the content taught in schools and present in textbooks, this recommendation is also difficult to carry out. Countries have different understandings of diversity based on their own context. Diversity can be physical or cultural—in one country, religious differences may be core to



individual identities, whereas in another country, ethnic heritage may be more important. Sometimes it is the omission of diverse perspectives that contributes to someone feeling excluded – for example, when the curriculum omits major historical events that are highly relevant to a portion of students (even those in the minority). Thus, the representation of diversity in textbooks and lesson plans will manifest differently as it applies to each context.

Moreover, private or non-formal educational institutions, such as religious institutions, may not be integrated into the national education system. In these circumstances, different policy requirements may be needed to advocate for certain pedagogies relevant for EPVE, or to bring private educational institutions into the conversation.

In addition, lessons to equip young people with intercultural understanding are sometimes perceived to be taking up classroom time at the expense of other core skills, such as reading and writing. Subjects where EPVE approaches are easily integrated, such as history or social studies, are also not always prioritized by teachers and parents, and math and science may be seen as more important in a students' educational process.

**Solutions:** Encourage, where appropriate, national curriculum reforms and educational programs that reinforce concepts of global citizenship that emphasize diversity, connect students' worlds to the worlds of others, build on shared interests and commonalities, and negotiate or mediate differences. Diversity here means respect towards and acceptance of other values, cultures and religions. Each context and country may have issues and tensions that are divisive in their communities, and textbooks and content of curricula should take care not to divide societies further through examples given or conspicuously omitted in the classroom. Education can also be a space to discuss contentious issues, which if unresolved, can contribute to underlying factors leading to radicalization to violent extremism such as marginalization/discrimination, racism, personal frustrations and personal or community failures. Appropriate education can enhance students' coping strategies, encourage personal development, provide job orientation, include civic education and encourage young people to take action. All of these approaches can be integrated into national and local curriculum in ways that are appropriate to the ages and development of the child.

Where private institutions do not follow national curriculum, or when local authorities have more control over the curriculum development than

national governments, national ministries of education should take care to raise awareness of EPVE approaches, their benefits, and options of steps that can be taken to implement EPVE in the classroom. Generating buy-in and enthusiasm from private stakeholders is important to ensuring these approaches reach educational institutions of all varieties.

Finally, when subjects pertaining to EPVE are not highly valued by teachers and parents, a case needs to be made for how the skills and values attributed to EPVE approaches are vital components of education that shapes a student into a productive and valuable member of the national society and as a global citizen.

*Practical Examples:*

- Include requirements and facilitate trainings for teachers to implement teaching pedagogies that encourage open-mindedness, critical thinking, and self-reflection;
- Evaluate teachers based on the pedagogies listed above;
- Encourage teachers to include discussions around contentious issues to enhance students coping skills;
- Provide training for teachers on how to facilitate classroom dialogue;
- Evaluate teachers on their facilitation methods;
- Prioritize changes to textbooks and curriculum that emphasize diversity, for example:
  - ◊ Recognize responsibility for past negative government influences in history textbooks (e.g. slave trade or colonization), and point out consequences on current affairs;
  - ◊ Avoid underlying misogyny in textbook language, as this is sometimes the method utilized by VE groups;
  - ◊ Include diverse voices in curriculum—for example authors contributing to literature from a migrant background;
  - ◊ Include field trips and excursions where students experience different culture, food, religion, or art.

**Recommendation 3**

*Put students' needs at the center of any intervention for preventing violent extremism, and avoid securitizing youth and students.*

**Challenges:** Students can be susceptible to many influences—both positive and negative—and EPVE approaches should avoid the underlying assumption that all students are susceptible to radicalization leading to violent extremism. Approaching education through the lens of PVE can potentially create bias amongst teachers towards their students, or raise their concerns of radicalization where there may not yet be a concern.

Early warning mechanisms where teachers detect potentially radicalized students can be harmful if not implemented appropriately. This can lead to stigmatization of students, and possibly further alienation that could exacerbate the radicalization process or lead to other adverse outcomes, such as withdrawal from school. Teachers identifying potential warning signs should take care that their actions do not contribute to the radicalization process, but instead are focussed on protecting the student and the community from harm.

Educational practices that separate students from different cultural backgrounds can be harmful if they perpetrate segregation between communities or enhance feelings of mistrust. For example, separation due to language competency for extended periods of time could be problematic if language is also linked to ethnic, cultural or religious disputes.

**Solutions:** A do-no-harm approach should be at the core of any strategy to leverage educational institutions to prevent violent extremism. This can be done by contextualizing violent extremism at a local level, and situating violent extremism as one subject to address within the needs of the community or school. EPVE approaches can help build resilience against violent extremism, among other vulnerabilities leading to deviant behavior.

This may include combating gang culture or gun culture in the community, preventing students' from being involved in organized crime or drug trafficking, or drawing specific attention to domestic abuse, gender-based violence or sexual violence in the community.

EPVE approaches also support building stronger, more effective national and global citizens with skills and competencies that can be harnessed for positive change. These include competencies of civic responsibility and civic engagement. Involving students in their own educational processes, and encouraging peer-to-peer learning opportunities can also support building more resilient students and constructive classrooms. This may mean providing opportunities for students to think creatively on how they can take action and contribute to positive change in their communities in a construc-

tive and non-violent way, or for addressing differences and disagreements through a lens of complexity rather than conflict.

For those schools where violent extremism is a significant problem, early warning mechanisms for teachers should be accompanied by sufficient training for teachers to detect potential warning signs, as well as appropriate solutions—both within and outside the school structure—for the teacher to follow if he/she identifies any of these signs.

Emphasizing the student-focused approach, the early warning mechanisms should provide clear guidance for the teacher on how to first intervene within the school system (e.g., referring to a school counselor, [talking] to the parents) before securitizing the situation and reporting to local authorities.

Integrated school systems that still provide options to address students' different learning needs, rather than segregated learning systems, have been shown to be more effective in building tolerant, open societies. For example, in a community where ethnic divisions are coupled with linguistic differences, an integrated schooling system with adequate support to address language inadequacies can support more tolerant communities as well as encourage students to apply newly acquired linguistic skills faster. Where integrated schooling systems are not possible, solutions can also be made in the informal sector—bringing together divided communities in after school activities.

*Practical Examples:*

- Train teachers and school counsellors to identify “signs of vulnerability” to deviant behavior in the classroom and on how to develop effective EPVE responses;
- Develop an in-school response to vulnerabilities through social and psychological support from teachers, counsellors and parents;
- Establish protocol for reporting serious vulnerabilities of students through appropriate channels, both within and outside the school;
- Where possible, involve students in the discussion around what topics related to EPVE of relevance to them—applying the “do no harm” principle in this regard;
- Re-structure schooling systems to avoid segregating communities (e.g., by ethnicity or religion).

#### Recommendation 4

*Work with teachers to change the culture of schools and education systems incorporate interactive learning styles and pedagogies conducive to building resilient students, rather than rote learning styles.*

**Challenges:** Teachers may see EPVE activities in the classroom as an “additional burden” to implement, on top of the national curriculum they have to teach.

They may feel the pressure to meet certain local, regional or national standards for their students’ scores, and may be punished for their students not achieving these scores. Teachers may not feel that PVE is their priority or responsibility, or that addressing PVE-related issues is too high of a risk.

Teachers may experience rhetoric in the classroom that encourages conflict or hate speech. In some circumstances, teachers may be directly facing narratives of violent extremist and terrorist groups in the classroom. However, teachers may be able to play a role in refuting the ideology and narratives of violent extremism or undermining misinformation of terrorist groups, but they may not feel adequately prepared to address those narratives. This may particularly be the case when faced with teaching on the subject of religion, or when presented with ideological arguments about which they are not familiar.

Teachers may also face other challenges in the classroom, such as large classroom sizes, students of different ethnic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds, or even direct threats of violence or violent extremism in their communities. They may lack basic resources for teaching such as desks, writing utensils, computers, access to internet, or textbooks. They also may face inadequate training, low or inconsistent pay, or lack of respect for their profession from the community.

Teachers may also feel a sense of hopelessness or disempowerment, and the sense that they do not have control over what happens both inside and outside the classroom. All of these challenges may be de-motivating for teachers to switch their teaching styles away from rote learning to more interactive approaches, partially because they are looking for “quick fixes” to broader, structural problems.

**Solutions:** There are four main elements critical to changing the culture of schools to incorporate EPVE:

1. Raising awareness of the need for EPVE in the classroom amongst educators,

2. Revising national curricula and textbooks,
3. Training teachers on interactive pedagogies for EPVE, and
4. Incorporating EPVE measures into educational evaluation frameworks.

Raising awareness of EPVE approaches should emphasize that how a student learns is just as important as what a student learns. Research has shown that certain teaching methods, such as those that incorporate social and emotional learning strategies, have a positive effect on school performance (including standardized tests)<sup>14</sup> as well as can contribute to PVE.<sup>15</sup> There are also studies that have shown that alternative techniques applied in a school setting, such as mindfulness, can help reduce school violence, assist students in overcoming trauma, and increase students' abilities to manage anger and stress.<sup>16</sup>

EPVE approaches could also examine national curricula, to include textbooks, to ensure that it at very least does not exacerbate community grievances or conflict, but at best teaches global competencies in students. Recommendations could then be made on how to improve or reform these curricula. Additional supplementary resources, including practical suggestions of EPVE-related activities, may also be needed to ensure that appropriate EPVE activities are integrated and implemented in the classroom. It may also be useful to create networks of educators, both within and outside a country, that are working on implementing EPVE approaches to share resources and knowledge.

Teachers who incorporate EPVE approaches should be appropriately trained. Some effective teaching approaches for EPVE include those that encourage open-mindedness, discourage black-and-white thinking, teach respect for diversity and inclusiveness, build independent identities for individuals as well as respectful approaches to other identities and the capacity to navigate differences productively, encourage classrooms to be safe spaces for dialogue, and cultivate skills of critical thinking and critical assessment of materials. Examples of existing teaching approaches may be in alignment with, for example, "Rights Respecting Schools" programs encouraged by UNICEF, or through implementing Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Pedagogies that incorporate games and activities that are student-led are often the most effective. These pedagogies involve a shift in approach to the classroom—from the teacher as a "dictator" with all the answers, to the

teacher as a “facilitator” that guides students towards finding out answers on their own. Teachers are often not taught facilitation methods or social and emotional learning techniques in their basic training, but ongoing teacher education can help to support the lack of skills.

In addition to training on skills related to EPVE, teachers may also be trained on knowledge of how to combat ideologies related to violent extremism that may manifest in the classroom. This may include methods to counter a range of potentially violent language, including hate speech and terrorist propaganda. Teachers may also be encouraged to leverage local connections to experts, such as religious leaders, who can address difficult topics with their students as guest lecturers or on field trips outside the school.

From the national policy level, it is also important to integrate EPVE measures into the evaluation of teachers themselves, as well as in the evaluation of students. If teachers are expected to cultivate competencies in their students, there needs to be some level of accountability (and rewards) for leveraging methodologies that build those competencies. At the same time, teachers should be rewarded for integrating more interactive styles into their classroom learning. Thus, any effective policy on EPVE at the national level needs to include a relevant and regular feedback system from schools to the policy level, and set measurable goals for how changes to the curricula to support EPVE have been achieved.

*Practical Examples:*

- Encourage teaching styles that are interactive and activity-based;
- Revise national curricula and textbooks to include active learning styles;
- Provide practical resources for teachers (including activities) that incorporate EPVE styles;
- Create networks of teachers, nationally and internationally, that are working on EPVE to enable peer-to-peer capacity-building and sharing of knowledge and techniques;
- Include requirements for teachers on utilizing social and emotional learning techniques;
- Provide training for teachers on social and emotional learning;
- Evaluate teachers based on social and emotional learning techniques;

- Provide training and resources for teachers (when contextually relevant) to counter the messages and ideologies of violent extremist groups (to include countering hate speech).

### Recommendation 5

*Connect to and involve the broader community, particularly civil society, in EPVE, where contextually relevant and possible.*

**Challenges:** The broader community may not be invested in efforts to prevent violent extremism, or may promote values that are counterproductive to building resilient students. For example, there may not be community support for girls' education, or even negative criticism of the existence of a girls' school; or hateful narratives against immigration or refugee populations may prevail in a particular setting.

Schools may also be physically separated from the community, remote or isolated. For example, in rural settings, students may need to travel far from their homes to access education—meaning the involvement of parents or other community members in educational activities may be more challenging.

Discussion of difficult topics in the classroom can also be challenging—teachers may feel they do not know enough, or do not have sufficient resources to open certain topics—and may close down the discussion of those issues that may be grievances in the community (push factors).

The local community itself, particularly the job market, may not feel education is preparing employable students, or students may not feel they are employable after schooling. Notably, in some cases, access to higher education in combination with not sufficient jobs for that education level can lead to more frustrations and grievances that are preyed upon by violent extremist groups.

**Solutions:** Where relevant and possible, schools should involve parents and the local community in prevention efforts. It is important that skills and knowledge leading to more resilient students are reinforced also at home. Parents can also help to aide teachers in identifying vulnerabilities in their children, and provide suggestions for solutions for the education system.

The community can be leveraged in a number of ways. In cases where teachers may not feel comfortable discussing certain topics, they should be able to bring in verified experts, practitioners, or others (such as survivors and formers) who can speak to their students. In cases where religion is



misrepresented and misinterpreted and used as a justification to perpetrate terrorist and violent acts, credible religious leaders and actors can play an influential role in reinforcing ideals of human rights and respect for all. Moreover, students can visit local sites, such as memorials of victims of terrorism, as a way to trigger a conversation around the subject (if contextually relevant).

Extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, culture programs can also be leveraged to incorporate resilience-building measures that are also part of the formal education system. For example, coaches can be taught social and emotional learning strategies that can be applied in the informal setting of teaching a sport, which is naturally more interactive.

Culture and arts programs can emphasize diversity and respect for others, while cultivating knowledge about subjects that are supplemental to what is being taught in schools.

Finally, the private sector can be leveraged with respect to ensuring [that] appropriate jobs are available on the market based on skill level; offering vocational training and life skills as part of the formal education process or extracurricular activities; and investing in building students' competencies that match with global citizenship and employability.

### *Practical Examples:*

- Set up meetings between parents and teachers to explain new teaching methods related to EPVE;
- Inform and communicate with parents on EPVE approaches;
- Involve outside experts (invite as guests) in classroom teaching, especially when teachers are not comfortable addressing specific topics;
- Visit a variety of local religious sites to show diversity and encourage questions about other religions;
- Encourage EPVE approaches with religious institutions that may support education;
- Train coaches on social and emotional learning techniques;
- Create clubs that link the private sector to secondary schools where unemployment is a major risk for radicalization and recruitment;
- Involve the private sector in decision-making around cultivating certain skills in students.

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# Sustainable Development through Education for Peace: An Appraisal of Indian Policies and School Education Curriculum

Saroj Pandey

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**T**HE WORLD TODAY is sitting on the edge of the volcano of violence, discrimination, aggression and oppression that erupts every now and then, de-stabilizing the peace and harmony of nations. Violence has permeated the fabric of all communities around the world so deep that we have accepted it as part of our daily life. Education was thought to be the major instrument to inculcate values, tolerance, harmony and living together in our children but seems to have failed miserably in this objective. The problem of today's education is its alienation from the realities of the world around with the result that instead of being a process of liberation, it is often visualized as an instrument of oppression, manipulation, process of thought control and indoctrination. That is why Ivan Illyich called for De-Schooling society and Paulo Freire suggested the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. A desperate need is being felt by educationists, philosophers, scientists and political leaders to rejuvenate the human values which may bring long lasting peace on this planet. The insistence of Delors report (1996) on "Learning to live together" as the central pillar of education is a sad reminder of the current state of affairs, and also a realization that education must be geared to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, democratic values, human rights and duties among students. It is right time to evolve a system of education that is more humane and liberating. Education for peace therefore should be the integral component of both overt and hidden curriculums of the education system. The concept of peace however needs clarification as distinguished from religious education, moral education or value education, and should cut across various subjects taught in institutions. The culture of peace needs to permeate the entire school experience of the child instead of being taught as a subject. Sustainable development can only be ensured through education for peace.

## Education for Peace: The Indian Context

The Indian society highly diversified in terms of caste, class, religion and regions faces the greatest challenge of ensuring equality, equity and social justice to all its citizens and considers education as the major tool for promoting these values enshrined in the Constitution. Education has been accepted, in this context a tool for nurturing interdependence of thought and action, sensitivity towards others, participation in the democratic process, ideals of living together and social change, etc. The combative role of education in eliminating discrimination, religious fundamentalism, violence and superstition, and promoting some core values such as India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy, secularism, equality of sexes, observance of small family norms (two-children family norm is encouraged in order to control population explosion), and inculcation of scientific temper, etc. have been emphasized in various educational policies of the country from time to time. Promoting peace, social justice, and equality of human race has always been one of the major concerns of Indian education system and addressed by the curriculum framers through integrating various values promoting peace, social justice and sustainable development in the entire school curriculum and across all subjects. Consequently all the Curriculum Frameworks formulated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for school education in 1975, 1988 and 2000, respectively emphasized developing certain values among students that are in conformity with the educational policies and help promote a peaceful society (school curriculum is periodically reviewed and modified to keep pace with the ever changing knowledge base). *The Curriculum for Ten Year School: A Framework* (1975) published by NCERT for school education states (para 2.5, page 4),

The awakening of social consciousness, the development of democratic values and of a feeling for social injustice and national integration are extremely important. The promotion of national consciousness and the development of international understanding should be one simultaneous process. Tolerance, friendship, cooperation and peace between nations are possible only through a proper appreciation of each country's contribution to the world. National Integration can be achieved only through a proper understanding and appreciation of different sub-cultures of India and the common bonds that hold them to-

gether...All subjects should be taught in such a manner so as to foster the spirit of scientific humanism.

The *National Curriculum Framework for Elementary and Secondary Education of 1988* visualized value education as integral part of school education curriculum. Values, emphasized in this framework, were drawn from national goals, universal perceptions, ethical considerations, and character building. This framework strongly advocated the need for generating awareness among students of the necessity of promoting peace and international understanding for prosperity of human kind and interdependence of nations in different spheres. Emphasizing on encouraging students to learn to live together by promoting the concept of “*world as a family of nations*,” this framework maintains <sup>1</sup>

The curriculum should reflect some of the major issues facing the world today such as disarmament, avoidance of nuclear war, prevention of violation of human rights, etc. ... The school curriculum, while enabling the pupil to root oneself in the abiding national cultural traditions and value frame, should also enable him/her to learn and appreciate the richness and to see himself/herself as a member of the new and emerging international community of [h]umankind.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE, 2000) stresses that <sup>2</sup>

education has to play its dual role of being conservative and dynamic —bringing about a fine synthesis between change-oriented technologies and the country’s continuity of cultural tradition. While on the one hand, education should help in promoting a global world order, on the other, it should be seen as developing a national consciousness, a national spirit and national unity essential for national identity. At no point of time can the school curriculum ignore the inclusion of specific content to forge national identity, a profound sense of patriotism and nationalism tempered with the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* [world as a family], non-sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating differences arising out of caste, religion, ideology, region, language, sex, etc.

Accepting truth, righteous conduct, peace, love and non-violence as the core universal values, the NCFSE (2000) maintains, “schools can and

must strive to restore and sustain the universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of the people, their moral and spiritual growth enabling them to realise the treasure within.”<sup>3</sup> In this context, “education about religions” and not “religious education” had been emphasized by the NCFSE (2000) in order to help students to understand that the “essence of every religion is common only the practices differ.”<sup>4</sup>

These frameworks adopted the behavioristic approach of teaching and learning and integration as the method for promoting education for peace. In addition, certain values had been identified and considered essential for promoting peace. Consequently, values related to peace and human rights had been integrated in textbooks of all subject areas at all levels, instead of teaching them separately.

### **The National Curriculum Framework (2005): The Epistemological Shift**

A major epistemological shift is witnessed in the approach towards school curriculum reforms in India in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) in the concept of learning as well as integration of peace education in the school syllabus. This was in response to the shift in the concept of learning from traditional behaviorist perspectives, where learning is considered mechanical, to constructivist perspective where the experiences of students become more important. Constructivism involves active participation of students in the process of exploration and discovery. Throughout the learning experience meaning is constructed and reconstructed based on the previous experiences of students. In contrast to behaviorist epistemology, learning in constructivism is no longer a product but the process of learning itself, and students learn concepts while exploring their application. During this application process students test several hypotheses and explore alternative solutions and learn through discovery. The 2005 curriculum reform in India has responded to this global shift in the concept of learning and two significant paradigm shifts can clearly be identified in the NCF 2005 that have bearing on promoting education for peace:

- i. The NCF 2005 is based on the Constructivist approach to learning, while all previous curriculum reform efforts had been based on the behaviorist approach, and,

- ii. Shift from traditional value-based approach to peace-based approach. The National Focus Group on Education for Peace was constituted to help develop NCF 2005.

Twenty one National Focus Groups were constituted in different areas of education to suggest their recommendations in order to facilitate the development of NCF 2005. Each focus group developed a focus group paper on its recommendations. The group on education for peace considers that<sup>5</sup>

value education is subsumed in education for peace but is not identical with it. Peace is contextually appropriate and pedagogically gainful point of coherence for values. Peace concretizes the purpose of values and motivates their internalization. Without such a framework, the integration of values into the learning process remains a non-starter. Education for peace is, thus, the ideal strategy for conceptualizing and operationalising value education.

Education for peace, according to NCF 2005, “seeks to nurture ethical development, inculcating the values, attitudes and skills required for living in harmony with oneself and with others including the nature.”<sup>6</sup> It is therefore, a concern cutting across the curriculum and is the concern of all teachers.

The NCF’s thrust on Constructivist epistemology provided ample opportunity to integrate peace concerns in education as constructivism considers students active partners in their knowledge construction process and not passive receivers of knowledge like in the traditional epistemology. There are several instructional practices commonly attributed to the influence of constructivism (Brooks and Brooks 1999, Hirtle, 1996; Poplin & Weeres, 1992; Roblyer, Edward, & Havriluk, 1997; Schifter, 1996) using problem-oriented learning activities relevant to students’ interests. These include:

- Encouraging active, not passive learning;
- Providing learning environment that utilizes variety of learning resources;
- Encouraging creativity;
- Encouraging collaborative and cooperative group work;
- Encouraging learning through exploration;



- Emphasizing the process of problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills;
- Using authentic assessment methods along with quantitative methods.

These processes are also very effective in negotiating conflicts and finding solutions acceptable to the conflicting parties. In contrast to traditional classrooms where learning is so decontextualized that it bears little resemblance to meaningful authentic activity, the constructivist classroom learning relates to real life experiences involving collaborative group work, exploration and discovery where students' existing knowledge base is challenged and reconstructed again and again. The guiding principles of constructivism are

- » Posing problems of emerging relevance to students;
- » Structuring learning around primary concepts;
- » Seeking and valuing students' points of view;
- » Adapting curriculum to address students' suppositions;
- » Assessing learning in the context of teaching.

These principles not only ensure better understanding of content but also facilitate students to think critically, reflect on problems and issues at hand, collaborate with others, work in groups, negotiate conflicts and contradictions, and make informed decisions and choices. In the process they develop as more independent, thoughtful, and humane individuals. For a diverse and multiethnic country like India developing humane citizens is the only way to ensure sustainable development.

The NCF (2005) provided wide scope for utilization of the personal experiences of students in day-to-day school activities. Expressing concern over lack of opportunities for students in the present system to share their personal experiences, the NCF (2005) strongly recommends “the curriculum must enable children to find their voices, nurture their curiosity—to do things, to ask question and to pursue investigations, sharing and integrating their experiences with school knowledge—rather than their ability to reproduce external knowledge.”<sup>7</sup> And schools must “provide opportunities to students to question, enquire, debate, reflect and arrive at concepts to create new ideas.”<sup>8</sup> These are the important steps of value clarification and conflict

resolution process also, which help in removing apprehensions, mistrust and doubts about others and encourages living together.

### **Pedagogy for Promotion of Culture of Sustainable Peace**

Education for peace brings together multiple traditions of pedagogy and theories of education. It is fundamentally dynamic, interdisciplinary and multicultural in nature and aims at developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to achieve and sustain global culture of peace. It encourages developing skills among students for active listening, critical thinking, reflection, problem solving, and conflict resolution. These skills need to be developed early in students and nurtured continuously. The personal experiences of students have to be honored and treated as a base for dialogue and new learning. It is essential to note that when we talk about peace we expect at least three basic conditions—communication, cooperation and confidence—the process of making these three conditions work is peace building. Therefore, peace is like the bridge that facilitates the process of communication and helps in developing closer relationship between people. Both constructivism and Peace education are associated with the humanistic philosophy, which is dedicated to developing more mature and self-directed learner who is conscious of his/her rights as well as the rights of others and his/her duty towards others, and emphasizes lifelong learning. Peace education does not teach students what to think, but rather how to think critically and had been the central focus of NCF 2005. In the process, its holistic and participatory approach draws more from the constructivist than traditional curriculum designs as it aims not to reproduce but to transform, and is a continuous process dedicated to the enormous task of improving the spiritual, as well as material quality of life of people.

Nevertheless, we cannot ensure sustainable development by merely engaging the curriculum or textbooks as promotion of culture of peace calls for a transformation of motivational orientations of students from competition and conflict to cooperation and mutual understanding. In such cooperative orientation, the sense of interdependent communality of interest, mutual understanding, tolerance, cooperative conflict management and resolution are encouraged through effective communication, problem solving, and negotiating behavior. All these pedagogies help in knowledge construction; development of deeper understanding and insight into the

problem. Unfortunately, the whole ethos of the existing educational institutions is more geared towards competition which encourages a win-win orientation among young students that fuels competition and conflict in school eco-system and the carry over effect remains with the students throughout their life. Education for peace represents a humanizing process whereby individuals overcome their violent instincts. It teaches respect for life and living together; it helps to develop among students a positive self-image, sense of dignity and self-worth, sense of responsibility for self and others, and a capacity to trust others.

The learning process in peace education is understood primarily as experiential and activity-based rather than by rote memorization or by repetitive conditioning. It should be very clear in our minds that we cannot indoctrinate peace. The learning models for peace are logically built on the assumption of human nature, i.e., students are sentient beings who actively participate in the learning experience, they also learn through reflecting cases, reading and examples (J. Synott, 2005). To put it precisely, they learn, both by, practical engagement and interaction, as well as, by processes of reflection and abstraction.

### **The National Education Policy 2020: a step towards sustainable Peace**

The Indian government has recently brought out New Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) that provides ample opportunity to develop humane, equitable, inclusive and sensitive society that can contribute to global peace and sustainable development. The NEP2020 envisages reconfiguring the entire education system to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all Indian citizens. The vision of the policy is to develop global citizens through education who are well aware of their traditional Indian culture and values and their fundamental duties towards the nation and also have the awareness of their responsibilities in changing the world. The vision of the policy is “to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian ... as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.”<sup>9</sup>

The reflection of the spirit of *from local to global* can be observed in the vision of NEP2020. Widespread reforms in the education system have been

suggested and the entire system right from pre-school to higher education level has been reconfigured to ensure inclusive, equitable and sustainable quality education for all by the next decade. Consequently, the focus of education is not only to develop the cognitive faculty of students but also to build character and create holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key twenty first century skills.<sup>10</sup> Efforts are being made to revise and modify the curriculum at all levels of education to achieve this aim. With an eye on the multilingual background of Indian students, three-language formula has been proposed in NEP 2020 with total freedom of states to choose any language, however, two languages should be Indian. The provision for instruction in the mother tongue of the child and bilingual textbooks are expected not only to promote the culture of togetherness and better understanding of the other but also to facilitate retention of children in the education system for a longer duration who otherwise drop out or fail due to their language comprehension issues. India has not only the linguistic diversity but Indian languages are considered to be among the richest, most scientific, most beautiful and most expressive in the world, with huge body of ancient and modern literature. This vast treasure of knowledge and its dissemination through various activities and projects such as “languages of India” under the “EK BHARAT SHRESHTHA BHARAT” (One India, Great India) scheme is expected to promote national unity and integrity in this multicultural and multiethnic society. The emphasis on Indian classical languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya and many more other classical languages is a significant step in the direction that would ensure the integrity and unity of nation and develop the feeling of “world as one family” among students.

One of the major distinguishing features of NEP 2020 that is significant for promoting the culture of living together is that on the one hand the policy strives to restore the dignity of the forgotten ancient Indian knowledge and languages, on the other hand students will also be exposed to many foreign languages such as Korean, Japanese, Thai, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian as well from the secondary level (Standard IX onwards). This provision is expected not only to facilitate better understanding in students about the culture of other countries of the world, enrich their global knowledge to make informed choices about their career and life in the future but also develop them as global citizens.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world to realize the tremendous potentials of information and communication technology (ICT) and other digital technologies/platforms which are continuously being used now for not only educational purposes but for other aspects of life like online medical consultations, helping others and keeping citizens abreast with latest developments in all walks of life. No education system in the contemporary society can afford to be oblivious of these technologies and its impact. NEP2020 recognizes the importance of various technologies and the crucial role it can play in emancipation of human life. Hence considerable attention has been paid on emerging disruptive technologies, various digital platforms, online and blended learning, etc.

To develop a culture of peace and sustainable development, the pedagogy of education needs to be broad, diverse and oriented towards lifelong learning. NEP 2020 strives to promote 4Cs, i.e., critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication along with 3Rs through various pedagogical approaches which are a prerequisite for developing any peaceful society. Experiential learning, cross-curricular pedagogies such as art integration, and sports integration may provide suitable opportunity to students to imbibe Indian ethos and culture, as well as develop self-confidence, self-control, self-initiative, self-discipline, team work, responsibility, collaboration, and citizenship. All these skills promote the culture of peace and sustainable development.

The recommendation for introduction of subjects like Artificial Intelligence, Holistic Health, Organic Living, Environmental Education, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), etc. at various stages of education have rich possibilities of not only promoting healthy mind in healthy body but also living in peace and harmony with nature which is a basic prerequisite for sustainable development and being emphasized in the latest UNESCO initiative of *Learning to Become*. Keeping in view the diverse and heterogeneous nature of Indian society, NEP2020 envisions equitable and inclusive education and development opportunities for all marginalized sections of society to ensure learning for all. The importance and role of teachers in promoting the culture of peace and sustainable development has also not been ignored, and widespread reforms have been suggested both at pre-service teacher preparation level and further their continuous professional development periodically.

## The Way Forward

Promoting the culture of peace and sustainable development calls for active engagement of students in the process of peace-building and peace-making. Such participation in turn can be ensured only when our educational institutions motivate and activate students engaging their interest, thinking and creativity through various participatory, innovative and constructive teaching-learning processes and develop a community of practice among the students. Classrooms for promoting the culture of peace and sustainable development needs to be more open, collaborative, participatory and creative with teachers as facilitators of knowledge through dialogue, discussions, debates, value clarifications, narratives, role play and other participatory approaches utilizing all available multimedia. Such broad perspective may help to address the menace of violence, discrimination, cultural and religious biases, prejudices and fanaticism, and help our future generation to become global citizens in real sense. There is an urgent need to develop critical and reflective thinking among our students, address their cultural and religious misconceptions and biases; facilitate them to distinguish and accept statements based on fact instead of individual opinions; develop their ability for intelligent reading and decoding the hidden agenda behind the news, reports, papers and magazines, etc.; develop the capacity to enter into others point of view, and most importantly help them realize that majority is not *always* correct so everything should not be accepted merely because majority say so. Unless we succeed in developing such facilitation and institutional eco-system and sustainable peace will remain a Utopia.

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# The Unending Task of Human Rights Promotion

Jefferson R. Plantilla

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**S**EVENTY-THREE YEARS AGO, a hopeful United Nations General Assembly adopted these texts:

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge...

The pledge in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to promote respect for and common understanding of human rights continues to be in a process of fulfilment after more than seventy years passed.

Questions are still being asked. What do we mean by human rights? Why should we value human rights? How can human rights apply to concrete situations of people? Can human rights help resolve the myriad of issues faced by society today?

While recognition and realization of human rights certainly exist today, there are still people the world over who could not see the need for the “universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” And despite the numerous international and national measures for the promotion, protection and realization of human rights, a serious misunderstanding of human rights remains. People’s perception of human rights is still shaped by diverse political, religious, social, cultural and even economic perspectives that hinder the achievement of a “common understanding of these rights and freedoms.” Additionally, the current COVID-19 pandemic situation reveals the different opinions on how human rights should be exercised. The “individual versus society” debate on human rights rises once more.

In short, the task of human rights promotion has not ended; it continues. In truth, it must continue.



The continuation of human rights promotion is seen in initiatives that do not have human rights as the noticeable content. These initiatives concentrate on empowering people regarding the development of their communities, the protection of their livelihood, the overcoming of barriers to education, the preservation of natural resources, the creation of new meaning of social harmony and inclusivity in a diversified society, the remembrance of the past, the establishment of systems that address harassment and other issues in the workplace, among others. These initiatives are important parts of human rights promotion because they are vehicles of an understanding of human rights that goes beyond the old “civil-political rights versus economic-social-cultural rights divide.” People see human rights in the context of realities that do not segregate civil, political, economic, social and cultural issues and rights from each other. Human rights promotion takes varied forms and covers diverse issues, communities and institutions.

The discussion below highlights articles in this volume that show the variety of human rights promotion initiatives in Asia and the Pacific. A few other initiatives are likewise mentioned in this article.

### **Continuing with School-based Promotion**

An online international conference organized by the Center for Transformative Education (CTE) of the Philippine Normal University on 21 October 2021 focused on “reconnecting human rights education” to the education community. The conference discussed the apparent retreat of human rights education in the Asia-Pacific region during the last decade. CTE specifically wanted to “reconnect” the school teachers to human rights education.

In a webinar organized by CTE with the theme, “Equality: Reducing Inequalities, Advancing Human Rights” on 9 December 2021, the issue of integrating human rights into the school curriculum was discussed. The idea was to provide the students who were aspiring to become teachers to consider teaching human rights in their respective subjects.

Both online activities reminded the participants about the human rights education experiences that existed in all forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal) in Asia and the Pacific during the 1990s and 2000s.

In the December webinar, the substantial support for human rights education provided by the Department (Ministry) of Education of the

Philippines, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, and other institutions in the 1990s and 2000s was reviewed. The development of teaching materials (lesson plans or teaching exemplars), organizing of teacher training workshops, holding of human rights celebrations (such as Human Rights Consciousness Week, Child Rights Month) by government agencies,<sup>1</sup> adoption of local government human rights initiatives (such as policy on child protection<sup>2</sup>) alongside the constitutional<sup>3</sup> and legal<sup>4</sup> bases for human rights promotion contributed to the relative popularity of human rights education in the Philippines during that period.

The teaching materials developed in the 1990s and 2000s for the Philippine school system focused mainly on social sciences subjects such as social studies and values education.

The constitutional and legal support along with the administrative initiatives<sup>5</sup> remain and yet the popularity of human rights education has seemingly declined in the Philippine school system from late 2000s.

Such decline in popularity seems to have been caused by the decreased support by the two main institutions with the mandate to promote human rights in the school system – Department of Education and the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.

Could it be that the initiatives in late 1990s and early 2020s were mainly projects rather than programs? As a result, the focus on human rights teaching waned after project completion.

Human rights teaching appears to be a minor part of the school curriculum in the Philippines at present, though extra-curricular activities related to human rights (Human Rights Consciousness Week, Child Rights Month) continue.

There is a need to review the integration of human rights teaching in the school curriculum to find ways of ensuring that it (human rights teaching) does not remain a minor part of the school curriculum in the Philippines.

This problem likely exists in other regions. A study in Africa describes the situation in relation to Global Citizenship Education (GCED):<sup>6</sup>

As for the low priority placed on GCED and related programs within broader education programming, it can be explained by cultural and economic pressures on formal school systems to include more math and science so that school graduates can compete in the high-tech global economy. This phenomenon is often described as the ‘market orientation of education,’ that

favors hard skills instead of promoting the development of soft and social-emotional skills. (notes omitted)

The market orientation of education is seen as a cause for marginalizing the teaching of topics (including human rights) that have been recognized as appropriate for social science subjects. Again, this is not likely limited to Africa.

At the same time, the lessening of interest on teaching human rights-related issues such as conflict resolution in formal education is seen as caused by the need to use teaching hours for more important subjects such as “math and science.” The Hedayah report explains this issue:<sup>7</sup>

In addition, lessons to equip young people with intercultural understanding are sometimes perceived to be taking up classroom time at the expense of other core skills, such as reading and writing. Subjects where EPVE [Education for Preventing Violent Extremism] approaches are easily integrated, such as history or social studies, are also not always prioritized by teachers and parents, and math and science may be seen as more important in a student’s educational process.

Formal education, in this sense, should stress “investing in building students’ competencies that match with global citizenship and employability.”<sup>8</sup>

This raises two questions: 1) Should human rights teaching be limited only to social science subjects?; 2) Are knowledge and skill related to human rights not relevant to the workplace in particular and the business and economy in general?

The 1999 manuscript of Rosemarivic G. Villena, entitled “Integration of Human Rights Issues in the Teaching of Secondary Mathematics,” provides an answer:<sup>9</sup>

The integration of human rights in the mathematics curriculum does not interfere with the mathematics lesson, and more so, it is not a burden. [The integration of human rights] in the lesson [is meant] to provoke thought and to raise issues of human rights awareness in the classroom.

Mathematics curriculum in secondary schools [must be] studied carefully, and topics where the integration of human rights is possible [have to be] identified.

Villena has several sample mathematics lesson plans in her manuscript that discuss human rights.

The December 2021 CTE webinar responded to these questions by emphasizing the many efforts already done in teaching human rights beyond the social science subjects that showed the relevance of human rights to science and mathematics.

Initiatives in the Philippines include development of teaching exemplars for science and mathematics subjects by the Department (Ministry) of Education, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, and other institutions. These teaching exemplars were the product of “write-shops” (writing workshops) where teachers and other educators wrote human rights lesson plans for different subjects in the school curriculum.<sup>10</sup> The teaching exemplars were introduced in teacher training from late 1990s to 2000s.<sup>11</sup>

A similar effort was made by the Australian Human Rights Commission when it produced in 2014 the “Human Rights Examples for the Australian Curriculum.”<sup>12</sup> The examples include lesson plans for mathematics subject such as the “Human Rights Examples for the Australian Curriculum: Secondary Year 7 – Year 10 – Maths.”<sup>13</sup>

In sum, rather than isolate the teaching of human rights to social science subjects, it should be done also in mathematics and natural science subjects. The relevance of human rights to mathematics and natural science subjects and to employment and other life issues should be properly emphasized. The integration of human rights education in the school curriculum means teaching of human rights in all subjects as much as possible.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Reinforcing classroom learning, or in some cases filling up the absence of human rights teaching inside the classroom, is done through extracurricular activities.

For tertiary level students, they need extracurricular activities that maximize their research skill and require them to do field activities on human rights issues. Below are examples of human rights-related extracurricular activities that have been implemented in Asia for several years now.

### Memorializing Historical Events

Visit to museums may either be considered a curricular or extra-curricular activity. Museums that provide thought-provoking and rare or unique exhibits are valuable sources of information that may not be discussed properly in school textbooks or even history books.

In the case of Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh, a visiting college student remarked:<sup>14</sup>

We learned about many unknown histories and realized that we still do not know the actual history and true facts about our Liberation War.

Much of what people would not know are stories coming from local areas about the role played by people in those places in the war for national liberation. The Museum provides such stories to highlight the important role of the local people in the history of the country. The more than 60,000 stories collected through the years by students of Grade VI and higher levels can provide important insights on national history seen through the eyes of local people.

At the same time, the students who participate in collecting the stories are learning history from members of their own family and the local community. With the compilation of the stories exhibited in their schools and localities by the Museum, they (students) and the local people concerned can own the part of national history related to their community.

The localization of historical narratives is a strategic mode of getting local people to participate in understanding and remembering their own histories. In the case of the Museum initiative, the collection of local stories creates synergy between the local school, students and the community.<sup>15</sup>

Understanding of human rights issues or conflicts can be more meaningful through local activities. The local process provides an avenue for local people to express their view about the issues in their own way. This local process of remembering the victims of conflict is seen as part of managing trauma or experience of injustice as stated by Search for Common Ground:<sup>16</sup>

To remember and to grieve our losses is an important aspect of moving beyond trauma, and in Sri Lanka there is a culture of memorialization practiced by all communities living in the country.

Affected people expressed ideas during regional consultations on how to remember the conflict:<sup>17</sup>

At the consultation, participants from the North noted that while intangible practices of remembrance which the Tamil community had been practicing throughout the war years (such as days of fasting, alms-giving, ritual lighting of oil lamps) could still continue, there should also be physical memorials (such as statues, cemeteries and graveyards, bus stops, schools and pre-schools built in memory of the dead) and intangible cultural memorials (such as documentary films, songs about incidents, registers of events, posters and handbills that are from the war). Southern consultations revealed a similar desire for both physical and non-physical memorials. Some participants noted that memorialization can serve different outcomes, with non-physical memorials focusing more on spiritual elements and the process of healing, while physical memorials would ensure that memory lives on.

Local process becomes even more meaningful when linked to other local processes, where people from different local communities share stories to each other.

In the Community Memorialization Project (CMP) of Search for Common Ground, Sri Lanka, youth from different communities participated in an inter-community program. They visit the homes of people belonging to a different ethnic group or religious background and experience a very personal interaction with them. This method is found to be effective in creating positive relationship among people from different communities:<sup>18</sup>

One of the most successful methods promoting deeper engagement was having participants from outside the district staying with a participant from another community for the duration of the district visit. The project provided financial support to the hosts to defray costs, but the level of hospitality shown by the hosts suggests that they did not do it just for the money but because they genuinely wanted to do it.

The home visits are complemented by the collection of stories, in the form of letters, photos, village maps, children maps, video and audio stories from people in different communities. These materials were<sup>19</sup>

uploaded in the digital archive and preserved in dispersed archives. CMP has gone beyond archiving memories to using these memories to promote reconciliation. The series of workshops with project participants began by focusing on one's own memories which acted as a catharsis to open up and feel empathy when in the next stage ... other people's memories of violence are shared.

Participation in the collection of stories and sharing them to a larger audience are important ways of developing a deeper understanding of issues. But it is not an easy process, and can potentially cause problems unless properly managed:<sup>20</sup>

In many cases, when the participants from one community are faced with personal histories and memories of other communities, it requires them to face uncomfortable realities, that their version of "truth" may not be the only truth. For example, inter-district visits compelled them to confront the violence perpetrated on others by their own community. Sinhalese visiting the site of a grenade attack on a church by the Navy or Tamils visiting the site of the massacre of twenty-eight Buddhist monks by the LTTE were forced to revisit their black and white view of the war, with clearly identified "good" and "bad/evil" parties. This muddying of how the war is perceived breaks down some of the mental barriers and increases the openness to hear multiple truths. For many, especially in the south, it may be an important milestone in the journey towards accepting and acknowledging the suffering of others due to the war.

Memorializing the past towards reconciliation and peace becomes a people-driven (as against institution-driven) effort when affected communities are involved and when local histories are given importance and different truths (not one truth) surface to create a more dynamic, complicated view of a nation's history. Students and the youth learn a deeper and insightful meaning of the conflict and the human rights involved in this process.

### **Interns/Volunteers**

Students can likewise learn about human rights as interns or volunteers in organizations that serve people who suffer from human rights violation or abuse.

Transit Workers Count Too (TWC2) in Singapore provides students the opportunity to meet migrant workers from other countries and learn about the problems they face. By helping implement the activities of TWC2, the students are exposed to issues that would hardly be known in school and maybe even in mainstream media. By knowing how the issues might be resolved (through policy change lobby, public awareness activities, online information dissemination), the students learn about the importance of resolving human rights issues.

However, the impact of such experience on the students cannot be guaranteed to result in sustained interest on human rights and the resolution of human rights issues. As stated by TWC2:<sup>21</sup>

Quite a few school and junior college students undertake projects on migrant workers and ask for our assistance. Some may not take much interest in the subject: it can feel as though we're doing work for them that is not appreciated, and will be forgotten as soon as their project is completed. Nevertheless, there are some who ask questions that reflect a fair amount of thought and concern with their subject. Most responses to student information requests are handled by the Public Engagement Team. They work on the basis that it is worthwhile to do whatever we can to have a positive impact on their views towards migrant workers, which will have long term consequences for public attitudes. Perhaps, among the many with whom we are in touch, we would reach a few who may make a stronger commitment to migrant worker rights in years to come. We have, in fact, had volunteers come to us who mention having contacted us years before for information.

The impact of such experience may not indeed be seen in the immediate sense but may arise subsequently in another form such as consciousness of the need to protect the rights of those who are disadvantaged in making decisions as officials of government and business institutions.

### **AICHR Initiative: Youth Debate**

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) organized in 2013 the first AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights that became a regular platform for direct engagement and education on human



rights issues. The Youth Debate and other initiatives and programs to educate students and people on human rights issues are included in the work of the AICHR for the next five years under the new 2021-2025 Work Plan.<sup>22</sup>

The 2021-2025 Work Plan's Focus Area 5: Capacity building and public awareness has the following components for students and youth:

Priority Areas	Indicative Activities	Expected Outputs
PA 5.1 Enhance public awareness and encourage dialogues on human rights cooperation and remedies in ASEAN	4. Initiatives to raise awareness among students and youth of human rights promotion and protection in the region and of the work of the AICHR, including through debates, essay competitions, lectures and training	Improve awareness and engagement of students and youth in the promotion and protection of human rights

The Youth Debate provides a platform for young people in ASEAN member-states (AMS) to express their views on human rights and interact with experts/academics on human rights issues within the subregion. It aims to nurture critical thinking, public speaking, leadership skills, as well as promote solidarity, empathy and camaraderie among the young people of AMS.<sup>23</sup>

The Youth Debate concludes with awards given to five best speakers.<sup>24</sup> Below is a discussion on how the Youth Debate has been evolving through the years.

AICHR launched the first ASEAN Youth Debate on Human Rights on 4-5 April 2013 at the Ateneo Professional Schools in Rockwell, Makati City, Philippines.<sup>25</sup>

University students from the ten AMS participated in the two-day event bearing the theme, "Mainstreaming Human Rights in ASEAN Community-Building." The event aimed to raise greater awareness and appreciation of human rights, as well as to promote camaraderie among the students and youth of ASEAN.

Ambassador Rosario G. Manalo, then Philippine Representative to the AICHR, opened the event, stating that "It is truly an honor for the Philippines to host the ASEAN Youth Debate on Human Rights." She emphasized that "human rights and the participation of the youth play important roles in shaping a people-centered and responsive ASEAN Community."

The Malaysian Representative to the AICHR at that time, H.E. Dato' Sri Dr. Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, the Representative of Lao People's Democratic Republic to the AICHR, H.E. Phoukhong Sisoulath, and H.E. Ambassador Rosario G. Manalo led the panel discussion on the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) by sharing their insights with the student-participants on the development of the AHRD; Ateneo Human Rights Center Executive Director Atty. Ray Paolo Santiago presented the AHRD's main provisions.

Members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of government agencies involved in human rights in the Philippines, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, members of the academe and students from Philippine universities attended the panel discussion.

The youth debaters later participated in a workshop on moot court competition focusing on fictional human rights case studies involving practical application of the AHRD and other international human rights instruments.

"We hope that the ASEAN Youth Debate on Human Rights organized by the Philippines and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights can serve as a model for human rights education in the region and become a yearly event," said Ambassador Manalo.

She added,

All of us are part of the same human family and respect human dignity. In this spirit, ASEAN's evolving human rights discourse and outreach to the youth should be welcomed and supported.

The second ASEAN Youth Debate on Human Rights was held on 5-6 September 2015 in Singapore. The debates were held at Tembusu College, National University of Singapore.<sup>26</sup>

Thirty university students from the ten AMS participated in the debates. Over one hundred students and interested parties from the local universities, polytechnics and junior colleges were also in attendance. The debates aimed to promote greater awareness of human rights among ASEAN youth, and facilitate an active exchange of ideas and perspectives on various human rights issues.

The program was divided into two segments. On the first day, students participated in a debate master class where they honed their presentation

skills before the debates on the second day. This was followed by a site visit to the Toa Payoh Housing Estate and a guided tour of Singapore's newly-opened Community Rehabilitation Centre.

The debates were conducted on the second day. Ambassador-at-Large Professor Chan Heng Chee, Representative of Singapore to AICHR, opened the session by emphasizing the importance of ASEAN youth in shaping the future of the region. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Youth and Human Rights in ASEAN" with four of the eight AICHR Representatives in attendance. Five debate sessions were held and the student-participants debated on topics revolving around good governance, the AHRD, the role of youth vis-à-vis human rights, and the death penalty. There were also spirited exchanges of views and ideas among debaters and the audience.

Dr Noeleen Heyzer, former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Max Everest-Phillips, Director of the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, and Associate Professor Eleanor Wong attended the event as guest judges. The award ceremony was also graced by the event's guest of honor, Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, who presented the awards to the student-participants.

The third Youth Debate on Human Rights themed "Realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Context of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012" was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 22-23 September 2016.<sup>27</sup>

In his welcome remarks, His Excellency Edmund Bon Tai Soon said that while the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) appear to focus on the achievements of communities and countries, they really arise from the concern for the rights, dignity and well-being of each human individual which in turn are clearly spelled out in the AHRD. The AICHR, being the overarching ASEAN human rights institution, must view the SDGs through the human rights lens and ensure that human rights principles are integrated in the ASEAN process of achieving the SDGs.

Since the AHRD is a historic agreement between the ten AMS to respect, protect and fulfil minimum standards of human rights in the region, His Excellency urged the promotion and use of the AHRD to the fullest extent possible in advocacy efforts. In this regard, he issued a "General Observation No. 1/2016: Interpretation of Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012" to elaborate on three provisions of the AHRD.<sup>28</sup> These provisions pertain to (i) duties and responsibilities, (ii) application of human

rights in regional and national contexts, and (iii) legal limitations of human rights.

The fourth Youth Debate on Human Rights was held on 4-6 September 2017 in Bangkok.<sup>29</sup> About forty university students from the ten AMS attended the event.

The issues debated revolved around the establishment of an ASEAN Human Rights Court; the challenges of balancing economic growth and human rights in meeting ASEAN development goals; the promotion of women's rights, a quota system for women representation; the right to work in all member-states; and Environmental Damage as Human Rights Violation. These topics encouraged the participants to focus on the complementarity and intersectionality of political stability, economic prosperity, inclusiveness and human rights in ASEAN. The event also focused on the long-term sustainability of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the SDGs.

A Special Talk on "Migrant Workers in Thailand: A Move Toward Inclusivity" and panel discussions on the "50th Anniversary of ASEAN: Forging Ahead Together toward a Sustainable Community," as well as on the "ASEAN and Human Rights: Toward Sustainable Decades," were held at Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University. The sessions generated a lively discussion between the youth and the resource persons on the evolution of human rights in ASEAN, as well as the challenges faced within the subregion.

Over the course of the three-day event, the student-participants visited the Grand Palace to pay their respects to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej and to the Central Women's Correctional Institution where they had the opportunity to learn about Thailand's application of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules). The 2017 Youth Debate is one of the AICHR's commemorative activities to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN.

The fifth Youth Debate on Human Rights was held on 8-10 September 2018 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Thirty undergraduate students from the AMS participated in the Youth Debate. Officials of ASEAN organs, relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, Entities Associated with ASEAN, United Nations' Agencies, and prominent human rights experts as well as other pertinent stakeholders also took part in enriching the debaters on the intersection of education with human rights, relevant international commitments and

instruments on right to education, ways and means to overcome digital disruption, as well as various innovations in education.<sup>30</sup>

The issues debated revolved around human rights education; children of migrant workers and their right to education; privacy of celebrities; air pollution; and the gravity of rape as to whether it amounts to a capital crime. Throughout the debate, the young debaters displayed their research and understanding on the wider issues of human rights, as well as on the right to education and its complementarity and inter-sectionality with political stability, economic prosperity, inclusivity and human rights guarantee in ASEAN.

The event also provided an opportunity for the student-participants of the Youth Debate to visit the Tuol Sleng Museum which documented “the darkest human history in Cambodia” when genocide was committed by the Khmer Rouge. While firmly pronouncing the “Never Again” statement, a student-participant expressed her expectation that the visit would continue to remind the future generations that such breaches of international law have no place in a dignified society.

The sixth Youth Debate on Human Rights was held on 18-20 September 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. Themed “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability” which was synced with the theme of ASEAN Chairmanship of Thailand, the event gathered approximately thirty university students as well as representatives from the Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY), AICHR, Entities Associated with ASEAN, and the ASEAN Secretariat. Selected secondary school students and teachers from Thailand participated in the debate as observers, widening the outreach of youth in ASEAN on human rights issues.<sup>31</sup>

Panel discussions on the theme of “development and sustainability” conducted on the first day provided an overview on how development impacts the people within the region and the importance of human rights-based approach to sustainable development. Through the debate motions, students showed their understanding and voiced their aspirations on the various thematic issues on human rights such as the enforceability of carbon tax (environmental rights), juvenile justice (child rights), and government supervision of internet use (freedom of speech). Site visits to the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) and the Asia Pacific Center on Disability (APCD) were also organized for the student-participants to better understand the

link of economic development and sustainability and between sustainable development and the rights of persons with disabilities, respectively.

The Youth Debate of AICHR helps improve the “awareness and engagement of students and youth in the promotion and protection of human rights” in Southeast Asia. It should continue to involve more students and youth in the subregion in this task.

### **Support for Teachers**

In addition to getting teaching exemplars, teachers need other support measures such as training either as formal training program or the non-formal counterpart. The program of the Japan Teachers’ Union (JTU) provides an example of such non-formal training for teachers. This organization provides opportunity for its members<sup>32</sup>

to learn about ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997) that ensure significant roles for teachers’ unions to play. Also, they have opportunities to join trainings and seminars on what rights are stipulated by national laws and local government ordinances. Now that citizenship education is regarded as necessary, it is also important for educators to know their own rights.

JTU holds gatherings to learn about human rights, namely, National Conference on Educational Research (NCER) and National Assembly on Education on Human Rights.

JTU also issued the *Human Rights Education Guidance toward Non-discrimination and Inclusive Schools and Society* (Guidance) in 2007<sup>33</sup> to help its members teach human rights in relation to issues faced by their students and existing in their respective communities.

As seen in the activities of JTU,<sup>34</sup> conferences can be used as venue for discussing the school curriculum and the teaching of human rights. Teacher-members can share their experiences in teaching human rights in the conferences and learn better teaching ways. At the same time, guides on teaching of human rights issues are useful in facilitating learning of these issues inside the classroom.

## Promoting Human Rights to Specific Sectors

Human rights education for specific sectors of society complements that which is done in the school system (including the tertiary level). The specific sectors referred to include youth, migrant workers, community workers, and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers.

Justice Without Borders (JWB) runs capacity-building programs aimed at equipping union caseworkers with the knowledge and know-how needed to help migrant workers. It offers a year-long learning, practice and coaching by experts in the field. In partnership with the Federation of Asian Domestic Worker Unions (FADWU), JWB trains worker-members to become members of a “pool of expert case managers who can identify potential legal issues and act on them rapidly.”<sup>35</sup> They are trained on how to interview clients as well as how to accompany them to “Labour Department meetings or conciliation meetings at the Equal Opportunities Commission.”<sup>36</sup> This means that they need to have the “paralegal abilities” in obtaining relevant information (or evidences) from the migrant workers and in discussing issues in meeting officials of relevant government agencies.

The Asian Justice and Rights (AJAR) provides a “space for learning and reflection among grassroots communities and leaders on issues relevant to human rights and transitional justice.” The people being trained comprise of “community members, leaders, educators, academics, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, researchers, lawyers, and individuals from governmental and non-governmental sectors” who “share their knowledge and experience on human rights issues with the goal of improving their communities for those who are marginalized and at risk of facing human rights violations.”<sup>37</sup>

AJAR also provides a Training of Trainers to empower “victims of violence in societies in transition through the combination of legal, psycho-social, and human rights-based perspectives.”<sup>38</sup> The “participants gain knowledge of human rights and transitional justice in Asia, network with others, interact with experts in the fields of human rights and transitional justice and develop skills in participatory action research” that they can use to “help victims of violence in their own communities have a voice for peace and justice.”<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, the Institute of Development Studies and Practices (IDSP) offers a course that “aims at creating a group of young community leaders

who are capable of critically understanding, analyzing and effectively approaching developmental challenges while applying holistic strategies and leadership skills.”<sup>40</sup>

The course participants are mainly youth from rural communities in Pakistan who are being trained to “engage in the critical inquiry and observation of diverse socio-political and economic contexts and generate community-based discussions and discourses.”<sup>41</sup>

The Raise It! project of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) is “designed specifically in recognition that many workers and managers find it difficult to have conversations about the ‘hard topics’ like sexual harassment and requests for pregnancy leave and flexible work.” The project’s “focus on changing behaviour and building confidence to have conversations was based on the well-established evidence that the primary drivers of sexual harassment and violence against women include attitudes and structures that entrench gender inequality, low rates of reporting of discrimination and sexual harassment, and poor responses by organisations.”<sup>42</sup>

The JWB, AJAR, IDSP and VEOHRC programs are designed to empower specific sectors to take action on issues affecting their respective groups or communities.

### **Diverse Mediums of Learning**

In view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, other means of undertaking educational activities are employed. JWB uses webinars in collaboration with partner “nGO, HELP for Domestic Workers,” and publishes infographics in its website on the rights for “workers subjected to unfair or ill-treatment during COVID-19 pandemic.”

VEOHRC uses three online chatbots:<sup>43</sup>

1. **A flexible work request planner**, with different pathways for employees and managers (users can access either or both). The chatbot provides users with a conversational guide to flexible work rights, entitlements and duties. It also enables an employee to plan, prepare and practice a well-considered flexible work request conversation with their manager; and provides helpful prompts for a manager to plan a conversation with a staff



member who is requesting flexible work (including information about how to process a request).

2. **A parental leave and pregnancy planner** with different pathways for employees and managers (users can access either or both). This toolkit provides users with information about pregnancy, parental leave and return to work rights, entitlements and duties. It also enables an employee to practise a conversation about pregnancy adjustments, or (for all parents) parental leave and return to work; and provides helpful prompts for a manager to plan a supportive conversation with a staff member about these issues (including information about how to process a request).

3. **A sexual harassment support and response tool** with separate pathways for individuals who may have experienced sexual harassment from a client or colleague, individuals who may have witnessed it, or individuals to whom a colleague has disclosed an incident. The chatbot helps people identify behaviours that constitute sexual harassment and options to raise a concern or seek help, including support pathways and simple ways to call behaviour out or reporting culture issues in the workplace in a way that protects victims of harassment.

Raise It! project also has a “multimedia Conversation Starter Kit for managers, HR (Human Resource) Staff and champions, made up of posters, challenge or ‘conversation starter’ cards, a planner for participants to note their use and distribution of toolkit materials, and an email newsletter on the Raise topics that participants can sign up for.”

Chatbots and multimedia kits are new online tools and would likely become very convenient and useful once people become familiar in using them.

The CMP likewise uses the online information and communication technology to extend “dialogues and conversations about memory, memorialization and their connections to reconciliation and transitional justice.” Its website ([memorymap.lk](http://memorymap.lk)) presents<sup>44</sup>

320 village histories and life stories of individuals and groups, collected and archived to memorialize the experiences of violence and conflict in three Sri Lankan districts. Using the archive, the project creates opportunities for dialogue within and between communities on our country’s past, and the future we as citizens want to create [for the present and] the next generation of Sri Lankans.

Similarly, the Liberation War Museum makes available online the more than 60,000 local stories collected by students from different parts of Bangladesh on the role of people in local communities in the liberation war in the 1970s.<sup>45</sup>

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, training and other educational activities are held online. Virtual conferences, webinars and other online activities are being used to implement education programs.

## Evaluation

As in any education program, evaluation is always an important component for program improvement or development.

The evaluation of Raise It! project as pilot initiative shows achievement of the aims of “a) rais[ing] awareness of sexual harassment and discrimination associated with pregnancy, parental leave and requests for flexible and part-time work, and b) build[ing] confidence and competence amongst managers and staff to have conversations about these issues.”<sup>46</sup>

But what is most significant in the evaluation results is the identification of specific items for improvement as shown in the table below:<sup>47</sup>

What can be improved	Evidence	Program Improvements
Focus, clarity and the benefits of the education modules.	The SVA endline survey revealed that some participants found the <b>full complement of content overwhelming</b> .	We will separate the full program into <b>heavily customised and specific modules</b> , and confirm workplace contacts have implemented communications regarding purpose, objectives, leadership commitment and benefits.
Sustaining the education program and benefits, while minimising the impost on workplaces.	SVA endline survey and interview participants reported <b>insufficient time to apply their new skills</b> in the pilot period. Some SVA interview participants also reported that the ‘block’ style education sessions created an impost.	We will <b>deliver the education program iteratively</b> over a longer period of time, in <b>shorter, blended modes</b> , with repeated practice using the toolkits.
Increased capability amongst <b>middle managers</b>	SVA interview participants reported reticence to exercise new skills due to uncertainty as to how their immediate manager would react.	We will tailor and target the education program towards middle managers to <b>build their skills as role models, influencers and culture builders</b> .

Avoiding overwhelming the participants with the content of the training program, allowing them enough time to apply skills learned, and addressing the doubt or uncertainty in the mind of the participants regarding the real environment where their learnings have to apply are some of the important points to consider in further improving training programs. Flexibility in training program implementation can help ensure that the programs are suitable to the capacity and context of the participants. It is also necessary to consider a longer period of training to allow participants time to “digest” new knowledge and skill.

Regarding the memorialization of conflict initiative, the CMP, an evaluation exercise resulted in finding out lessons learned and recommendations for community-based activities such as the following:<sup>48</sup>

- To promote deeper connections, people-to-people interactions should happen over a period of time (at least several days) and be based around activities such as games, role plays, visits to places of interest and so on;
- Participants need to be encouraged to have a positive mindset about other communities before they engage with each other very closely, such as hosting a person from another community;
- Sharing memories is cathartic and also provides a base to connect across divisions;
- Envisioning the future as a value-based society and what that should look like, helps to bring out the commonality across divisions;
- It is not enough only to talk about memories, or only to show places where events have occurred. Both elements are necessary in order to make the memories “real” for outsiders, which will help them to understand and change their attitudes;
- Skills development for youth should be provided through hands-on experience of engaging with conflict, especially on social media;
- Youth should be supported to learn how to engage positively in conflicts between adults, and they should be trained in aspects of Do-No-Harm as well;
- More needs to be done after workshops end, to promote networking and development of structures of mutual support between participating youth;

- More initiatives are needed to encourage people-to-people engagement across divisions under suitable conditions, as interactions that are happening organically can lead to worsening mistrust and tensions;
- Support the “champions” to build their knowledge and conflict resolution skills by engaging with small-scale conflicts in their own communities, before engaging with large-scale conflict at the national level.

The two examples of evaluation results have common features regarding time for people to digest the training content and the much needed post-training support. Knowledge and skill have to continue to grow after the training in order for them to be applied appropriately to specific situations.

### **Education for the General Public**

In a broader sense, human rights education must be available to everyone through all forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal). Reaching out to the general public to gain support for human rights is an absolute necessity.

The objective of the Association for Toyonaka Multicultural Symbiosis (ATOMS) of building a “multicultural society based on respect for human rights and with broad participation of the citizens” requires educational activities for the general public. Thus ATOMS holds seminars, symposiums and other educational activities for the Japanese residents of Toyonaka city to address the issues affecting the non-Japanese residents.

On the other hand, the non-Japanese residents are also given educational opportunities that would benefit the general public. These activities are “meant to empower the non-Japanese residents in engaging the Japanese residents towards ‘Creating a fair and sustainable, multicultural symbiotic society.’”

In its own limited way, “JTU holistically responds to ... issues and engages the children, parents, politicians and citizens in a social dialogue to achieve its political goal of building an inclusive society for the children’s well-being.” Thus, while the teachers are the main beneficiary of its activities, JTU sees the need to reach out to the general public to serve the larger purpose of inclusivity in society.

In a similar way, TWC2 uses a variety of strategies in pursuit of its goals. It uses “advocacy, research, public engagement and direct services” that are “considered ... to be complementary and always treated them as such.” It needs public engagement to “broaden popular awareness of migrant workers and their rights and [encourages public support that] has played a role in bringing about such changes as have occurred, and we think that it has been laying a good foundation for further advances in years to come.”

### Continuing Work

Eleven volumes of this publication attest to the reality that many initiatives supporting the promotion of human rights are being undertaken in different parts of Asia-Pacific. Though some initiatives have ceased to exist, many more programs and projects are being developed and implemented tailored to the specific contexts and issues of people they are meant for.

The current volume alone provides a peek of such initiatives spread out in the whole length and breadth of this vast region. There are many more human rights promotion initiatives that have not been brought to the attention of educators and education policymakers of Asia-Pacific. The search for such initiatives remains.

In the meantime, there are many lessons and ideas about human rights promotion that can be learned from the documented educational initiatives in this volume, and in ten more volumes before it.

### Endnotes

1 The Department of Education has been issuing since late 1990s a number of memorandums on human rights activities such as the following:

- DECS Memorandum No. 467, s. 1998: School-Based Activities to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (November 20, 1998);
- DECS Memorandum Order No. 487, s. 1998: Second National Conference on Peace and Human Rights Education (December 3, 1998);
- DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2003: An Act Declaring December 4 to 10 as National Human Rights Consciousness in the Country and for other Purposes (April 28, 2003);
- DepEd Memorandum No. 303, s. 2003: Fifth Youth Summit on Human Rights (August 21, 2003);
- DepED Memorandum No. 458, s. 2003: National Human Rights Consciousness Week (December 3, 2003).

In addition, it held youth conferences and the Parents, Teachers and Students Forums on human rights.

2 Child-friendly Municipalities and Cities Award (Council for the Welfare of Children), Child Protection Policy of Local Governments (2012).

3 The 1987 Philippine Constitution has two main provisions on human rights education:

- All educational institutions shall include the study of the Constitution as part of the curricula. They shall inculcate ...respect for human rights... (Article XIV, Section 3 (Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports))
- The Commission on Human Rights is given the power to establish a continuing program of research, education, and information to enhance respect for the primacy of human rights. (Article XIII, Section 18)

4 A number of laws have been enacted since the 1990s such as the following: An Act Providing For Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, and for Other Purposes (1992), Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (1992), The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) (1997), An Act Declaring December 4 to 10 as National Human Rights Consciousness Week in the Country and for Other Purposes (2003), An Act Promoting the Integration of Women as Full and Equal Partners of Men in Development and Nation Building (2009), The Magna Carta of Women (2009).

5 Human Rights Consciousness Week continues to be held by different government agencies.

6 Tina Robiulle Moul, *Promotion and Implementation of Global Citizenship Education in Crisis Situations*, UNESCO, 2017, page 13, [www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/252771e.pdf](http://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/252771e.pdf).

7 Hedayah, "Countering Violent Extremism through Education," in this volume, page 248.

8 Hedayah, *ibid.*, page 256.

9 Rosemarievic G. Villena, "Integration of Human Rights Issues in the Teaching of Secondary Mathematics," *Research Series*, No. 43, October 1999, Research Center, Philippine Normal University.

10 The first set of teaching exemplars came out in late 1990s while a revised and expanded version came out in 2000s. Both versions have a number of lesson plans on mathematics, science and technology.

11 Due to lack of information on the training on the human rights teaching exemplars undertaken from late 1990s to 2000s in the Philippines, it is difficult to state exactly how many teachers were given the training.

12 "Human Rights Examples for the Australian Curriculum," Australian Human Rights Commission, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/publications/human-rights-examples-australian-curriculum>.

13 See Human Rights Examples for the Australian Curriculum: Secondary Year 7 – Year 10 – Maths," Australian Human Rights Commission, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/secondary-year-7-year-10-math>.

14 Liberation War Museum, “Liberation War Museum and Human Rights Education,” in this volume, page 193.

15 Liberation War Museum, *ibid.*, page 189.

16 Search for Common Ground, “Community Memorialization Project, Sri Lanka,” in this volume, page 73.

17 Search for Common Ground, *ibid.*

18 Search for Common Ground, *ibid.*, page 104.

19 Visit [memorymap.lk](http://memorymap.lk) for the stories. Search for Common Ground, *ibid.*, page 105.

20 Search for Common Ground, *ibid.*, page 106.

21 Transit Workers Count Too, “Public Outreach for Migrant Workers’ Rights in Singapore,” in this volume, page 18.

22 For the full text of the Five-Year Work Plan of the AICHR 2021-2025, visit <https://aichr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AICHR-FYWP-2021-2025-approved-at-53rd-AMM-web.pdf>.

23 The AICHR Youth Debate was organized each year by the following:

2013 - Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines in collaboration with the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) and the Ateneo Society of International Law (ASIL).

2015 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

2016 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia in collaboration with the University of Malaya, the Malaysian Institute for Debate and Public Speaking (MIDP) and the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (ASEAN-U.S. PROGRESS).

2017 - Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, the Representative of Thailand to the AICHR, in collaboration with various agencies in Thailand, including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University. The event was supported by ASEAN-U.S. PROGRESS (Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security program).

2018 - AICHR-Cambodia, in collaboration with the Cambodian Human Rights Committee and the Royal University of Phnom Penh, with financial support from the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund.

2019 - AICHR Thailand in collaboration with various agencies in Thailand, including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University. The event was supported by ASEAN – USAID PROSPECT.

24 Some of the best speaker awardees are the following:

2016 - Mr Chun Heng Sae Seah (Thailand), Mr Kishen Sivabalan (Malaysia), Ms Jutima Wanitchakarnchai (Thailand), Mr Alfonso Roel Vargas (the Philippines) and Ms Dan Thao Nguyen Do (Vietnam).

2018 - Mr Maneth Nay from Cambodia, Mr Muhammad Aditya Padmanaba from Indonesia, Mr Muqriz bin Mustaffa Kamal from Malaysia,

Ms Colleen Anne Chua and Mr Neal Amandus de la Rosa Gellaco from the Philippines.

2019 - Best Speaker from each debate motion was announced including: Motion 1 “ASEAN Member states should set quotas and schedules for tourists visiting national parks”, Ms Meher Malhotra (Singapore), Motion 2 “Juveniles aged 16 and above who commit a crime should be charged as adults”, Mr Tan Yang Long (Singapore), Motion 3 “Enact an enforceable ASEAN carbon tax”, Mr Hans Xavier W. Wong (Philippines), Motion 4 “Medical marijuana should be legalized in ASEAN”, Ms Sok Sonita (Cambodia), and Motion 5 “The internet now requires government supervision”, Mr Arsyad Asyl bin Romil (Malaysia).

25 Press Release: ASEAN Youth Debates on Human Rights, <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-asean-youth-debates-on-human-rights/>.

26 Press Release: AICHR Youth Debates on Human Rights, 5 – 6 September 2015, Singapore, <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-aichr-youth-debates-on-human-rights-5-6-september-2015-singapore/>.

27 Press Release: AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights 2016, 22 – 23 September 2016, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-aichr-youth-debate-on-human-rights-2016-22-23-september-2016-kuala-lumpur-malaysia/>.

28 The full text of “Interpreting Articles 6, 7 & 8 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration 2012” by Edmund Bon is found in AmerBon blog, [www.amerbon.com/blawg/interpreting-articles-6-7-8-of-the-ahrd-2012](http://www.amerbon.com/blawg/interpreting-articles-6-7-8-of-the-ahrd-2012).

29 Press Release: AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights 2017, 4-6 September 2017, Bangkok, Thailand, <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-aichr-youth-debate-on-human-rights-2017-4-6-september-2017-bangkok-thailand/>.

30 ASEAN Students Join AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights, September 17, 2018, <https://asean.org/asean-students-join-aichr-youth-debate-on-human-rights/>.

31 AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights 2019: Partnership for Sustainability, 18-20 September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand, <https://aichr.org/news/aichr-youth-debate-on-human-rights-2019-partnership-for-sustainability-18-20-september-2019-bangkok-thailand/>.

32 Japan Teachers Union, “JTu: Working towards Non-discrimination and Inclusion in School and Society,” in this volume, page 204.

33 The full document, in Japanese language, is available at [www.jtu-net.or.jp/wp/wp-content/themes/jtu/doc/booklet.pdf](http://www.jtu-net.or.jp/wp/wp-content/themes/jtu/doc/booklet.pdf).

34 See Japan Teachers Union, *op. cit.*, pages 201-206.

35 Justice Without Borders, “Making Justice as Mobile as Migrant Workers,” in this volume, page 167.

36 JWB, *ibid.*, page 168.

37 Asia Justice and Rights, “Education for Peaceful Transformation: The AJAR Learning Centre at Kampung Damai,” in this volume, page 153.

38 Asia Justice and Rights, *ibid.*, page 155.

39 Asia Justice and Rights, *ibid.*

40 Institute of Development Studies and Practices, “Learning from People: IDSP Experience,” in this volume, page 117.



- 41 Institute of Development Studies and Practices, *ibid.*
- 42 Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia* (Our Watch, 2015) 6, 8.
- 43 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *this volume*, page 220.
- 44 See [memorymap.lk](http://memorymap.lk).
- 45 See Liberation War Museum, <http://www.liberationwarmuseumbd.org/oral-history/>.
- 46 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *op. cit.*, page 218.
- 47 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, *ibid.*, page 234.
- 48 Search for Common Ground, *op. cit.*, pages 105, 107, 110 and 112.

## **Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism**

### **Background**

This non-binding good practices document<sup>1</sup> focuses on the ways in which education can be used as a resource and a tool by policymakers, teachers and educators, community-based and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and families and parents to prevent and counter violent extremism. Education can be leveraged as a tool to achieve both beneficial and harmful results in the context of violent extremism. Therefore, governments, civil society, and the private sector should work together to identify the myriad ways in which education can be utilized to build resilience and reduce recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism.

The starting point for the effective role of education in countering violent extremism (CVE) is access to and protection of schools as a safe space - both physically and intellectually. Because education is a universal value, educational environments can be a space for CVE interventions that are effective across cultures and contexts. As with any CVE programming, CVE educational interventions are only relevant if they address the local push and pull factors leading to radicalization and recruitment. Quality education alone is not sufficient

for CVE, but it can broadly enable results-based CVE efforts in the education sector.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) identified education as one of its priorities in the GCTF CVE Working Group inaugural meeting in April 2012 in Abu Dhabi. Since that time, Hedayah and other GCTF partners have organized a number of experts' workshops, training sessions, and other activities which focused on the role of education in CVE.

The good practices in this document draw from the discussions and recommendations that emerged from these activities, the existing literature related to CVE and education, and in consultation with relevant experts. The primary focus of this document is on how CVE policies and programs can be developed at the primary and secondary school levels, with limited references to higher education. Although it has been widely recognized that educational institutions can be utilized as a radicalizing tool, the purpose of this document is to provide concrete options for how education can be utilized in a positive way to prevent and counter violent extremism without securitizing the education sector. The list below is not meant to be an exhaustive one, but rather a starting point to

illustrate various education approaches to CVE.

GCTF members will support the implementation of the following good practices with the subsequent development of an Action Agenda to provide guidance to interested States on tailored application and implementation.

## **Good Practices**

### ***General Practices for CVE and Education***

**Good Practice 1**—Use a multi-sectoral approach to enhance the effectiveness of CVE interventions through education.

CVE and education involve multiple sectors of society, including government, the private sector, NGOs, media, civil society, families, and communities. Encouraging dialogue between educational institutions and these stakeholders on CVE programming—from the conduct of needs-assessments, design of programs, implementation and evaluation—helps ensure sustainability of effort.

**Good Practice 2**—Promote dialogue and collaboration between the education and security sectors to increase political attention and resources devoted to CVE and education.

Where appropriate, the security and education sectors can work together through educational programming<sup>2</sup> National CVE strategies, which include an education component, may help to

promote the necessary dialogue to achieve this cross-sectoral collaboration.

**Good Practice 3**—Consider semantics when labeling educational programs as “countering violent extremism” to avoid securitizing the education sector.

Labels are important for how a program is perceived. Integrating CVE activities into existing educational programming may help to overcome this stigma.

**Good Practice 4**—Initiate CVE interventions through education as early as possible.

Primary and secondary school years are an appropriate time to consider such interventions; many cognitive skills relevant to value formation, critical thinking, and tolerance are developed in early childhood. Parents and family members may be relevant actors in early CVE interventions, particularly those that shape values related to prejudice, hatred, or violence.

**Good Practice 5**—Use existing empirical evidence to provide the basis for educational curricula development that addresses violent extremism and conduct further research to identify the gaps in knowledge on how education is relevant to studying conditions that lead to violent extremism.

Relevant empirical studies from the fields of psychology, sociology, and social neuroscience, as well as crime and violence prevention, theories of learning, the development sector, and conflict resolution, offer useful lessons applicable to CVE interventions. These studies also indicate

the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to CVE and education. Universities, private research institutions, NGOs, and civil society actors may also have access to data and studies that are useful to curricula development or as evidence for justifying curricula reform. Further baseline research, such as needs-assessments, perceptions' studies, analyses of existing education literature and statistics, and the development and assessment of pilot programs, is important for program design, particularly monitoring and evaluation, and ultimately to demonstrating results and impact of interventions on students.

### ***Educational Approaches***

Some of the following approaches to educational curricula development for CVE may already exist in certain educational systems for reasons unrelated to CVE. On the other hand, the existence of such curricula does not always mean that recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism are reduced in all contexts.

**Good Practice 6**—Emphasize in curricula the concepts of problem-solving and the examination of issues through a “gray” lens as opposed to a black-and-white lens.

Such critical thinking skills are useful for challenging violent extremist messages because they reveal the multiple ways of approaching an issue other than the use of violence. These skills are most effective when integrated at an early age—university level engagement is often too late.

**Good Practice 7**—Increase and

expand on curricula that emphasize civic education, civic responsibility and human values.

Civic education provides youth with a framework for a collective civic identity and therefore fosters tolerance and the willingness to negotiate and compromise. To be most effective, civic education and its related values must be relevant to the local context and culture. It is also important to consider how best to highlight the value of civic education in light of a greater demand for math, science, engineering, and medicine rather than social sciences and humanities.

**Good Practice 8**—Offer opportunities for vocational and technical training and emphasize the development of life skills.

In places where economic motivations to radicalization to violence are operative, vocational and technical training can build resilience in youth who may be recruited or radicalized to violence. This training can build their self-confidence, empowering them to choose a positive, productive alternative using their technical skills. Life skills can also build resilience by bolstering individuals' ability to solve problems, think critically, make decisions, communicate, and build interpersonal relationships. These skills all help students identify and implement peaceful solutions to conflict while resisting the lure to violence.

**Good Practice 9**—Relate CVE issues to existing social issues already included in educational curricula.

Linking the issue of violent extremism

to other issues already being discussed in curricula, such as gang violence, drugs and alcohol, trauma, and bullying, may make it more relevant and accessible to students.

**Good Practice 10**—Address the role of trauma and ways to build resilience to it in an educational setting.

Traumatic experiences, especially those involving violence, have been shown to be a destabilizing catalyst that can create vulnerabilities and render traumatized individuals susceptible to recruitment and radicalization to violence. Addressing trauma may especially be relevant in the context of refugee populations or conflict/post-conflict situations.

### *Institutional Approaches*

#### *Schools*

**Good Practice 11**—Incorporate experiential, hands-on learning opportunities in regular classroom curricula.

Schools can provide opportunities for students to apply critical thinking and civic education lessons in real-life settings such as volunteer opportunities or other school projects. Development of skill sets that build resilience to violent extremism can be more effective if the learning comes from direct experience.

**Good Practice 12**—Provide mechanisms for addressing grievances of students in an open and safe way.

Schools may also consider training their teachers on how to effectively engage in debates with students on sensitive topics

in ways that do not further radicalize an individual, or leave them more susceptible to recruitment. Schools may also instruct students on strategies for controlling emotions and channeling anger in constructive ways. Appropriate strategies for managing anger may help individuals express grievances non-violently.

**Good Practice 13**—Consider providing incentives for parents for ongoing school enrollment, and ensure all children have access to education.

In many contexts, youth who do not have access to education or formal schooling, or who choose to forgo education, may be susceptible to recruitment and radicalization to violence. Providing incentives to parents to ensure school enrollment and address dropout rates, where locally relevant, may help in reducing the number of susceptible individuals that could be recruited into violent extremism.

#### *Government*

**Good Practice 14**—Train teachers on how to understand and manage their own inherent biases.

Teachers and educators should be made aware of the messages they are conveying to students, including unintentional messages. Training teachers on behaviors, words, and practices for reducing violence in the classroom may also help reduce violent extremism.

**Good Practice 15**—Train teachers to detect early signs of radicalization to violence.

When trained and equipped with the tools to counter violent extremism, teachers can be important partners in preventing recruitment and radicalization to violence. It is important to provide educators with a point of contact with appropriate authorities if they detect signs of radicalization to violence among their students. However, it is important to ensure that schools do not become information-collecting institutions. This may also undermine the teacher's standing and relationship with students, genuine efforts to protect students, and broader community trust.

**Good Practice 16**—Structure educational institutions to integrate segregated communities and educate children of different communities together.

Feelings of marginalization and alienation can render individuals vulnerable and make them more susceptible to the sense of belonging that a violent extremist group may offer. Integrating educational institutions can enhance cross-community trust, thereby helping to alleviate marginalization, raise awareness of diversity, increase tolerance, and allow students to overcome tensions fostered by unfamiliarity with other communities.

#### *Private Sector*

**Good Practice 19**—Engage the private sector through relevant corporate social responsibility mandates and emphasize how violent extremism can negatively affect profits while highlighting the benefits of educational opportunities for youth.

The private sector has a range of tools and resources it can use to support the government and schools in their endeavor to reform school curricula and to build resilience to recruitment and prevent radicalization to violence. It may be of use to emphasize the link between unemployment and violent extremism, and highlight the positive effect of increasing the vocational and technical capacities of youth and encouraging entrepreneurship.

#### *Media and Technology*

**Good Practice 20**—Engage the media to offer ways of advancing educational approaches to CVE in a formal and informal setting.

The media can offer youth alternative ways to receive educational lessons, such as through TV shows, movies, cartoons, games, comic books, radio, and SMS services. In a formal setting, such as schools, the use of media can be a powerful and effective tool to help impart values and can supplement teacher lectures with engaging material. In an informal setting, they can likewise be an effective means of amplifying key narratives and values while still offering engaging, yet innocuous, programming. Media programs and platforms for CVE should also be well-researched in terms of the local values, culture, and methods to reach the target audience effectively and appropriately.

**Good Practice 21**—Consider adapting existing gaming technologies and tools that build skills to countering violent

extremism.

Current online and video games can help build positive skill sets that assist with character-building and can help mitigate violent tendencies; such techniques can be adapted to the context of building resilience to violent extremism.

### ***Family-Based and Community Approaches***

**Good Practice 22**—Involve youth in the development of educational programming related to CVE.

Youth are often perceptive of the conditions that lead their peers to radicalization and recruitment, and can shape CVE programs creatively and in ways that are relevant to their cohort. Research also shows that youth often listen to their peers as much as or more than adults.

**Good Practice 23**—Engage community leaders in education to raise awareness of violent extremism and effective techniques to counter it.

Community leaders can be broadly influential beyond schools. Such figures can help to amplify and coordinate narratives to counter violent extremism in their communities, leveraging various platforms, with the lessons that are taught in formal educational settings.

**Good Practice 24**—Offer opportunities for families to receive training on countering violent extremism and ways in which to build resilience in their families. When possible, it can also be useful to train

parents on identifying the early warning signs of radicalization to violence so that they can help counter it at home. Where feasible, schools can be physical settings for educating families and parents directly via other existing programs such as literacy and vocational programs. It is important to provide families with a point of contact with appropriate authorities if they detect signs of radicalization to violence.

**Good Practice 25**—Interact with families to reinforce lessons learned in formal educational settings that build resilience to violent extremism.

Raising awareness of school lessons with families can help to reinforce the same concepts at home, and provide opportunities for practical application. This might be done through the formation of parent-teacher organizations within schools.

### ***Sports, Arts and Cultural Approaches***

**Good Practice 26**—Incorporate sports, arts, and/or cultural programs in order to build secondary effects of CVE programs, especially in a youth population.

Sports, arts, and culture can provide students opportunities to work within local groups and teams, and develop constructive goals and skills. There are many good practices that can be derived from existing peace building initiatives working on conflict transformation, mediation, youth empowerment, that show how sports, arts and cultural programs can be powerful and effective tools for building resilience. This

is especially the case when such programs are integrated into broader, comprehensive programs for CVE and education, utilize deliberate strategies and theories of change, and are carried out with certain professional standards. Arts and cultural programs can help build cross-cultural understanding and trust. When using sports as part of CVE programming, it is important

to avoid the potential negative effects of sports, however. Competition inherent in some sports programs may have negative effects if this competition leads to violence. CVE programs may address these potential negative effects through coaching and mentoring strategies incorporated into program design.

### Endnotes

1 This document was drafted and developed in cooperation with Hedayah.

2 Other opportunities for collaboration include community-oriented policing efforts, good practices on which are further elaborated in the *GCTF Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism* and in the *GCTF Doha Action Plan for Community-Oriented Policing in a CVE Context*.



## AICHR Activities at the Time of COVID-19 Pandemic

Yuyun Wahyuningrum

Representative of Indonesia to AICHR, 2019-21, 2022-24

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Corona Virus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic. Although different countries have different responses to the pandemic, human contact restriction has been their common approach. In Southeast Asia, measures such as movement control, partial or total lockdowns, curfews, quarantine and state of emergency imposed in some ASEAN Member States (AMS) have potential of challenging the implementation of international human rights law.

Following the outcomes from the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 on 14 April 2020 which emphasized the importance of taking a coherent, multi-sectoral, effective, timely, multi-stakeholder and whole-of-ASEAN Community approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) issued a statement on 1 May 2021 calling for AMS, ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and entities to integrate human rights values and the principles of non-discrimination, participation and inclusion in their responses to the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to re-organize our way of living, communicating and working. AICHR came to realization that with the emergence of new

variants, it is unlikely that the pandemic would cease anytime soon. Despite all challenges, AICHR adopted its Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025 at the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) in 2020, which included a number of programs for human rights protection. AICHR also managed to have specific action points related to human rights included in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) for COVID-19 that was adopted in the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020.

Since 2020, AICHR has adjusted its activities online to advance human rights in ASEAN. Altogether, AICHR held twenty-eight activities consisting of training activities, workshops, forums, consultation and dialogue activities from 2019 to 2021 as briefly described below.

### Training

1. *The Essentials of Human Rights Due Diligence in Business: A Training for ASEAN Institutions, Bangkok, Thailand, 1 - 2 December 2020 via videoconference*

The training deepened the participants' understanding on the promotion of Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) for the business sector in order to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and

Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Implementation Plan of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF). It unpacked the roles of states in setting expectations on HRDD, and thus equipped participants with essential knowledge on HRDD process and its linkage to remediation as well as lessons learned in addressing adverse human rights impacts in different contexts. The training marked the first AICHR activity attributing to the implementation of the ACRF.

2. *AICHR training for frontline officers emphasizing human rights, child-friendly, gender-sensitive approaches in addressing trafficking in persons, Jakarta, Indonesia, 20 November 2021 via videoconference*

The training comprised of modules related to contemporary forms and challenges in countering trafficking in persons, including how to cope with COVID-19; ASEAN mechanisms in addressing trafficking in persons; ensuring assistance and protection for trafficked persons; interviewing victims; investigating and prosecuting traffickers; assisting trafficked persons in the court proceeding and providing care for the carers. At the training, participants shared their experiences and made some recommendations: (a) AMS to enhance the use of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty mechanism to help the process of investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases in the

region, (b) AMS to consider not holding victims of trafficking in persons criminally or administratively liable, for unlawful acts committed by them, and take necessary protective operational measures of assistance and protection, and (c) AICHR to develop a human rights-based approach to regional referral system in ASEAN to better respond to trafficking in person cases, among others.

### **Workshops**

1. *AICHR Workshop on the Environment and Human Rights: Urban Pollution, Singapore, 9–10 September 2019*

The Workshop comprised a session on defining urban pollution and its impact on the right to health and a session on ideas and solutions in dealing with urban pollution. It also included sessions on the role of the youth in sustainable urban development and ASEAN's approach on the right to a safe, clean, and sustainable environment. Engaging the youth in sustainable urban development was demonstrated and underlined as a strategic approach to address challenges ahead and generate innovative ideas and solutions in dealing with urban pollution. The speakers and participants discussed the various sources of urban pollution and its impact on people's health and the environment, as well as how rapid urbanization and development have affected the environment

and the link between human rights and urban pollution.

2. *AICHR Workshop on Promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women through ICT towards Achieving UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, 7-8 November 2019*

The Workshop marked the AICHR's initial attempt at tackling the issue of human rights in the face of digitalization and 4th Industrial Revolution, with emphasis on gender equality and empowerment of women. With the participation of various stakeholders in ASEAN, the AICHR aimed to contribute to ASEAN efforts in building a people-centred and people-oriented community as well as in implementing international commitments such as the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were ratified or acceded to by all AMS.

3. *AICHR Workshop on Human Rights, Environment, and Climate Change, Bangkok, Thailand, 8-10 June 2021 via videoconference*

This Workshop explored the inter-linked elements of human rights and the environment, such as environmental decision-making, climate change, and impacts on vulnerable groups including women, children and youth.

Discussions were focused on matters in relation to advancement of a rights-based approach to environmental decision-making (including through environmental impact assessment [EIA] mechanisms), intersection between climate change and human rights, children's rights to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN. The Workshop reaffirmed the important link between environment and full enjoyment of human rights, the need to focus on accountability, and access to justice and public participation as well as multi-stakeholder platforms to mainstream a rights-based approach to environmental protection in ASEAN. It also shed light on regional efforts to protect vulnerable peoples beyond boundaries and institutionalizing efforts at all level.

4. *AICHR Workshop on Realizing the Right to Health through Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Jakarta, Indonesia, 29 June 2021 via videoconference*

The Forum discussed the challenges and gaps in implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in ASEAN during and post-pandemic, the progresses and lesson learned, common elements for an effective UHC system, and measures in realization of the right to health for migrant workers, such as portable social security<sup>1</sup> as well as practical recommendations and ways forward to realizing UHC

for groups at risk or infected with COVID-19, particularly for migrant workers in AMS. Participants also discussed integrating human rights-based approach in the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, the inclusion of mental health issues into the UHC package and the improvement of living and working conditions of the health workforce.

5. *AICHR holds workshop on community policing approach to prevent trafficking in persons, Jakarta, Indonesia, 23-25 August 2021 via videoconference*

Over one hundred fifty participants from relevant ministries, national agencies and task forces focused on combating trafficking in persons, national agencies of witness and victim's protection, national human rights institutions, ASEAN sectoral bodies and civil society organizations from all AMS and Timor-Leste attended the workshop. At the three-day workshop, participants exchanged views, experiences and good practices on victim identification, human rights and gender perspectives to trafficking in persons, trafficking in persons case handling, community policing approaches, police-public partnership, national and regional referral mechanisms for trafficked persons and their challenges due to COVID-19.

6. *AICHR holds validation workshop on a regional study on migration management and human rights, Jakarta,*

*Indonesia, 1 November 2021 via videoconference*

The workshop gathered inputs and comments for the AICHR Study on Migration and Human Rights report from migration experts and representatives from universities, think tanks, and civil society organizations in ASEAN. The scope of AICHR's study report covers labor migration management in ASEAN by examining state practices in promoting and protecting the human rights of migrant workers; cooperation mechanism and the role of various stakeholders; best practices and recommendations to protect the rights of migrant workers and improve labor migration management in AMS. The study report complements the existing ASEAN initiatives on the rights of migrant workers, such as: ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers; ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration; and ASEAN Guidelines on Effective Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers, among others.

### **Forums**

1. *AICHR Forum on the Rights of Migrant Workers: Implementation of Article 4 of ASEAN Human Rights Declaration related to the Human Rights of Migrant Workers, Jakarta, Indonesia, 30 June 2021 via videoconference*

This AICHR Forum on the Rights

of Migrant Workers: Implementation of Article 4 of ASEAN Human Rights Declaration related to the Human Rights of Migrant Workers aimed to contribute to the implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers as well as the AHRD. The Forum focused on emerging challenges and gaps in policy framework related to the protection of the rights of migrant workers in ASEAN throughout the migration cycle of: pre-departure, transit, settlement in the host country, return and reintegration, and aimed to develop recommendations on the implementation of Article 4 of the AHRD in relation to the rights of migrant workers. The Forum also reviewed the progress and challenges in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in the region, including the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*2. AICHR Forum on Freedom of Opinion and Expression: Digitalisation and ASEAN Digital Connected Community in Post-Pandemic Era: Challenges, Opportunities and Ways Forward, Jakarta, Indonesia, 16 December 2021 via videoconference*

The Consultation was the follow-up on a previous initiative on freedom of opinion and expression online, COVID-19 and ASEAN Community. This Consultation aimed at sharing

practices, experiences, challenges and possible cooperation in addressing the spread of hate speech, fake news, misinformation, and disinformation among stakeholders in ASEAN and its challenges and ways forward in the era of post-pandemic and providing a platform to discuss digital rights within the framework and the interpretation of Article 23 of the AHRD on freedom of opinion and expression.

*3. ASEAN Forum on SDG 11: Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable in the time of Post-Pandemic, Jakarta, Indonesia, 17 December 2021 via videoconference*

The Forum affirmed the critical role of cities, local authorities and communities in improving the life of people and focus on institution-building and mechanisms to make cities a more inclusive, resilient, sustainable and human rights city in the post-pandemic era. The Forum aimed at providing a platform for discussion among local governments and AICHR in demonstrating cities' enabling and transformative power in shaping resilient, inclusive and sustainable and human rights societies through sharing best practices in responding to COVID-19 and understanding challenges, opportunities and ways forward, and the role of different actors in realizing better cities in post-pandemic context.

## Consultations

### 1. *Regional Consultation on Commonalities of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in ASEAN Member States and Advancing a Harmonized and Right-Based Approach, Yangon, Myanmar, 2-3 October 2019*

The 2019 Regional Consultation aimed to advocate for a harmonized and rights-based framework to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in ASEAN. The participants discussed the existing legal framework on the environment and EIA in AMS, identified areas of commonalities, and discussed ways forward for a harmonized and rights-based regional framework, which included identification of the stakeholders, possible content of the regional framework, and timeframe for its implementation, among others.

### 2. *AICHR Consultation on Realization of the Right to Development to Enhance the ASEAN Community, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia, 11-12 November 2019*

The Consultation highlighted the nexus between the Right to Development, its relations to human rights-based approach to development and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in the context of ASEAN. The participants discussed the impact of globalization on the right to development in ASEAN and the existing practices in the AMS to address the gaps and ensure the grievances and

remedies related to the right to development. They also emphasized a gender-based perspective. They recommended mainstreaming the right to development, and the accountability mechanism to monitor development program implementation in the ASEAN community.

### 3. *The 2019 AICHR Consultation on Freedom of Opinion and Expression in ASEAN (Article 23 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration), Bali, Indonesia, 8-10 December 2019*

The Consultation was held with a diverse participation of representatives from the media, national human rights institutions, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector, and the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies. The participants discussed a wide range of issues related to the international and regional framework on the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, state of human rights in digital age and its implications, opportunities and challenges, and strategies in addressing the challenges and balancing rights and freedom, in particular on the right to privacy, data protection, censorship and academic freedom in ASEAN. Aiming to solicit inputs in the formulation of recommendations to the AICHR on the articulation of the Article 23 of the AHRD,<sup>2</sup> the participants suggested that state obligations consider the role of stakeholders and the gender

perspective in ensuring the freedom of expression and opinion in ASEAN, access to information, the right to privacy and data protection, internet freedom, media freedom, among others.

4. *The 2019 AICHR Consultation on the Implementation of Article 22 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Bali, Indonesia, 11-13 December 2019*

The Consultation provided a platform for ASEAN stakeholders to share practices and experiences on the implementation of freedom of religion and belief in ASEAN. The Consultation aimed to formulate the articulation of Article 22 of the AHRD<sup>3</sup> in advancing freedom of religion and belief in the ASEAN context for AICHR's consideration. The main aspects and salient points in ensuring fulfilment of freedom of religion and belief were deliberated. A detailed formulation of state obligations related to freedom of religion and belief as well as the role of stakeholders with emphasis on gender perspective was recommended by the participants, focusing on the prohibition of all forms of intolerance and discrimination, and the prohibition of all forms of incitement to hatred based on religion and belief.

5. *AICHR Consultation on the Implementation of Article 14 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD): Preventing and Countering*

*Torture in Jakarta, Indonesia, 3-4 December 2020 via videoconference*

The Consultation was a continuation of AICHR's previous programs on the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD. It provided an avenue to share experiences and practices among AMS to counter and prevent torture as well as gather inputs to develop recommendations on the implementation of Article 14 of the AHRD.<sup>4</sup> Participants discussed the practices of State Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) in ASEAN, and shared some key principles in implementing Article 14 of the AHRD as well as possible international and regional cooperation on the prevention of torture. Furthermore, the Consultation underscored the importance of public awareness-raising activities, and collaboration with stakeholders such as government institutions, civil society, national human rights institutions, and scholars to develop possible elements of a skeletal roadmap toward the realization of preventing and countering torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in ASEAN.

6. *AICHR Consultation to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism in ASEAN from the Perspectives of Human Rights, Gender-Sensitivity and Child Rights, Jakarta, Indonesia, 3 June 2021 via videoconference*

This activity showcased the

AICHR's contribution to strengthening cross-pillar and cross-sectoral cooperation in countering violent extremism in ASEAN, and the implementation of the Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2019-2025) in particular. It provided a platform for sharing best practices on preventing and countering violent extremism from the perspectives of human rights, gender-sensitivity, and child rights.

7. *AICHR Consultation on Mainstreaming Human Rights in Humanitarian Actions, Jakarta, Indonesia, 4 June 2021 via videoconference*

The Consultation was the first AICHR activity focusing on the need and importance of integrating human rights to humanitarian action. Participants from ASEAN bodies and entities, stakeholders and external partners shared experiences and practices to overcome challenges in promoting rights-protection in humanitarian action, including: programs on gender mainstreaming, disability inclusivity and child protection. Participants also discussed four categories of human rights commonly at stake in disaster, pandemic and conflict contexts, which relate to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

8. *AICHR consult stakeholders in strengthening its human rights protection mandate, Bangkok, Thailand, 14*

*September 2021 via videoconference*

At this dialogue, AICHR Representatives and relevant stakeholders continued to exchange views on the implementation of AICHR's mandate and functions, and discussed the areas to be strengthened, to solidify its position as the ASEAN human rights body. The dialogue served to identify issues of subregional concern that need adjustment, taking into consideration the disruptive changes taking place globally, and the changing needs of AMS to review AICHR's TOR. It also sought to consolidate views from experts from the American, European and African regions on practical lessons with regard to their respective regional human rights mechanisms that could be considered in the ASEAN context.

9. *AICHR Consultation Workshop on Achieving a Disability Inclusive Post COVID-19 World, Bangkok, Thailand, 3 December 2021, via videoconference*

The Consultation aimed to raise awareness through a consultation workshop that focused on the multidimensionality of disability rights to cope and work towards a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable recovery. More than one hundred twenty-five participants attended the consultation and came up with recommendations for ASEAN.

10. *AICHR Concept Note on the ASEAN Dialogue on the United Nations*



*Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comments, Manila, the Philippines, 7-8 December 2021 via videoconference*

The Dialogue focused on the discussions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comments No. 5 (2003) regarding general measures on Articles 4, 42, and 44 Para. 6 and No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (Article 4). These two General Comments are aligned with on-going children-related efforts of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), through the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

11. *AICHR Consultation on the Right to an Effective Remedy in ASEAN (Article 5 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration), Jakarta, Indonesia, 14 December 2021 via videoconference*

The Consultation aimed at developing a greater understanding of the concept of the right to effective remedies, exchanging views and experiences in implementing the right to effective remedies and exploring possible common approaches, principles and practices in implementing the right to effective remedies. Among AMS, there has been a profound experience in addressing victims' right to truth, justice, reparation and the guarantees

of non-recurrence. Accordingly, participants shared experiences and practices in realizing the effective remedies for victims.

## **Dialogues**

The Human Rights Dialogue discussed in a separate article in this volume involves mainly the representatives of AMS and follows the discussion format of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review. However, AICHR has been holding another type of dialogue from 2019 on various issues with representatives of AMS, CSOs and other institutions. A summary of the discussions during these dialogues are presented below:

1. *AICHR Interregional Dialogue: Sharing Good Practices on Business and Human Rights, Bangkok, Thailand, 10-11 June 2019*

A two-day Dialogue emphasized the stock taking of recent progress among AMS in implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), particularly the development of a national action plan on business and human rights and discussed the interaction between the UNGPs and expansion of trade liberalization through Free Trade Agreements. With around one hundred eighty participants attending from the subregion and beyond, the Dialogue saw notable progress that has been made worldwide including Southeast Asia to ensure the effective

implementation of the UNGPs.

2. *The 2nd AICHR Regional Dialogue on Mainstreaming of the Right to Education in the ASEAN Community, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 20-22 October 2019*

Pursuant to its objectives, the 2nd Regional Dialogue mapped out good practices and challenges pertaining to the promotion of the right to inclusive education for women, children and persons with disabilities; the right to education for development; the right to education for employment; the right to education in digital age; and human rights education in ASEAN. The participants shared good practices and challenges to enhancing the right to quality and inclusive education and discussed possible ways forward for the AICHR as well as relevant bodies of ASEAN to contribute to the mainstreaming of the right to education in the ASEAN Community.

3. *The 2019 Jakarta-AICHR Human Rights Dialogue (JAHRD), ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia, 13 November 2019*

This Dialogue was attended by Representatives of the AICHR, AMS, CSOs, and other stakeholders. The Dialogue focused on exchanging views and opinions on the achievements, challenges and opportunities of the AICHR on the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN, and on the evolution of discourses and knowledge

on human rights in the past decade and the role of ASEAN scholars in the process. Advocating for the promotion of people's participation, inclusivity and accountability in realizing human rights in ASEAN, the participants provided inputs and suggestions on ways to overcome challenges and barriers faced by different stakeholders and actors, and to establish effective cooperation among different actors at the national, regional and international levels. Inputs from the Dialogue would also be useful for the AICHR to elaborate further on the articulation of Articles 9 and 39 of the AHRD.

4. *AICHR Regional Dialogue on Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Gender Perspective on Disability Rights), Bangkok, Thailand, 3-5 December 2019*

This Dialogue was conducted in conjunction with International Day of Persons with Disabilities, focusing on gender perspective on disability rights from multiple dimensions, such as women with disabilities and policy and political rights, gender perspectives and justice system, disaster preparedness and management for women and girls with disabilities, inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities, and mainstreaming gender and disability rights in business. The participants, mostly members of the disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), discussed three position

papers with recommendations to further mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in ASEAN in the areas of political participation and access to justice, inclusive education, business, and disaster management.

5. *ASEAN Dialogue on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) General Comments, Manila, Philippines, 11-12 December 2019*

Following the recommendations of the ASEAN Dialogue on the UN CRC and its Related Instruments held in 2018, this Dialogue shared best practices in addressing challenges by discussing the General Comments (GCs) as authoritative interpretations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) articles and as a means to identify regional and international similarities in advancing the rights of the child. With focus on GC 12 on the right of the child to be heard and GC 14 on the right of the child to have her/his best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Dialogue put special attention to children in vulnerable situations such as those who are stateless, children of undocumented migrants, child brides, children of sex workers and those with disabilities. Several recommendations raised include reviewing the reservations made by some AMS on the UN CRC articles, strengthening the awareness of decision makers on GCs, institutionalizing

the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of GCs, reinforcing the efforts to educate children about their rights, and streamlining the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in ASEAN, among others.

6. *Regional Dialogue: Self-Assessment of AICHR Progress After 10 Years, Bangkok, Thailand, 23 July 2021 via videoconference*

This Dialogue created an opportunity for exchange of views among former and current AICHR Representatives on AICHR's mandates and functions that need to be strengthened in order to enhance effectiveness in the promotion and protection of human rights in the subregion. It aimed to document the discussion and recommendations for further deliberation in support of the work of a Panel of Experts to be established by the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), which was tasked by the AMM in 2019. The Dialogue commended AICHR for its achievements and progress made in the first decade of AICHR's establishment. It also discussed a number of structural and operational challenges, namely, on the overview of regional human rights mechanism and the evolution of AICHR; challenges in implementing AICHR's mandates to provide policy support for AMS and ASBs (ASEAN Sectoral Bodies) to mainstream human rights and to develop human rights strategies

in ASEAN; ways forward for AICHR to advance stakeholders engagement; and ways forward to strengthen AICHR's protection mandates.

### Online Activities

AICHR was able to invite more participants from different stakeholders for online activities since there was no budget implication on the number of people that could participate. This opened the way for inclusivity in the AICHR process and introduced new methods of engagement with stakeholders. Online engagement allows me to reach out and listen to the grievances of the victims of human rights violations from different countries regardless of language differences because of online application on language translation. Moreover, although almost all conversations were done online, the quality of the substance of the discussions did not lessen.

### Some Reflections

As a way of reflection, while the COVID-19

crisis appears to be an unprecedented situation, there are also unexpected positive developments in addressing the pandemic, which includes, but not limited to, (a) the increased appreciation of effective protection of social and economic rights and universal healthcare coverage, (b) the need to have science-based policies, (c) awareness and appreciation of the advancement of technology, and (d) new opportunities to conceptualize online employment.

At the same time, the situation created by the pandemic also exposed new vulnerabilities and inequalities. One of them is the digital divide between those who have the means and the poor, those who live in rural areas, students with disabilities, girls, and women that surfaced very clearly during the pandemic.

It is now very important for AICHR to seize the momentum and define the (new) state obligations related to "digital rights" to ensure that the human rights of the people in AMS are fulfilled.

### Endnotes

1 "Portability means the ability to preserve, maintain, and transfer social security right vested or on disbursement, regardless of nationality and country of residence.<sup>4</sup> A tool to establish portability is a Social Security Agreement (SSA), which is an international agreement that coordinates the social security programs of two or more countries in order to overcome, on a reciprocal basis, the barriers that might otherwise prevent migrant workers and the members of their families from receiving benefits under the systems of any of the countries in which they have worked." Study Report on the Portability of Social Security Rights between ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Secretariat, September 2021, page xxii, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EPUB-Study-Report-on-the-Portability-of-Social-Security-Rights-between-ASEAN-Member-States-Final-Sep2021.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>A. T. Cruz, "Portability of benefit rights in response to external and internal labour mobility: The Philippines experience," Paper presented at the International Social Security

Association, Thirteenth regional conference for Asia and the Pacific held in Kuwait, March 2004. R. Holzman et al., *Portability regimes of pension and health care benefits for international migrants: An Analysis of issues and good practices*. (Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration, 2005).

2 "23. Every person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information, whether orally, in writing or through any other medium of that person's choice. " The full text of ASEAN Human Rights Declaration is available at <https://asean.org/asean-human-rights-declaration/>.

3 "22. Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. All forms of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred based on religion and beliefs shall be eliminated." ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

4 "14. No person shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

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The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center or HURIGHTS OSAKA, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally opened in December 1994. HURIGHTS OSAKA has the following aims: 1) to engender popular understanding in Osaka of the international human rights standards; 2) to support international exchange between Osaka and countries in Asia-Pacific through collection and dissemination of information and materials on human rights; and 3) to promote human rights in Asia-Pacific in cooperation with national and regional institutions and civil society organizations as well as the United Nations.

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