


HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC

VOLUME FOURTEEN

HURIGHTS OSAKA

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Acknowledgment

This 14th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* presents diverse experiences in human rights promotion and education in Asia-Pacific. Six countries and five subregional and regional programs are covered by fourteen articles that would not have come into existence without the patience and support of the following people: Annika Tierney Lemisio, Member of the Board of Deaf Association of Samoa; Elena Ippoliti, Paulina Tandiono and Oran No, Human Rights Education and Training Unit, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Sabrina Aripen, Founder and Chairperson of Society for Equality, Respect, and Trust for All Sabah (SERATA); Javad Safari, Office of Educational and Research Affairs, Hengameh Elahi Fard, Office of International Affairs, Iran Human Rights Commission; Dilnoza Muratova, Deputy Director, Department for International Cooperation, National Human Rights Centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Inez A. Wardhani, Community Outreach & Development Program Manager, ASEAN Youth Forum Secretariat; Charu Bikash Tripura, Regional Capacity Development Programme Coordinator, Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact; William Gois, Regional Coordinator, Abigail Guevarra, Program Assistant, Ayessa Nilong, Program Assistant, Migrant Forum in Asia; Daryll Delgado, Senior Director, Research and Stakeholder Engagement (Philippines), William Ragamat, Senior Legal and Policy Advisor, Jet Urmeneta, Global Capacity Program, Lowie Rosales-Kawasaki, Country Director for Japan, Kria Jopson, Yohana Miyajima and Aaron Thirkell, Dignity in Work for All (formerly Verité Southeast Asia).

As in the previous thirteen volumes of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific*, the richness of the articles in this volume is matched by the cover and lay-out design of Fidel Rillo of Mind Guerilla. His commitment to continuously support this and other publications of HURIGHTS OSAKA is highly appreciated.

Foreword

We are pleased to issue the volume fourteen of Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific.

A wide range of experiences of human rights education covered in this volume sheds light on emerging issues and remaining agendas of human rights. Adaptation to climate crisis and effective implementation of the UN Guiding Principles of Business and Human rights are among those that need special attention and accelerated actions.

We are facing the world where the situation regarding human rights does not look encouraging: the second Trump administration in the US has adopted policies that outright deny any progress regarding human rights, including the elimination of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policy, the suspension of support for abortion at home and abroad, and the denial of sexual diversity. Reversing this situation is critically needed and education will definitely play a key role.

The Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center celebrated the 30th anniversary last year, which became an opportunity to renew our commitment to concentrate our work on three essential pillars for realizing international human rights standards in Japan, namely "national human rights institution", "individual communication", and "comprehensive anti-discrimination law". For this to take place, human rights education will play a crucial role.

We earnestly hope that the wide range of articles of this edition will inspire every reader to envision and work for a world where human rights are ensured without leaving anyone behind.

Atsuko Miwa
Director

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Introduction

The main objective of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* is to bring out to a larger audience the experiences of individuals and institutions on human rights promotion and education in different countries in Asia and the Pacific.

The experiences of practitioners are significant guideposts for fellow practitioners. In fact, practitioners always learn from each other. This is true among human rights educators.

The diversity of contents of the articles in this volume underlies the rich menu of lessons to learn from.

Sectoral Issues

Several articles dwell on specific sectors such as persons with disabilities, children, young girls, youth, Indigenous Peoples, migrant workers, and men/fathers, as well as local government officials and non-governmental organization workers. The articles explain the different thinking and approaches in dealing with specific sectoral issues. There are similarities among these experiences, however, as explained below.

The articles express the need for these sectors to have a voice in matters that affect them. Such voice has to be expressed at different levels – from personal interaction with those willing to listen to them, to platforms for society to hear them, to opportunities for governments to receive their demands, to forums of international human rights mechanisms that are tasked to address their issues.

Human rights promotion and education play a significant role in enabling the members of the sectors and their supporters to raise this voice at such varied levels and to facilitate change.

The articles discuss the characteristics and situations unique to each sector that define the sectoral human rights promotion and education program.

Thus, Maselina Iuta explains that for persons with disabilities who do not know the sign language, there is a need to use gestures, facial expression, or whatever is used in the country to communicate with them that would make them feel included since their own way of communicating is being used.

To Aiki Matsukura, human rights education can also mean "accepting the persons right in front of you as they are, reaching out to them and getting involved in their situation so they could realize or get back the potential they have or originally had - the power to live, strength to believe in themselves, or the strength and mindset to care for their own selves."

SERATA, on the other hand, "engages boys and men in activities and programs meant to promote healthy masculinity so that men may become allies of women in the pursuit towards dismantling sexist patriarchal structures."

In the case of prefectural or provincial level program, a network of people and organizations working on human rights is a key element in implementing a human rights promotion and education program. This is the role being played by the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association whose program is meant to reach municipal employees, and promoting human rights training for "people working in welfare and medicine" and "private bodies, corporations, etc."

The larger society needs to have a human rights promotion and education program in order to effectively address the problems of sectors that do not enjoy their rights. As explained by Iuta, human rights are:

> Not only for people with disabilities to understand their own human rights, but also for people without disabilities, so they can understand that everyone has the same rights and they too can support the promotion of accessible and inclusive opportunities. (emphasis mine) (see page 20 of this volume)

Developing a Program

An important component in documenting experiences on human rights promotion and education work is about the development of program and activities. What initiated the development of a program? How did it develop? Why were certain activities chosen? And what changes were made in the activities over time?

Answers to these questions enlighten people who are interested in human rights promotion and education. They can trigger examining one's existing program and the corresponding activities. They can inspire the adoption of a different or new perspective and approach, and new activities. They can bring confidence to those who are planning to create their own program and activities on human rights promotion and education.

The article on the Kiwa Initiative explains how a human rights promotion and education program can develop focusing on a "new" issue – the link of climate change to human rights.

In the context of the Pacific Island States, discussing climate change in light of human rights adds a significant element in addressing climate-related problems. What kind of human rights promotion and education program must then be adopted?

Climate-related problems led to the adoption of new principles and frameworks. The United Nations want rights-based, gender-sensitive and socially inclusive nature-based solutions. What would these solutions really mean?

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has defined nature-based solutions in the following manner:

> Resolution 5 defines the concept of nature-based solutions as actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems and calls for more collaboration and resources.

This is explained as

> […] actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use, and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic, and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience, and biodiversity benefits.

The UNEA definition became known as UNEA 5.2 (adopted during the second session of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly, 28 February to 2 March 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya). Nature-based Solutions or NbS became a new principle that should be reconciled with human rights principles.

As explained in the Kiwa Initiative article, the United Nations' Human Rights Council recognized the "right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment to address the human rights impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and to ensure rights-based environmental action." This statement is useful in linking NbS with human rights.

The Kiwa Initiative did the right approach of bringing people on the environment and human rights fields to develop the program together.

Human rights (including ideas such as Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion [GEDSI] and human rights-based approach) have to be merged with environmental concerns through "three main pathways: (1) the development of resources and training material, (2) the facilitation of a Community of Practice (CoP) and (3) awareness and capacities development on human rights and GEDSI."

Training for Advocacy

Several articles discuss training for advocacy work. The ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) aims to empower the youth in Southeast Asia to enable them to actively participate in different activities supporting the rights of the youth. The Migrant Forum Asia (MFA) aims to train migrant leaders and non-governmental workers on advocacy for the protection of the migrant workers.

Both AYF and MFA support the need to engage governments in ensuring that the rights of their sector (youth and migrant workers respectively) are protected and realized. Thus they have educational programs that support advocacy.

AYF defines advocacy:

> Advocacy involves promoting a cause or issue, and it can take many forms, such as public speaking, organizing events, lobbying government officials, and using the social media to raise awareness. Effective advocacy requires strategic planning, effective communication, and the ability to build alliances and coalitions. (see page 97 of this volume)

MFA defines the need for advocacy:

> amplifying their [migrant workers'] voices by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills in advocating for themselves as well as establishing a strong support system is crucial in ensuring that they are able to carry out the work that they do and the services that they provide. (see page 169 of this volume)

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact's (AIPP) "work is grounded and functions at broader levels (local/national to regional and global levels); working with decision-makers, governments, United Nations (UN) agencies and cor-

porations, to be able to speak out on bigger issues that pervade Indigenous communities." Thus, it

> has developed its expertise on grassroots capacity-building, advocacy and networking from local to global levels and strengthening partnerships with indigenous organizations, support non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and other institutions. (see page 126 of this volume)

AYF, AIPP and MFA undertake various activities to help develop knowledge and skills needed in the advocacy work of their members (individuals and organizations). The need for training on advocacy work is seen in the activities of AIPP:

> AIPP supports Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHRDs) and Indigenous leaders to effectively engage and influence the human rights mechanisms at the regional and global levels by consolidating common advocacy strategy and strengthening the engagement with national human rights institutions (Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines), and engaging with the UN mechanisms. (see page 129 of this volume)

Additionally, the adoption of the Yangon Declaration in 2014 provided AYF with the guiding principles in its work. It states that AYF is a "youth-based, autonomous and independent regional movement that represents the voices of young Southeast Asians, and [acts] to monitor and evaluate the implementation of youth-related policies, agenda, and recommendations."

The Yangon Declaration provides an essential frame within which AYF's human rights promotion and education program can evolve over time. See Annex of the AYF article on pages 121-124 for the full document of the Yangon Declaration.

Continued Learning

The Kiwa Initiative has its Community of Practice (CoP), which plays a significant role in the continued development and sustainability of its human rights promotion and education program. CoP facilitates continued discus-

sion and sharing of experiences by people involved in environmental issues on "critical areas" "where human rights and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) projects intersect, including culturally appropriate human rights-based approaches when working with communities, inclusive facilitation, as well engagement with, and for, people with disabilities, as a key cross-cutting issue." (see page 152 of this volume)

Similarly, MFA maintains "regular online conversations to discuss different thematic issues, sharing good practices and lessons learned, as well as improving coordination amongst each other such as building connections to better provide services for migrants within their communities (i.e., establishing referral systems for case work and legal assistance, identifying support for return and reintegration, etc.)."

Training must not be a stand-alone or one-off activity. Kiwa Initiative and MFA provide the examples that illustrate how continued learning can be facilitated after the training workshops ended.

This also relates to the need for sustainable human rights promotion and education program that evolves as situations change and new challenges arise.

Formal Education

Human rights are learned in the formal education system from primary to tertiary and higher levels. Experiences from Uzbekistan, Japan and Iran show the learning of human rights using an international educational initiative (Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and in relation to social values and religion. Yumi Takahashi uses GCED to teach women empowerment, gender equality and also Sustainable Development Goals to her students. JD Parker discusses the need to use existing societal values by incorporating "cultural traditions that value harmony, community, and respect for others." Mahya Saffarinia discusses the teaching of human rights in relation to Islam, and emphasizes the diversity of views on how such link should be discussed and taught at the tertiary level in Iran.

Finally, Tomas Fast points out that societal values and national agenda affect educational policies such as "Zest for Life" (*ikiru chikara*), global *jinzai* or global human resources in the case of Japan that in turn may affect the teaching of human rights.

Human Rights Promotion and Education

This 14th volume of *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* provides another set of documentation and analysis of activities on disseminating knowledge on human rights as well as developing skills needed to take action on them.

This publication stresses "human rights promotion and education" to emphasize the activities that are covered under it. Such activities range from raising public awareness on human rights to activities that are designed to provide comprehensive understanding of rights and the practices that protect and realize them.

Educational programs benefit from awareness of human rights gained by people through popular modes of disseminating human rights information from posters and banners on public walls to flyers given to passersby on the street to advertisements in mass media platforms (print, broadcast and digital). However, there are also cases of human rights being misrepresented and thus misunderstood because of wrong information from these popular communication platforms (particularly mainstream and social media) that require proper correction.

Promotional activities such as celebrating the annual Human Rights Day on December 10th and information campaigns on specific issues or sectors prepare people for more organized educational activities to better understand the meaning of human rights and to learn practical means of realizing rights. Even learning skills on undertaking promotional activities should be part of the organized educational activity on human rights.

This publication has much to offer on how human rights promotion and education should be undertaken drawing from the rich experiences of practitioners in Asia and the Pacific.

Jefferson R. Plantilla
Editor

Endnote

1 UN Environment Assembly 5 (UNEA 5.2) Resolutions, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), https://www.unep.org/resources/resolutions-treaties-and-decisions/UN-Environment-Assembly-5-2.

2 See The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, United Nations General Assembly, A/76/L.75, 26 July 2022, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en&v=pdf.

Human Rights Education for People with Disabilities in Samoa

Maselina Iuta

I was born deaf in rural Savai'i in Samoa. There were no accessibility services where I grew up, and I grew up without access to many important things.

When I was four years old, I started attending school however there were no sign language interpreters in my village. I had never even seen someone use sign language.

Growing up with no access to sign language meant that I was unable to communicate effectively with my teachers, explain to a doctor when I felt sick, or understand what the pastor was saying in church every Sunday.

I felt very isolated and could not keep up with other kids my age. I did not know what was happening in my community and I always got bad grades in school because I never understood what the teacher was saying.

It was not until I was much older that I realized I had the same rights as people without disabilities. And when I was supported with a sign language interpreter, I could do the same things as everyone else.

My experience since childhood as a person with disability inspired me to stand up and advocate for the realization of human rights of people with disabilities. I do not want the future generations of people with disabilities to face what I experienced when I was growing up.

When I was 11, I moved to Samoa's capital city Apia so that I could attend an inclusive education school. It was here that I learned sign language and was able to start learning how to read and write. I learned of organizations such as Nuanua O Le Alofa, Samoa's national advocacy organization for persons with disabilities and started to learn about human rights. Unfortunately, circumstance meant I was unable to finish my education, however my time in Apia taught me so much about what was possible.

Situation of People with Disabilities in Samoa

Approximately 1.7 million people in the Pacific are living with some form of disability. The Pacific Disability Forum has documented that people with

disabilities in the Pacific experience many cultural and physical barriers to full participation as well as lack of access to communities, education and the workplace.

In Samoa, one hundred ninety people cannot hear at all or have a lot of difficulty. The majority of deaf and hard of hearing communities are located in rural areas of Upolu and Savai'i Islands.[1]

According to data from the Samoan Bureau of Statistics, of the population with disabilities in Samoa, 9.6 percent have never been to school, compared to 1.7 percent of those without disabilities. Only 4 percent of the population with disabilities are formally employed. These statistics highlight the exclusion rates of persons with disabilities in Samoa.

A study jointly conducted in 2021 by the United Nations Population Fund, Women Enabled International and Pacific Disability Forum reveals that people with disabilities suffering from "[I]nformal deprivations of legal capacity are commonplace in Samoa."[2]

Young persons with disabilities in Samoa are generally entitled to equal recognition under the law. However, in practice many experience a denial of their right to make decisions for themselves, particularly in healthcare settings. The study lists the common ways this occurs in Samoa:[3]

- Harmful stereotyping by both service providers and family members that a person with a disability cannot make a decision independently;
- Services that rely on third parties (often family members or OPDs [organizations for persons with disabilities] to provide interpretation or other accessibility measures, which restricts the ability of the person with the disability to make decisions independently;
- Lack of clear legal and policy supports and safeguards to enable a person with a disability to make their own decisions through supported-decision making mechanisms and to challenge a denial of their right to make a decision for themselves;
- Disempowerment of persons with disabilities, which prevents people from understanding and advocating for their right to make an independent decision; and
- Lack of support services and social protection schemes for people with disabilities and their families, which leads to people with disabilities being economically dependent on their family.

Samoan National Policy for Persons with Disabilities

The Samoan government's National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2031 (adopted in July 2021) states in its preamble the situation and the policy response:[4]

> Disability is a human condition, those living with disabilities are members of our community and society. Inclusivity is about equal opportunities for all; everyone participating and contributing to the development process. Yet, persons with disabilities are the most marginalised members of society, often excluded from the decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. They face many obstacles that prevent or limit their capabilities to become part of society and contribute effectively to the development of the communities and nation in which they live.
>
> This National Policy for Persons with Disabilities aims to provide a national disability-inclusive development agenda for Samoa, for the next 10 years.

The National Policy has advocacy and awareness as expected outcome:[5]

Advocacy and awareness

- Recognising, promoting and enhancing the rights of persons of disabilities, and addressing negative stereotyping and discrimination against them, including the many disparities between persons with disabilities and those without, required a shared understanding about those rights, their significance to persons with disabilities, and how persons with disabilities rights and disability-inclusion should be addressed through policies, systems and practices of service organisations such as ministries, schools, employers, and businesses. Better awareness of services that exist and those not yet exist for persons with disabilities is needed.

On the other hand, one of the objectives of the Disability Inclusive Development Agenda of the National Policy is to increase "awareness about the rights and needs of persons with disabilities."[6]

This objective is meant to be achieved through programs and activities such as the following:

1. Research and awareness on the prevalence and characteristics of disability, as well as existing gaps on disability-inclusion. This includes a research to establish current levels of awareness and understanding about the needs and rights of persons with disabilities in Samoa in accordance with the CRPD.
2. Programs and activities aimed at empowering persons with disabilities to promote and advocate for their rights, issues and needs.
3. Awareness programs on the challenges and issues faced by persons with disabilities including barriers preventing and limiting their participation in society.

While these documents demonstrate a high-level commitment of the Government of Samoa to see the realization of human rights for persons with disabilities in Samoa, disability advocates have raised concerns that these documents did not receive proper consultation with the disability community. I myself was part of the consultative process for the National Policy and despite being part of a group that made a submission to the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development on our concerns about the draft policy, we did not see our feedback reflected in the final result nor have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the Ministry during the policy's development.

Deaf Association of Samoa

In 2017, I was part of a founding group that established the Deaf Association of Samoa. Prior to 2017, while support services and disability advocacy organizations had existed for some time, Deaf people had never had the opportunity to meaningfully lead advocacy efforts on behalf of ourselves. We had found that other, non-deaf people had often made decisions on what they deemed was best for us and we wanted to change that.

Today, the Deaf Association of Samoa remains the only organization that has a majority deaf or hard of hearing governance board.

Having experienced many years of marginalization by both the wider community, and even accessibility services run by people without disabili-

ties, we wanted to establish an organization where our own life experiences, Deaf culture and ownership of our own language were respected. I was on the first Board of the Association, and in 2019 was voted in as the Vice President. I stepped down in 2020 so that I could take up a position as one of the first paid staff members of the Association.

The Mission of the Association is to advocate for equal opportunities and full participation for persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing in all aspects of Samoan society.

The Association's Strategic Plan (2020-2025) vision is for "An inclusive Samoa that is responsive and ensures the promotion and protection of the rights of persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing" and has six key outcomes:

> Outcome 1: The Samoan Government respects, protects and fulfills the rights of persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing.
>
> Outcome 2: Mainstream the provision of sign language and gesture translations throughout government, non-government and community organizations to ensure accessible information and communication for all Deaf people.
>
> Outcome 3: Ensure access to inclusive and accessible services across all sectors including but not limited to health, education, employment and church.
>
> Outcome 4: Support the provision of accessible and inclusive public transport across all of Samoa.
>
> Outcome 5: Advocate for translation and signage to achieve an accessible and inclusive physical environment for Samoa.
>
> Outcome 6: A high performing and accountable Association.

The Association's board, staff and members continue to need to work to receive respect from the wider community, many of whom still believe that Deaf people do not have the capacity to lead the development and realization of our language and culture.

I cannot speak further on this issue without acknowledging the important work and support of Nuanua O Le Alofa. It is the leading disability advocacy organization in Samoa and was established in 2001.[7] It was the first organization in Samoa to be governed and led by persons with disabilities and was instrumental in advocating for the Samoan government's ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016.

The Association was able to be established due to the important work and support of Nuanua O Le Alofa which has paved much of the way for disability-led advocacy. The Association remains an affiliate of Nuanua O Le Alofa and continues to work in close collaboration with it to further the rights of persons with diverse disabilities in Samoa.

Human Rights Education

Since we are not all born with equal access, it can be difficult to advocate for ourselves if we do not know what our rights are.

Learning from Nuanua O Le Alofa about my rights as a person with disabilities drastically changed my life. Further, seeing persons with disabilities such as Fa'atino Utumapu, General Manager of Nuanua O Le Alofa, travel the world to speak of the experiences of persons with disabilities in the Pacific and advocate for equity and equality greatly inspired me. I wanted to help share that knowledge with other people to empower them to stand up and advocate for their human rights.

Many interventions are needed to ensure that people with disabilities have equal and meaningful access in all aspects of society. One aspect is human rights education. Not only for people with disabilities to understand their own human rights, but also for people without disabilities, so they can understand that everyone has the same rights and they too can support the promotion of accessible and inclusive opportunities.

Through the Association, and working with the Deaf community in Samoa, I provide a range of deaf-led human rights education initiatives and advocates for the participation of Deaf and hearing-impaired persons in all aspects of society.

I took on a much larger role as an educator and teacher when I joined the Association as a staff member in 2020. I became the Project Officer of the Association and worked there until 2023 when I left to move to Fiji and study at the University of the South Pacific. Now, I continue to support the

Participants at the Deaf Association of Samoa's Annual Forum for Samoans who are Deaf, September 2021.[8] © Australian Humanitarian Partnership

(Above and next page) A sign language workshop led by facilitators including Maselina from Deaf Association of Samoa for children who are Deaf, 2021.

Association and work as a Disability Advocate. A large part of my job is working with the deaf community to understand their human rights in the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Maselina Iuta attending an international conference, advocating for disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction mechanisms, 2022

My role involves working closely with the members of the Deaf community to learn about their own human rights and support them to advocate for their rights to access education, employment and health services, to name a few.

I particularly enjoy working with young people with disabilities. I have found that youth with disabilities always want to engage in human rights education. We keep our programs activity-based and engaging and we are always asked to come back and run more programs.

Another component of my work involves providing advocacy and human rights education in national and regional contexts with mainstream organizations across a variety of sectors. We at the Association cannot achieve our mission and vision alone. We strive to develop enduring partnerships with stakeholders who are willing to recognize the importance of accessibility and inclusion and support the realization of rights for persons with disabilities.

Activities

Human rights education is often the precursor to being able to advocate for the realization of rights of persons with disabilities.

In line with Outcome 2 of the Deaf Association of Samoa's Strategic Plan, when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, the Association worked hard to educate government stakeholders on the reality of the Deaf experience in the pandemic and highlight the importance of accessible information for all as detailed in Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

State of Emergency regulations changed on a weekly basis in the early months of the pandemic, and the Association continued to receive reports from our members that due to the low literacy rates and inaccessible information, those who are deaf and hard of hearing struggled to know what rules were in place and often got in trouble for breaking those rules. In May 2020, together with Nuanua O Le Alofa, the Association was able to successfully advocate to the Samoan Prime Minister and Cabinet for the provision of sign language translation in the Prime Minister's weekly State of Emergency address. This was a

Maselina leading a discussion on marginalization of the Deaf community during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021.

historical moment for Samoa, as it was the first time that Samoa had ever provided sign language translation at the national level.

While this was an important development and a successful advocacy achievement for the Association, we knew we had to take it further. With approximately 50 percent of our members not understanding formal sign language, we knew key messages were still not reaching many people. We then mobilized key members of our team to work from lockdown to create videos of gestures translation that were released on the Association's Facebook page, making the State of Emergency regulations accessible to all persons who were deaf and hard of hearing, no matter the level of education they had been able to attain.

Annually, the Association hosts a Members Forum in celebration of International Week of the Deaf. During the week, we bring up to one hundred members from across the country together to a single location for a week of connection, advocacy and education. The Forum organizers face the annual challenge of developing a program that is accessible to members aged between 10 – 55, some of whom have never attended a day of school.

The first session of the week is always about introduction. It is an emotional activity, with members helping each other learn how to spell their names and the villages they are from. Nerves are high, and everyone is tentatively watching each other, trying to gauge reactions.

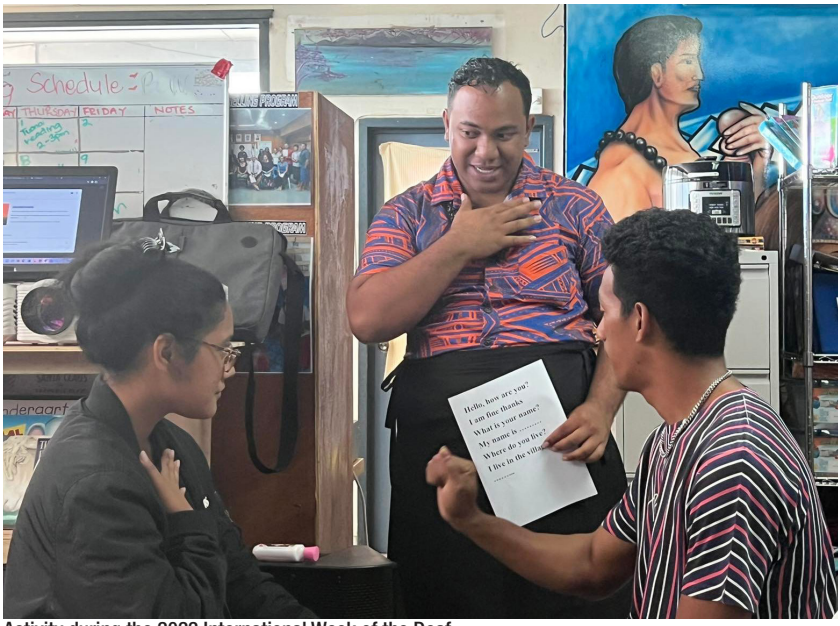
The program varies from year to year, sometimes including emergency evacuation simulations from Fire and Emergency services, visits to the Samoa Meteorology Services to learn about early warning systems and provide feedback on how to make multi-warning systems inclusive for persons who are Deaf and sessions with the electoral office, receiving support on registering to vote and understanding why casting your vote is important. A highlight in 2022 was when we were able to visit the Samoan Parliament, take a tour and learn all about our political system.

The week is filled with field trips to different places, where we facilitate two-way-learning, our members learning about different services and systems, and government and non-government agencies meeting with Deaf people, often for the first time, and listening to first-hand experience of their lived experience; and where they experience barriers in being able to access and participate in different aspects of Samoan society.

Throughout the course of the week, it is wonderful to see the confidence of our members grow, as they enter spaces for the first time, and

are supported to share their experience and advocate for their inclusion. Everyone supports each other and the week is filled with laughter and new experiences.

It is hard for everyone when we have to say goodbye at the end of the week. However, we consistently hear from families that their Deaf family members return home overjoyed and enthusiastic, ready to take on new challenges. Throughout the week we work to identify some of the hopes and dreams of our members, and use the following months to connect them with employment and education pathways, and include them in programs that align with their interests.



Activity during the 2022 International Week of the Deaf.

Our International Week of the Deaf program is the most anticipated week of the year for many of our members and they start contacting us to excitedly ask for plans many months in advance.

Challenges

The Deaf Association of Samoa has made many important achievements since its establishment in 2017 as detailed above, however, we continue to face challenges.

Many challenges faced among Deaf community are related to the little educational, employment and decision-making opportunities. When we are invited to sit at the decision-making table at national and regional levels, we have to do significant work to compensate for the barriers we continue to experience due to lack of access to education. I find in my work that I must continue to advocate for not only the provision of sign language translation, but also to receive any key materials or potential questions prior to the meeting so that I have time to prepare with my interpreter. I often come to events where consideration of how the physical environment may impact my ability to see and communicate with my interpreter is not considered. It can be hard to have to consistently advocate for reasonable accommodations each and every day.

Additionally, there are organizations and individuals who still struggle to understand that just because they cannot hear me does not mean that I do not have thoughts, feelings and opinions. I find myself in situations where hearing people correct me on my use of my language or tell me that my perspective is not correct. At times I find that while I have been invited to an event, it does not mean that there is space and consideration to meaningfully hear from me. People who do not share my lived experience will sometimes speak with authority on the barriers they believe I experience or the support that I need. It is important for all non-disabled people to remember that while being an ally is incredibly important to the disability rights movement, they must make space to hear from disability advocates themselves.

Some Reflections

I am proud to be a human rights educator because I am part of a movement that ensures that people with disabilities have equal access to their human rights.

I am really proud of the fact that through my work, I am able to ensure Deaf-led advocacy for the Deaf community.

Being a young Deaf woman from Savai'i, I get to speak throughout the country to members of the Deaf community and I can see the impact it has.

You cannot be what you cannot see. I hope that people with disabilities seeing me in spaces that traditionally do not include people with disabilities

will inspire the next generation of the Deaf community to understand their rights and see that they can be anything they want to be.

The big changes that I have seen have been at the individual and family levels. Working with families of young Deaf children in Savai'i, I see them realize that their child could grow up just like me to take on leadership roles and work to support their family.

Another exciting change has been seeing the increased confidence of Deaf women and men my own age who are realizing that access to inclusive education and employment opportunities is possible and that with knowledge of their human rights, they can advocate for opportunities in their own lives.

The world needs human rights education because we are not all born with equal access, and it can be difficult to advocate for ourselves if we do not know what our rights are. We need the support of the community, so that we can continue to fight and support the rights of those who are deaf in Samoa.

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Fighting Human Trafficking: Human Rights Education for Children and Youth

Aiki Matsukura

My name is Aiki Matsukura. I am proud to be a human rights educator because I get to support people and help them realize their strength and potential.

The main reason I became a human rights educator is that I strongly wish to create a society where there are no victims and no one lives in fear of experiencing any kind of violence. I believe that human rights education helps individuals realize their own worth and know that every human being without exception should be treated with respect. That is why I work to strengthen and promote human rights education.

Initial Involvement

I joined Free the Children Japan when I was in high school. Free the Children Japan is a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a mission to free children from poverty and discrimination and to free children from the notion that they are powerless to create positive change in the world. At sixteen years old, I became involved in its activities and raised funds for two years to build a library for children in Mongolia. Through these activities, I came to understand the serious issue of child labor around the world. I was particularly angered by the issue of sexual exploitation of children and wanted more than anything to see it eradicated. The passion I felt then is still at my core.

Trafficking in Japan

Human trafficking in Japan is not a widely recognized issue. However, Japan is known to be a major destination, source, and transit country for men and women subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. There have been many cases of non-Japanese women, many from Asian countries, who have been

deceived, brought to Japan and forced to work in the sex industry. However, in recent years, we are seeing increasing cases of Japanese women and children being exploited in this industry.

While it is often believed that women who work in the sex industry chose to work there, there are many cases in which women were deceived, threatened, mind-controlled and forced to work in the sex industry. In recent years, many Japanese men, women, boys, and girls are reported to being coerced to sign vague contracts and forced to participate in making pornographic films as well.

It is especially disturbing fact that many children and young people are targeted as victims of sex trafficking in Japan. Loopholes in the legal system allow various forms of business that facilitate sexual exploitation of teenage girls to operate in Japan. *Sextortion* is a worrying and increasing trend, in which children who meet people online via app are tricked into sharing their sexually explicit pictures or videos, and then blackmailed into sending more materials under the threat of releasing them to the public. Child pornography is also a big issue in Japan where child abuse materials called *child erotica*, pictures and videos depicting children under eighteen wearing bikinis in sexually provocative poses, are available for sale.

The issue of sex trafficking is attributed to the country's large sex industry, along with socio-cultural factors such as the lack of sex education, commodification of children's sex, and legal loopholes.

Victim blaming which is deeply rooted in the society is also one of the biggest challenges in solving the issue.

Bystander's comments such as "Girls should cherish their body" intended towards victims of sexual exploitation do not give thought to what the high school girls could be going through. What are the underlying reasons for these girls to have ended up in such situation? Family discord, financial issues, being abused at home are some of the many possible problems experienced by the high school girls that these comments disregard. We must take a bold stance that in any situation, the perpetrators who commodify children's sex are to be blamed for their actions and not the children.

Human Rights Education

"Human rights education" can sound very formal. When you say "education," it gives an impression of teaching someone from a superior position. I think that this is a widely held idea in Japanese society.

However, human rights education in my mind is accepting the persons right in front of you as they are, reaching out to them and getting involved in their situation so they could realize or get back the potential they have or originally had - the power to live, strength to believe in themselves, or the strength and mindset to care for their own selves.

I believe that human rights education is beyond passing down knowledge of what human rights are. Instead, it is important to show what it means to respect each individual's human rights through words and actions. I am convinced that it is only through learning the importance of and having the experience of being respected that one can respect others' rights.

When delivering human rights education to children and youth, I think that the elements of self-worth and body autonomy should be at the core. It is also very important to deliver human rights education by using media which children and young people feel familiar with and to use language that is easy for children to understand.

Actively engaging with and listening to young people's voices in Kabukicho, Shinjuku in Tokyo.

A human trafficking survivor expressed her sentiment after getting words of encouragement:

> What I can still remember clearly today among her words is that: "No one has the right to take away my happiness." She gave me these powerful words. Until then, I was being reclusive, only wanting to disconnect from people, but, little by little, I started to be able to meet close friends and through the connection to the society, I started to be able to find myself."

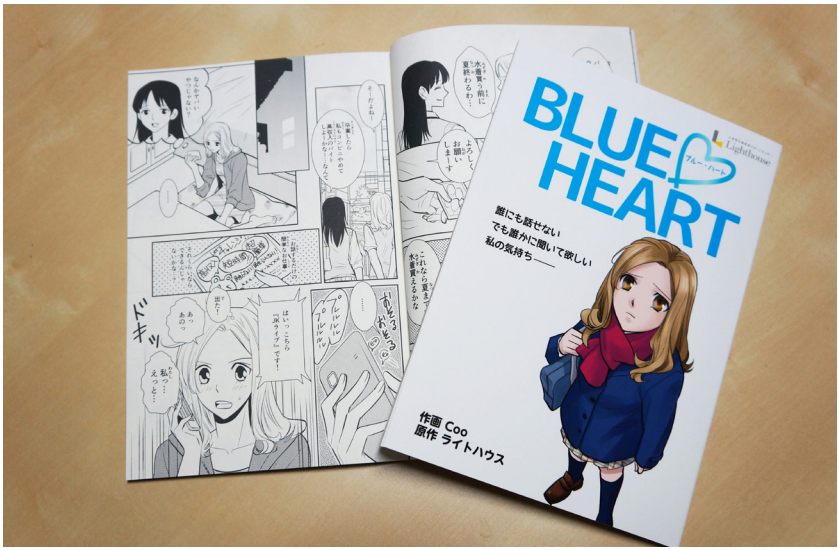
This is an example of the impact of human rights education that emphasizes self-worth and body autonomy to young people who suffered from trafficking.

Activities

I joined a non-profit organization called Lighthouse: Center for Human Trafficking Victims in 2014. Lighthouse is committed to fighting for a society without human trafficking and works to support victims of human trafficking, especially sex trafficking, in Japan. Like a lighthouse that guides people who are lost in the dark to safe harbors, Lighthouse was founded to be the beacon of hope for survivors of human trafficking and to be their voice. Lighthouse closed and concluded its activities in 2022.

As Public Relations Manager of Lighthouse, I was in charge of awareness-raising campaigns. I gave talks at schools and companies, and in the media to raise awareness on the issue of trafficking. I was also involved in creating tools such as *manga*, videos, pamphlets which are relatable and easy to understand for children. I also responded to calls and e-mails on the hotline from different parts of Japan (though Lighthouse was based in Tokyo), and provided direct support to the survivors of sexual exploitation.

In 2015, Lighthouse published a *manga* entitled *Blue Heart*, based on the experiences of survivors of sexual exploitation. Many parents, teachers, social workers, doctors, and government officials have been using the *manga* as a tool to protect children from sexual exploitation. Children and young people who read the *manga* has also reached out to Lighthouse's hotline for support. This *manga* has been a very effective tool and was translated into Chinese and English as well.



Blue Heart **published by Lighthouse**

Lighthouse also produced several videos that challenge bias towards the issue of sexual exploitation. To show that anyone could become a victim, a video shares a story about a so-called ordinary high school girl falling victim to sex trafficking. One of the videos is titled "Close to You" and contains a message that a problem like this is happening right next door, very close to us, and that children suffering from such victimization actually exist close to you.

It also contains another message to the children who are suffering right now: "We are on your side. There are adults who will support you."

My work at Lighthouse also involved educating and training law enforcement and government officials to respond to sexual violence cases appropriately as well as conveying the need and the importance of legal and systematic change. My role was to talk to professionals who were in the position of supporting the victims and help them deepen their understanding of the issue and prevent second rape (insensitive and traumatic actuations often blaming the victims). Lighthouse was also asked to give feedback on awareness-raising campaigns planned by the government.

Meanwhile, Lighthouse proactively took action to individually meet government officials, Diet (Parliament) members, and local assembly members to lobby for change. My role was to deliver the voice of the survivors to

policy makers, have their voices heard, and to work with the policy/decision makers to create a society without human trafficking.

The lobbying activities of Lighthouse resulted in making the Japanese government take specific actions against sexual exploitation of children and youth. For example, as an outcome of lobbying politicians and government officials, the government declared in 2017 the month of April as month for raising awareness on the issue of sexual violence against young people. With discussion of sex being taboo in Japan and little attention being paid by the government to the issue of sexual exploitation, I believe this has been a great breakthrough.

Sexuality Education as Human Rights Education

I personally think that sexuality education is human rights education, because cherishing our own and others' human rights starts from knowing how important our own body, especially our private zone, is. By providing sexuality education, which supports each child's sense of self-worth, children may have less chance of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse, because they know that it is their right to say NO or to seek help.

With increasing number of sextortion cases being reported by children to the Lighthouse hotline, I strived not to "educate" these children by warning them or telling them what they should do. Instead, I try to ease their fear and anxiety as well as repeatedly conveying to them the message that no one has the right to invade their own body and that they have the right to say NO. I witnessed many cases in which the children who were blackmailed and were completely mind-controlled by the perpetrators came to realize that they did not have to follow what the perpetrators instruct and instead chose to take action to protect their own rights. Although this process takes time and requires patience, I believe this act of consistently telling children their important worth and their right to protect their body has a great impact not only to the individual but to the society at large.

When people know their own rights and are able to care for themselves, I believe there is a greater chance for people to be able to also respect other people's rights.

Final Thoughts

Throughout my work as a human rights educator, I met many children and young people who struggle to feel self-worth and are overwhelmed by feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. It saddens me that many children and youth, the treasures of our society, who are full of so many possibilities feel hopeless to live. I believe that the presence of even a single adult who will listen to and believe in a child is very important. Thus, I wish to be that single adult for as many children as possible and help them realize their own strength and potential.

Malaysia: Engaging Men in Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Initiatives

Farhana Abdul Fatah and SERATA

The beginnings of women's rights movements in Malaysia can be traced back to then-colonial Malaya in the 1930s, when a group of women Muslim intellectuals called for women's rights to education. Such a move was galvanized by the reform movements in West Asia (Middle East), where these Malayan women received their education.

Founded in 1929, the Malay Women Teachers' Union promoted formal schooling for Malay women. Over the next two decades, women activists in the Malayan states of Selangor and Perak highlighted cases of sexual molestation and harassment among estate workers.[1] Nearly a century later, the women's rights movement in Malaysia progressed beyond merely addressing education reforms, women's participation in politics, and gender-based violence. A myriad of women's rights organizations also emerged, each with its own distinct focus.

However, as Ng, Mohamad and Tan (2006)[2] conceded in their book on feminism and women's rights in Malaysia, much of the discussion surrounding feminism and women's rights are skewed towards the West Malaysian perspective. This unfortunate reality inadvertently led to insights from East Malaysia – made up of the territories Sabah and Sarawak – being largely dismissed or unheard.

SERATA – Centering the Experiences and Voices from East Malaysia

Formally registered in Sabah, Malaysia in 2018, the Society for Equality, Respect, and Trust for All Sabah (SERATA) made its mark by asking, "Are current women empowerment programs the most effective way to reach gender parity at the workplace?,"[3] linking the active participation of fathers as essential to closing the gender gap. At that point, paternity leave was not yet introduced in the Malaysian employment laws.

Since then, SERATA has made significant strides in promoting gender equality and empowerment. An emerging voice for women empowerment regionally and internationally, SERATA has engaged men and boys in partnership with women and girls in important conversations and efforts intended to bring about tangible changes with regards to inclusivity and parity for all. Although SERATA's core focus is on gender equality and women's empowerment, its work also revolves around initiatives to promote equality, inclusivity, and awareness on issues involving the workplace and family. SERATA's work is befitting of its name, which spells out the Malay word that means "equal" or "undifferentiated."

Bringing Men and Boys to the Table

SERATA distinguishes itself from other women's rights groups in Malaysia by including men and boys, as SERATA believes that in order for women to have unimpeded access to participation in the public and private domains, men – the traditional beneficiary of patriarchal structures – need to be involved. Under prevailing structures of patriarchy, men are beneficiaries of socio-economic access and benefits that have been historically exclusive of women; yet, patriarchy has also rendered men victims of unfair societal norms and expectations. "Boys don't cry" and "boys don't wear pink" are prevailing dogmas that not only restrict boys and men from fully embracing their selves, but may ultimately be harmful towards women. In attempts to remedy this, SERATA engages boys and men in activities and programs meant to promote healthy masculinity so that men may become allies of women in the pursuit towards dismantling sexist patriarchal structures.

SERATA's efforts in this regard have been recognized through its partnership with MenCare, a global campaign that was launched in 2011 to champion equitable fatherhood and caregiving. Such programs include organizing Father's Day events, as well as online webinars like "Responsible Dads" held in 2021, which featured a panel of three fathers, one of whom is Saiful Nizam, the father of Ain Husniza, a Malaysian teen who was subjected to widespread public criticism as well as sexualization after her TikTok video exposing rape culture in Malaysian schools became viral.[4] The session highlighted the importance of fathers who are present and involved in their children's lives, and the guests also shared the trials and tribulations they faced as fathers parenting children in the 21st century.

SERATA, in collaboration with Urban Tamu, organized a Father's Day event called 'Bapaku Idolaku' (My father, my idol), June 2023.

In 2023, SERATA continued with initiatives to spread awareness by inviting Australian sociologist and gender studies expert Michael Flood to give a talk entitled "Why engaging men and boys is vital for gender equality initiatives." The key takeaways from the talk included knowledge about key theories and concepts advocating for the need of including men in gender-equal initiatives, and the approaches that can be taken to educate boys from an early age.

Engaging with the Youth and Public

One of SERATA's core activities involves workshops and training sessions on gender sensitization and awareness. The general Malaysian population arguably lacks knowledge and has limited access to education regarding the concept of gender, its distinction from biological sex, and its relevance as well as importance in public and private domains. SERATA has over the years conducted workshops and training sessions for members of the public, university students, as well as staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aim to redress this issue.

In June 2022, SERATA was invited by Universiti Malaysia Kelantan – under the sponsorship of American Corner Kelantan - to conduct a program entitled "Breaking Barriers: a women empowerment workshop" to a group of female undergraduate students. Spanning two days, the workshop was attended by approximately thirty students who were exposed to the fundamentals of gender vs. sex, the agents and processes of gendered socialization, as well as the "glass ceiling" and "bamboo ceiling," which highlight the challenges for women's career progression in the workplace.

Although small in number and scope, this workshop nevertheless signals a minor, yet significant shift in the landscape of gender equality conversations in Malaysia. This is because Kelantan – a state in Malaysia's east-coast – is widely regarded as a bastion for ultra-patriarchal and conservative beliefs and practices that are rooted in both the Malay culture and the Islamic faith. Kelantan is also known nationwide for its numerous Malay-Muslim women entrepreneurs (especially in the beauty industry), a fact which made the participants of the workshop think that women have always been empowered in their communities. Some of them later commented that they were surprised to learn the different forms of gendered bias, prejudice, and discrimination that were subtly in operation and which they realized were also evident in their respective communities.

The "Breaking Barriers" program was duplicated for an online session for women with disabilities in April 2022 with the support of International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). SERATA has also been invited to become a part of similar programs with other public and private higher educational institutions in Malaysia, such as the Unhealthy Relationships webinar with Sunway College in 2022. For two consecutive years, SERATA has also been part of SULAM, a university-level initiative introduced by

Breaking Barriers workshop held at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, June 2022.

the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to incorporate community-service and society-based learning into academic modules. Specifically, SERATA worked with students from the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, to help them create digital content to educate and spread awareness on gender-based issues such as grooming and domestic violence. Online progress meetings or "check-ins" were conducted throughout the semester-long program to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the information gathered by the students. As part of their assessment, the students were then required to present their materials to SERATA representatives.

Besides working with the youth, SERATA also receives invitations from governmental and non-governmental organizations to conduct workshops on gender sensitization. SERATA tailors the content for each gender sensitization program to fit with individual organization's aims and objectives, although general concepts and theories are covered. For instance, in July 2023 SERATA was invited by ReefCheck Malaysia to conduct a gender sensitization workshop for youths in Semporna as part of its coral conservation program. Fifty youths from three nearby islands (Kulapuan, Larapan and Mabul) attended the program. Through oral presentations, group activities, and discussions, the workshop not only sparked thought-provoking conversations about gender, but the participants were also taught about key concepts that are applicable to their work, such as gender and development, the gendered division of labor, the gender analysis framework, as well as gender and decision-making.

Positive Parenting for a Healthier, Happier Family Dynamic

SERATA's core educational focus also centers on family and parenting. Together with partners, SERATA has organized and conducted numerous programs for the public. In 2019, SERATA conducted a six-week positive parenting program, called "Semarak Kasih,"" which was part of a feasibility study conducted by Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and UNICEF on the effects of positive parenting towards children.

In 2021, SERATA conducted an online webinar entitled "Working Moms – the good, the bad, the ugly" featuring Tashny Sukumaran, a senior analyst at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia, whose work revolves around policymaking and gender. Panelists made up of experts – executives, academics, as well as SERATA's own co-founder, Robert Hii – also shared their challenges and triumphs as working mothers and supportive partners. The session highlighted vulnerable moments especially in recalling the struggles of balancing career demands with the expectations of being a "good mother," the authenticity of which resonated with the participants.

In 2022, in partnership with the National Population and Family Development Board, SERATA conducted a Parenting Style workshop to assist parents to negotiate the challenges of parenting and to foster closer relationships with their children. The objectives of the program include – providing parents knowledge on healthy parenting; promoting closer bonds

between parents and their children; exposing parents to the challenges of raising children in the modern world; and teaching parents on parenting approaches that are more suited to the demands of today. Three sessions conducted over the span of two days fulfilled these objectives, and the smaller, targeted number of participants resulted in more engaging and invigorating discussions.

One of the positive parenting workshops conducted by SERATA in partnership with the National Population and Family Development Board, 2022.

Leading the Charge Towards Reformed Labor Laws

One of the most pressing issues that are brought to SERATA's attention is the number of sexual harassment cases in the workplace. In most cases, survivors of sexual harassment are afraid of taking action against their perpetrators, choosing the "safe and easy" option instead, of just leaving the workplace.

In 2022, SERATA decided to explore how survivors of sexual harassment could legally take action and found out that not only was Sabah governed by a separate set of laws on employment matters (Federal Malaysia is covered by the Employment Act 1960), the laws also have not been amended since 2005. This means that many of the protections that are guaranteed under Employment Act 1960 such as paternity leave, protection against dismissal while pregnant or compelling an employer to investigate claims of sexual harassment in the workplace, are nonexistent in Sabah. In fact, the lack of these amendments meant that workplaces in Sabah are not conducive for women or working people with families.

Fueled by these revelations, SERATA has prompted efforts towards reforming the Sabah Labour Ordinance (SLO) 1950, as well as promoting awareness on employees' rights. Beginning with a three-day workshop in January 2023, "Opis Idamanku" (translated to "my dream office") was conducted to educate participants on the SLO, their rights to protect themselves in cases of sexual harassment in the workplace, and the importance of parental leave for both mothers and fathers.

In March 2023, a roundtable was held with several Sabah-based civil society organizations (CSOs) and attended by representatives from the Sabah Labour Department, Malaysia Trade Union Congress (MTUC) Sabah Chapter, Sabah Employers Association (SEA), Sabah Human Resource Development Department, and Sabah Trade Union Affairs Department. According to SERATA co-founder and then-president Sabrina Melisa Aripen, Sabah's labor laws – which are older than the formation of Malaysia - have not been amended in nearly two decades. This puts Sabah behind West Malaysia when it comes to issues such as maternal and paternity leave, and investigations of sexual harassment. Aripen added, "Our biggest concern is many employees in Sabah don't actually know their rights as employees, and thus may be easily exploited by unscrupulous employers."

In April 2023, SERATA published a report entitled "Assessing Gender Sensitivity on Labour Laws of the Sabah Labour Ordinance." The report explored the differences between the Sabah Labour Ordinance (also known as the Labour Ordinance [Sabah Cap. 67]) and other existing labor laws in Malaysia, namely the Employment Act 1955 (EA) by focusing on gendered issues such as protection against sexual harassment and parental leave entitlement. The key findings are summarized as follows:

a. Lack of provisions protecting workers from sexual harassment in the workplace

In July 2022, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act was passed by Dewan Rakyat (Malaysia's House of Representatives). According to SERATA's report, certain provisions covered under the amended Act do not apply to employers in Sabah. They are as follows:

- Inquiry into complaints of sexual harassment made by employers as mentioned in 81B under the Employment Act;
- The need to take disciplinary action towards the harasser if found guilty to have committed any sexual harassment offences;
- The offences applicable towards employers who fail to act on any complaint relating to sexual harassment stated are liable to a fine up to ten thousand ringgit (RM10, 000).

Therefore, employees in Sabah have less legal measures in place to safeguard and protect them against sexual harassment incidents at the workplace.

b. Inadequate protection for mothers and fathers in the workplace

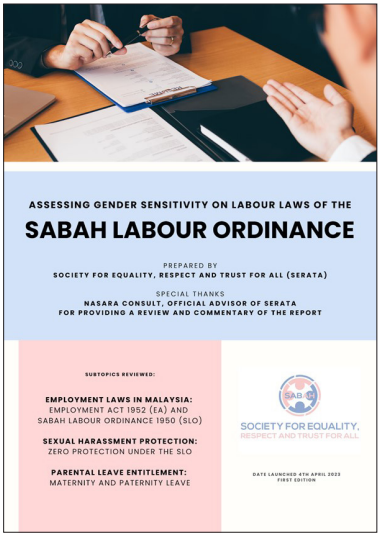
Following the Employment Act Amendment 2022, maternity leave is increased from 60 to 98 days. This federal provision is applicable to all working women regardless of salary level, and acts as additional protection against unreasonable termination on grounds of pregnancy. However, the SLO does not reflect this amendment and retained the 60-day maternity leave for pregnant Sabahan employees.

Pertaining to paternal rights, the federal Employment Act Amendment 2022 instated seven consecutive days of paternity leave, eligible to male workers that fulfil the following conditions:

- Employed for a minimum of one year;
- Entitled to only five births, regardless of the number of wives;[5]
- Effective on the day of delivery.

At the time of the report's publication, SLO does not have provisions for paternity leave.

The urgency for paternity leave was highlighted in May 2023, when Sabahan Fridentsteward Jailon came home from work to discover that his



Front cover of SERATA's report on the SLO

wife – who had just given birth several days prior – had died. It was reported that Jailon's employers had requested that he return to work two days after his wife's delivery, which left Jailon unable to perform his duty as a husband to care for his wife. A grieving Jailon then penned a heartfelt post on his social media account that directed his distress to his employers, saying "I wanted to take leave, but they told me 'it is even better if I can come to work.' What is this? I work very hard, but the pay does not even commensurate. How much can you pay to return my wife's life?"

Jailon's case renewed pressure from the public and civil society organizations (CSOs) to reform Sabah's outdated labor laws. In June 2024, SERATA started an online fundraising campaign for Jailon's one year-old baby – Erol Erando Exly - who had been diagnosed with Thalassemia Major, an inherited blood disorder that affects the body's ability to produce haemoglobin and healthy red blood cells. The fundraiser received RM3, 017.50 (approximately US$700) in just two days.

Online fundraising appeal for Baby Erol

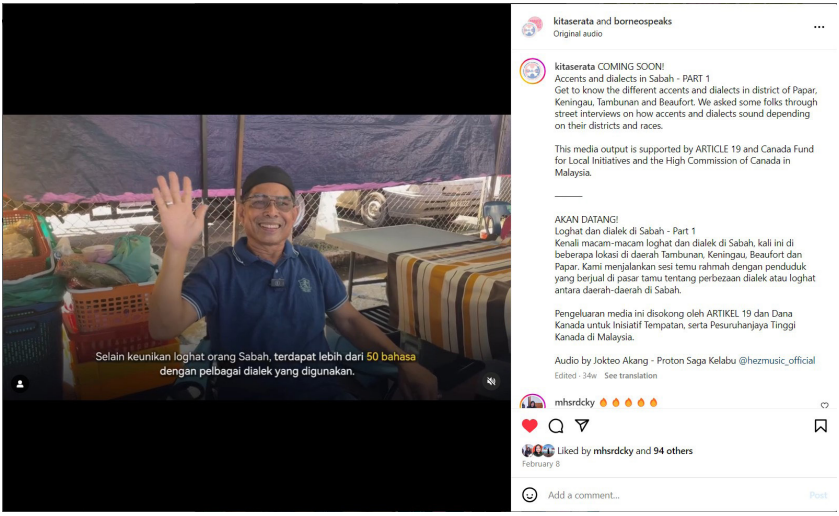
Then, in July 2024, several of the demands laid out in SERATA's report were finally tabled, discussed, and then passed at the Dewan Rakyat. These key demands included granting pregnant female employees 98-day maternity leave, and giving fathers 7-day paternity leave. However, the reforms demanded pertaining to protection against sexual harassment cases in the workplace have yet to be attained. SERATA continues to advocate for and promote awareness on employee rights in Sabah via its social media platforms. For instance, an online webinar entitled "Employers' role and responsibilities to prevent sexual harassment" was conducted in June 2023.

Poster on amendments to the SLO

Raising Awareness on Diversity in Malaysia

Malaysia is known for three major ethnic groups; but East Malaysia is home to a large number of ethnic groups that are indigenous to the island of Borneo. Sabah alone is home to over thirty ethnic groups, with the largest being the Kadazan Dusun. The Kadazan Dusun people are often collectively grouped with the Rungus and Murut to make up the "KDMR," whose culture and tradition are deemed representative of Sabah.

With the support of Article 19 and Borneo Speaks, SERATA released a number of infographics, videos and an article under a project titled "Reclaiming Sabah Voices." The overall goal of the program is to explore and normalize the different dialects and accents of Sabahans beyond the widely accepted representation (i.e., the KDMR dialect spoken by the urbanites of Penampang district) by bringing in voices and diverse dialects from all over Sabah, from the West Coast to the East Coast.



SERATA aims to raise awareness about the diversity of ethnicities and dialects in Sabah.

The program also highlights how differences in accents have affected Sabahans who are working in West Malaysia. SERATA conducted interviews with Sabahans in West Malaysia to share their experiences of being "othered" by West Malaysians due to their non-standard dialect.

"Not Local Enough" shares the plight of Sabahans working and living in West Malaysia.

SERATA's commitment on raising awareness on Sabahan diversity is further explored through their current project titled "Stories of Life at Home," supported by the British Council and Junction 15, which aims to tell the lived realities of the people in Sabah, through the lens of their socio-economic status, and how it affects their lives. By allowing them to document their individual stories, they will craft a common thread narrative across various areas of the state and how a state within Malaysia is as different as they are common. A call for participation for ten local community filmmakers was announced, and the selected filmmakers attended a filmmaking workshop to further hone their skills. The premiere of this community film took place on 30 August, 2024.

Overcoming the Divide – Issues and Challenges

Sabah is a 2.5-hour plane ride away from the capital city of Kuala Lumpur where decision-makers and funders are mainly located. As such, getting to Kuala Lumpur to ensure Sabahan representation and narratives are properly considered comes at an extra cost of time and money. This has always been a prominent issue to be addressed when it comes to funding from potential sponsors. However, with increased awareness among several local and international organizations on the need for East Malaysian representation to address nationwide issues, SERATA is optimistic that Sabahan voices would continue to be heard at the decision-making table.

The move to remote work and online workshops and conferences due to the COVID-19 pandemic had helped level the playing field and brought more opportunities for SERATA to showcase its work beyond the borders. For example, SERATA was invited to deliver several webinar sessions at the national level by organizations such as the Malaysian Institute of Accountants, TalentCorp Malaysia and Kolej Komuniti Hulu Langat, a community college located in West Malaysia.

SERATA is made up of a small number of dedicated individuals with varying backgrounds – advocacy, law, business, health, and education. This has somewhat limited its capacity to engage in larger-scale, big-budget projects. However, SERATA has seen a gradual increase in visibility and membership over the years. SERATA thus hopes to grow its membership via recruitment, as well as providing internship opportunities to college and university students.

Being part of some Malaysian NGO coalitions, such as the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO) and CSO Platform for Reform, has also helped SERATA as a small organization, to amplify issues to get more attention and support. For example, SERATA assisted the whistleblowers in a case of workplace sexual harassment that happened in a government agency in Sabah. Through the support of CSO Platform for Reform, SERATA was able to obtain over two hundred endorsements from organizations and individuals on its press statement to demand proper investigation into the sexual harassment case, which later on led to the perpetrator being removed from his position in the government agency.

The topic of engaging men and boys in gender equality initiatives is still a rather niche area. This can be seen in light of the fact that most gender equality initiatives and calls for proposals focusing on gender in Malaysia tend to revolve around women empowerment. As such, it has been a challenge to find funders willing to support the kind of work that SERATA is interested in.

Despite these challenges, SERATA is gaining more traction due to the novelty and uniqueness of its advocacy work. SERATA believes that awareness and empowerment of individuals on their rights are key to bringing positive change to the country. And this will only be possible when SERATA also works on dismantling prejudices, presumptions and outdated stereotypes.

Moving Forward – Upcoming Projects and Programs

SERATA continues with its advocacy programs that focus on grassroots participation, together with its community partners. Over the years, SERATA has engaged with community partners made up of environmental, health, religious, arts, and human rights organizations to address targeted concerns that are in line with the mission and objectives of both SERATA and its partners. These include Reef Check Malaysia, Sabah Aids Support Services Association (KASIH), Good Shepherd Services, Urban Tamu, and Pusat Komas. SERATA members also continue to contribute their expertise and experience that includes providing training on gender sensitization to these organizations and the communities they work with, and collaborating with them to bring meaningful activities to their community events.

Extending beyond the core focus on gender parity, SERATA recently proposed a program concerning interfaith relations and dialogue. SERATA believes that respect can only emerge from real understanding and non-

SERATA facilitated a workshop on strategic planning (SWOT analysis, long-term and short-term goals) for the Pertubuhan Wanita Orang Asal Malaysia (PWOAM) to empower indigenous women.

judgment over unique lived human experiences. The objectives of the program are as follows:

- To promote healthy discourse between individuals of hidden and marginalized identities;
- To begin to dismantle misinformation, stereotypes, and prejudice towards these individuals; and
- To educate members of the public on the different forms of stigma and discrimination that exist within communities.

SERATA had previously collaborated with Impact Hub Kuala Lumpur to organize "Human Library," where five "human books" with life experiences on ethnicity, religion, disability, and social status were featured. In this proposed program, tentatively named "A Coffee Date with Humanity," participants will have the opportunity to learn more about a religious and/or cultural experience or practice through a "resource person."

Some Reflections

SERATA has evolved tremendously since its inception in 2018 with just a handful of volunteers and a makeshift workspace in a corner of a home, fu-

eled with passion to work on ending gender-based violence and improving women's representation at all levels in the workplace. Today, SERATA has two full-time staff and an executive committee with a fully functional office space.

The idea of engaging men and boys in gender equality came from years of observing initiatives such as the White Ribbon campaign that originated in Canada which calls on men to proactively end violence against women and girls after a massacre of fourteen female engineering students at École Polytechnique in 1989 by a 25-year-old man named Marc Lépine.

The focus on this particular area of gender has helped SERATA's advocacy work. Bringing up the topic of gender equality, especially at a time where people commonly associate feminism with men-hating tropes, is not always easy. But SERATA found that when it includes men and boys in the conversation, the energy shifts and people become more curious about the work it does and why.

Because of this, SERATA will continue working together with community partners and dedicated members of the public in pursuit of gender equality and women empowerment by including men and boys and centering the East Malaysian experience.

Endnotes

1 Cecilia Ng, Maznah Mohamad & Tan Beng Hui, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Malaysia: An Unsung (R)evolution,* Routledge, 2006.

2 Ng, Mohamad and Tan, ibid.

3 Let dads rock the cradle too, *The Star,* 11 January 2018, www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2018/01/11/let-dads-rock-the-cradle-too/.

4 The 17-year-old exposing rape culture in Malaysian schools, Al-Jazeera, 19 May 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/19/the-17-year-old-exposing-rape-culture-in-malaysian-schools.

5 Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country whose Islamic marital laws permit Muslim men to marry up to four wives.

Raising Awareness and Training on Human Rights in Osaka Prefecture

Jefferson R. Plantilla

The Osaka Prefectural government's response to a major discrimination issue in the prefecture dates back to the 1950s.[1] The Dowa issue or Buraku issue (the problem of discrimination against Japanese known as Buraku people)[2] was the major discrimination issue responded to. As a result, the Osaka Prefecture Council for the Promotion of Dowa Projects (Council) was established in 1951.

In April 2002, the Council was reorganized into the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association (Association). As explained by Masaya Kamio:[3]

> The Osaka [Prefectural] Human Rights Association is an organization that inherits the 50 years of efforts to solve Dowa problems by the Osaka Prefecture Council for the Promotion of Dowa Projects…

This reorganization was based on the Council report issued in September 2001[4] regarding measures to be taken after the lapse in 2002 of the 1969 Law on Special Measures for Dowa Projects.[5]

In March 2005, the Osaka Prefectural Government Plan for the Promotion of Human Rights Education (2005-2014) [Osaka Prefectural Government Plan] was adopted as a follow-up to the "problems requiring solution as well as achievements of the Osaka Prefectural Government Plan of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education prepared in March 2001." The Plan has the following basic principles:[6]

- Promoting human rights education, which respects diversity
  We will promote human rights education, which will respect the personality and culture of each individual and respect the diversity, so that no one will be discriminated against on grounds of gender,

disabilities, social origin, nationality, race, ethnicity, systems and practices, etc.

- Promoting practical human rights education
  We will promote practical human rights education that will help each individual to embrace the spirit of respect for human rights and to act accordingly so that he/she will not only protect his/her rights but also respect the lives and personalities of others.
- Promoting human rights education supporting independence and empowerment
  We will promote human rights education to support the "independence" and "empowerment" of each individual towards building a society, in which each individual can seek his/her own self-realization using his/her characteristics and capabilities.

The Osaka prefecture also adopted similar policies for non-Japanese residents as stated in its Osaka Prefecture Policies for Supporting Foreign Residents. The policies, revised in March 2023, are explained as follows:[7]

> In 2002, Osaka Prefecture formulated the "Osaka Prefecture Policies for Supporting Foreign Residents." Following these policies, the Prefecture has been comprehensively promoting measures for people from abroad living in Japan. These policies set forth the guidelines for comprehensively and systematically promoting initiatives for foreign residents in Osaka.
>
> The policies have the following goal and vision:
>
> Goal
>
> Create an inclusive society in which all people respect human dignity and human rights, recognize differences in nationality, ethnicity, etc., and live together in harmony.
>
> Vision
>
> (1) Create a society that respects human rights;
> (2) Create a society where people can coexist while preserving their individual cultures;
> (3) Create a society where you can live with peace of mind as a resident of your local community.

The guidelines of these policies include raising awareness of human rights of the non-Japanese residents:

> Enhance public awareness and promote mutual understanding [to] eliminate prejudice and discrimination against residents from abroad, promote effective awareness using various mediums.
>
> Raising awareness to eliminate hate speech.

Hate speech became a major human rights issue since 2015 in Osaka prefecture.[8] On 1 November 2019, Osaka Prefecture enacted the "Osaka Prefectural Ordinance on the Elimination of Unjustifiable Discriminatory Speech and Behavior on the Basis of Race or Ethnicity" ("Osaka Prefectural Ordinance on the Elimination of Hate Speech") with the aim of eliminating hate speech and creating a harmonious society where all people respect each other and recognize their differences.[9] But Osaka City enacted an ordinance on hate much earlier, on 18 January 2016 (and took effect on 1 July 2016) and entitled "Osaka City Ordinance on Dealing with Hate Speech (Osaka City Ordinance No. 1 of 2016)."[9] This ordinance defines the meaning of hate speech[10] and provides for measures to curb hate speech in the city including "awareness-raising measure that aims to increase the interest and understanding of the general public regarding the human rights abuse caused by hate speech."[11] The constitutionality of this ordinance was challenged in the courts in Osaka. But the Supreme Court of Japan ruled in 2022 that the ordinance did not violate the right to freedom of expression.[12]

Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association

In June 2017, the Representative Director of the Association, Kenichi Tamura, wrote that "human rights issues have become more diverse, complex, and multifaceted, and concrete efforts are required to resolve human rights issues from the perspective of universal respect for human rights." He referred to what was known as the "century of human rights" as a reason for this development.

He further explained:[13]

> we must respond to and support the specific issues that arise in consultations [held by the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights

> Association], while also raising awareness of such human rights issues and raising people's awareness of human rights. It is also necessary to carry this out through a network of various people and organizations working on human rights. This is where the role of the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association lies.

Objectives

The Association "aims to contribute to the formation of a community free of discrimination and realize a prosperous society in which the human rights of all people are respected."[14] It also aims to be "a center that builds a network for efforts to resolve various human rights issues, such as discrimination, exclusion, violence, and poverty, and to advance this network."[15]

The Association assumed the role of providing human rights consultation service, raising awareness of human rights among the Osaka Prefecture residents, training government personnel and building networks with groups and institutions working on human rights.

General Activities

The human rights awareness project of the Association primarily focuses on commissioned projects of the Osaka prefectural government. These include human rights training for municipal employees, promoting human rights training for "people working in welfare and medicine" and "private bodies, corporations, etc.," by providing information to raise human rights awareness, developing human rights materials, and cooperating with other institutions working on human rights.[16]

The Association undertakes a number of activities involving education, consultation and support services. It holds the following activities:[17]

a. Human rights education and awareness-raising

In order to raise awareness of human rights, the Association disseminates information, produces teaching materials, trains government personnel on promoting learning and training on human rights, and dispatches lecturers on human rights.

As part of information dissemination, the Association produces the *Osaka Human Rights Information Magazine*, publishes the *Human Rights*

Association News, and disseminates information on its website such as e-mail newsletters and "relay essays."

It produces teaching materials such as human rights education series, participatory experiential learning materials and essays.

It also provides consulting service on planning human rights education and training activities, and provides human rights education and training instructors.

b. Human rights consultation and support for self-reliance

The Association provides consultation and support services to promote self-reliance among people. They include consultations on human rights and support for resolving human rights issues and providing relief to victims.

Counseling and support cover cases involving discrimination, including discrimination against Buraku people, support for those released from correctional facilities who need welfare assistance, support for resolving leprosy issues, support for those who have lived in child welfare institutions, suicide prevention efforts, etc.

c. Human resource development

The Association offers various courses to train personnel who can provide human rights counseling, self-reliance support, and human rights education and awareness-raising services. There are courses for general human rights counselors, newly-transferred human rights staff of local government offices, facilitators (participatory learning instructors), and human rights coordinators (personnel).

d. Networking

The Association interacts, collaborates and networks with various institutions, organizations, non-profit organizations (NPOs), companies, and government agencies that work on human rights. It is a member of several networks including Human Rights Consultation Agency Network, Osaka Liaison Council for the Eradication of Pseudo-Dowa Activities, etc.

It cooperates and collaborates with municipal human rights associations and human rights regional councils. It also cooperates with organi-

zations of discriminated people, human rights awareness organizations, welfare organizations and organizations for gender equality, labor, industry, education, urban development, etc.

In line with the human rights policies of the Osaka Prefecture and municipalities, it participates in the Dowa Problem Resolution Promotion Council and Human Rights Issues Council. It also participates in councils on welfare/health, children/single parents, gender equality, labor, industry, education, urban development, etc., and makes recommendations from a human rights perspective.

Basic Information on Human Rights Issues

The Association provides brief yet substantive explanation of a number of human rights issues through the "Basic knowledge of human rights issues" section of its website. The following human rights issues are discussed in the website:[18]

- Dowa issue
- Women's human rights issues
- Human rights issues of people with disabilities
- Human rights issues of the elderly
- Children's human rights issues
- Human rights issues of foreigners
- Human rights issues of HIV-infected persons
- Human rights issues of leprosy survivors
- Human rights issues of crime victims and their families
- Labor issues
- Issues related to the development of the information society
- Homeless people's human rights issues
- Human rights issues of sexual minorities
- Human rights issues of the Ainu people
- Human rights issues of people who have completed their sentences and been released from prison
- North Korean abduction issue.

The discussion of each issue is taken from the 2004 edition of the Osaka Prefecture Human Rights Measures Project Implementation Plan and Implementation Status.

Discussion of Human Rights Topics

The Association publishes essays of people recognized for their knowledge of human rights regarding specific issues. These essays provide analysis and insights on issues with a human rights perspective. Thus these essays help enlighten the public on the human rights aspects of issues considered to have societal significance. They are available in the Association's website (www.jinken-osaka.jp).

During 2022-2024 period, the following are some of the essays uploaded on the website:[19]

- Aiming for a better society by realizing children's rights, Shozo Yoshinaga, Professor Emeritus, Senri Kinran University;
- Sharing the "social model of disability" - Towards a society where everyone can live comfortably, Motohide Nishio, Secretary General, Osaka Liaison Conference for the Independence and Full Participation of People with Disabilities (Shodairen);
- What is the "difficulty of men's lives" that a male-dominated society exposes?, Futoshi Taga, Professor, Department of Education and Culture, Faculty of Letters, Kansai University;
- Providing care that allows both caregivers and recipients to live their own lives ~ Learning from the voices of young carers, Mao Saito, Professor, Department of Contemporary Sociology, College of Social Sciences, Ritsumeikan University;
- We value interactions with local people and provide support to residents with foreign roots, creating a place where everyone can feel safe and connected, Rikako Kawabe, NPO Hoshizora & Fureai House Narutaki;
- Isolation and loneliness drive people to the brink. Creating a new community to support each other, Takeshi Ikuta, Representative, Homeless Network;

- What to do to prevent unintentional harm to others. Mariko Tatsumi, Specially Appointed Associate Professor, Osaka Municipal University;
- LGBTQ is right next to you - What to do to promote a society that understands sexual diversity?, Akira Okubo, CEO, Akatsuki Project;
- ~Thinking from the perspective of peace studies~ - What to do to create a "peaceful" society?, Kyoko Okumoto, Professor, Osaka Jogakuin College;
- On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Levelers Association - Becoming aware of various discrimination issues, Takeshi Asaji, Director, Osaka Human Rights Museum (Liberty Osaka).

Publications

The Association undertakes editing and publishing of books on various human rights issues in the form of publication series, training materials and specific issue materials.

It edits and publishes the Human Rights Education Series. Below are some of the volumes of the series:

1. Human Rights Education Series, volume 10 - "Being yourself, embracing your worth - Empowering children and their guardians"
2. Human Rights Education Series, volume 9 - "The Roots of What is Normal: Social Consciousness and My Values"
3. Human Rights Education Series, volume 8 - "Living My Life - Identity and Respect"
4. Human Rights Education Series, volume 7 - "Invisible Power - Reconstructing Structures"
5. Human Rights Education Series, volume 6 – "Beyond Equality - Discrimination and Equality."

It produces guides and training materials to help those who are engaged in human rights education work such as the following:

1. *Beginner's Guide for First-Time Facilitators* (Human Rights Learning Series)

2. *Learning How to Treat with Respect by Serving Customers with Disabilities - Employee Training Material*
3. *Guidebook for Supporting People in Social Welfare*
4. Q&A for understanding Dowa administration
5. Mental Barrier-Free Promotion Project materials – educational materials for businesses and other organizations to use for their own training and awareness-raising activities
6. Let's Try! Study Program on Human Rights and Buraku Issue

Other publications

There are also a number of other publications that discuss human rights issues:

1. Human Rights Pocket Essay 1 - a collection of essays about the daily activities and thoughts of twenty-eight people involved in various "human rights" issues, including issues about Buraku people, women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, non-Japanese residents, Hansen disease sufferers and children;
2. *Suicide and Human Rights;*
3. *Facing each and every customer - a manga* (comic book);
4. The Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (effective in April 2016);
5. *Various Forms - Learning about Sexual Diversity* (Human Rights of Sexual Minorities);
6. Toward the Elimination of Discrimination Based on Disabilities.

It edits on commission the *Osaka Human Rights Information Magazine* (*Souzo*) which provides information on human rights issues and activities. It also regularly publishes *Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association News* which provides information to human rights counselors and counselors, such as introduction to the creation and revision of systems and policies that can be used as reference for counseling activities, and introduction to specific counseling activities. In addition, when necessary, the Association also conveys its ideas and calls for efforts to utilize various systems and policies in the community, with the aim of helping with local activities.

To commemorate its 20th anniversary, the Association published the book *Encounters, Connections, and Cultivating Human Rights*

Together - Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association 20th Anniversary Commemorative Magazine in 2022.[20]

Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Comprehensive Lecture Course

Among the courses conducted by the Association, one that is commissioned by Osaka Prefecture is the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Comprehensive Lecture Course.

This is a comprehensive course on various human rights issues. It is designed for people who reside or work in Osaka Prefecture and are involved in human rights education and awareness-raising or human rights counseling in the prefecture or any of its municipalities, or works in NPOs, companies, local communities, etc. The Association started undertaking this course in 2012.

The training is held in stages, taking into account the needs, work experience, skills, etc. of the participants.

Around eight courses are held each year for people who will be active in the field of human rights awareness-raising and human rights counseling, as well as a human rights issue subject in which participants can learn about a wide range of human rights issues.

The courses offered provide a set of whole year training program. The courses are offered in two semesters.

Table 1. Training courses for two semesters

First semester courses	
[1] Introductory course for human rights officers (seven subjects)	This course is for new human rights officers and those who wish to become new counselors, and provides basic knowledge such as a basic understanding of human rights issues and the basics of human rights administration.
[2] Human Rights Facilitator Training Course (twelve subjects)	This course is for those who want to acquire the basic knowledge necessary for a facilitator, and teaches the basic perspectives, actions, and skills to enable them to conduct participatory human rights education and training in the workplace, school, community, etc.
[3] Human Rights Awareness Planning Officer Training Course (eleven subjects)	This course is for those in charge of planning and implementing human rights education and awareness-raising projects, and teaches the basics of planning so that they could plan, design, and implement projects to solve human rights issues.

[4] Human Rights Counsellor Training Course (twelve subjects)	This course is for counselors with approximately one year or less experience in counseling work, and teaches the current state of human rights counseling in Osaka Prefecture as well as the basics of counseling support techniques.
[5] Human Rights Subjects (twenty-eight subjects)	This is a group of subjects that allows participants who want to learn about a wide range of human rights issues to freely choose one subject to take, depending on the issues they want to delve deeper into and the content they want to learn.
A certificate for the Human Rights Counselor Training Course is issued after completing all twenty-eight human rights subjects listed in Course 5.	
Second semester courses	
[1] Human Rights Facilitator Skills Improvement Course (six subjects)	This course aims to improve the perspectives, actions, and skills of facilitators who conduct hands-on human rights learning and training in the workplace, school, community, etc., in order to further promote human rights awareness efforts.
[2] Human Rights Coordinator Skills Improvement Course (four subjects)	This course aims to equip human rights personnel with the perspectives, actions and skills required to coordinate and manage human rights-related business operations.
[3] Human Rights Advisor Skills Improvement Course (twelve subjects)	This course is for counselors with more than one year of experience in counseling, and aims to improve counseling and support skills as well as the perspectives necessary for resolving human rights issues.
[4] Human Rights Counsellor Specialist Course (twelve courses)	This course is aimed at counselors with approximately three years or more experience in counseling work, and aims to further improve their counseling and support skills by teaching them the skills to look at issues from multiple perspectives and to form networks with other organizations in order to resolve human rights issues.
[5] Human Rights Subjects (sixteen subjects)	This is a group of subjects that allows people who want to learn about a wide range of human rights issues to freely choose from one subject to take, depending on the issues they want to delve deeper into and the content they want to learn.
A certificate for Human Rights Counselor Skills Improvement Course is issued after completing all sixteen human rights subjects listed in Course 5.	

The first and second semesters of Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Comprehensive Course in 2024 consisted of the following topics:

Table 2. 2024 Training Courses[21]

Human resource training course	Number of subjects	Maximum number of participants
First semester		
[1] Introductory course for human rights officers	7	40
[2] Human Rights Facilitator Training Course	12	20
[3] Human Rights Awareness Planning Officer Training Course	11	20
[4] Human Rights Counsellor Training Course	12	50
* Human Rights Issues Subject Group (first semester)	28	60
Second semester		
[5] Human Rights Facilitator Skills Improvement Course	6	20
[6] Human Rights Coordinator Skills Improvement Course	4	20
[7] Human Rights Counsellor Specialist Course	12	30
[8] Human Rights Counsellor Specialist Course	12	30
Human Rights Issues Subject Group (second semester	16	40

The 2024 Osaka Prefecture Comprehensive Human Rights Course (first semester) was held over seventeen days (seventy subjects in total) from 3 September to 31 October 2024.

Here below are impressions from some participants:[22]

- It was a valuable learning opportunity to not only learn basic knowledge about human rights, but also to actually visit the field in the Airin district and think about human rights issues. It was very meaningful to be able to systematically acquire more specialized knowledge about human rights. (Introductory course for human rights officers)
- The participants actually experienced participatory learning and practiced as facilitators, which was a valuable experience for them to experience both the participant and the facilitator side. (Human Rights Facilitator Training Course)
- Until now, I have not had many opportunities to learn tips for planning projects or public relations (PR) activities. Therefore, I felt anew the importance of carefully planning projects. I used to think of PR as advertising, but learning the perspective of "building good

relationships" that PR has changed my approach. (Human Rights Awareness Planning Officer Training Course)

- The lectures given by the lecturers in each course were full of specific stories based on their own experiences, and I felt that they were an opportunity to realize that there were still many things I did not know or understand. There were also parts where I was able to re-learn about the system, and overall I felt that it was a course that I am glad to have taken. I was able to gain ideas that I can actually use in my consultation work. In particular, I would like to pay particular attention to listening to others. (Human Rights Counselor Training Course).

Post-training Support

The Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association provides support service to the participants of its training activities. One important service is the dissemination of information on systems and policies related to human rights. This is done through its *Osaka Human Rights Association News*.

It produces "Trends in Human Rights Issues" report[23] every year which summarizes the issues that arose in the year and meant to guide efforts at resolving human rights issues by people involved in human rights work (particularly in the Osaka prefecture).

Concluding Remarks

The Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association provides an example of a local government-supported initiative on human rights education. This Association acts as a mechanism of the Osaka prefectural government in implementing policies on human rights at the local level.

This mechanism fills a gap in the field of human rights where governments may hesitate to undertake human rights-related activities despite having explicit human rights policies. It also addresses the issue of having educational activities that are not hindered by the processes of the local government in discussing human rights and local issues.

The Association has a wide range of activities that provide not only training activities but also continuing support for human rights education work (as well as human rights-based work) after training. The existence of

publications and online materials that discuss human right issues and human rights education work relevant to the local situation is a major factor in continuing the support to participants in the training activities including the comprehensive human rights course. These participants are engaged in varied professional engagements, — including work in the local government, private companies and non-governmental organizations — that are opportunities for either human rights education work or human rights-based services (e.g., counselling, provision of government or company services).

To a large extent, the Association's programs and activities constitute a good template for other organizations with local government support to follow.

A study on the scope and impact of the Association's programs and activities is needed.

Endnotes

1 For a broader discussion of the work of the Osaka prefectural government on human rights, though dated see Joseph Lavetsky, "Human Rights and the Osaka Prefectural Government," *FOCUS Asia-Pacific,* September 2010, Volume 61, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2010/09/human-rights-and-the-osaka-prefectural-government.html.

2 Dowa issue, also known as the Buraku problem, "has its remote cause in the discrimination based on social class of *senmin* (humble people) (most of whom were called *eta* (extreme filth)), which existed in the pre-modern society in Japan. The people who reside in or who are originally from the areas, in which the *senmin* had lived, continue to be discriminated against even in the current society." Kenzo Tomonaga, The Buraku Liberation Movement and Legislative Measures towards Elimination of Discrimination –The Japanese Experience , https://blhrri.org/old/blhrri_e/article/20110303/article1.htm.

3 Masaya Kamio is the Chairperson of the Osaka Prefectural Human Rights Association, www.jinken-osaka.jp/soshiki/.

4 Kamio, www.jinken-osaka.jp/soshiki/

5 Dowa Issues|Basic Knowledge of Human Rights Issues, www.jinken-osaka.jp/knowledge/issue01.html.

6 Summary of Osaka Prefectural Government Plan, https://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/0070020/jinken/measure/suishinkeikaku_eng.html

7 大阪府在日外国人施策に関する指針について (Guidelines regarding Osaka Prefecture's measures for foreign residents in Japan), https://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/0070030/jinkenyogo/gaikokujinn/guideline.html

8 See "Fiscal 2015 Ministry of Justice Commissioned Study and Research Project: Report on Fact-Finding Survey on Hate Speech," which was published by the Center for Human Rights Education and Training in March 2016,cited in Judgment

concerning Article 2 and Articles 5 to 10 of the Osaka City Ordinance on Dealing with Hate Speech (Osaka City Ordinance No. 1 of 2016) and Article 21, paragraph (1) of the Constitution, 2021 (Gyo-Tsu) 54, Minshu Vol. 76, No. 2, 2022.02.15, Judgments of the Supreme Court, www.courts.go.jp/app/hanrei_en/detail?id=1888.

9 About the Osaka Prefectural Ordinance for Promoting the Elimination of Hate Speech, www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/0070030/jinkenyogo/hatejyourei/index.html. Judgment concerning Article 2 and Articles 5 to 10 of the Osaka City Ordinance on Dealing with Hate Speech (Osaka City Ordinance No. 1 of 2016) and Article 21, paragraph (1) of the Constitution, 2021 (Gyo-Tsu) 54, ibid.

10 The Supreme Court of Japan provides the English translation of Article 2 of the Ordinance:

> (1) The main paragraph of Article 2, paragraph (1) of the Ordinance provides that the term "hate speech" as used in the Ordinance means expression activities that fall under all of A. to C. below (hereinafter such expression activities are referred to as "hate speech under the Ordinance"):
> A. the expression activities are conducted for any of the following purposes (regarding (C), activities wherein the relevant purpose is clearly found; the same applies hereinafter) (main paragraph of item (i) of the same paragraph):
>
> (A) excluding an individual who has specific attributes pertaining to a certain race or ethnic group or a group consisting of such individuals (hereinafter referred to as a "specific person, etc.") from society ((a) of the same item);
>
> (B) limiting the right or freedom of a specific person, etc. ((b) of the same item); and
>
> (c) inciting hatred, sense of discrimination or violence against a specific person, etc. ((c) of the same item);
>
> B. the content of the expression or the form of the expression activities falls under either of the following (main paragraph of item (ii) of the same paragraph):
>
> (A) insulting a specific person, etc. to a considerable extent or defaming him/her ((a) of the same item); or
>
> (B) having a specific person, etc. (when the specific person, etc. is a group, a considerable number of individuals who belong to the group; hereinafter the same applies in relation to (b) of the same item) feel threatened ((b) of the same item); and
>
> C. the expression activities are conducted at a place where or by a method whereby unspecified and large number of persons are put in the state of being able to know the content of the expression (item (iii) of the same paragraph).

Judgment concerning Article 2 and Articles 5 to 10 of the Osaka City Ordinance on Dealing with Hate Speech (Osaka City Ordinance No. 1 of 2016) and Article 21, paragraph (1) of the Constitution, 2021 (Gyo-Tsu) 54, ibid.

11 Hurights Osaka, "Osaka City Ordinance Against Hate Speech," *focus Asia-Pacific,* issue 86, December 2016, https://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section3/2016/12/osaka-city-ordinance-against-hate-speech.html#2.

12 The Supreme Court ruled that the "Osaka city ordinance's restrictions on freedom of speech were within the bounds of the Constitution because it was 'only limited to extremely and maliciously discriminatory words and deeds.'" Shunsuke Abe, Supreme Court finds hate speech ordinance constitutional, The Asahi Shimbun, 16 February 2022, https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14550113.

13 Representative Director Kenichi Tamura, www-jinken--osaka-jp.translate.goog/outline/index.html?_x_tr_sl=ja&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc.

14 Kamio, www.jinken-osaka.jp/soshiki/.

15 Tamura, op. cit.

16 Summary of Osaka Prefectural Government Plan, op. cit.

17 Activities, www-jinken--osaka-jp.translate.goog/outline/katudo.html?_x_tr_sl=ja&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc.

18 Issues, www-jinken--osaka-jp.translate.goog/knowledge/index.html?_x_tr_sl=ja&_x_tr_h=en&_x_tr_pto=sc.

19 Essays, www-jinken--osaka-jp.translate.goog/hr_topics/index.html?_x_tr_sl=ja&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc.

20 Encounters, Connections, and Cultivating Human Rights Together, www.jinken-osaka.jp/books/index.html.

21 See を次に変更, https://jinkensodan-keihatu.pref.osaka.lg.jp/wp-content/uploads/62e9611fd2651a7b340e6f11025194dc-2.pdf.

22 Osaka Prefecture Comprehensive Human Rights Course, https://jinkensodan-keihatu.pref.osaka.lg.jp/seminor_event/2024zenkihoukoku/.

23 Trends in Human Rights Issues, www.jinken-osaka.jp/transmit/index.html.

Implementing the Fourth Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education: Uzbekistan's Experiences

National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Human rights education holds particular significance in promoting universal respect for human rights by every citizen and ensuring their observance. It is also crucial for preventing violence and conflicts.

The implementation of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2020–2024 (WPHRE) in the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at empowering the youth through human rights education. In this regard, to further enhance human rights education in the country, ensure the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and effectively and timely address the objectives outlined in the fourth phase of the WPHRE for Human Rights Education, specific measures have been undertaken.

The promotion, protection, and observance of human rights are among the priority areas of the state policy of Uzbekistan. As part of the National Human Rights Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, targeted measures are being implemented to ensure that personal, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are protected and realized. Significant progress has also been made in improving human rights education.

The fourth phase of the WPHRE was implemented in Uzbekistan during the 2020 - 2024 period. This phase aims to instill in the youth the values of equality, respect for human rights, and non-discrimination, while providing education to create an inclusive and peaceful society.

To foster a culture of human rights, the Council of the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Council of the Senate of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the National Human Rights Education Programme of the Republic of Uzbekistan

for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training as well as its "Roadmap" on 15 July 2019.[1]

A framework has been established to enhance and assess the legal literacy of public officials. Training courses on human rights observance and protection are organized by the National Center for Human Rights for employees of government agencies and civil society institutions.

An institute for postgraduate education specializing in "Human Rights" (Legal and Sociological Sciences) has been established to train high-level scientific and pedagogical personnel and to advance fundamental research in this area.

It is essential to involve government agencies, civil society institutions, the media, and educational institutions in promoting the principles of respect for universal human values and human rights, ensuring compliance with them, and improving public access to legal information.

Rationale for the National Programme for Human Rights Education

The monitoring of the implementation of courses and use of textbooks on human rights, women's rights, and children's rights in higher education institutions, academic lyceums, and vocational colleges revealed shortcomings. These include inadequate organization of the "Human Rights Studies" course in universities, lack of funding, and reliance on non-specialist instructors.

There is a pressing need to systematically organize professional development programs on human rights for employees of judicial, law enforcement, and other state bodies. This will foster respect for human rights and freedoms in society and facilitate the implementation of recommendations from international organizations.

Considering Uzbekistan's international obligations, new challenges posed by the pandemic, and the tasks defined in the National Human Rights Strategy, it is imperative to organize human rights education that incorporates innovative approaches, methodologies, and practices.

Shortcomings in this area hinder the population's legal literacy, especially among youth, their respect for human rights and freedoms, and the development of state officials' knowledge and skills in human rights and gender equality.

In this regard, the adoption of the National Human Rights Education Programme of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Programme) becomes particularly important. This Programme aims to gradually expand and enhance the system of informing, educating, and training in human rights, raising the quality of personnel training to a new level in line with national legislation and international standards.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the "Roadmap" for implementing the Programme includes seven areas and consists of thirty paragraphs.

Roadmap Implementation Measures

Area I of the Roadmap: Raising Awareness among Youth About Human Rights and Freedoms

1.1. "Human Rights Week"

The National Center for Human Rights, together with a number of partner organizations, organized the "Human Rights Week" on 20-28 February 2024. As part of this "Human Rights Week," the Youth Affairs Agency created the hashtag #Human_Rights_of_High_Value for young people across the republic, with about 4,000 young people in the country participating.

During the "Human Rights Week," the Youth Affairs Agency organized various meetings in the districts, cities and neighborhoods of Uzbekistan on the topic "Human Rights - the Highest Value": "Prosecutor and Youth," "Judge and Youth," "Head of Justice and Youth," "Head of Internal Affairs and Youth," and "Head of State Security and Youth." More than 8,000 young people participated in the meetings organized across the republic and gained an understanding of today's topical topics, namely, ensuring human rights and freedoms, theft, fraud, strokes, bodily harm and other acts that violate human rights, and information about legal measures to be taken in case of the commission of human rights violations.

Also, during the "Human Rights Week," the territorial divisions of the Supreme Court in the regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Karakalpakstan, together with a number of partner organizations, organized roundtable discussions and meetings on the topics "Human Rights - the Highest Value," "New Uzbekistan and Human Rights," "Judges and Youth," "Human Rights," as well as events such as "Information Hour" and "Spiritual Hours" on the topic "New Uzbekistan and Human Rights" in

educational institutions (universities, technical schools, lyceums, schools). In particular, more than one hundred fifty-three human rights promotion events were held during the week, including seventy-eight on television, sixty-six on radio, thirty-eight in newspapers and magazines, four hundred thirty-two articles in social media pages, seventy-six in enterprises and organizations, and two hundred three in educational institutions, with a total of 1,600 participants.

1.2. Implementation of Educational and Specialized Courses on "Human Rights," "Women's Rights," and "Children's Rights"

In collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, educational and specialized courses on "Human Rights," "Women's Rights," and "Children's Rights" were introduced. Members of the working group developed the corresponding curricula for the educational and specialized courses on these topics.

Higher education institutions where human rights courses have been introduced include:

- Tashkent State University of Law
- University of World Economy and Diplomacy
- Berdaq Karakalpak State University
- Samarkand State University
- Termez State University
- Bukhara State University.

In addition, at the Academy of Law Enforcement, educational and specialized courses on these topics have been integrated into the Academy's undergraduate, master's, and professional development programs.

1.3. Holding the National Competition on "Education and Innovations in the Field of Human Rights and Freedoms"

The National Center for Human Rights developed the regulations and program drafts for the national competition named "Education and Innovations in the Field of Human Rights and Freedoms." The national competition on human rights was organized by the National Center for Human Rights, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, the Youth Affairs Agency,

and in collaboration with the Youth Union. The competition was also announced on their official websites.

The competition was held with the following categories:

- Best educational course on human rights
- Best drawing on the theme "Human Rights in the Eyes of Children"
- Best video on human rights and freedoms
- Best educational literature on human rights and freedoms: printed educational literature and electronic educational literature
- Best article on human rights: best scientific article and best popular article
- Human rights expert
- Best innovative idea on human rights.

The materials for the competition were accepted from 1 June to 15 November 2023. Participants filled out an electronic application and sent it, along with their competition materials, by e-mail to the National Center for Human Rights (konkurs2023@nhrc.uz) until 15 November 2023. A total of eighty-one applications were submitted to the national competition.

In 2024, the competition was held with six categories, and eight hundred nineteen participants taking part.

The national competition was of great importance for promoting education and innovation in the field of human rights, enhancing legal culture in society, and supporting scientific research in this area. The achievements of the winners and active participants of the competition serve as an incentive for further efforts to develop human rights education.

1.4. Organizing Summer Schools and Competitions on "Human Rights – For Future Generations"

On 15 August 2023, the National Center for Human Rights organized a summer school on the topic "Human Rights for Future Generations" in the large conference hall. The event was attended by members of the Youth Affairs Commission of the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis,* representatives of the Central Council of the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan, employees of the National Center for Human Rights, the Youth Affairs Agency, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, and other youth public organizations, as well as fifty students.

During the event, key aspects of protecting and ensuring youth rights were discussed. Participants debated issues related to quality education, active participation in social life, and many other areas concerning youth.

1.5. Developing Proposals for the Introduction of a "Human Rights" Curriculum in Medical Education

In order to ensure the implementation of this provision, the Ministry of Health developed a "Human Rights" curriculum for all medical education institutions, which was approved in May 2023 by the leadership of the Department of Science and Education and the Medical Education Development Center of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, in accordance with Clause 5 of the standard regulations approved by Order No. 259 of the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 9 June 2023 ("Process of Developing, Approving, and Implementing Regulatory and Methodological Documents for Higher Education Directions and Specialties), "Human Rights" module has been included in the curriculum for all third-year students of eleven medical education institutions (Tashkent Medical Academy, Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute, Tashkent State Dental Institute, Tashkent Pharmaceutical Institute, Karakalpak Medical Institute, Andijan State Medical Institute, Bukhara State Medical Institute, Samarkand State Medical University, Fergana Public Health Medical Institute, Tashkent Medical Academy Termez Branch, Tashkent Medical Academy Urgench Branch). A total of sixty hours of learning are allocated, with thirty hours in class and thirty hours for independent study.

Area II of the Roadmap: Enhancing the knowledge and skills of employees of government agencies in the field of human rights and gender equality

2.1. Introducing Training Courses (Hours) on Human Rights and Gender Equality in Retraining and Professional Development Systems

Starting from May 2023, the Academy of Public Administration introduced training hours on human rights and gender equality in the professional development system for managerial staff. Specifically, from 8 May 2023, four professional development courses, each lasting fifty-six hours, were organized for management staff of ministries and central government

agencies, with a total of one hundred sixty-five managerial staff participating. The professional development course program included two topics on human rights and gender equality, totaling three hours.

By the end of the 2022/2023 academic year, professional development courses were organized for one hundred management staff members from the central apparatus of ministries and agencies, as well as one hundred fifty candidates included in the Talent Pool, based on the designated training programs.

In the period from April to June 2024, a 527-hour program for the "Women Leaders' School" special training course was developed, with the topic "Human Rights and Gender Equality" included in the curriculum. A total of forty-five active women from state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were trained in the "Women Leaders' School" special course.

From September 2023 to June 2024, one-week training courses were organized by the regional branches of the Academy of Public Administration for 4,550 middle and lower-level management staff from the regions.

2.2. Organizing a Summer School on "Ensuring Human Rights in the Implementation of Fair Justice"

From 29 July to 19 August 2023, the National Center for Human Rights, the Higher School of Judges, the Academy of Law Enforcement, and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan organized a four-week summer school on the topic "Ensuring Human Rights in the Implementation of Fair Justice." The event was attended by nearly sixty employees from the Tashkent city and regional courts, and prosecutors' offices, both in offline and online formats from other regions of the country. The main purpose of establishing the Summer School is to enhance the knowledge and skills of government officials in the practical application of human rights. Additionally, it aims to ensure the continuous professional development of specialists from state bodies and organizations involved in fulfilling Uzbekistan's international obligations in the field of human rights, focusing on the international standards of human rights.

At the end of the event, certificates were awarded to fifty-seven participants who successfully passed the final examinations.

2.3. Short-Term Training Courses on Combating Torture

A training schedule, program, and module for short-term courses on combating torture were developed in collaboration with the National Center for Human Rights, the Prosecutor General's Office, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. On 1 March 2023, the National Center for Human Rights, the Prosecutor General's Office, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs approved the plan to conduct training courses throughout 2023.

According to the approved plan, training courses titled "Combating Torture: International Practices and National Experience" were organized in both online and offline formats in Fergana (22-23 February), Bukhara (29-30 March), Tashkent (18-19 April), Surkhandarya (17-18 May), Andijan (20-21 June), Namangan (22-23 June), Jizzakh (25-26 July), Syrdarya (27-28 July), Navoi (19-20 September), and Samarkand (21-22 September). National and international experts were engaged to facilitate these courses, which involved a total of five hundred ninety participants, including fifty representatives from law enforcement agencies and ten from the prosecution system in each region. The participants consisted of personnel involved in pre-investigation inquiries, inquiry, preliminary investigations, and staff from penal institutions.

In each region, the training courses were organized based on the approved program and materials prepared and validated by experts, including presentations, case studies, and handouts. During the training courses held in Andijan and Namangan regions, international expert Azmat Shambilov participated online and delivered a presentation on the topic "The Revised Nelson Mandela Rules."

In 2024, training courses on "Combating Torture: International Practices and National Experience" were held according to the approved plan. The courses were held in various regions, including Qibray District, Tashkent Region (30 April and 1 May), the Republic of Karakalpakstan (21-22 May), Khorezm Region (23-24 May), Surkhandarya Region (2-3 July), Kashkadarya Region (4-5 July), Syrdarya Region (30-31 July), Jizzakh Region (1-2 August), Fergana Region (16-17 September), Andijan Region (18-19 September), Namangan Region (20-21 September), and Tashkent City (27-28 November).

The training courses were organized in online and offline formats, with the involvement of national and international experts. More than six hundred participants from each region attended the courses, including fifty

representatives from law enforcement agencies, ten from the prosecution office, regional judges, and staff from penal institutions. These sessions were designed to follow the approved schedule, using presentations, case studies, and handouts prepared and validated by experts to ensure the effective transfer of knowledge and skills.

2.4. Establishing a Section Dedicated to Human Rights Literature in Information and Library Centers

As part of the "Human Rights Week," a total of 1,530 publications were presented to the National Library of Uzbekistan, information and library centers of Zangiota District, Syrdarya, Bukhara, Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana regions, as well as to school libraries and libraries of several higher education institutions.

Additionally, during the training sessions on "Combating Torture: International Practices and National Experience" held in Bukhara and Fergana, three hundred thirty books were distributed to participants.

The National Center for Human Rights also provided 1,600 copies of literature on human rights to the National Library of Uzbekistan, its regional branches in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, various regions, Tashkent City, and district (city) information and library centers.

In 2024, a total of five hundred sixty-four roundtable discussions and book exhibitions were organized in the information and library centers across fourteen regions of the republic on the following topics:

- Human Interests are the Highest Value
- Awareness – The Demand of the Time!
- Ensuring Human Rights is Our Primary Goal
- Human Rights – The Supreme Value
- New Uzbekistan and Human Rights
- Human Interests – A Symbol of Goodness
- Human Dignity is Great
- Human Dignity and Its Freedoms
- Do You Know Your Rights?
- Protection of Workers' Rights
- Do You Know Your Rights?
- All Youth Must Know Their Rights
- Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men

- Women's Rights in the New Constitution
- Rights and Youth
- Youth Rights are Legally Protected
- The Role of Human Rights in Society.

These events were aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of human rights to the public.

2.5. Publishing Collections of International Treaties on Human Rights in the State Language

The National Center for Human Rights has published the following collection of international treaties on human rights:

- International Treaties on the Protection of Women's Rights and the Legislative Framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan
  Editor: A. Kh. Saidov, Tashkent: National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023. – 204 pages, circulation: 100 copies;
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  Tashkent: "Adolat" National Legal Information Center, 2023. – 32 pages. (Uzbek: Cyrillic script, 1,000 copies; Lot: 1,000 copies; Karakalpak: Cyrillic script, 500 copies; Lot: 150 copies; Russian: 350 copies).
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  Tashkent: "Adolat" National Legal Information Center, 2023. – 32 pages, circulation: 1,000 copies.
- International Treaties on the Protection of Children's Rights and the Legislative Framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan
  Editor: A.Kh. Saidov, Tashkent: National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023, 550 pages (in preparation).
- United Nations (UN) Human Rights International Treaties Collection
  Editor: A.Kh. Saidov, Tashkent: National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023, 195 pages.
- United Nations Human Rights International Treaties Collection.
  – Tashkent: National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023, 170 pages.

2.6. Continuous Professional Development of Specialists on International Human Rights Standards

To enhance the professional skills of specialists from state authorities and organizations involved in fulfilling the international human rights obligations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the training program "Implementation of Human Rights Obligations by the Republic of Uzbekistan: Practice and Reporting" was approved by the Chairman of the National Commission for the Implementation of the World Programme on Human Rights Education in Uzbekistan on 27 March 2023.

In accordance with the program, training courses titled "International Standards for Human Rights Compliance and Protection: Practice and Reporting" were held both online and offline at the Human Rights Monitoring Meeting Room (IHM) on 14-17 November 2023. The four-day sessions were dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Over twenty specialists from state bodies and organizations participated in the training in offline and online formats.

The training was organized based on an approved program and presentations prepared by experts, along with distributed materials. To assess the participants' learning outcomes, a test was conducted at the end of the course. Successful participants were awarded certificates from the National Center for Human Rights.

In addition, on 14-17 May 2024, a similar training on "International Standards for Human Rights Compliance and Protection: Practice and Reporting" was held, focusing on the 45th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the 40th anniversary of the Convention Against Torture, and the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. More than twenty officials from ministries and agencies participated in the training.

A practical session was also conducted, where specialists from the National Center for Human Rights provided detailed information about the e-learning platform for human rights education. Participants who successfully completed the course were awarded certificates.

Area III of the Roadmap: Training Pedagogical Staff and Supporting Scientific Research

3.1. Developing Proposals for Integrating Human Rights Subjects into Teacher Training and Retraining

From 10 June to 10 September 2023, an assessment was conducted on the status of educational programs in the teacher training and retraining system, specifically in the areas of "Human Rights," "Women's Rights," "Children's Rights," and "Rights of Persons with Disabilities." In collaboration with a working group, the content of the curriculum and sample study programs for the pedagogical and professional retraining courses included the module "Legal Issues in General Education Schools." This "Legal Issues in General Education Schools" module explains the content and essence of International Law (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women) and National Law (Law on Education, Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Law on the Guarantees of Children's Rights, and the Cabinet of Ministers' Decision No. 638 on 12 October 2021, regarding the education of children with special educational needs) as well as study women's rights guarantees.

3.2. Introducing a "Lawyer-Educator" Bachelor's Program and Enhancing a Master's Program in "International Law on Human Rights"

"Human Rights," "Women's Rights," "Children's Rights" educational and special courses were introduced starting from the 2023-2024 academic year based on the directive of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation. In particular, the course "Human Rights" was taught in groups in 2nd year (201, 202, 203, 204 groups, and in Russian in 205 and 206 groups) and 4th year (401, 402, 403, 404, 405 groups, and in Russian 406 group) at the Department of National Ideology, Spirituality, and Law.

Courses on "Human Rights" and "Children's Rights" are offered by the joint faculty of the National University of Uzbekistan and the Belarusian State Pedagogical University. The Department of National Ideology, Spirituality, and Law had two professors who participated in a professional development program organized by UNESCO and Aydın University of Turkey (Istanbul), and received certification.

At the Department of National Ideology, Spirituality, and Law at the Tashkent State Pedagogical University, a foundation was prepared for the opening of the "Lawyer-Educator" bachelor's program and the improvement of the "International Law on Human Rights" master's program. The "International Law on Human Rights" master's program is planned to be launched in the 2025-2026 academic year.

3.3. Enhancing Postgraduate Education in the "Human Rights" Specialization

A monitoring meeting was held regarding the effectiveness of the activities of doctoral students, candidate doctoral students, and independent researchers of the National Center for Human Rights. A specialized qualification examination was conducted for obtaining the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in the field of "Human Rights" (12.00.13) in legal and sociology sciences.

In accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 3, 13, and 15 of Chapter 3 of the "Regulation on Postgraduate Education" approved by Resolution No. 304 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 22 May 2017 concerning the further improvement of the postgraduate education system, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation announced the formation of quotas for candidate and doctoral programs in the field of human rights.

Additionally, an annual report (starting on 1 June 2023) on the needs for scientific personnel with academic degrees, the effectiveness of existing postgraduate educational institutions, the contingent of research interns, doctoral students, and independent researchers, the work of scientific advisors and consultants, as well as the number of research interns and doctoral students assigned to one scientific advisor or consultant will be submitted through a unified electronic system to the Innovation Development Agency of Uzbekistan. Based on this, proposals can be made for accepting new research interns, doctoral students, and candidate doctoral students starting from 2024.

3.4. State-Ordered Research Projects and Competitions in Human Rights Education

The National Center for Human Rights, along with ministries and agencies, has been tasked with submitting proposals (thematic topics) on

pressing human rights issues in accordance with the "Regulation on State Orders for Research Activities" approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 133 dated 9 March 2020. An official letter was issued regarding the submission of these proposals and their review by the respective ministry according to the established procedure (Ministry's letter No. 89-03-113 dated 15 February 2023).

Additionally, the 77th round of the competition was held for research projects under state programs related to scientific activity in the field of "Law" with a focus on the development of the "Smart Hakim" platform and mobile application, aimed at facilitating online arbitration processes for alternative dispute resolution.

In the 78th round of the competition, the "Women Scholars" initiative for practical and innovative projects was announced. Among the proposals submitted under the "Law" field by Tashkent State University of Law, led by D. Umarhanova, were projects such as the creation of a platform for the Uzbek language texts of key international treaties in international law, the development of the "Protection" mobile application to safeguard women from pressure and violence by S. Niyazova, and the establishment of a legal advisory "Call Center" by D. Suyonova to provide free legal advice on criminal and procedural law matters.

The scientific projects submitted for competition have passed the initial technical examination and are now undergoing scientific expert review by the Scientific and Technical Council of the "Law" field. An official report on the implementation of these tasks has been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Accounts Chamber, and the Ministry of Justice, as per the letter dated 29 September 2023. This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to improve the legal and regulatory framework for scientific and innovative activities in Uzbekistan.

3.5. International Cooperation for Higher Education and Professional Development.

The National Center for Human Rights received a letter with reference number No. 03/04/1202 about the lack of financial resources from the state budget allocated to the "El-Yurt Umidi" Foundation to fund the professional development program for the staff and specialists of the Center at prestigious foreign research centers and higher education institutions.

From 10 October to 10 November 2023, applications were accepted online and electronically from candidates across all regions of the republic on a unified and equal opportunity basis. The documents were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed by the technical group of the selection committee in accordance with the legislation. According to the analysis, a total of 2,045 candidates (including four hundred ten for doctoral programs, eight hundred fifty for master's programs, and seven hundred eighty-five for bachelor's programs) registered electronically through the "El-Yurt Umidi" Foundation's online document submission platform at the end of the first stage.

In 2024, candidates' documents were accepted electronically from 25 June to 25 July 2024, in an online format, following a unified procedure and equal opportunity basis for representatives from all regions of the republic. A total of 4,017 candidates registered on the Foundation's platform to participate in the open scholarship competition. In terms of educational programs, there were 2,190 candidates for the bachelor's program, 1,352 candidates for the master's program, and four hundred seventy-five candidates for the doctoral program.

Area IV of the Roadmap: Increasing Awareness Among Vulnerable Groups

4.1. Seminar-Trainings on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment has developed an action plan on conducting seminar-trainings on the rights of persons with disabilities. In accordance with the approved seminar training program on the rights of persons with disabilities, a total of one hundred forty-three seminar-training events were held in 2023 at special boarding schools for persons with disabilities, focusing on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In these seminars, regional departments of the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, along with specialized schools and boarding schools for children with special educational needs, the Disabled, Blind and Deaf Associations, representatives from local administrations, and other stakeholders collaborated on topics such as "Benefits and Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities," "We Are Not Inferior to Anyone," "Reflection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in National Legislation," "Inclusive Society – Fair State," "Opportunities

for Persons with Disabilities in New Uzbekistan," "Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Yesterday and Today," "Inclusive Education – The Foundation of an Inclusive Society," and "The Rights and Freedoms of Persons with Disabilities under Legal Protection." These seminars were organized with the participation of regional departments of the Ministry, the Disabled, Blind, and Deaf Associations, regional justice departments, local administrations, as well as representatives from higher education institutions. Over 13,200 students and teachers from schools and boarding schools participated in these seminar-trainings.

4.2. "Women's Rights" Training Courses for Rehabilitation and Adaptation Center Employees

Taking into account the proposals provided by the Committee on Family and Women, a "Women's Rights" training course program was developed and approved by the Chairman of the National Commission for the implementation of the Fourth Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan on 3 June 2023.

According to the program, on 6-7 September 2023 a training course on the topic "International and National Mechanisms for Protecting Women's Rights" was organized by the National Center for Human Rights, the National Agency for Social Protection under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Republican Center for Women's Rehabilitation and Adaptation.

The training was attended by fifty participants, including directors and legal experts from the Republican Center for Women's Rehabilitation and Adaptation, its regional branches, and exemplary inter-district centers. The sessions were held both offline and online and covered the following topics:

- The content and significance of international human rights standards and their relevance to the national legal system;
- Legal foundations for protecting women's rights: international and national mechanisms;
- Measures being taken to eliminate violence and pressure on women, including preventive work with perpetrators of violence;
- Assistance for women victims of violence and pressure, and measures to hold offenders accountable;

- Promoting gender equality: enhancing participants' knowledge based on international and national experiences.

On 9-11 July 2024, a three-day training course on the same topic was organized at the initiative of the National Center for Human Rights, in cooperation with the National Agency for Social Protection under the President and the Republican Center for Women's Rehabilitation and Adaptation.

The main goal of the course was to enhance the knowledge of employees of the Women's Rehabilitation and Adaptation Centers on international human rights standards, legal mechanisms for the protection of women's rights, and the recommendations of UN charter bodies and treaty committees.

The training also focused on analyzing the effectiveness of measures taken to eliminate pressure and violence against women and developing the necessary skills in this area. The training continued with a presentation by Oybek Ahmadov, the Assistant Director of the National Center for Human Rights, on "International Standards for Human Rights and Protection Mechanisms."

The first day of the training course was rich in lively questions, answers, and debates. The sessions saw the participation of forty-two attendees, including the directors and legal experts of the Republican Center for Women's Rehabilitation and Adaptation, its regional departments, and exemplary inter-district centers, all of whom joined online.

4.3. Seminar-Trainings on "International Human Rights Standards" for Inspectors Preventing Offenses among Minors

To implement this activity, the National Center for Human Rights, in collaboration with partner organizations, developed a training course plan on "International Human Rights Standards and Guarantees of Children's Rights," which was approved on 8 May 2023.

On 26 August 2023, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ombudsman for Children's Rights (Children's Ombudsman) of the *Oliy Majlis,* the National Center for Human Rights organized a seminar-training on "International Human Rights Standards" for inspectors on issues of preventing offenses among minors.

The event involved representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and inspectors-psychologists working in fourteen regions of the Republic. During the training, a number of topics were discussed, including:

- The national system for the protection of human rights and freedoms;
- National legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the protection of children's rights;
- Specific features of crimes committed against minors;
- Issues such as smartphones in educational institutions and socio-legal analysis.

4.4. Training Courses on "Migrant Rights"

The National Center for Human Rights, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment developed a training course program on the topic "Migrant Rights: International Standards and National Legislation," which was approved on 16 May 2023.

On 16 August 2023, the National Center, the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Agency for External Labor Migration, and the Academy of Law Enforcement, in collaboration, organized a training course on the topic "Migrant Rights: International Standards and National Legislation." The training course aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of the staff of the Migration Agency regarding international and national migration law norms that regulate migration rights and relations, theoretical foundations of administrative and legal regulation of migration processes, the content and main directions of state policy on migration at the modern stage. Around one hundred employees from the central office and regional branches of the External Labor Migration Agency participated in the event.

On 22 June 22, 2023, a training course on "Migrant Rights: International Standards and National Legislation" was held in the Namangan region. The training course was organized by the National Center for Human Rights with the initiative of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Ten employees from the Namangan region's prosecutor's office and fifty staff from the internal affairs system attended the training as listeners. The training sessions covered international standards related to migration law, the legal foundations of

migration policy, and discussions on protecting migrant rights and supporting them in the fight against human trafficking and forced labor.

4.5. Competition for State Grants and Social Orders in "Human Rights Education"

In accordance with the 29th decree of the Parliamentary Commission of the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis* dated 11 May 2023, the Public Fund under the *Oliy Majlis* announced the third grant competition for the State Grant on the topic "Enhancing the legal consciousness and communication culture of the population and increasing the activity of civil society institutions in the field of human rights education."

The projects that support gender equality, the protection of women's rights, freedoms, and legal interests, strengthening a healthy environment in the family, protecting motherhood and childhood, combating human trafficking, and fighting domestic violence were prioritized in this competition.

In the third state grant competition held between May and June 2023, ten projects from NGOs, mass media, and other civil society institutions were selected as winners, and they were supported with a total amount of 925 million *soums* in the form of state grants.

In the state grant competition held in 2024, eight projects from NGOs, mass media, and other civil society institutions were selected as winners, and they were supported with a total amount of one billion two hundred ninety million *soums* in the form of state grants.

Area V of the Roadmap: Collaboration with Civil Society and the Private Sector

5.1. Joint Events with Civil Society

On 20 July 2023, the National Center for Human Rights organized a training course on the topic of "Enhancing the knowledge and skills of representatives of non-governmental, non-profit organizations in preparing alternative reports." The aim of the training course was to direct and develop the activities of non-governmental, non-profit organizations, as well as to assist in improving their effectiveness and quality, and to enhance their knowledge and skills in the field to foster mutually beneficial cooperation with government bodies. The training, conducted by staff of the National Center for Human Rights, covered practices, experiences, and future tasks

of working with international organizations, preparing analytical reports, and implementing human rights agreements. It provided detailed information on preparing alternative reports and their key aspects. Around twenty representatives from non-governmental, non-profit organizations participated in the event.

In 2023, a total of one hundred five events were held in all fourteen regions of Uzbekistan by the NGO Support Agency in collaboration with civil society institutions on the topics of "Human Rights," "Women's Rights," and "Children's Rights." Specifically, the breakdown is as follows:

- Human Rights: fifty-one events
- Women's Rights: forty-three events
- Children's Rights: eleven events.

5.2. "Business and Human Rights" Training Courses for Entrepreneurs and Farmers

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, together with the National Center for Human Rights and the Business Ombudsman, developed a plan for organizing "Business and Human Rights" training courses for entrepreneurs and farmers. This schedule was approved on 3 June 2023, by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, the Council of Farmers, Dehkan Farms, and Private Landowners, the National Center for Human Rights, and the Ombudsman for Protection of Entrepreneurial Rights and Legal Interests under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

From 21 August to 1 December 2023, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, the Council of Farmers, Dehkan Farms, and Private Landowners, the National Center for Human Rights, and the Business Ombudsman, jointly held online and offline training courses on "Business and Human Rights" in the regions of Andijan, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Surkhandarya, Jizzakh, and Samarkand, with a total of seven hundred fifty-two entrepreneurs and farmers participating. In the second phase of the training course, 3,745 farmers and entrepreneurs participated.

Based on the approved schedule, more than sixty training sessions were held across the regions of the Republic, with almost four thousand entrepreneurs taking part, starting from September 2023.

From August to December 2024, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan, the Council of Farmers, Dehkan Farms, and Private

Landowners, the National Center for Human Rights, and the Business Ombudsman again collaborated to organize "Business and Human Rights" training courses in the same regions. This course, held both online and offline, reached more than eight thousand individuals (4,192 entrepreneurs and 4,004 farmers). Topics included: "Entrepreneurs' Land Rights and Their Implementation Mechanisms," "The Activities of Organizations Protecting Entrepreneurs' Rights," "Combating Corruption in Business and Developing Entrepreneurs' Legal Awareness," "The Organization of Dehkan Farms and Support for Established Dehkan Farms," and "Legal Analysis of Entrepreneurship Rights Protection Legislation."

Over 8,500 farming households were directly informed about the content and meaning of newly adopted legal documents and decisions in the field of "Business and Human Rights" through the "Fermer Minbari" Telegram group and channel.

5.3. Proposals for Human Right Education at the Academy of Labor and Social Relations

According to the official information from the Academy, starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, the course "Human Rights" has been introduced in all seven fields of study:

- Labor Protection and Safety Engineering (by industry) [61020200]
- Life Activity Safety [61020100]
- Human Resources Management [60411400]
- Social Work (in various fields) [60920100]
- Psychology (by types of activity) [60310900]
- Management (by industry and sector) [60411200]
- Jurisprudence [60420100].

Starting from 18 September 2023, in the second year, third semester, the topic "Human Rights" was included in the Jurisprudence [60420100] curriculum, with six credits (thirty hours of lectures, thirty hours of practical sessions, and thirty hours of seminars). The course materials including lectures, practical sessions, seminars, and the student evaluation system, have been uploaded to the "Hemis" information system.

For the other fields of study (Labor Protection and Safety Engineering [61020200], Life Activity Safety [61020100], Human Resources Management

[60411400], Social Work [60920100], Psychology [60310900], Management [60411200]), the "Human Rights" course was offered in the working curriculum from 29 January to 11 May 2024 for full-time students, and in April-May for part-time students.

Area VI of the Roadmap: Media and Public Outreach

6.1. Creating a "Teaching Children's Rights" Methodological Guide for Preschool Teachers

In order to ensure the implementation of this provision, the "Teaching Children's Rights" methodological guide and the "Children's Rights" illustrative guide for students were reviewed by specialists of the education agency. These guides were developed in accordance with the state requirements for the development of preschool and early childhood children in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the "First Step" state curriculum, as well as the pedagogical approach to teaching children's rights to preschool education institution teachers. Additionally, on 6 October 2023 (letter number 03/567), the Preschool Education Agency under the Ministry of Preschool and School Education sent the illustrative guides to the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as to the preschool and school education departments of regions and the city of Tashkent for distribution in preschool education organizations and integration into the educational process.

6.2. Radio and Television Programs on the National Human Rights System.

The UzMTRK (Uzbek National Television and Radio Company) aired several human rights-related programs across various channels from January to December 2024. The "Uzbekistan 24" TV channel broadcasted programs such as "Special Report" (forty-five episodes), "Election 2023" (three episodes), "Right 24," "Report 24," "Studio 24" (twenty-four episodes), "Interview 24" (nine episodes), "In Our Eyes" (one episode), "For Human Dignity 24" (three episodes), "Information 24" (twenty-eight episodes), and many others, which focused on human rights, women's rights, children's rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan, along with the wide-ranging reforms being carried out in the country and their outcomes.

Programs aired on various other channels, including "Youth" TV channel, "Bolajon" TV channel, "Mahalla" TV channel, and "Toshkent" TV channel, also highlighted issues related to human rights, gender equality, children's rights, and the efforts aimed at raising awareness and knowledge about these issues, especially among the younger generation, government employees, and vulnerable social groups.

In addition, the independent TV and radio channels within the UzMTRK system, such as "Information 24," "News 24," and others, broadcast content in Uzbek, Russian, and English, focusing on the objectives, tasks, and expected results of the decree, including discussions on human rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, children, and migrants.

In 2024, based on monitoring results, a total of one hundred eleven materials were published in the media. Of these, thirteen were in print publications, thirty-three in social media, thirty-five on the Telegram messenger, eight on internet websites, sixteen on national TV channels, and six on radio channels.

6.3. Training Courses for Press Services and Mass Media on "State Policy in the Field of Human Rights Protection"

The National Center for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Information and Mass Communications Agency under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, developed a training program and module for employees of ministries, departments, organizations, and local government information services, as well as for the mass media, on the topic of "State policy in the field of human rights protection and the implementation of international obligations in this area."

On 7 March 2023, the training plan was approved by the Director of the National Center for Human Rights and the Director of the Information and Mass Communications Agency.

On 27-28 September 2023, a training course on the topic "State policy in the field of human rights protection and the implementation of international obligations in this area" was organized by the National Center for Human Rights and the Information and Mass Communications Agency under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The purpose of the course was to improve the effectiveness and quality of conveying information on the state policy in the field of human rights

protection and the fulfillment of international obligations in this area to the public and circles that shape the policies of foreign countries.

The training course was organized for employees responsible for public relations in government institutions and international cooperation in the field of human rights, as well as for press secretaries. A total of seventy-nine employees from ministries, departments, organizations, the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional administrations, and the city of Tashkent participated in the course.

Additionally, the event was attended by Akmal Saidov, First Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan; the Director of the National Center for Human Rights of Uzbekistan; Asadjon Khodjaev, Director of the Information and Mass Communications Agency under the Administration of the President of Uzbekistan; and Shukhrat Bafaev and Dilorom Fayzieva, Committee Chairs of the Legislative Chamber of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Feruza Eshmatova, Ombudsman of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as National Center for Human Rights employees, experts, and professors.

During the training courses, presentations, lectures, and interactive sessions were held on topics such as "Uzbekistan's international obligations in the field of human rights," "The role of Parliament in ensuring human rights," "The role of mass media in ensuring and protecting human rights," "Legal foundations for the protection of women's rights: international and national mechanisms," "Ensuring children's rights in Uzbekistan – a key area of state policy," "The role of the Ombudsman in the protection of human rights," "Implementation of the National Human Rights Education Program in Uzbekistan," and "Issues of ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan."

The work carried out during the course, the lesson processes, and other organizational activities were widely covered on the official websites https://dunyo.info.uz, https://www.insonhuquqlari.uz, as well as on https://uzdaily.uz. This event was dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

6.4. Developing an Electronic Platform for Human Rights Education

In collaboration with the Ministry of Digital Technologies, the updated version of the electronic platform for education in the field of human rights was developed and launched with the following steps:

- The concept, technical specifications, and passport of the electronic platform for education in the field of human rights were prepared and sent to the Ministry of Digital Technologies. The materials were reviewed and approved by the Ministry.
- The platform was launched in test mode by the National Center for Human Rights at the domain http://ecourse.nhrc.uz/.
- A section titled "Access to Human Rights" was introduced on the electronic platform.

Area VII of the Roadmap: International Cooperation and Capacity-Building

7.1. Strengthening Cooperation with OHCHR, OSCE, and Other International Organizations

The National Center for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, conducted a series of training sessions and developed manuals to support the implementation of international standards in Uzbekistan. These initiatives included:

1. 6-8 June 2023: A training on "Empowering Women's Role in Peace and Security" for judges and law enforcement representatives was held as part of the OSCE project "Supporting the Strengthening of Women's Role in the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security."
2. 9 June 2023: A manual on "Ensuring the Rights of Women and Children in Emergency Situations" was developed for the Ministry of Emergency Situations and discussed in a workshop with the Ministry's representatives.
3. 19-21 June and 22-24 June 2023: In cooperation with the OSCE Project Coordinator and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a three-day training on "Preventing Torture and Other Cruel Treatment According to International Standards" was conducted for employees of correctional institutions in Tashkent and Bukhara cities.
4. 31 March 2023: A webinar on "Best Practices in Preparing the National Report for the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR)" was held in cooperation with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human

Rights (OHCHR) and the UPR Info NGO. It was attended by over twenty representatives from government agencies, specialists and experts.

5. 30 April – 3 May 2023: A four-day training for correctional facility staff in Tashkent on "Preventing Torture and Promoting Human Rights," based on the Nelson Mandela Rules, was conducted to introduce international standards for preventing torture.

6. May-August 2024: The National Center for Human Rights, in collaboration with the OSCE Project Coordinator, held a series of seminars and training sessions on:

- Promoting Women's Leadership
- Eliminating Statelessness in Our Region
- Practical Aspects of the UN High Commissioner for National Minorities' Recommendations on Social and Economic Participation of National Minorities
- Strengthening National Mechanisms for Implementing Human Rights Recommendations
- UN Rules on the Treatment of Female Prisoners
- The Role of Women in Strengthening Peace and Security.

In total, one hundred sixty-nine participants from government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and civil society attended these courses.

7.2. Cooperation with the Council of Europe "Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals" (HELP) Program

On 29 November 2023, a meeting was held at the National HELP for Human Rights with Christina Khokhlova, the coordinator of the HELP project in Central Asia from the Council of Europe's Cooperation Programs Directorate, and Norwegian prosecutor Rudolf Kristoffersen to collaborate on the organization of seminar-trainings on the topic "Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals" in March 2024.

The Academy of Law Enforcement hosted a seminar for prosecution officers on topics related to the fight against human trafficking and the protection of women from pressure and violence within the framework of the "Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP)" program in Central Asia for the years 2020-2023. The seminar included presentations

from international experts on the methodology of the HELP program, the fight against human trafficking, and protection of women from violence, alongside practical aspects of investigating such crimes. Over sixty prosecution officers and postgraduate students from the Academy attended.

During the seminar, experts presented international standards and European Court of Human Rights case law related to human trafficking and discussed challenges and best practices in investigating related crimes.

On 26-27 June 2023, representatives of the Academy participated in the second online meeting of the regional management committee of the HELP project in Central Asia, a part of the Council of Europe's rule of law program. Participants discussed the progress of implementing the National Programme for Human Rights Education in Uzbekistan and examined future cooperation opportunities, focusing on enhancing the capacity of prosecutors to fight violence against women and human trafficking.

On 5-6 March 2024, a two-day training seminar was held in Tashkent on the topic of "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities: International Standards and National Practices." This event was organized by the National Center for Human Rights, in collaboration with the National Agency for Social Protection under the President of Uzbekistan, the Association of People with Disabilities, the Council of Europe's HELP program, and other stakeholders. The seminar aimed to exchange best practices on protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, discussing strategies for improving the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the national and international levels.

At the conclusion of the seminar, participants adopted recommendations on enhancing the protection of persons with disabilities, including legislative analysis, aligning national laws with international standards, and creating accessible environments in public spaces, transport, educational institutions, and workplaces. The recommendations also focused on supporting the employment of persons with disabilities, promoting inclusive workplaces, and encouraging employers to offer training and career development opportunities.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan's efforts under the Fourth Phase of the WPHRE (2020–2024) demonstrate a comprehensive strategy to integrate human rights educa-

tion in legislation, formal and informal learning, professional training, and multi-stakeholder engagement. These initiatives linked to the corresponding paragraphs of the WPHRE 2020–2024 underscore Uzbekistan's commitment to fulfilling its international obligations, promoting a culture of respect for human rights, and ensuring that human rights principles are understood, upheld, and mainstreamed across all sectors of society.

Endnote

1 See full text of the "Roadmap" in volume 13 of this publication, www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/hreap_v13_appendix.pdf.

School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia

ASEAN Youth Forum

Advocacy skills are essential for effective human rights activism. Advocacy involves promoting a cause or issue, and it can take many forms, such as public speaking, organizing events, lobbying government officials, and using the social media to raise awareness. Effective advocacy requires strategic planning, effective communication, and the ability to build alliances and coalitions.

Youth welfare is another important area that is closely linked to human rights. Ensuring that young people have access to education, health care, and other basic needs is essential for their well-being and for the development of society as a whole. However, many young people around the world still face significant challenges, including poverty, discrimination, and violence.

In order to be effective youth human rights activists, young people need to have a strong understanding of human rights principles and international law, as well as the ability to advocate for their own rights and the rights of others. They also need to be able to work collaboratively with others and to develop innovative strategies for achieving their goals.

Overall, the development of a capacity-building module on human rights and advocacy skills for youth is an important step towards promoting human rights and youth welfare in the ASEAN region and beyond. By equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective advocates, we can empower them to make positive changes in their communities and to contribute to a more just and equitable world.

ASEAN Youth Forum

The ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) commenced in 2009 as a movement for the young people in Southeast Asia to create a better regional community. From 2009 to 2013, the movement had made statements and recommendations for ASEAN to be more inclusive and rights-based. In 2014, under the guid-

ance of the Yangon Declaration (2014), the movement transitioned from a group making statements and recommendations to developing strategies for a youth-driven regional community. In 2019, AYF was fully institutionalized as a legal association, and AYF Secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia was established in 2020. As the movement began, AYF has been organizing annual forums which are hosted locally in the Southeast Asian countries to gather regional perspectives on youth rights issues ever since.

Vision, Mission, Basic Principles and Values

The AYF has adopted the following Vision, Mission, Basic Principles and Values:

AYF Vision

To create an environment in Southeast Asia where young people live with dignity and free from all forms of discrimination; an area where youth is not an additional group and a pure object of policy but shall also be included in the policy-making process;

To provide a space for youth in the context of the policy-making process and to meet youth needs while also giving youth space to build their capacities and opportunities to realize their vision.

AYF Mission

To respond to youth problems in the [sub]region;

To oversee the policies related to youth by ASEAN;

To engage the key actors including civil society, youth-related bodies at national, regional, and international levels by holding effective regular dialogues and expanding influence with other key groups in ASEAN and beyond;

To strengthen the capacity of agencies/organizations/networks and other related groups in the [sub]region;

To bring the youth in the [sub]region to take part in the movement toward ASEAN Community Vision of 2025.

AYF Basic Principle

AYF is a youth-based organization that upholds the principles of the Yangon Declaration, solidarity, and equality in Southeast Asia and performs

democratic practices, transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in the process with respect for human rights and non-discriminatory values.

AYF Basic Values

AYF upholds and grounds in the values of non-discrimination, equality, democracy, justice, freedom, human rights, empowerment, sustainability, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Yangon Declaration

During the 6th ASEAN Youth Forum held in Yangon University from 16-19 March 2014, AYF adopted the Yangon Declaration that guided the movement's transition from a group making statements and recommendations to developing strategies for a youth-driven [sub]regional community.[1] The Declaration states that the AYF is a "youth-based, autonomous and independent regional movement that represents the voices of young Southeast Asians, and monitors and evaluates the implementation of youth-related policies, agenda, and recommendations."

> It further demands that there should be
> Meaningful participation of youth in all sectors, with emphasis on young vulnerable groups including adolescent girls, LGBTIQ (young people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, and gender expression), persons with disabilities, indigenous people, religious minorities, migrants, stateless people, people living in poverty, language minorities, women, pregnant girls, children, people living in the context of war and humanitarian contexts, sex workers, people living with HIV and AIDS, dropouts, drug users and internally displaced peoples; with genuine democratic consultation, sufficient funding allocation and provision of other resources, and protection on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

The Yangon Declaration identified the major issues in Southeast Asia that should be addressed with youth involvement:[2]

- Peace and reconciliation;
- Good governance, democracy, and freedom of expression;
- Decent work and livelihood;
- Quality education;

- Sexual & reproductive health and rights (gender, sexuality, access to health, and comprehensive sexual education);
- Migration: assuring safety, freedom, and rights (trafficking, refugees, statelessness, and migrant workers);
- Regional environment for self-determination, preservation of local wisdom and indigenous culture.

On Good Governance, Democracy, and Freedom of Expression, the Yangon Declaration provides:

- Reform and reinforce the existing youth government institutions and youth policies to ensure meaningful participation of youth in all levels of policy implementation;
- Review and repeal all laws and policies that are against the basic principles of democracy and human rights of young people and … promote free, fair, and peaceful elections, free and independent media, transparency, accountability and access to information; and
- Empower existing regional institutions to ensure the promotion and protection of youth rights in ASEAN and accept and support … the regional youth Charter.

Programs and Activities

AYF developed several programs that address a number of issues related to the youth in Southeast Asia.

a. School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia

The School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia (SAY-HR-SEA) was initiated in collaboration with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and Plan International Asia and Pacific. This initiative aims to strengthen the engagement of AICHR with the stakeholders, partners, and young human rights defenders, raise the awareness of AICHR, and build capacity in engaging and working with AICHR. This program started in 2021.

In 2022, ten youth from Southeast Asian countries held an online forum from 18 May to 31 August 2022 to present their ideas, proposals, and recommendations on advancing human rights in the subregion. In 2023, the SAY-HR-SEA Program continued with three online sessions and nine on-site sessions, allowing participants to meet face-to-face. Twelve participants from

Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam gathered in Bangkok on 10-12 August 2024. Some of the topics covered were Human Rights 101, Human Rights Convention, Advocacy 101, Advocacy in Practice, and Do's and Don'ts in Advocacy Meeting.

b. YUWANA Program

AYF believes that the youth in the subregion have multiple life perspectives which can be expressed through creative processes and are worth further amplifying. This is the main focus of its YUWANA Program. YUWANA is derived from the Sanskrit word *yauvana* meaning youth. It stands for young, united, witty, accessible, and non-discriminative activism. Through this zine-making process, AYF aims to build solidarity among the youth in the subregion. This program started in 2020.

Under the YUWANA program, young artists are invited to reflect and create artworks that channel their mind, feelings and inspirations to promote human rights values in Southeast Asia.

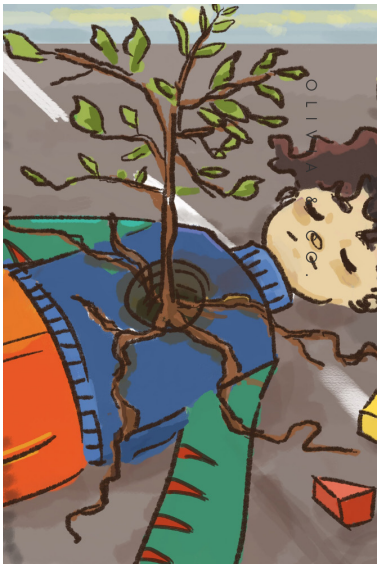
This program has YUWANA Zine (a magazine containing youth artwork); YUWANA Exhibition (an on-site exhibition held to exhibit various artwork from the YUWANA Zine 7th edition), YUWANA Talk (Talk show during YUWANA Exhibition, where AYF invites experts in art and human rights to share knowledge and discuss artivism, Zine, and their perspective on the exhibition topic), YUWANA Podcast (audio recording of the young artists' written artwork such as poems), and YUWANA Minority Circle for Artivism/YMCA (a space for advocacy that has roots from artivism and solidarity among minority youth in the region).

Since 2020, AYF collaborated with three hundred sixteen young artists across Southeast Asia and produced seven editions of *Yuwana Zine.* Each edition of *Yuwana Zine* had specific theme such as the following:

- 1st edition (2020) - On Feelings
- 2nd edition (2020) - Democracy, Voices, & Youth
- 3rd edition (2020) – Days of Activism
- 4th edition (2021) - LOCKDOWN
- 5th edition (2021) - Expressing Remembrance
- 6th edition (2021) - Creative & Disruptive Resistance

In the 7th edition (2022), young artists were invited to reflect upon the theme of "Grief, Loss, and Human Rights." A YUWANA Exhibition held in December 2022 was the first offline event under the program. The event took place in Jakarta on 9 - 10 December 2022 at Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (Indonesia National Library) with a total of six hundred eleven visitors, and in Bangkok on 10 - 11 December 2022 held at the Shopping Mall Gateway Ekkamai, with a total of two hundred six visitors. The exhibition in Bangkok was held in partnership with Plan International Asia & Pacific and Thailand Youth Institute.

Title "Don't Set Yourself on Fire" by Klyad (The Philippines). Artwork featured in YUWANA Zine 7th Edition.



Title "Run Over" by Remi F. (Indonesia) Artwork featured in YUWANA Zine 7th Edition.

C. Mini Fund for Youth

The Mini Fund for Youth is a program designed to support youth-led movements and activism that promote human rights, democracy, justice, peace and freedom across countries in Southeast Asia during the pandemic. The fund is intended for programs, initiatives and activities targeting young people between the ages of 15-35 who have a vision of bringing positive change to their community in response to the issues of freedom of expression, the right to participate in political and public life, and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Mini Fund for Youth 2023 Activity by Breakthrough (Cambodia).

Mini Fund for Youth 2023 Activity by Lingkar Studi Feminis (Indonesia).

Mini Fund for Youth 2023 activity by the Philippines Network of AYF (The Philippines).

D. Youth Networking

AYF has expanded its network to promote human rights and democracy by engaging with youth communities, youth leaders, ethnic minorities, Queer Communities (LGBTIQ+), girls and young women, secondary school students, Human Rights Defenders and civil society organization/non-governmental organization (CSO/NGO) workers, indigenous communities (indigenous rights holders), non-English speaking youth, Persons with Disability or Youth with Disability, religious minorities, university/college students and graduates, urban poor, young workers and professionals, youth in migration (exchange students, refugees, migrant workers, etc.), youth in rural area or conflicted area, and others representing those who are in the listed category of the program. As a result, AYF has become one of the leading organizations that has earned the trust of ASEAN in contributing to the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021-2025.

Responses from all the participants and partners joining AYF activities are mainly positive and many of them express their satisfaction and hope to join it again next year.

E. Youth Right Ambassadors

AYF introduced a Youth Rights Ambassador scheme in 2022. This is part of AYF's efforts to further promote youth advocacy on human rights

issues in line with the objectives of the organization and also for the organization to gain new knowledge in building strategies that can assist in the continuity and sustainability of its youth rights advocacy.

Nine young people in Southeast Asia were selected as Youth Rights Ambassadors in 2022 for three different circles and joined events where the rights of the youth were discussed among various stakeholders. Every circle has three Youth Ambassadors that serve for three months for three different issues which were: The Freedom of Expression; The Right to a Clean, Healthy & Sustainable Environment; and The Right to Participate in Political and Public Life. The Youth Rights Ambassadors directly advocate human rights by delivering interventions and asking critical questions in subregional forums based on AYF's existing advocacy materials, voice out the concerns of youth within AYF's network, and act as AYF's focal persons.

School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia

The School of Advocacy for Youth on Human Rights in Southeast Asia (SAY-HR-SEA) is an initiative that revolves around the idea that youth should be facilitated with relevant human rights knowledge, effective advocacy skills, and rights-based approaches that are intersectional, analytical, and critical. The overarching objective of SAY-HR-SEA is to increase the capacity of youth in the subregion on human rights.

The co-conveners of SAY-HR-SEA (AYF, AICHR Indonesia and Plan International) were committed to

1. strengthening the engagement of AICHR with stakeholders and partners, particularly and especially young human rights defenders; and
2. building capacity and raising public awareness about AICHR among the young human rights defenders.

The SAY-HR-SEA is designed to enable the youth to unlearn, learn, design, and implement advocacy initiatives and activities in the region, specifically on claiming the space that they have in the mechanisms in the subregion.

SAY-HR-SEA started in 2021 virtually and it was part of the All About AICHR Program that was initiated with PLAN International and AICHR Indonesia. The first activity consisted of sessions on All About AICHR, where

youth were able to attend three sessions, which were: 1) Regionalism, human rights, and AICHR, 2) AICHR & Human Rights Issues in Southeast Asia, 3) AICHR & People's Engagement. The second activity consisted of Youth Presentations at SEA Youth Festival 2021. Selected youth prepared together and presented their ideas, proposals, and recommendations on the advancement of human rights in Southeast Asia. Ten youths were selected as the 2021 SAY-HR-SEA participants, coming from Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. The youths presented their ideas in the AYF SEA Youth Festival 2021 Online event, where they discussed various topics: 1) Inclusive Education for Children with Disability; 2) Better Education System for the Enforcement of Human Rights; 3) Freedom of Religion or Belief issues in ASEAN Member States; 4) Deprivation of the Right to Life with the Involvement of Illegal Drugs and Political Interventions; and 5) Burma: The Story So Far.

In 2022, a total of ten young people across the region were selected to present their ideas, proposals, and recommendations for advancing human rights. They were from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. This program was carried out on 18 May to 31 August 2022. The three stages of this program included human rights learning, advocacy, and presentation skills. Participants agreed that the activity had improved their knowledge on human rights activism, helped build networks with other youth, and helped to consult with the mentors and human rights experts. They were engaged in such deep conversation with the speakers on the Howspace platform and during live sessions by learning about youth participation, youth activism, advocacy channels, and the essential of intersectionality in each issue.

AYF latest SAY-HR-SEA Program was conducted in 2023, with three online sessions and nine on-site sessions, allowing participants to meet face-to-face. Twelve participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam gathered in Bangkok, Thailand from 10-12 August 2023.

2023 SAY-HR-SEA Program

1. Objectives

The program aims to "engage and empower youth to be human rights activists." The output expected from this program is "Improved understanding of the youth related to Human Rights, 'welfare.' and Advocacy Skills."

2. Participants

Table 1. 2023 SAY-HR-SEA Participants

No.	Country	Human Rights Issue
1	Cambodia	Freedom of Expression
2	Indonesia	Climate Justice, Human Rights
3	Indonesia	Interfaith, Queer, SRHR
4	Lao PDR	SRHR, Queer
5	Malaysia	SRHR
6	Myanmar	Digital Rights
7	Thailand	Democracy, Freedom of Expression
8	Thailand	Freedom of Expression
9	Timor-Leste	Queer, Environment
10	The Philippines	Education, Gender
11	The Philippines	Queer, Environment
12	Vietnam	Youth Development

3. Proceedings and Sessions

Welcoming Night

The session aims to welcome the confirming participants, and to kick off the program. The session is done online. The participants were also briefed about the platforms, allowances, and administrations, such as pre-course surveys, bank account, consent form for under 18, etc.).

Human Rights 101

The session is delivered online on Wednesday Evening, 26 July 2023. The session started with a pre-session quiz with 3 questions done through zoom. The session continued with a presentation with materials from the module (definition, values and principles, UDHR, and characteristics). The participants then continued to do group work of case studies. They were asked to analyze cases (in total of 3 cases prepared) with rights-based analysis pointing out which human rights violation(s) are related to the case, and they presented the group discussion after 7 minutes of discussion. The session continued with presentations of remaining materials in the module (state obligation and human rights advocacy). To wrap the session, the par-

ticipants were asked to do another (post-session) quiz with the same three questions.

Development Justice

The session was delivered online on Wednesday Evening, 5 August 2023. The participants were asked to fill out a pre-test by scanning QRcode on the screen. The facilitator started the presentation tracing the materials back historically to the industrial revolution and bringing to forth unfair economic system, crises, social inequality, and the response from CSOs, which is Development Justice. The participants were then divided into groups to discuss a case study or social phenomenon and analyze it with a rights-based approach, pointing to existing and relevant social inequalities, and recommending solutions. The session is wrapped by asking participants to fill out a post-test by scanning QRCode.

What is ASEAN?

The session was delivered on-site on Thursday, 10 August 2023. The session started with a presentation from the facilitator on ASEAN, its principles, its pillars, the opportunities, and challenges including the criticism on ASEAN. The presentation is wrapped with a section on CSOs engagement in ASEAN. The second section of the session is an exercise where the participants are asked to simulate the ASEAN meeting. They acted as ASM discussing Rohingya Refugees with this given context. One participant acted as a chairperson providing clear flow how to discuss in the simulation.

Advocacy 101

The session was delivered on-site, on Thursday, 10 August 2023. The session was direct with the presentations, introducing the participants to the definition of human rights advocacy, brief summary of what it is in essence and the main 6 elements of advocacy. For definition, participants are asked to write 2 words related to advocacy on post-it. After presentations, the participants were divided into two groups and act as an "advocacy agency" and try to offer an advocacy plan with 6 elements to the facilitators for scenario 1. They will contest each other to provide better plans. After presentations, they will work as one group offering another advocacy plan for scenario 2 to show that it's better to collaborate than to compete. The session is wrapped

with a conclusion on slide number 14 that the goal is to not solve every human rights problem and the summary of what advocacy usually looks like.

Discussion with Expert - WWF

The session was conducted on-site, on Thursday, 10 August 2023. We had a guest resource person, from the Data and Transparency of WWF Greater Mekong, coming in and sharing about their advocacy. The session started with the speaker presenting their organizations, plans, and activities. After that, the facilitator facilitated the question and answer sessions.

Human Rights Conventions

The session was delivered on-site on Friday, 11 August 2023. The session started with a presentation about the definition of human rights conventions, the explanation of each existing conventions (only 8), and followed by explanations about relevant International Organizations such as OHCHR, IOM, ILO, and ICJ. The presentation is wrapped with brief discussion around monitoring mechanisms. The second section was a group work where the participants were given case studies and they discussed human rights violations based on UDHR and relevant treaties.

Advocacy in Practice

The session was delivered on-site on Friday, 11 August 2023. The session started with a brief review of 6 elements of advocacy and another exercise to design an advocacy plan based on 6 elements of advocacy together as one group. The facilitator then opens a discussion around the practicality and experience of advocacy from the participants. The session is wrapped with short presentations around advocacy language, advocacy meetings, forms of interventions, raising critical questions, and giving recommendations.

Holistic Security

The session was delivered on-site on Friday, 11 August 2023. The session started with a trigger warning and a brief presentation about Holistic Approach to Personal Security, its concept, personal vulnerabilities, and steps to conduct a security assessment holistically. After the presentation, the facilitator facilitated discussion where participants could share their security concerns, experiences, and challenges.

Meeting Simulation

The session was delivered on-site on Saturday, 12 August 2023. The session started with the facilitator assigned an observing role to participants who are not doing the meeting simulations. The simulating participants will be given feedback and notes by their respective observers, the feedbacks includes what the observers like from the simulation and what can be improved by simulating participants in the future. Each simulation was only for 10 minutes, besides the last one is being cut short to 5 minutes to show that advocacy meetings can be very dynamic and uncontrollable. After each simulation, the assigned observer will talk about their note of observation, followed by feedback from other participants and facilitators. After the simulations, the facilitator presented Dos and Don'ts in advocacy meetings.

Security for Advocates

The session was delivered on-site on Saturday, 12 August 2023. The session started with the presentations from the facilitators on why the knowledge related to psychosocial security is beneficial for activists and advocates alike, how to ensure it, and what an emotional support network could look like (look, listen and link). Throughout the presentations, participants can interrupt and share their experience and knowledge on the discussion. The next section of the session is an exercise. The participants are put into three groups as they would come up with their own real-life scenarios and practice the emotional support network, which they will present in the form of theatrical performance. The session is wrapped up with the conclusion that it needs collective willingness to create a safe environment.

Discussion with Expert - IWRAW Asia Pacific

The session was held on-site, on Saturday, 12 August 2023. A guest resource person came in and shared about advocacy and activism experience, and opinions on global, regional, and national mobilization. The session started with the participants writing in their questions into post-its and the facilitator organized the questions. Then, the speaker presented shortly about their organization and their biggest learning in advocating in a global setting. After that, the facilitator facilitated the question and answer sessions based on the previously organized questions.

Graduation Night

The session was conducted online through Zoom on August 30, 2023. The session started with a reflective session evaluating the program from the participants verbally, and continued with the graduation ceremony where we flashed the certificate one by one on the slide.

4. Participants Reflection on the Program

General Reflection

Many participants view the training as essential for human rights advocates, emphasizing its significance in their roles. They find the training to be applicable to their current jobs, indicating its practicality and relevance in their professional lives. Participants value the practical nature of the training, involving discussions, simulations, and recommendations. The emphasis on critical thinking and logical reasoning resonates with them.

Reasons to recommend the program

The program received a 9.6 rating on how likely the participant would endorse the program to their friends. Participants of SAY-HR-SEA express a strong willingness to recommend the program to others and provide compelling reasons for their endorsement. The program's positive and open-minded environment, combined with the potential for collaboration and personal growth, solidify participants' endorsement of the program. The program is seen as an invaluable space for those who are new to activism or advocacy, providing the necessary tools and knowledge to make a meaningful impact.

Biggest learnings

Participants acknowledge the significance of the intergovernmental approach in human rights, recognizing the need for collaboration across borders. This approach empowers them to influence their target groups and effectively advance advocacy goals. Teamwork emerged as a key takeaway, with many individuals highlighting the importance of collaboration and the skills acquired during advocacy meetings. Participants discovered that they cannot solve every problem in isolation, emphasizing the necessity to establish connections and support alliances.

Several participants particularly appreciated the mock-up activities, which provide a practical understanding of advocating for human rights. The exchange of experiences among peers was deemed invaluable, fostering a sense of shared learning. Moreover, SAY-HR-SEA expands participants' horizons by providing insights into the cultural and legal diversity of Southeast Asian countries. This global perspective enhances their awareness of the interconnectedness of their field within the broader context of human rights.

Program impact to youth activism

The common theme across participants' responses is a strong sense of motivation and empowerment to contribute more effectively to human rights causes in their respective regions. The program equips participants with knowledge and skills that are directly applicable to their local and national activism efforts. They believe that SAY-HR-SEA has not only expanded their understanding of human rights but has also given them the tools and confidence to engage more actively in advocacy activities.

Participants acknowledge the potential for increased participation in human rights activities within their local communities and countries, indicating a renewed commitment to the cause.

SAY-HR-SEA has offered a sense of motivation to keep moving forward in their advocacy work. Participants view their enhanced knowledge as a valuable asset that can be utilized to engage with people and organizations more effectively. This knowledge is seen as a bridge between local and international advocacy efforts, as they believe that the insights gained can be applied on a global scale.

Connections and networking with fellow participants have been particularly highlighted, as they recognize the strength in solidarity and the potential to implement innovative ideas from their peers in their own local advocacy efforts. The expertise and knowledge acquired from experts during the program have further reinforced their commitment to the cause and have provided them with the tools to map out partnerships with local NGOs and organizations that support human rights.

Interactive exercises during the SAY-HR-SEA in Bangkok on 11-12 August 2023.

A participant raising an opinion during the session.

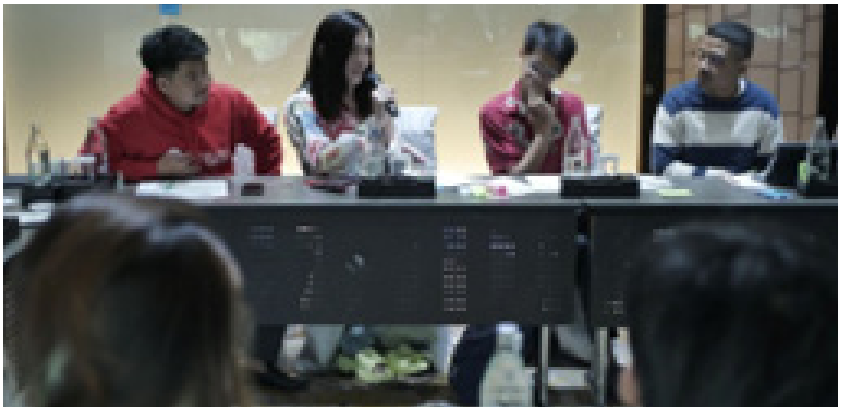
Participant stating his opinion.

All participants listen carefully during session.

Activity during the SAY-HR-SEA training.

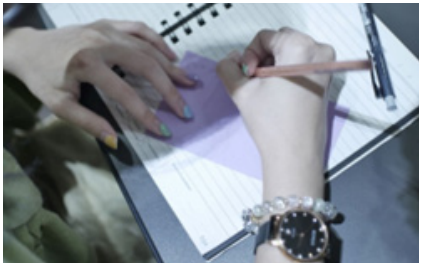
Rastra Yasland, AYF CODP Manager, facilitates the session.

All participants in group photo.



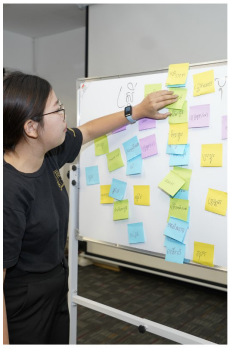
Participants in a training session.

Participants in various activities.



A participant writes down answers to questions in a game activity.

Organizer explains dedicated open envelope where messages, writings or anything from others are put and brought home.



(Above and next page) AYF activities.


Kelas Advokasi Kebijakan
Feminist Legal Theory


Bonjour
SaSa Café


Para sa Pilipinas na Lahanan sa lahat

SAY-HR-SEA Impact to the Youth

ASEAN Youth Forum's School of Advocacy for Human Rights in Southeast Asia (SAY-HR-SEA) program has provided an excellent platform for youth in the subregion to become aware of human rights, practice public speaking skills, influence policymakers, engage in advocacy, and build a network.

After three years of implementation, AYF interviewed six youth participants out of thirty-two from the 2021-2023 cohorts across the region. The interviews highlighted several impacts of the program, one of which is the program's influence on participants' work in building community movement (initiating social movements).

What they say:

> "SAY-HR-SEA has stimulated my thinking on welfare issues, human rights, advocacy simulation, and youth movements in ASEAN while also allowing me to hear different perspectives from others. Additionally, I learned from the real-life experiences of other participants in activism." - Claudia Emma

> "The content made me realize that age is not a barrier to initiating a community group to address environmental or social concerns. Support is available for those who are genuinely committed." - Pascoela

> "I am deeply concerned about the impact of peat fires on children in Jambi, which can disrupt their education. Therefore, I sought opportunities to learn more about human rights issues and climate change." - Naba Hesti

Five participants shared how the program inspired them to initiate social movements within their communities and enhanced their ability to manage their existing community groups. Their experiences demonstrate the program's significant role in empowering young leaders to effect positive change and build stronger, more cohesive communities.

For Emma, a 22-year-old student from Kuching, Malaysia, the SAY-HR-SEA program has significantly strengthened her capacity to manage her small NGO, "PAD" (Period Poverty Awareness), which she established four years ago. Emma is deeply concerned about the ongoing stigma surrounding menstrual health. Her organization has been actively raising awareness

about menstrual health in rural areas and distributing menstrual pads to those in need. Realizing that her social movement needed a more strategic approach to have a more significant impact, she sought out an activism education program. This search led her to discover SAY-HR-SEA through the AYF Instagram page.

For her, the biggest takeaway was that anyone, regardless of age, could start a social movement even when they were young. With their resources and energy, they can bring changes to their community.

For Pascoela and Ricardo from Timor-Leste, participating in the SAY-HR-SEA program inspired them to establish a digital campaign community named "Gen Z Talk Timor-Leste." While Pascoela joined the program in the first batch in 2021, Ricardo enrolled in the second batch in 2022. Gen Z Talk Timor-Leste leverages various social media platforms to advocate for mental health, gender equality, and human rights, specifically targeting young people in Timor-Leste. This online community has garnered thousands of followers across the country who appreciate their inspirational content. Recognizing their impact, Oxfam International has provided support with a grant for gender equality campaigns. The online campaign continues to offer education and advocacy under their guidance and supervision.

Pascoela was particularly impressed with the program's curriculum, from which she learned that strategic actions were essential for a community group to effectively influence change.

Naba, a 22-year-old final-year student at the Law Faculty of the Indonesian Islamic University (UII), has been inspired by the program to establish a youth community. Concerned about the recurring smoke pollution in Jambi, Sumatra, she founded "Climate Tea Time," a youth community dedicated to raising awareness about climate change. Each year, Jambi is enveloped in smoke from peat fires, leading to unhealthy air quality due to the combination of dust and smoke particles.

This youth environmental community is actively advocating for the impact of climate change in Jambi. Through regular discussions on social media under the banner of "Climate Tea Time," more than thirty young people in Jambi can freely share their concerns and ideas on climate change, mainly focusing on the issue of smoke from peat fires. Presently, her community is initiating engagement with critical stakeholders in Jambi to amplify their concerns about peat fires.

Hailing from Laos, Mayu, a young university student, took the initiative to establish a community group for LGBTQ individuals named "Queers and Cheers." Currently, the group boasts of over twenty members and is dedicated to providing various forms of support, including capacity-building in sexual orientation education, public speaking, safety, digital security, mental health, and overall well-being for LGBTQ individuals across multiple districts in Laos.

Final Thoughts

All in all, the SAY-HR-SEA program has gained recognition as an essential and highly beneficial endeavor for human rights advocates.

Providing safe space for fostering solidarity among young people, building their knowledge and capacity, and influencing the policymaking and decision-making process in the subregion is an important mission of AYF. AYF actively pursues this mission in collaboration with youth networks across the subregion and partners. AYF will persist in pursuing this approach to strive towards a sustainable, inclusive, people-centered, and youth-driven subregional community.

Endnotes

1 See full text of The Yangon Declaration - ASEAN Youth Statement in the Annex below and in this link: https://aseanyouthforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AYF-Yangon-Declaration.pdf.

2 See The Yangon Declaration - ASEAN Youth Statement of the AYF conference in Yangon University, 2014.

ANNEX

The Yangon Declaration

ASEAN Youth Statement
(Approved during the 2014 AYF in Yangon, Myanmar)

One Community! One Strategy! Youth for Unity!

We, the young people of ASEAN, aspire for the promotion of non-discrimination, equality, peace, protection, sustainability, and inclusive development of the ASEAN community that are in line with the principles and values of human rights, democracy, justice and freedom in all aspects of our lives.

We, the young people of ASEAN, strongly call for the creation of a sustainable rights-based, inclusive, people-centered, and youth-driven regional community.

We, the young people of ASEAN, strongly call for affirmative action by our leaders in ASEAN countries to create an enabling environment at regional, national, and local levels that highly addresses the needs, fulfills the aspirations of young people and ensures youth-embracing Post-2015 Development agenda for the region.

To attain our vision, we strongly demand:

1. The full recognition of the ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF) as a youth-based, autonomous and independent regional movement that represents the voices of young Southeast Asians, and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of youth-related policies, agenda, and recommendations;
2. The facilitation and integration of an inclusive, accessible, non-discriminatory, needs-based, evidence-based, human rights-centered approach to formal and non-formal education;
3. The immediate reform and repeal of policies & laws that indirectly criminalize and discriminate young people based on their political views and status, SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression), religion, and Social economic status; and
4. Meaningful participation of youth in all sectors, with emphasis on young vulnerable groups including adolescent girls, LGBTIQ (young people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, and gender expression), persons with disabilities, indigenous people, religious minorities, migrants, stateless people, people living in poverty, language minorities, women, pregnant girls, children, people living in the context of war and humanitarian contexts, sex workers, people living with HIV and AIDS, dropouts, drug users and internally displaced peoples; with

genuine democratic consultation, sufficient funding allocation and provision of other resources, and protection on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly

5. Immediate action to fully address and work with young people on the following issues:

– *Role of Young People and Impacts of Peace and Reconciliation:*
- Create and support peaceful dialogues with governments and various stakeholders;
- Initiate youth focused peace education in curriculums and alternative peace building programs;
- Provide safe spaces for youth to meaningfully engage in peace-building efforts such as interfaith dialogues and cross-cultural exchanges at the community, national and regional levels specifically in conflict areas; and
- Provide protection for youth impacted by conflict.

– *Good Governance, Democracy, and Freedom of Expression:*
- Reform and reinforce the existing youth government institutions and youth policies to ensure meaningful participation of youth in all levels of policy implementation;
- Review and repeal all laws and policies that are against the basic principles of democracy and human rights of young people and to promote free, fair, and peaceful elections, free and independent media, transparency, accountability and access to information; and
- Empower existing regional institutions to ensure the promotion and protection of youth rights in ASEAN and accept and support for the regional youth Charter.

– *Ensuring Decent Work and Livelihood for the Youth of Southeast Asia:*
- Implement, monitor and evaluate transparent, youth-friendly, rights- and evidence-based national employment policies that generate decent work for ASEAN youth and adherence to International Labour Organisation (ILO) standard, which is stable, safe, secure, non- discriminatory, and provides decent wage and opportunities for career development;
- Prioritize creation of jobs and a skilled workforce by increased investment including from the private sector through programs that foster youth entrepreneurship and provide internship opportunity and capacity building to young people through trainings, continuing professional education, using formal, informal and non-formal approach, employment counseling, offer social protection, mentoring and

expertise sharing so that ASEAN youth can get the necessary information and skills to access decent work opportunities;

- Invest in building and enhancing the motivation of young people. If so, it may also help in creating an enabling and conducive environment for young people to participate in all stages of decision-making for their livelihood and future;
- Ensure humane and equal access to decent work that free from discrimination, respectful of diversity, and promoting human development for all young people, including vulnerable and migrant youth. ASEAN must also eliminate gender biases in all sectors and at all levels of the workforce; and
- Implement and enforce policies that address discrimination of young people in the labor market.

– Quality education for all Young Southeast Asians:

- Identify and develop relevant and standardized framework, right based educational programmes (formal, informal, and non-formal) designed for and with young people. Quality of Academic staff, infrastructure, teaching andl earning materials and facilities must be ensured;
- Allocate and properly distribute funding to ensure non-discriminatory and quality education that focuses on empowerment and capacity enhancement of young people; and
- Establishment of a regional policy that mandates for free, accessible and available education for all.

– Empowering Young People's Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights (gender, sexuality, access to health, and comprehensive sexual education):

- Fully provide youth-friendly access to reproductive and sexual health services to anyone in the region including all young LGBTIQ, young migrant workers, young stateless person/ refugees, young sex workers–male, female, transgender, transsexuals; and
- Provide Comprehensive Sexuality rights-based information and education for all young people. Teaching strategies must be differentiated and be flexible to meet the differing needs of female and male learners, taking into account the fact that persons with special needs — such as young people not attending school or young married women — have to be taught about sexuality through methods other than formal education.

– Youth in Migration: Assuring Safety, Freedom, and their Rights (trafficking, refugees, statelessness, and migrant workers):

- Implement formal and educational curricula that emphasizes on people-centred history, human rights, migration and cultural appreciation;
- Ensure full access of young migrant people to all levels of formal, skills-based, informal and non-formal education;
- Develop and implement policies that promote and protect the rights and freedoms of young migrant people especially undocumented, stateless, asylum seeking young people; and
- Immediately ratify international labor and human rights conventions that directly affect young migrant people.

– Actualizing and Maintaining a Regional Environment (self-determination, preservation of local wisdom and indigenous culture):

- Facilitate and support youth-initiated green programmes that aim to address local and transnational environmental matters;
- Acknowledge and uphold environmental justice as fair treatment and meaningful involvement of young people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies to ensure healthy environment to learn, live and work;
- Ensure transparency, accountability and rights to access information on local, regional and transnational development plans;
- Involve young people in all forms of consultations and decision making processes to ensure sustainable and healthy environment; and
- Improve disaster risk-preparedness for young people.

We, the young people of ASEAN, aspire for the promotion of non-discrimination, equality, peace, protection, sustainability, and inclusive development of the ASEAN community that are in line with the principles and values of human rights, democracy, justice and freedom in all aspects of our lives.

Youth Rights are FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS!

Yangon University, Yangon, Myanmar

Source: The Yangon Declaration, https://aseanyouthforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AYF-Yangon-Declaration.pdf

Building the Capacities of Indigenous Peoples in Asia

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional organization of Indigenous Peoples in Asia that visualizes and amplifies the voices and concerns of Indigenous Peoples and their intersectional groups such as Indigenous elderly, Indigenous youth, Indigenous Women, and Indigenous persons/women with disabilities (IPwDs/IWwDs) for the recognition of their collective and inherent rights at all levels.

It was founded in 1992 by the strong movements of Indigenous Peoples in Asia. Since then, it has been constantly supporting Indigenous Peoples for their rights, distinct cultures and identities, self-determination, recognition; in addition to living with peace, justice, and dignity in Asia.

AIPP has been continuously supporting and collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and the intersectional groups in their struggles and movements for enhancing the sustainable management systems of lands, territories, and resources for own future and development in an environment of peace, justice, and equality.

As of 2024, AIPP has forty-seven members from fourteen countries in Asia with seven indigenous peoples' national alliances/networks and thirty-five local and sub-national organizations including sixteen ethnic-based organizations, five indigenous women and four indigenous youth organizations.

In recent years, the issue of intersectionality within indigeneity such as gender, youth, disability, LGBTQI+ has become more visible and movements to mainstream this issue and the concerns involved have started as well. AIPP, along with its members, partners, and allies join forces with people, organizations and networks who share the same feelings and belief on the intersectionality issue to empower Indigenous Peoples and their communities to build better lives, well-being, and livelihood.

Additionally, AIPP seeks to build the broadest solidarity and cooperation with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and social movements to strengthen and amplify the Indigenous and other movements towards achieving equality, peace, democracy, and justice. AIPP also seeks

to promote and protect the integrity and harmony of the environment and nature, and enhance the sustainable resource management systems. AIPP's work is grounded and functions at broader levels (local/national to regional and global levels); working with decision-makers, governments, United Nations (UN) agencies and corporations, to be able to speak out on bigger issues that pervade Indigenous communities.

Through the years, AIPP has developed its expertise on grassroots capacity-building, advocacy and networking from local to global levels and strengthening partnerships with indigenous organizations, support non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and other institutions.

Vision

AIPP has adopted the following vision:

> Indigenous Peoples in Asia are living with dignity and fully exercising their rights, distinct cultures and identity, and enhancing their sustainable management systems on lands, territories and resources for their own future and development in an environment of peace, justice and equality.

Mission

It has the following mission:

> AIPP strengthens the solidarity, cooperation and capacities of indigenous peoples in Asia to promote and protect their rights, cultures and identities, and their sustainable resource management system for their development and self-determination.

Core Values

AIPP's vision steers it in the right direction, while its core values and principles provide guidance in shaping the organization. AIPP including its Executive Committee, board and secretariat need to realize the mandate and vision of AIPP including its core values and principles that shape the

concrete political and strategic guide and support to the member-organizations. AIPP has the core values of

- Self Determination
- Foundational Leadership
- Volunteerism/Voluntary Transition
- Co-responsibility and
- Reconciliation.

Programs

The main areas of work of AIPP in its programs are information dissemination, awareness-raising, capacity-building, advocacy and networking from local to global.

There are programs for the following concerns:

- Communication
- Environment
- Human Rights Campaign and Policy Advocacy
- Indigenous Women
- Organizational Strengthening and Movement Building
- Regional Capacity-building.

AIPP is accredited as an NGO in special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and as observer organization with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). AIPP is a member of the International Land Coalition (ILC).

AIPP Objectives

AIPP has defined its objectives in the form of four strategic goals:

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4
Strengthen governance and build co-responsibility among AIPP's Executive Council (EC), member organizations (MOs) and networks for securing their rights and to create impacts at local and country levels.	Expand and build the capacity of the AIPP networks for greater outreach and integrated leadership with necessary skills.	Support AIPP's MOs and networks in localizing SDGs, right-based conservation, FPIC (free, prior, and informed consent), and related capacity-building modules in their respective contexts.	Promote a culture of research and innovation to take new initiatives and approaches.
Focus on revival of Indigenous values, practices and principles of customary institutions and governance systems for a sustained advocacy and impact at all levels.	Create new channel of partnerships to expand networks of donors, knowledge & advocacy partners at all levels.	Expand and strengthen AIPP's foundational and integrated leadership in realizing its organizational mandate and vision.	Build institutional and human capacity, and framework for catalyzing actions, communication, monitoring results and measuring impacts.
Focus on Indigenous knowledge for co-creation and documentation around bio-cultural landscapes including Indigenous food systems, natural resource management, biodiversity, and climate change with that of global best practices at all levels to create impacts.		Enhance Indigenous Women, youth and IPwDs engagement in the local and country level processes and actions and at decision-making level for building an integrated Indigenous movement and distributed leadership.	

Under Strategic Goal 1, AIPP implements training on Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination and government focusing on Indigenous governance system, training module development including localizations in selected countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, and Northeast India), regional training on Indigenous self-government and democracy.

AIPP carries out research and produces advocacy materials, policy briefing papers, campaign materials and localization of these advocacy materials. In terms of institutional strengthening, AIPP supports its members and networks in strengthening leadership and policy development, direct involvement of AIPP Executive Council (EC) in the country consultations and

monitoring in addition to regular AIPP EC Meetings, AIPP Board Members meetings, organizational policy development and amendment.

AIPP implements Goal 2 through the expansion of outreach and networking, strengthening AIPP's networks, and supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sectors such as through dialogue with private sectors on business and human rights at the regional and global levels. Furthermore, AIPP engages the Indigenous media by strengthening their media networks, media fellowship, and outreach through media engagements.

Under Goal 3, AIPP supports Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders (IPHRDs) and Indigenous leaders to effectively engage and influence the human rights mechanisms at the regional and global levels by consolidating common advocacy strategy and strengthening the engagement with national human rights institutions (Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines), and engaging with the UN mechanisms. The documentation and evidence generation on human rights violation cases, the support for court cases and follow-up of complaints in collaboration with IPHRDs have been continuous in 2022 as well. Furthermore, capacity-building for indigenous Peoples leaders and IPHRDs especially focusing on Indigenous Women and youth leaders are meant to strengthen Indigenous Women's leadership in doing advocacy work at national and regional levels. AIPP continues to support Indigenous Women in the dialogues with national and international experts and members of human rights mechanisms.

Under Goal 4, AIPP engages in research and innovation in all its programs by conducting specific research on Indigenous Women's role in governance system, analyzing civic space and producing innovative approaches in engaging in the democratization process, redefining traditional justice system and Indigenous values and principles, and overall reflection of Indigenous leaders and movement-building in the region. Further, AIPP highly prioritizes the enhancement of monitoring and learning with all its partners and member-organizations, and reflection and assessment to improve engagement of Indigenous Peoples in Asia. AIPP also amplifies and improves the gender mainstreaming in all AIPP engagements and the strengthening of adoption of good practices on institutional development, staff capacity development, and setting clarity on vision, mission and mandates.

Key Programs and Associated Networks

AIPP has six programs and corresponding regional networks directly under the regional secretariat. AIPP's member-organizations and partners jointly implement the project interventions, advocacy and lobbying, capacity-building, research documentation and policy dialogues under these programs and networks.

	Programs	Networks
1.	Indigenous Women Program	Network of Indigenous Women in Asia (NIWA)
2.	Environment Program	Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples of Asia (IKPA)
3.	Human Rights Campaign and Policy Advocacy (HRCPA) Program	Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Defenders Network (IPHRD)
4.	Regional Capacity Building (RCB) Program	Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP)
5.	Organizational Strengthening and Movement Building (OSMB)	AIPP Executive Committee members and networks
6.	Communication Program	Indigenous Voices in Asia Network (IVAN)

Capacity-building

AIPP organizes regional training activities for its member-organizations. The training activities cover different categories including Indigenous Peoples' human rights defenders, Indigenous Women, youth leaders, etc.

Training for IPHRD focal organizations

In 2022, the focus of AIPP was capacity-building particularly strengthening the IPHRD focal organizations in the areas of project management, financial management, advocacy at the national and international levels, specifically on the use of existing mechanisms and instruments. The regional exchange of IPHRDs was reflected on the lessons learned and charting ways forward. The particular emphasis was also given on streamlining the agenda of Indigenous Women and Indigenous Peoples with Disabilities and other intersectional groups. Also, HRCPA continued to work on streamlining the capacity-building initiative of the partners at the country level. HRCPA program along with the IPHRD focal organizations localized the training modules to train and build a strong and grounded leadership who would lead the movement building and advocacy at all levels and creating an impact on the

ground. The partners in the Philippines, Nepal, and Bangladesh have drafted the localized training module and others have targeted theirs for 2023.

AIPP, together with Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS) and Partners of Community Organizations (PACOS), co-hosted a regional learning exchange/workshop for IPHRDs (16 - 20 June 2022) in Sabah, Malaysia. A total of fifty-two Indigenous Peoples (twenty-three females and twenty-nine males) including Person with Disabilities (1); Youth (1), one representative each from IKPA, IVAN and NIWA from ten countries actively participated throughout the event. Also, the EIDHR fund supported the participation of thirty-two IPHRDs (sixteen females and sixteen males) in the 3rd Regional Consultation on Indigenous Data Sovereignty Framework in Asia (22-23 June 2022) in Chiang Mai, Thailand representing eight countries (namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam) for the development of the IKDS.

As part of capacity-building, the Indigenous Navigator coordination meeting (28 March 2022) was held with the steering committee members, consortium partners, and national partners. Likewise, the workshop "Strengthening Customary Tenure Advocacy Initiatives in AIPP Network CSOs and MRLG CT Alliance" was organized (27-30 May 2022) at Bangkok in hybrid mode with a total thirty (twenty-six females and four males) from nine countries. Similar event on "Indigenous Women in Mekong Regional Exchange: Unpacking Indigenous Women's Roles in Customary Forest Tenure and Water Governance" was organized jointly with MRLG, Oxfam-Mekong-Inclusion Project, SIDA, NIWA, IVAN on 6-8 April 2022, which was participated by thirty Indigenous Peoples (twenty-three females and seven males) from nine countries, member of Steering Committee of NIWA, Media, MRLG Regional Alliance, Donors, and stakeholders.

AIPP hosted a briefing session (virtual) on "Enhancing the Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations" on 21 October 2022 at Bangkok with a total of twenty-four participants from Bangladesh, India, Cambodia, Philippines, Malaysia, and Nepal. Mr. Binota Moy Dhamai, the EMRIP Chair provided information on Enhanced Participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UN Human Rights Council. In addition, HRCPA program conducted a session on FPIC and Indigenous Peoples focusing on more effective and inclusive climate action through climate justice for young people (28 October 2022) at the UNDP building in Bangkok in collaboration of RCB program and

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with twenty Indigenous and Non-Indigenous youths from Asia and the Pacific participating.

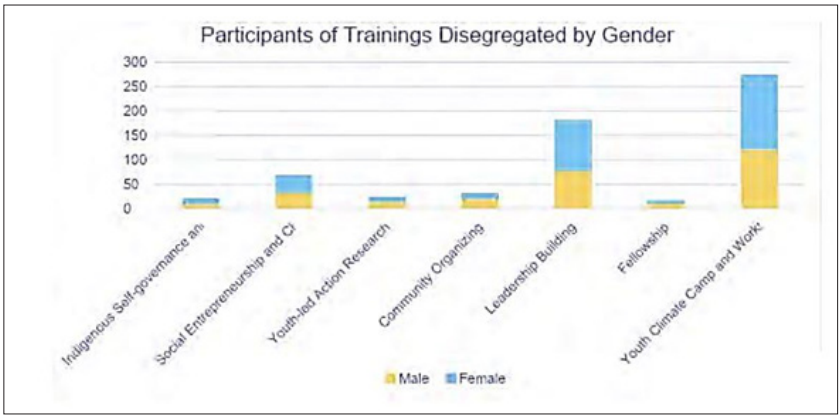
Focusing on IPHRDs networking, AIPP organized six online workshops and mentoring meetings for IPHRD focal organizations in five countries, namely, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, the Philippines, and Thailand under the support of the Samdhana Institute (TSI). A total of ten representatives (three females and seven males) of the IPHRD organizations participated in these workshops and built up their capacities in human rights documentation, data generation, submissions, fact-finding mission, advocacy tools, campaigns, and enhanced participation in advocacy events. Moreover, the partners also arranged capacity-building workshops/meetings for the IPHRDs of the respective countries for ensuring the participation of Indigenous youths and women.

On 19 October 2022, IWGIA organized a global webinar to introduce the Indigenous Navigator's Global Portal, which was participated by AIPP and its country partners. The webinar was designed to go through the portal and website of the Indigenous Navigator, including the methodology for the national and community surveys. Apart from the webinar, AIPP organized two online consultation workshops with six country partners and five consultation meetings with IWGIA to introduce the new phase of the Indigenous Navigator project.

In addition, AIPP and Diplomacy Training Programme (DTP) successfully organized a special capacity-building program on Diplomatic Outreach on Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) (five weeks of online sessions with two hours per week) from 10 November to 1 December 2022. This training aimed to enable human rights defenders in advocating Indigenous Peoples' rights in Asia Pacific engaging with the diplomats and policy makers in the countries. It included the content of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), lobbying skills, short simulation, and engagement with the diplomats. Altogether ten participants (four females and six males) were trained by the lead facilitator Bill Barker (retired Australian diplomat and trainer at DTP), Clare Sidoti and Anna Nettheim from STP, and Frederic Wilson from AIPP.

Capacity Leadership Strengthening

Indigenous youth strengthened their capacity regarding self-governance, social entrepreneurship, climate action, youth-led action research, community organizing and leadership. A total of twenty-one Indigenous youth and leaders are now engaged in work at the country level after they had been trained on Indigenous Self-governance and Democracy. A total of sixty-nine Indigenous youth received training on social entrepreneurship and climate change, and they are now engaged in work with social entrepreneurship and environment and climate issue. A total of two hundred fifty-two Indigenous youth strengthened their foundational leadership skills through community organizing, leadership training and fellowship program and they are now engaged in their member-organization and at the community levels. The genders of training participants are illustrated in the figure below:



Community Organizing and Leadership Building

Pacos Trust, the member and partner in Malaysia, organized community organizing training of trainers and provincial training in Sabah with a total of thirty-two Indigenous youth (nineteen males and thirteen females), which is an ongoing activity since October 2021. The training focused on strengthening the knowledge and skills of the youth on the historical background of the community/Indigenous group, core values of Indigenous Peoples including culture and governance system including livelihood and way of life, Indigenous land, territories, resources, Indigenous Women in the way of women empowerment, contemporary challenges, and future vision.

The thirty-two community organizers conducted community awareness sessions at community level particularly focusing on Kg. Somodon Tamparuli, Kg. Wangkod Tamparuli, Kg. Timbou Tamparuli, Kg. Lapasan Tenghilan, and Kg. Tinuhan Tenghilan. A total of three hundred ninety-four people from the five communities were able to understand and gain knowledge on land, territories, resources, culture, values and livelihood, their current issues and future vision to protect the resources and their identities.

Indigenous Peoples' Self-governance and Democracy

The training workshop on Indigenous Peoples' self-governance and democracy (19-23 February 2022) was successful and most of the participants were asked to draw up an assessment of Indigenous Peoples' situations regarding their rights and implementation of these rights with a focus on the relationship with public authority and express their vision about concept of self- determination. The participants exposed their vision, better understanding of their communities (youth, elders), and described their action to strengthen the achievements and explained how they were envisioning the future in terms of action. It was a great experience and opportunity to learn from each other and build a collective reflection based on their stories and experiences.

The second course was held from 19 to 28 October 2022 physically and gathered Indigenous Peoples from different communities such as Karen, Kroeng, Jarai, Chong, and Naga from Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand. The event was designed to provide a broad and thorough understanding of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and self-governance to overcome structural discrimination and disadvantages in order to exercise their inherent right to autonomy. The content of the course included:

- Indigenous Peoples and self-determination
- Sovereignty, nations, and nation state
- Democracy in diversity: Federalism and autonomy
- Realizing autonomy: Things to be considered
- Indigenous self-government: Criteria for success
- The need for critical reflection: Four key issues
- Identifying grounding values and guiding principles of Indigenous self- government

- Decolonized self-government: Grounding values and guiding principles
- The statute of the Wampis Nation
- Deepening understanding
- Studying cases
- Concluding discussions and planning the next steps.

In addition, the participants learned the common aspects and struggles that they shared with other Indigenous communities, together with the main concepts regarding self-governance and autonomy. So, in general terms, participants learned to critically reflect on the state-of-affairs regarding self-determination and self-government among their own people, how to change existing non-adequate governance systems, to take stock of what is left, to explore the different options that Indigenous Peoples must do to establish a suitable governance system within their communities, different ways to decolonize governmental structures in Indigenous Peoples communities, how to inspire creativity and think of new ways of governance, the necessity of reinstalling Indigenous values in governance, and to acquire flexible ideas about governance.

Overall, participants recognized the importance of the course that reached Indigenous Peoples and leaders at all levels. They also expressed their determination to bring the acquired knowledge to their own communities, and to focus on implementing customary practices to strengthen a traditional self-government system. It is relevant to mention as well that participants were thankful that the understanding of the concepts and different experiences was done in person with other fellow participants.

Culture and Language Promotion

Indigenous Peoples are a unique community in the world with their distinct language, culture, values, livelihood and way of life. Promoting and protecting the Indigenous language is a priority area for the program. Hence, jointly with HRCPA program, it led the celebration of International Indigenous Language Day, which was attended by a total of sixty participants (virtually). The Secretary-General of AIPP spoke on the importance of protecting Indigenous Language in the light of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination/

inter-connectivity between Indigenous Language and self-determination. A professor from Delhi University spoke on scope and opportunity to advocate for Indigenous Language at global, regional, and national levels and Mr. Mathura Bikash Tripura, National Awardee for the contribution to mother tongue-based education spoke on Bangladesh Government's initiatives to protect the Indigenous Language. Likewise, Ms. Su Suriyamonton, Country Representative Thailand, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, talked on the present situation of Indigenous language in Thailand. A statement was read by Mr. Dharmodip Basummatary on the occasion which was later shared on AIPA's website. A summary of a book about Indigenous Languages in Asia has been presented by Mr. Shohel Chandra Hajong and launched it during the event.

The 6th Tharu National Literature Festival 2022 was organized in Nepal to protect and preserve the language, culture, tradition, and indigenous knowledge. More than two hundred Tharu Indigenous Peoples attended the festival. They shared their ideas on how their culture, language, traditions, values, and knowledge could be protected.

Indigenous Youth in Research, Documentation, and Policy Development

The youth-led research work was introduced as a new initiative to enhance the skill and knowledge of youths on research work and documentation. As a result, youth had engaged and led some research in 2022 such as research on video documentation for fundraising for youth issues in collaboration with IWGIA, IMPECT and PACOS trust. The youth in Nepal and Northeast India, who participated in the Indigenous Peoples self-governance and democracy training carried out case studies on the same topics and published them. A similar study was done in Bangladesh. The youth in Northeast India documented good practices of traditional knowledge and Mukkuva community in the South India made a video documentary on customary rights and Indigenous Language. The youth in the Philippines particularly the youth artists and cultural workers used art to document the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Documentation on the present situation (health, economic, social) of Indigenous Tharu people living near the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve area in Nepal was prepared and circulated widely. Also, documentation on the impact of Salween Dam project on Indigenous youths, and the

coping strategies of Indigenous youth was prepared and distributed among Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

The Indigenous Youth and Leaders are central focus for building leadership for the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Asia and strengthening the capacity of its member-organizations and networks. It is also a priority to smoothly accelerate and implement the country level plan. The Regional Capacity-building (RCB) program annexed research, documentation, and policy development as a part of leadership-building and enhancing the knowledge of Indigenous youth and leaders on research and documentation and enhancing the capacity of its member-organizations and networks.

Ms. Chandra Tripura, women youth leader, sharing her experience about youth-led action research

Strengthening Indigenous Youth and Person with Disability Organizations

One of the mandates for the RCB program is to provide support to youth organizations and member-organizations to develop organizational policies, strategic plans and leadership-building at the institutional levels. The RCB program provided support to nine youth and member-organizations for leadership, institutional and knowledge development in 2022 which remarkably contributed to the institutional capacity development of member-organizations and skill and knowledge development for Indigenous Youths and communities.

Regional Events of Indigenous Youths

The Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP) Annual Conference (11 to 12 November 2022) was held with sixty-nine Indigenous youth coming from different Indigenous communities across eleven countries in Asia – Bangladesh, Cambodia, India (Northeast and Mainland), Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. As an outcome, the new AIYP Strategic Plan, Articles of Governance, and Council Members were adopted for the upcoming period of 2022-2025.

Also, the Regional Dialogue on Indigenous Youth on Social Entrepreneurship (14 to 16 November 2022) was held back-to-back in Chiang Mai with training on climate change with forty-five Indigenous youth coming from the same eleven countries. The participants learnt the fundamental aspects of social entrepreneurship, shared their stories and experiences, and elaborated pitch presentations to present their ideas for social enterprises to earn new partners and potential investors.

The Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP) Indigenous Peoples training was held at the same time with twenty Indigenous youth from the Asia Pacific, which focused at expanding the environmental and climate knowledge of the Indigenous youth as well as sharing their mutual insights and ways to combat the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. All the participants were part of different organizations and groups working on the promotion of Indigenous rights. In addition, the participants gained strategic knowledge of climate change issues, basic ways to counter the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and how to better protect Indigenous lands and Indigenous rights.

The Peace Regional Training on Story Collection, Youth Participatory Action Research, & Youth Exchange (3 to 5 October 2022) were organized in Bangkok with twenty-four participants from the same eleven countries. Among others, youth from Indigenous communities such as Kinh (Vietnam), Thami (Nepal), Assam (India), Kerala (India), Khmu (Laos), Arakan (Myanmar), Chakma (Bangladesh), Tripura (Bangladesh), Tou Mu'ung (Indonesia), Wanua Matungkas (Indonesia), Karen (Thailand), Dara-Ang (Thailand), Kui (Cambodia), and Dusun (Malaysia) participated in the event. Most of the participants joined in affiliation with organizations and universities. It was an on-site training that gathered Indigenous

youth from different Indigenous communities of Asia. The training was designed to revitalize, explore and protect Indigenous culture through youth empowerment and promotion of intergenerational dialogue in the process of elaborating a research project. In the context of mass extinction of language and traditional heritage, the training was focused on cultural protection of Indigenous communities through the implementation of traditional knowledge in processes of peacebuilding, enhancing gender equality, and sustainable development.

The training empowered the Indigenous youth to promote peace, sustainability, and gender equality by collecting stories, guarding traditions, and encouraging intergenerational dialogue. The fundamental pillars of the training were to learn, explore, and create. In this sense, the main outputs of the event were to digitalize stories in Indigenous languages, setting the

Declaration of AIYP Council Members (2022-2025) during the second youth conference.

2nd regional youth conference

First consultation meeting with Myanmar youth, Bangkok, 2-4 July 2023.

Thai indigenous youth with IWGIA and OD Denmark research team.

Participants in Indigenous self-governance meeting in the front of Lanu Indigenous governance center.

Indigenous youth learning how to protect the forest in their territories from fire.

Celebration of the International Mother Language Day, 2023.

focus on how young Indigenous Peoples want to present such stories. The training was organized by the AIPP in collaboration with UNESCO, the Asia Foundation, AIYP, MISEREOR, and the Embassy of Japan.

Fellowship and Internship Program

Fellowship is an important intervention that the RCB program provides to AIPP members and partners to support the overall work of the secretariat, its six programs and members/partners. The fellows and interns supported the heavy workload of the secretariat in specialized areas, including the program and administrative work. In most cases, they assisted in taking meeting notes and preparing reports of regional events and helping members on project implementation since staff were too pre-occupied with coordination

and campaign and advocacy work. In 2022, the RCB program assisted the AIPP secretariat and member-organizations' work with following number of fellows and interns:

- A fellow strengthened the capacity of NIDWAN and NIWA on customary tenure advocacy in Nepal;
- Two interns assisted BIPF in strengthening its work and movement-building in Bangladesh;
- Two fellows strengthened media work of Indigenous Peoples by publishing news in the Indigenous Peoples and national media in Bangladesh and Thailand;
- A fellow led the preparation of the CIPT Bill in the parliament and worked on the strategy development on land rights and Indigenous Peoples in Thailand;
- A ground zero fellow worked to mobilize the communities of Bang Kloy village and other communities located in Kae Krachan National Park to protect their land in Thailand;
- A fellow helped to strengthen the work of Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Alliance (CIPA) and movement building in Cambodia;
- Three Indigenous youths worked to strengthen the work of AIYP especially in organizing the 2nd regional youth conference, training on climate change and social entrepreneurship;
- A fellow helped the members in coordination and reporting with AIPP and other works in Mainland India;
- Four interns from Chiang Mai University and Copenhagen University supported the work on different programs of AIPP and IMPECT;
- A fellow engaged to develop a module on Indigenous youth leadership summit/youth leadership camp.

Advocacy, Community Mobilization and Movement Building in Asia

Five Indigenous youths attended the United Nations on Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) conference in Bali, Indonesia. The youths spoke on the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and how this knowledge can help mitigate and control the risk of natural disaster during the event. They learned about disaster issues, mitigation tools and techniques from

other speakers who came from different countries. The Indigenous youths also presented the youth-led video documentation to bring awareness on Indigenous issues and their challenges to all that attended the conference.

An Indigenous youth from AIYP strengthened the knowledge and capacity on climate change and SDG 13 by attending Stockholm + 50 in Sweden and shared the work of the platform with different stakeholders. Also, one hundred ten youth-led activities and Indigenous Peoples' issues have been shared in the AIYP Facebook page to bring awareness of issues and challenges to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous youth.

Responses from the Training Participants

Participants in AIPP training programs are asked to assess their participation in the training activities. Below are the thoughts of two participants:

> I, Ms. Sabba Rani Maharjan, belong to the Newa Indigenous community of Kathmandu Valley. I got the opportunity to work as an Indigenous Youth activist for Indigenous issues and justice at the national, regional and global levels through Asia Indigenous Youth Platform. I am now an Executive Council Member of the Asia Indigenous Youth Platform (AIYP) and the Youth Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, Federal Council Nepal (YFIN). Additionally, I am the South Asia Focal person of Asia Young Indigenous Peoples Network (AYIPN). Recently I attended the 23rd session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) with support from AIPP. I read out a statement on behalf of Asia Indigenous Youth Caucus, outlining crucial recommendations made by Indigenous youth. Furthermore, I am the Indigenous Advisory Board Member of Global Green Grants Fund (GGF), through which I now directly recommend funds to Indigenous Youth-led organizations. In the realm of climate justice, I am chosen as an Indigenous Fellow at the Youth Empowerment in Climate Action Platform (YECAP), where I organized numerous climate-related activities across Asia. I am grateful to AIPP for building me as a youth Indigenous activist for the advocacy works on the Indigenous issues at the national, regional and global levels.
>
> "The best experience for me was the project 'Fight with the Climate Indigenous Youth Protectors' which was meant to share with others our opinions and be able to learn together about ways to produce good videos and pictures. In addition, gathering

> materials in making the video was also a new experience for me. Next, I met new friends from various ethnic groups throughout the District in Sabah. I'm looking forward to our Ulu Papar Group making our own short video recording on herbs and the use of the herbs. [This will] show to others that the villages in the Ulu Papar area are rich in biodiversity and knowledge like our traditional medicine. I hope that this project can help us to be confident in defending our rights as indigenous people so that we are not oppressed by the construction of projects like the Kaiduan Dam." (Miss Anna Babra Bonis)

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The activities of AIPP faced a number of challenges which impact on its human rights education work. The challenges consist of the following:

– A vast majority of Indigenous Peoples have lost control over their land and resources, as well as their own development, due to "development projects" and measures in the name of protecting or conserving areas and cultural heritage;
– Little progress in the peace negotiations in Northeast India and the Philippines, while the peace process was stalled in Myanmar due to military coup;
– Strong resistance against or improper treatment of recognized rights of Indigenous Peoples in several countries, and improper implementation of agreements such as Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord in Bangladesh;
– High poverty rate of Indigenous Peoples in all countries in Asia;
– Rule of law is often not upheld, and opposition and public dissent are often met with state violence.

AIPP recognizes the need for improvement in some aspects of its work including:

– Coordination and networking with partners, donors and UN agencies
– Fund raising
– Bridging the gap in cooperation and understanding between the Indigenous youths and Indigenous elderly leaders

– Quick response in cases of human rights violations and land grabbing.

AIPP plans future capacity-building programs to focus on

– self-determination and Indigenous Peoples self-governance
– climate action to protect land, territories and resources of Indigenous Peoples
– community organizing and training on foundational leadership
– advocacy at national, regional and global levels
– internship and fellowship
– youth-led research work
– strengthening youth organizations (AIYP and national youth networks)
– legal empowerment training for Indigenous youths in line with UNDRIP.

Indigenous Training for Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples in Asia believe that "knowledge is power, and education is liberating." Unfortunately, for indigenous communities, this is not always true. The kind of education offered by the state often has the opposite effect: the indigenous youths are made to feel inferior, to deny their identity, to strive for the adoption of mainstream culture, values, and lifestyles that alienate them from the roots and lead them away from their homes and communities. At the same time, indigenous communities are facing increasingly complex challenges as their land and resources are being encroached upon, their local livelihoods integrated in the national and global market economy, and their self-government institutions undermined by their incorporation into the state's political-administrative system. Often, the promised benefits of the latter in the form of government services do not reach the remote indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities need an education system that is based on their culture and identity to genuinely empower them to lead a self-determined life. There is also a need to create opportunities for indigenous communities to acquire complementary knowledge and skills offered by mainstream education to cope with the complexity of life in the 21st century.

Indigenous culture and value-based education system can help the indigenous communities strengthen indigenous leadership and liberate indigenous communities from adverse impacts of the mainstream society. AIPP focuses its capacity-building activities of Indigenous leaders including youth, women, Indigenous peoples with disabilities and other intersectional groups to defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Asia.

Pacific Islands: Human Rights Learning and Integration into Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation

Sangeeta Mangubhai, Mereoni Chung and Mathilde Kraft

In 2020, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) partnered with the Kiwa Initiative, a regional mechanism supporting easier access to funding for climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation for Pacific Island countries and territories. The objective of this partnership is to support the development of Kiwa regional projects and strengthen the capacity of practitioners to implement rights-based, gender-sensitive and socially inclusive nature-based solutions.[1] But what does this look like in practice? What does that imply for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) practitioners in Pacific Islands? Trying to answer these questions was the starting point of a fruitful collaboration between SPREP and human rights and gender experts. Building on this initial effort, regional partners and recipients of Kiwa Initiative grants from across the Pacific Island region embarked on a collective learning journey towards understanding and integrating human rights, including gender equity, disability and social inclusion in nature-based solutions, and more broadly in the environment and development sectors.

Human Rights, Environment and Climate Change

As the impacts of climate change intensify, the protection of human rights becomes increasingly critical in the Pacific Islands, where communities rely heavily on natural ecosystems for their livelihood and cultural identity. Through NbS, interventions like the Kiwa Initiative are paving the way for climate-resilient futures that prioritize both environmental sustainability and the safeguarding of human rights.

The Fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) resolution formally adopted the definition of NbS as "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, eco-

nomic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits."[2] NbS are based on the recognition of the deep interconnections between humans and their environment, and the many different ways humans depend on and benefit from healthy and functioning ecosystems for their health, wealth and wellbeing. This concept is not new and has been used for decades by practitioners to support sustainable island living through a variety of related approaches.

By harnessing nature's contributions to people, NbS can positively reinforce human rights. For example, by maintaining biodiversity and core ecosystem functions and services such as provision of fish, marine protected or conserved areas contribute to people's rights to an adequate food supply and a clean, safe and healthy environment (Mangubhai et al., 2015). Similarly, by conserving native forests and the traditional medicinal plants they host, people's right to health is protected, as well as communities's rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (Mangubhai and Lumelume, 2019).

Conversely, as any project affecting people's land and access to natural resources, it is critical that NbS take a human rights-based approach, and ensure they do not infringe on any community or community member's rights, including by thorough consultations with all stakeholders and having the right social and environmental safeguards in place. Because the implications of human rights violations and environmental degradations are felt most acutely by people that are already in vulnerable situations, and have less power and privilege (Barclay et al., 2021), particular attention has been paid in the development and environment sectors around Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). UNEA 5 resolution on NbS specifically calls for further engagement with local communities, women and youth as well as with Indigenous Peoples to build transparent and gender-responsive processes for NbS.[3] This call was echoed later that year by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council recognition of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment to address the human rights impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and to ensure rights-based environmental action.[4]

More broadly, the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach is now widely recognized by the conservation and development sectors, and increasingly integrated into their frameworks at all levels, from international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity,

through regional, national or institutional levels. Human rights and gender have also been mainstreamed into donor policies and criteria, which have supported important developments and integration into specific sectors, such as fisheries. The Kiwa Initiative is now investing in that space for NbS for climate change adaptation more broadly.

Partnering with the Kiwa Initiative

The Kiwa Initiative[5] is a multi-donor programme funded by European Union, France, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It aims to strengthen the climate change resilience of Pacific Island ecosystems, communities and economies through NbS, by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring biodiversity. The Kiwa Initiative is supporting easier access to climate change adaptation and NbS funding for national and local authorities, civil society, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional organizations in Pacific Island countries and territories.

SPREP, the Pacific's primary intergovernmental organization charged with supporting the work of its twenty-one Pacific Island Countries and Territories Members (PICTs) to address the region's environmental management challenges, provide technical assistance to its PICTs beneficiaries to support the development of Kiwa regional projects and capacity-building for the implementation of rights-based, gender-sensitive and socially inclusive NbS biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation in the region.[6]

Human rights, including GEDSI, are issues the Kiwa Initiative is particularly attentive to promote in NbS, and on which specific support to Kiwa Beneficiaries and partners of Kiwa projects is provided.

The integration of human rights, including gender equality, is one of the six pillars enabling SPREP's work and the delivery of its assistance to its Members, as identified in its 2017-2026 Strategic Plan. NbS are a key area of work for SPREP through various programs and projects where benefits to ecosystems and human rights can be achieved, and on which SPREP partnered with the Kiwa Initiative. To ensure effective support on these issues, SPREP partnered with a Fiji-based team of conservation and human rights experts, to develop and implement a strategy to strengthen and integrate human rights knowledge, awareness and capacity with NbS practitioners in the Pacific. These efforts also included contributions from Kiwa partners,

particularly regional human rights and social development experts of the Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF).

The first step in this learning process was to clarify the links between human rights and Pacific Islands nature-based solutions.

Developing a Human Rights Framework for NbS

Emerging literature and environmental frameworks are placing a greater emphasis on human rights and human rights-based approaches (HRBA). There are multiple gender and human rights international conventions that are relevant to the environment sector, which many Pacific Island countries and territories are signatory to, as well as regional declarations by the region's leaders.[7] Most PICTs have recognized core human rights in their national constitutions and continue to make progress on domesticating

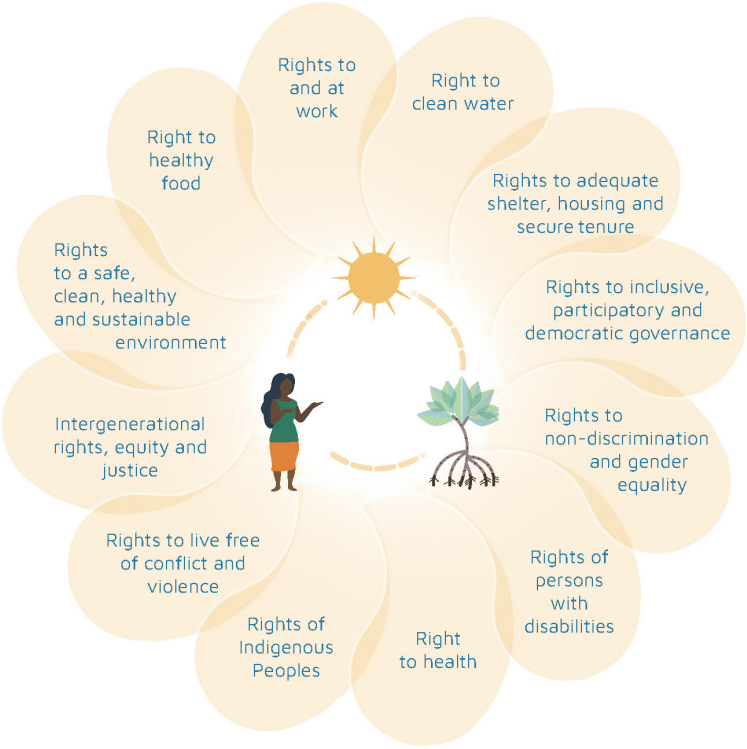


Figure 1. Twelve human rights relevant to Nature-based Solutions. Copyright: Kiwa Initiative

human rights and gender principles in legal and policy frameworks (e.g., Graham & D'Andrea 2021).

In reviewing these commitments and considering the responsibilities of both state and civil society actors, twelve key rights have been identified as particularly relevant to the environmental sector. These rights should be taken into account when designing and implementing NbS for climate change adaptation (see Figure 1). This does not imply that other rights, such as the rights to life, liberty, and education, are not also important. Instead, these twelve rights are highlighted as useful starting points for exploring how human rights intersect with NbS.

This framework acknowledges that human rights are interdependent, indivisible and interrelated, living instruments and constantly shaped and adapted to current global challenges and that the rights to non-discrimination and gender equality and rights of persons with disabilities, are cross-cutting and apply to all of the rights. They also provide minimum standards and leave room for contextualization.

Collective Learning on Human Rights in Nature-based Solutions in the Pacific Islands

Building on this framework, SPREP in partnership with Talanoa Consulting provided learning activities for Kiwa Initiative regional project beneficiaries and their partners, mostly members of international and local conservation-NGOs from across the Pacific Islands region. This process was initiated in May 2023 during the first Kiwa Initiative Regional Workshop organized by SPREP with Pacific Community-SPC and IUCN-ORO, in partnership with Talanoa Consulting. The workshop gathered thirty-five people from Kiwa project leaders and partners in Suva, Fiji.[8] The workshop socialized key concepts and terms related to Human Rights, Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) and GEDSI. The participants discussed why these matter in nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation, and how they can apply them to their work. As reported in SPREP website:[9]

> During the workshop, Gender and Human Rights Specialist, Ms Natalie Makhoul and SPC Advisor on GEDSI and Fisheries, Ms Margaret Fox, presented on the lessons from the Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme, which has an overarching goal of integrating GEDSI and Human Rights into fisheries, and uplifting people-centred approaches.

Ms. Makhoul highlighted the importance of finding "gentle entry points" to have these important discussions.

"What we have learned through PEUMP is the importance of stepping back," she said. "There are still lots of misconceptions around what gender and human rights mean, so it's important to create a dialogue with partners around their needs and understanding of these concepts without assuming anything."

Most Kiwa beneficiaries working in the conservation sector already had some experience in human rights-based approaches and gender equity, disability and social inclusion and an understanding of why these issues matter to their work. They also acknowledged gaps where improvements are needed.

Critical areas were identified where human rights and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) projects intersect, including culturally appropriate human rights-based approaches when working with communities, inclusive facilitation, as well engagement with, and for, people with disabilities, as a key cross-cutting issue.

Game 2: Learning about power inequalities through the Power Walk. Margot Bantegny © Kiwa Initiative – May 2023.

The recommendations from the workshop served to design a learning process aimed to assist Kiwa partners effectively address GEDSI and broader human rights in their NbS for climate change adaptation projects, through three main pathways: (1) the development of resources and training material, (2) the facilitation of a Community of Practice (CoP) and (3) awareness and capacities development on human rights and GEDSI.

The main objective was to raise awareness on human rights concepts and issues of relevance to NbS, encourage ownership and further exploration and investment from Kiwa regional projects in their specific areas

Working Group 3: First Kiwa regional workshop on GEDSI. Margot Bantegny © Kiwa Initiative – May 2023.

and communities, and to create a platform for sharing lessons learned from NbS practitioners from the region. Activities were designed to adapt to the resources available and regional scale of delivery, meaning most meetings took place online in short sessions, and content was introductory and focussed on key questions and concepts relevant across NbS sectors and diverse socio-cultural Pacific Island contexts.

1. Resources and training materials

Many efforts have been made and resources developed to support GEDSI in the Pacific Islands. A review of relevant resources currently in use in the Pacific identified around fifteen relevant and suitable tools and guides for practitioners, and three complementary simple tools and a training were developed with Kiwa partners where gaps were identified on human rights and GEDSI understanding and integration for NbS.

Figure 2. The three toolkits developed under the Kiwa Initiative.

- Human Rights for Nature-based Solutions in Pacific Islands Booklet: the purpose of this booklet is to provide an introduction to what human rights are based on the 12 human-rights framework, and why they are relevant and should be considered when designing and implementing NbS for climate change adaptation in the Pacific Islands.
- Tool to assess human rights risks to inform NbS in Pacific Islands: Based on the 12 human-rights framework, this human rights risk assessment tool has been designed for organizations and practitioners working on NbS in the Pacific Islands, who wish to ensure their projects do not cause harm to people. The tool is based on checklists and guiding questions to support risk identification.
- The Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Analysis Guide: the guide is designed for organizations and practitioners working on NbS in the Pacific island region. It provides information and guidance on how to conduct a GEDSI analysis and to use the findings to ensure stakeholders promote fairness and ensure social inclusion in NbS initiatives.
- The Human Rights in Pacific Islands NbS Training Package: This training package includes two presentations on the Human Rights framework and on how to use it to conduct human rights risk assessment, with a guide for facilitators including further resources and suggestions of activities. The material is meant to be delivered either facilitated, as self-learning or in-person, and has already

been used and adapted by various organizations to support internal awareness workshops on NbS.

All these resources are available in English and French on SPREP Virtual Library: https://library.sprep.org/project/term/11026

The resources will be updated based on feedback and experiences from their application by Kiwa partners.

2. Community of Practice (CoP)

The Kiwa GEDSI Community of Practice is a dedicated space for GEDSI Focal Points and interested staff of Kiwa Initiative regional projects to gather online on a quarterly basis to learn and share their experiences, knowledge and resources around specific topics related to human rights, and ensure there is GEDSI capacity within organizations during and beyond the timeline of the Kiwa Initiative.

The Kiwa GEDSI Community of Practice has gathered representatives from twenty organizations, regional organizations, international and national conservation NGOs from across fourteen Pacific Island Countries and Territories and Australia, with various levels of awareness and experience on the topic.

Together, they have discussed the key concepts of human rights, how to conduct human rights risk assessments, main GEDSI concepts, how to conduct a GEDSI analysis, and principles for GEDSI-sensitive community facilitation. Although facing the inherent limitations of online meetings, particular attention was paid to interactivity and ample time given to group discussions and hearing from each other, which was what participants valued most in these meetings. The last session of this first phase is dedicated entirely to discussions and reflections from the GEDSI CoP members on their journey integrating these principles into their NbS projects. Their progress was also captured through the development of case studies on each project, a process that also allowed partners to structure their reflection and refine their approach.

For many conservation officers working in local NGOs, this has been the first platform to join a regional network and share their experiences on these issues, both through their work and personal lives.

3. Building Awareness and Developing Capacities on Human Rights (HRBA) and GEDSI

Due to the increased interest in NbS and learning about human rights and GEDSI in the Pacific, a series of five one-hour online lunch sessions were organized throughout 2024. Going over the five topics of the GEDSI CoP, these sessions provided the opportunity for GEDSI CoP members who had joined at different times to catch up on missed topics but were also open to all and reached a larger audience beyond the Kiwa partners. These were meant for a larger audience, and have gathered participants from across the region, either as a first introduction for practitioners new to these concepts, or as refreshers for experienced practitioners wanting to be up to date with the regional conversation on these issues.

The significant interest received in these learning sessions (up to five hundred people registered to some of them) confirmed the need to provide more learning events available to all.

Conclusion

Human rights approaches, including GEDSI, are not new and have been mainstreamed into organizational frameworks and policies. However, specific attention, and capacity to effectively integrate them into NbS and conservation action from the sector in the region remains a challenge. To go beyond formal requirements to see actual change in how NbS projects are designed and implemented at a regional scale and across sectors has required significant strategizing to find entry points in terms of content and formats relevant to all, as well as significant investment and commitments from all partners in time and resources to engage, learn and share on these issues. Pursuing these collective learning efforts will be key to drive positive change in the long run, but the genuine appetite and recognition of the importance of human rights and GEDSI principles in environment and development work by Kiwa Initiative partners and beyond promise exciting new understandings as these concepts and approaches get refined and adapted to the rich diversity of Pacific Island contexts.

The integration of human rights into NbS is not only necessary but also transformative. By recognizing the interdependence of environmental health and human rights, the Kiwa Initiative and its partners are building a

more resilient and equitable future for Pacific Island communities, where nature and people thrive together.

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2 See Article 1 of Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on 2 March 2022, United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP/EA.5/Res.5, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39864/NATURE-BASED%20SOLUTIONS%20FOR%20SUPPORTING%20SUSTAINABLE%20DEVELOPMENT.%20English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

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8 See A look back at the first Kiwa Initiative regional workshop on #GEDSI, Kiwa Initiative, https://kiwainitiative.org/en/news/a-look-back-at-the-first-kiwa-initiative-regional-workshop-on-gedsi#:~:text=The%20first%20Kiwa%20Initiative%20Regional%20%23workshop%20organized%20in,Kiwa%20project%20leaders%20and%20partners%20in%20Suva%2C%20Fiji.

9 See Gender equity, human rights and social inclusion critical to strengthening Kiwa Nature based solution projects, SPREP, 20 June 2023, www.sprep.org/news/gender-equity-human-rights-and-social-inclusion-critical-to-strengthening-kiwa-nature-based-solution-projects.

Training for Advocacy

Migrant Forum in Asia

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is a regional network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), associations and trade unions of migrant workers, and individual advocates in Asia who are committed to protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of migrant workers. MFA believes in the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers irrespective of race, gender, class, age, religious belief, and status.

It is guided by a vision of an alternative world system based on respect for human rights and dignity, social justice and gender equity, particularly for migrant workers.

MFA was formally established in 1994, in a forum held in Taiwan entitled "Living and Working Together with Migrants in Asia." MFA grew during the past thirty years as a social movement mainstreaming migration as a critical area for engagement while understanding the challenges therein in alliance with those engaged in the arena of social justice.

MFA was established by migrant workers and migrant workers' rights advocates to address the need for cooperation and collaboration in addressing individual cases of migrant workers between Countries of Destination (COD) and Countries of Origin (COO); and the need to have a common voice expressed in a common advocacy agenda for migrant workers' rights at the regional and international levels. The foundations of MFA as a migrant workers' rights movement were laid by a group of women human rights activists and migrants who were engaged in voluntarily serving migrant workers in host countries particularly in Malaysia and Hong Kong. Since then, MFA has been at the forefront of migrant workers' rights advocacy.

Collaboration with Other Institutions

MFA collaborates with different institutions in pursuit of its goal of respect for human rights and dignity, social justice, and gender equity, particularly for migrant workers.

Through the years, MFA has collaborated with United Nations agencies, Asian regional labor institutions, regional and global trade unions, and national civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region working on migrant workers issue. MFA held conferences, consultations and forums in partnership with these institutions at regional, subregional and national levels.

On 24-25 July 2023, MFA with Our Journey Malaysia and the Malaysian Bar Council organized the "Cross-Regional Conference on Access to Social Protection" in Kuala Lumpur. The conference facilitated a cross-regional discussion between civil society advocates, migrant worker leaders, members of the academe, and representatives from international organizations on the issue of access to social protection for migrant workers, identifying gaps in the implementation of existing policies which pose barriers and challenges to migrant workers.

The cross-regional conference was organized following the launch of MFA's most recent campaign, the "Sustainable and Decent Social Protection Campaign." The campaign aims to address non-discriminatory access of migrant workers and their families to social protection such as gender-responsive emergency healthcare, essential services for persons experiencing violence or harassment, basic income security for persons with livelihood disrupted by crises, basic social services, and other forms of social protection. For migrant workers, social protection measures are limited, and in some cases, inaccessible. Thus there is a need to reassess policies to ensure migrant workers are able to access social protection both in the country of origin and destination.[1]

The conference brought in a resource person from the International Labour Organization to help obtain a better understanding of social security and social protection, especially in the context of labor migration. Insights and perspectives from civil society from across the region on existing social protection initiatives available in different states enabled cross-learning on effective social protection policies and mechanisms in countries of origin and destination. The sessions helped the drafting of recommendations for more robust programs and social protection systems that would benefit migrant workers and their family members.

On 14-15 August 2023, MFA and the International Organization on for Migration (IOM) organized a regional civil society consultation workshop

entitled "The Future of Migration, Business and Human Rights in Asia: Priority Areas of Engagement" in Bangkok.

The workshop[2]

> focused on identifying key trends and challenges faced by migrant workers in Asia and priority areas of engagement with civil society within the space of migration, business, and human rights. Key topics discussed during the event also included access to rights-based information, social support and services, effective remedy, gender inclusion and finding solutions to some of those challenges faced by migrant workers.

William Gois, Regional Coordinator of MFA, raised the pertinent issue of denial of wages, saying this should never be accepted as an inevitable consequence of cross-border migration. Gois also stressed the need to build "accessible and expedited access to justice mechanisms."

Representatives of women-led organizations from Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, among others, attended the workshop.

MFA in partnership with ASEAN-Australia Counter-trafficking, conducted a study entitled "Wage Theft and Forced Labour among Migrant Workers in Southeast Asia: Impacts of COVID-19 and Policy Responses." The study examines the linkages between wage theft and forced labor in labor migration within ASEAN, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on this phenomenon. The report provides evidence on wage theft that policymakers should consider, which also means countering human trafficking and forced labor.

The study was carried out from 2021 to 2022 in five countries of ASEAN (Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia) to capture experiences in both countries of destination and origin. Interviews were held with four hundred fifty-one migrant workers and further in-depth key informant interviews and focus group discussions with one hundred forty respondents. The study also assessed the impact of the policies and practices of the government and non-governmental stakeholders in ASEAN during the COVID-19 pandemic on forced labor and incidence of wage theft.

The findings of the research indicate a strong correlation between wage theft and migrant workers' experience of forced labor during the pandemic. 31 percent of respondents reported experiencing wage theft, among whom

46 percent suffer from conditions of forced labor. The high incidence of wage theft worsened their working and living conditions during employment and upon return to their home countries. Vulnerability to wage theft and forced labor also appeared to be influenced by factors such as irregularity in the migration process, a lack of effective protection or support mechanisms, lack of information provided to migrant workers, poor access to services, violation or absence of contracts, and lack of prioritization of policies for migrant workers.[3]

Following the 2023 ASEAN People's Forum, the report of the study was officially introduced with a soft launch event held on 4 September 2023 in Jakarta. The event was attended by various stakeholders, including the media, civil society organizations, mission representatives, international organizations, and members of the academic community. During this launch, collaborative strategies were discussed to address the correlation between wage theft and forced labor within their respective countries and in upcoming ASEAN initiatives.

As preparation for the participants in the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) on 25-26 October 2023, MFA held a meeting to thoroughly analyze the existing gaps in the ASEAN Guidelines and Frameworks on Migration,[4] encompassing both contextual and practical implementation challenges. The workshop, organized in partnership with Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia/Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI) and funded by AWO International,[5] discussed the "legal pathways" in maximizing the Guidelines with the representatives of trade unions and civil society organizations. Participants' insights shared in this meeting were crucial in shaping coordinated interventions during the forum.

Training

On 5 October 2022, MFA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Qatar Ministry of Labour (MOL) that aims to promote the accessibility and effective utilization of complaint mechanisms for migrant workers in Qatar. It also aims to empower migrant workers in lodging labor-related complaints and seeking redress, and thus strengthening their access to justice in a fair and timely manner. Under this MOU, a training program was developed to enhance knowledge, skills, and capacity in advocating for the rights of migrant workers.

William Gois, Regional Coordinator of MFA, signed the MOU with the Ministry of Labour's Mr. Mohammed Hassan Al Obaidly, Assistant Undersecretary.[6]

The first training activity reviewed the policy reforms and psychosocial support among migrant workers. The MOL issued identification cards to the participating migrant leaders to certify them as community organizers who could provide support and assistance to fellow migrant workers in the country of destination.

On 8-9 March 2023, MFA organized a "Capacity Building Training of Migrant Community Leaders" as part of the initial implementation of the MOU. Migrant community leaders from India, Nepal, and the Philippines attended the training. There were sessions and visit to the Qatar MOL to provide a unique opportunity to better understand the complaints system available in the country for migrant workers. Another training workshop was held under the MOU in October 2023.[7]

The complaints system, accessible both online and in-person, has increased migrant workers' access to the MOL. This has been one of the many comprehensive labor reforms introduced in a short period of time by the State of Qatar. The capacity-building training of migrant community leaders provides a platform to review the different pathways migrant workers could experience in using the system.

MFA organized the "Empowering the Migrants Rights Agenda" training program on 3-5 July 2023. This training program brought together key leaders of migrant community organizations from countries of destination particularly in the Gulf as well as in Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia,

and provided an avenue for the leaders to share their support systems, good practices, and stories from their experience on the ground.

This training program provides an opportunity to build their capacity in advocating for migrant workers' rights within their own communities and how to work collaboratively with migrant workers' rights advocates both in the country of origin and of destination as well as engage with stakeholders and with relevant national, regional, and global processes.

The workshop included a number of activities such as the following:

a. A panel discussion on Fair and Ethical Recruitment with representatives from IOM and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and moderated by MFA's Regional Coordinator, William Gois and, Center for Migrant Advocacy's Executive Director Ellene Sana.

   IOM discussed the IRIS: Ethical Recruitment, its flagship initiative to promote ethical recruitment of migrant workers and a global multi-stakeholder initiative that supports governments, civil society, the private sector and recruiters to establish ethical recruitment as a norm in cross-border labor migration. IRIS priorities include: 1) awareness-raising and capacity-building, 2) migrant worker voice and empowerment, 3) the regulation of international recruitment, 4) voluntary certification of private recruitment agencies, and 5) stakeholder partnership and dialogue.[8]

   ILO presented the General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment that should guide the current and future work of the ILO and other organizations, national legislatures, and the social partners on promoting and ensuring fair recruitment.[9]

   There were also discussions on spaces for engagement by migrant leaders such as regional consultative processes (Abu Dhabi Dialogue,[10] Colombo Process,[11] ASEAN) as well as intergovernmental processes such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM);

b. Session on the importance of Case Documentation for Evidence-Based Advocacy. Ellene Sana, Hubertson Wilson, and Tatcee Macabuag took the lead in this learning session. Migrant worker leaders were also given the platform to share the documenta-

tion process within their organizations and other relevant good practices;

c. Session on MFA's advocacy campaigns. Abby Guevarra of MFA talked about the campaign on Decent and Sustainable Social Protection and emphasized the need for social protection as essential element in achieving decent work for all migrant workers. Alyssa Flores presented The Justice for Wage Theft Campaign and discussed the outcomes of campaign's case documentation - highlighting the number of wage theft cases and the amount of wages lost;
d. Session on GFMD and its thematics. Participants shared insightful perspectives on the major issues faced by migrant workers and gave recommendations for both Countries of Origin and Countries of Destination;
e. Session on sharing invaluable insights among the participants regarding advocacy and campaign tools. A presentation on video and digital tools included insights from participants on using mobile phones and cyber security. The resource speaker, Arul Prakkash, started the session by emphasizing that strategy had more bearing in advocacy work than the tools used. How tools were utilized would make a difference.

Session during the "Empowering the Migrants Rights Agenda" training program, 3-5 July 2023, Bangkok. ©Deccan Chronicle12

The training program made the participants listen and empathize with each other's experiences, challenges and triumphs, shining a light on the resilience and strength that power the movement. Having built knowledge and new skills on different tools, platforms and advocacy made the partici-

pants eager to jump into action and share what they learned not only from the program but also from fellow leaders and advocates.

MFA, together with the South Asia Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) and Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK), and with the support of the ILO-UN Women GOALS project, organized a capacity-building program on "Strengthening Civil Society and Trade Union Engagement with Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) and Technical Area Working Groups (TAWGs)" to advance the rights of women migrant workers in South Asia. The training was held in Kathmandu on 5-8 September 2023. Participants from civil society organizations, trade unions, returnee migrants, and migrant leaders coming from both Bangladesh and Nepal attended this training program.

Looking at two regional consultative processes in the region, particularly the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the training program brought in women leaders from civil society to lead the sessions covering topics and issues around women and labor migration. The training program aimed to increase understanding of issues faced by migrant workers, with a focus on gender-based violence and violence against women (VAW), particularly against women migrant workers. The sessions looked at the main drivers and root causes of women's migration as well as the feminization of migration, analyzed the barriers women face during the migration process, and gained an understanding of the gender-based impacts that result from these challenges.

Having the most basic understanding of these issues is essential in engaging with stakeholders involved in RCPs, and is key in promoting and ensuring their rights and well-being, while also building skills and capacity around gender-responsive advocacy based on key insights and perspectives from grassroots leaders and advocates.

Following the plenary discussions, the training also facilitated a site visit activity which provided the participants the opportunity to utilize their learnings and understanding of women migrant workers' issues. Divided into groups, the participants visited various shelters for returnee migrant workers in Nepal, an ethical recruitment agency as well as a national government agency, the Department of Foreign Employment of Nepal. Member-organizations of MFA in Nepal helped organize the visits.

Other Training Activities

As a migrant workers' rights movement, MFA has invested in developing the capacities of migrant civil society organizations in advocating for rights and justice. MFA has worked in partnership with the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) of the University of South Wales Australia since 2004 in organizing regional and national trainings on the human rights of migrant workers. The training program was intended to build knowledge and skills of participants through review of internationally agreed standards and mechanisms related to migrant workers, experience sharing of advocacy work, and fostering support networks and collaboration between countries of origin and destination. National training programs were organized in Nepal (2013), Malaysia (2017), and Indonesia (2018). The first migration and human rights training organized by MFA with DTP in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) Region was in held in 2013 in Doha, Qatar.[13]

MFA in collaboration with the Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT), and the Civil Society Action Committee (AC) organized a Certificate Programme on GCM. The program was organized as a series of weekly online capacity-building program in preparation for the Regional Migration Reviews of the GCM starting in 2020, and in preparation for the International Migration Review Forum in 2022.[14]

Webinars

MFA in collaboration with IOM organized webinars on issues affecting migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021):

1. "Build Back Better: Advancing the Recruitment Reform Agenda Post COVID-19," 6 August 2020 – a webinar on understanding the impact of COVID-19 on recruitment of migrant workers;
2. "Access to Remedy for Migrant Workers," 16 December 2020 – a webinar on existing good practices on access to remedy for migrant workers who experience abuse in the recruitment process;
3. "Access to Technology and Fair Recruitment," 28 January 2021 – a webinar on the role of technology in promoting fair and ethical recruitment practice (including existing practices led by govern-

ments, CSOs and the private sector) analyzed the best practices, needs and challenges in accessing technology.

Documentaries

In 2018, MFA with the support of ILO produced three documentaries on the role of sub-agents in the recruitment of migrant workers in Nepal, Bangladesh and India.[15] The documentaries involved interviews with sub-agents, migrant workers and their family members, representatives of recruitment agency associations, civil society representatives, and government representatives. The video documentations have the purpose of making viewers develop a better understanding of the role of informal labor intermediaries and to contribute to the improvement of overall accountability in the recruitment processes. Specifically, the documentaries aim to:

- Highlight the perspective of sub-agents and migrant workers on how the former help/facilitate migrant workers employment and how they are beneficial from the point of view of migrant workers;
- Use the video as a tool in policy spaces related to fair recruitment, foreign employment, intermediation and human trafficking; and
- Contribute to the improvement of existing laws and policies concerning fair recruitment, foreign employment, intermediation and human trafficking.

Training for Advocacy

MFA's engagement with the migrant worker leaders does not end at the training. Rather, the training opens a path for them to further strengthen the migrant community as a constituency that continues to tap into new initiatives to build capacity in promoting migrant workers' rights.

Furthermore, these capacity-building programs organized for migrant community leaders enable a strengthened network to provide a stronger support system for migrant workers through collaborative advocacy. It also allows a cross-learning process between leaders of civil society and migrant workers, who both have deep understanding of migrant workers' issues, owing to the work they have done on the ground and in the case of migrant worker leaders, through direct, lived experiences as members of the migrant

community themselves and through the experiences of other members of their respective communities in the country of destination. This learning and capacity-building process leads to cross-border collaboration which enables migrant worker leaders to provide support to the work of stakeholders in migration and vice versa.

Building migrant communities as a constituency within the MFA network also ensures greater participation and inclusion of migrant workers' perspectives in the larger advocacy work facilitated across the region, which is crucial in leveraging issues and pushing for change in global, intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder spaces. For example, MFA and the migrant worker leaders maintain communication and engage with each other on different issues and participate or contribute to regional and global processes such as the GFMD as well the Regional Review of the GCM which was held in July 2024 in the Arab region and for the upcoming Asia-Pacific Regional Review in 2025 through its preparatory consultations.

It must be emphasized that providing training and capacity-building programs on migrant workers' rights advocacy comes with great risk to migrant worker leaders due to the heavy scrutiny they are subject to in countries of destination particularly in the Gulf countries and in Southeast Asia (i.e., Malaysia and Singapore). There is a consistent need to observe caution in how trainings are conducted and what spaces and conversations leaders can engage in, at the risk of any of these activities being perceived as misconduct or activism, which can affect the safety of migrant workers and their status in the country of destination (e.g., termination, detention, deportation, etc.).

However, migrant communities thrive out of passion, dedication, and solidarity, as do advocates and rights activists who have been in the migrant workers' rights movement over the decades since MFA was founded. There is a need to recognize the pivotal role of migrant workers in making change happen for their own communities by influencing policymaking or decision-making processes. Thus, amplifying their voices by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills in advocating for themselves as well as establishing a strong support system is crucial in ensuring that they are able to carry out the work that they do and the services that they provide.

Beyond the training programs, MFA continues to engage with migrant worker leaders and to nurture a space where they are able to learn not only from members of the MFA network but also among each other and between

communities and other migrant worker leaders. This includes facilitating regular online conversations to discuss different thematic issues, sharing good practices and lessons learned, as well as improving coordination among each other such as building connections to better provide services for migrant workers within their communities (i.e., establishing referral systems for case work and legal assistance, identifying support for return and reintegration, etc.).

Endnotes

1 For more information on this campaign, visit Social Protection Campaign, https://socialprotectioncampaign.org/.

2 IOM, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Empowering Migrant Workers: IOM Seeks Civil Society Input to Shape its Migration, Business and Human Rights Initiative in Asia, 15 August 2023, https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/empowering-migrant-workers-iom-seeks-civil-society-input-shape-its-migration-business-and-human-rights-initiative-asia.

3 For the full report of the study, see *Wage Theft and Forced Labour Among Migrant Workers in South East Asia: Impacts of COVID-19 and Policy Responses,* Migrant Forum in Asia, https://mfasia.org/migrantforumasia/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Nov-9-Final-MFA-WageTheft-design-215PM.pdf.

4 ASEAN Guidelines and Frameworks on Migration

To foster resilient societies, ASEAN has introduced guidelines and frameworks over time to safeguard migrant workers and their family members. These measures encompass documents like the 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of Migrant Workers' Rights (Cebu Declaration), and the 2017 ASEAN Consensus on Migrant Workers' Rights. Recent additions include the ASEAN Declaration on Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations, the ASEAN Declaration on Protection of Migrant Fishers, and the ASEAN Declaration on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers. Complementing these declarations, ASEAN Committee on the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ACMW) has taken the initiative to formulate ASEAN Guidelines on Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers, aimed at aiding ASEAN Member States in creating portable instruments while drawing insights from other regions.

5 AWO International is the professional association of the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (Workers Welfare Association) for humanitarian aid and development cooperation. For more information, visit www.awointernational.de/en/.

6 Qatar Strikes Deal With MFA To Reform Migrant Workers' Rights, Asian Lite International, 9 October 2022, https://asianlite.com/2022/arab-news/qatar-strikes-deal-with-mfa-to-reform-migrant-workers-rights/.

7 See Progress report on the technical cooperation programme between the Government of Qatar and the ILO, International Labour Organization, November 2023, page 13.

8 What is IRIS?, IRIS: Ethical Recruitment, https://iris.iom.int/what-iris.

9 See General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs, ILO, www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@migrant/documents/publication/wcms_703485.pdf.

10 The Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) was established in 2008 as a forum for dialogue and cooperation between Asian countries of labour origin and destination. The ADD consists of ten Member States of the Colombo Process (CP), namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam; and six Gulf countries of destination: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Malaysia. Regular observers include the IOM, ILO, private sector and civil society representatives. The permanent secretariat is provided by the United Arab Emirates, and the chairmanship rotates between a sending and a receiving country on a voluntary basis. For more information, visit Abu Dhabi Dialogue, http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/about-abu-dhabi-dialogue. MFA is an observer in this Dialogue.

11 Regional Consultative Process on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labor for Countries of Origin in Asia, www.iom.int/regional-consultative-process-overseas-employment-and-contractual-labor-countries-origin-asia-colombo-process.

12 Narender Pulloor, Capacity building training programme for migrant workers, Deccan Chronicle, www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/050723/capacity-building-training-programme-for-migrant-workers.html.

13 More information on the program can be found here: https://dtp.org.au/training/the-rights-of-migrant-workers/.

14 More information on Certificate Programme on Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) can be found here: https://grfdt.com/Upload/AcademicPrograme/12_AcademicPrograme_GCM%20Brochure%20(1).pdf.

15 The documentaries are available on YouTube:
Nepal: www.youtube.com/watch?v=acGa75_tQME
Bangladesh: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Q-jrPnkLGo
India: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHWfAvKG6ng.

Illuminating Impacts of Business on Human Rights: Initiatives in Human Rights Education

Dignity in Work for All

As the human rights regulatory landscape shifts globally, and adverse impacts of business on the lives of workers and communities continue to be spotlighted, Dignity in Work for All (DIWA), a global nongovernmental organization (NGO) that has been working in the nexus of business and human rights for more than two decades, sees a growing need to support companies in understanding their own operations and in establishing fit-for-purpose human rights due diligence (HRDD) programs that bring results and address dynamic supply chain challenges. The organization also recognizes the need for companies to go "beyond due diligence" and work towards building an enabling environment for ethical businesses to thrive.

DIWA has been capacitating companies to identify and address human rights risks in their own operations and extended supply chains for over two decades. Alongside this work, DIWA continuously engages governments, multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs), civil society organizations (CSOs), worker support groups, and the general public to increase their awareness of issues faced by workers in various workplaces and global supply chains; making available open-source research reports, toolkits, and other learning resources; and actively participating in establishing meaningful industry sustainability codes and standards.

The organization was founded in the Philippines in 2005 and was then known as Verité Southeast Asia (VSEA). With operations and activities in more than twenty countries, including Japan, the organization and its network has since grown in both size and scope, organizing country teams throughout Southeast Asia, and establishing offices in Thailand,[1] Australia,[2] and, by end-2024, Japan. However, as early as 1998, DIWA founder and Executive Director Marie Apostol along with some of the pioneering members and affiliates of the organization were already deeply involved in investigating the root causes of various issues faced by foreign migrant

workers (FMW) in manufacturing facilities and agricultural worksites across Southeast Asia and beyond. They were documenting the enormous amounts of money FMWs were paying to secure jobs in factories, and the impact of this recruitment practice on workers' ability to advocate for better conditions or to leave the job when this was no longer tenable.

"Twenty years ago," Apostol recalls, "audits were mainly financial audits or quality audits. When we came in, nobody understood what we were looking for." Exploitative recruitment and hiring practices were not seen then as indicators of forced labor. Eventually, DIWA (VSEA at the time) started to actively cite excessive recruitment fees as an indicator of forced labor which, among other things, keep workers in debt bondage, severely limit their right to freedom of movement, and hinder them from advocating for decent working conditions without the threat of penalty.

While the organization started out conducting social compliance audits, it quickly grew to become an institution of training, capacity-building, independent research, policy advocacy, and stakeholder engagement. Apostol explains:

> We started with social [compliance] audits, and that led to understanding better what companies we were working with needed. We started doing training and capacity building. [Based on] the results or the outcomes of the audit, we would be able to translate [these] into what competencies businesses need to have to be able to address these issues on a daily basis, on an ongoing basis, and on a systematic basis.

Farm workers harvesting coconuts in the Philippines. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All

Migrant fishermen in Taiwan making repairs to their nets. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All

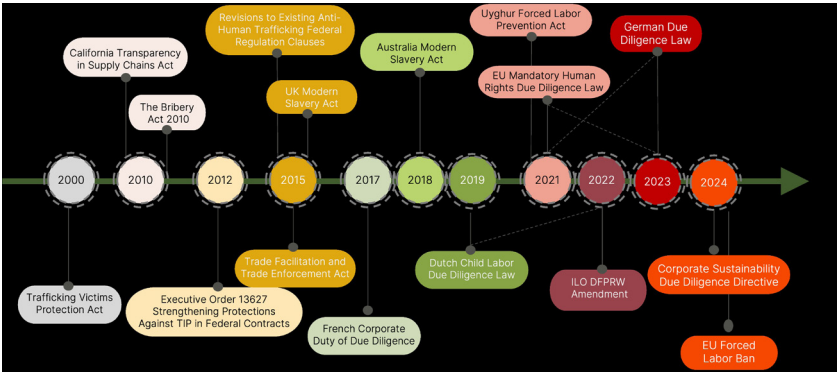
To complement the work that it was doing directly with client-brands and their suppliers, DIWA embarked on various research activities not only to identify labor issues in the sectors in which the organization was involved, but to understand more systematically their root causes and drivers, as well as the profile of rights holders who were most vulnerable to such issues and risks. Since 2005, the research arm of the organization has been conducting focused investigative research and applied studies, and testing approaches that could lead to solutions to the most pressing labor issues. Reports yielded by research have also informed DIWA's capacity-building programs and learning platforms.

DIWA has now grown into a diverse organization, established across the Southeast Asian region and currently operating in over 20 countries. DIWA has business operations and in-country experts based across the region, sitting within various units: Research and Stakeholder Engagement, Capacity Building and Consulting, and Audit and Supplier Engagement. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All

Leveraging On-the-ground Work to Educate Industry Actors at All Levels

Since 1998, when Apostol and team started social compliance audits in Southeast Asia, DIWA has conducted thousands of workplace assessments across more than twenty countries in several industry sectors such as apparel and footwear, toys, electronics, cosmetics and beauty products, sports equipment, construction, food, agriculture and fishing, logistics, service (e.g., hotel, tourism), oil and gas, and mining. Insights from these assessments are also distilled into case studies, course modules, and other learning materials for activities that DIWA delivers mainly to business actors, and eventually to governments, civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations, workers, unions, and other stakeholders.

DIWA notes that regulations concerning HRDD and workers' rights can vary greatly in terms of policy and enforcement across countries in Asia, and there are inconsistencies in member states' ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and integration of the same into their national legal frameworks. Thus, regardless of states' readiness to fulfill human rights obligations, companies need to have robust social compliance systems and adequate capacity to meet various jurisdictions' legal, customer, and stakeholder expectations relevant to businesses today, while striving to meet their own business and operational objectives.



Some of the key legal instruments driving HRDD over the last decades.

Training Activities

As HRDD becomes mandatory for businesses worldwide, effectively mainstreaming what used to be distinct voluntary efforts of socially responsible businesses, DIWA continues to deliver programs that support various types of businesses to embed and operationalize human rights within their business processes. These also strengthen internal implementation structures, ensuring that companies remain agile and self-correcting, and become continuously improving organizations in terms of human rights performance.

Through various customized training and capacity-building programs, as well as interactive tools and resources based on DIWA's deep work on the ground, the organization ensures that companies' human rights initiatives and programs are based on real-life data and on a systems approach. Training and capacity-building programs may involve not just management personnel of all levels, who develop and implement policies and procedures; but also workers and all other employees, who are directly impacted by practices evolving from such policies and procedures. Quite recently, DIWA developed an open source toolkit for Thailand businesses for in-country recruitment, as part of a research project supported by the Australian Government-funded ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program (ASEAN-ACT). DIWA, then known as VSEA, also spearheaded the development of a similar open source toolkit for the palm oil industry a few years back. Both toolkits and links thereto are found in Annexes A and B.

DIWA's approach directs companies to look into internal processes and structures, and at external risk drivers. In this way, they can build sustainable programs that effectively go beyond due diligence and more towards holistically addressing risks before they become issues, correcting systems failures, and remediating results of rights violations on workers. Laws and regulations are viewed as minimum standards rather than the north star.

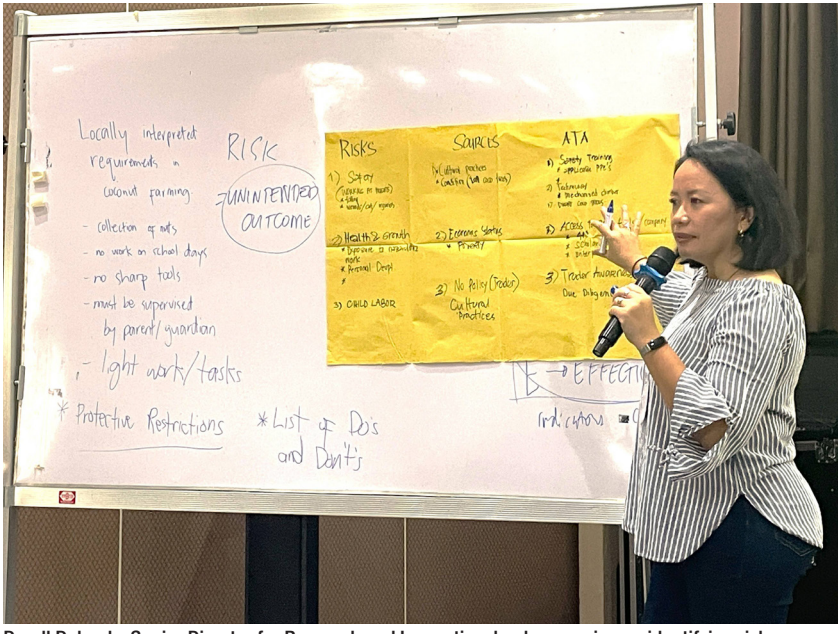
Jet Urmeneta, Head of DIWA's Capacity Building and Consulting Unit, explains these training activities:

> Capacitating companies through various initiatives is one of the ways by which DIWA contributes to upholding workers' rights in the region. By helping businesses construct comprehensive HRDD programs, and guiding them to embed human rights and social responsibility principles into actual business processes and operations, companies are able to effectively self-

Cezar Bagadion, Senior Director for Strategic Learning and Organizational Development Solutions, facilitates the training entitled "Seven Elements for the Successful Implementation of the Employer Pays Model in Malaysia" held on 15-16 May 2023. @2024 Dignity in Work for All

DIWA training on Auditing Techniques held in Johor on 13-14 September 2024. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All

Jet Urmeneta, Senior Director for Capacity Building and Consulting, leads a training session on the Corrective Action Process on 13 September 2024 in Johor, Malaysia. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All



Daryll Delgado, Senior Director for Research and Innovation, leads a session on identifying risk sources in the local coconut supply chain industry during a Standards Awareness and Alignment Training held on 23 February 2024 in Gen. Santos City, Philippines. ©2024 Dignity in Work for All

> detect, self-correct, and self-manage their human rights impacts across their supply chain.

This foundational element of DIWA's approach in effecting change, which can have profound impacts and goes beyond the company's own operations, starts with identifying how human rights risks can surface in the normal day-to-day business activities and conduct. DIWA's approach is premised on the notion that both business and human rights commitments can be honored simultaneously, without undue hindrance on overall business performance.[3] Through its standards awareness and the more technical capacity-building training programs, DIWA breaks this notion down to the business process level for companies to see the granular details of operationalizing human rights commitments alongside day-to-day business concerns.

Urmeneta adds:

> DIWA's more than two decades' experience partnering with businesses to develop robust HRDD programs has fostered a nuanced understanding of the language of business and insights into business processes. This has also allowed DIWA to help companies more accurately assess where risks to human and labor rights originate in their operations and supply chains, and what kinds of control mechanisms they would need to put in place to prevent risks from becoming full-blown issues and to take appropriate action (e.g., meaningful compensation to workers affected) if they do become issues.

Centering Workers' Rights While Engaging Multiple Stakeholders

While partnerships with businesses, helping them articulate and operationalize their own commitments to their human rights policies and relevant legal obligations, is a key tenet of the organizations' theory of change, DIWA firmly believes that MSIs and stakeholder empowerment are key to effecting more broad and deeper changes in the way businesses are run, and in their impacts on the lives of workers and communities.

DIWA advocates not only for individual businesses but also industry associations to establish standards and systems to address emerging risks; for instance, promoting the employer-pays principle to deal with forced labor risks and issues in migrant worker recruitment. During its tenure with the

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), DIWA played a vital role in conceptualizing and pushing for a sector-relevant definition of forced labor to be included in the RSPO Principles and Criteria (RSPO P&C).

Involvement in MSIs like the aforementioned continues to drive DIWA to explore other means of educating various stakeholders about business and human rights. The organization has produced open-source tools and learning materials for different sectors and segments of supply chains, aimed at capacitating all stakeholders (small businesses, unions, CSOs/NGOs, and the like) to contribute to addressing often very complex labor and human rights issues. DIWA recognizes that businesses of varying sizes and capacities have different knowledge levels about HRDD principles, and the maturity of their social compliance systems vary as well. As such, DIWA designs its publicly available resources to benefit businesses which may consider themselves novices in HRDD, as well as those which already possess relatively advanced systems.

Daryll Delgado, Head of DIWA's Research and Stakeholder Engagement Unit, lists the different ways of awareness-raising of labor rights and promotion of human rights: in closed-door meetings, roundtables, boardrooms sessions as well as in very public sessions through publications, open-source toolkits, webinars, and face-to-face engagements with strategic government agencies or MSIs. Various publications produced by DIWA are available in its website.[4]

In its engagement with various types of businesses, DIWA has seen how HRDD programs succeed when workers in the supply chain are truly empowered to report and properly frame the issues afflicting them, and when they are involved in developing solutions. In helping some companies prioritize the most salient human rights risks, for instance, in order to create specific key performance indicators (KPIs) or milestones, DIWA always highlights the need to consider workers and their working conditions front and center.

In all of DIWA's training activities and capacity-building programs,[5] whether focused on social standards awareness or on establishing robust HRDD systems and implementing standards, centering workers' experiences and incorporating worker voice into the process are always emphasized.

Worker interviews have long been a key component of DIWA's methodologies for its social compliance audits, human rights impacts assessments (HRIA), original and applied research, and other data gathering activities and engagements with business and other stakeholders. The emphasis on worker

voice, through incorporation of interviews with workers from all categories present in the unit of assessment or study, and through keeping grievance and communication lines open, has facilitated DIWA's nuanced understanding of labor issues and working conditions, and thus has remained a critical foundation on which DIWA's analyses and recommendations, program designs, and trainings are built.

In the many years that DIWA has been operating across geographies and industries, it has seen how the interplay between migrant workers' policies in any number of sending and receiving countries creates unique legal frameworks and procedures to which workers and other stakeholders involved in their recruitment must adhere (e.g., labor regulators, recruitment agents). DIWA always stresses in its capacity-building and stakeholder engagement activities that without direct engagement with workers as well as other relevant stakeholders and rights-holders throughout the value chain, any assessment activity or workplace and supply chain improvement efforts would have inherent limitations and face credibility challenges.

DIWA employs diverse strategies to educate companies about human rights and enhance their HRDD systems.

Casting the Spotlight: Business and Human Rights Developments in Japan

In Japan, the business environment is undergoing significant changes to prioritize transparency and HRDD. Many Japanese companies have started to integrate human and labor rights into their policies, and are looking into cascading human rights commitments to their extended international supply chains. The Japanese government has introduced initiatives to support companies to focus on human rights in their operations, and to respond to increasing global demands for more transparent supply chains.

Notable changes have been seen in legislations governing business, including the abolition of the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) in 2024,[6] its replacement by the new Training and Employment System (TES), and the introduction of the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) program in 2019.[7] The last program allows foreign workers to work in sixteen specified industry sectors with more flexibility – and which came about partly in response to reports and allegations of human rights risks inherent in the previous TITP system.[8] Additionally, Japan's Inter-Ministerial Committee has developed the Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains to encourage businesses to conduct due diligence and uphold human rights.[9]

Research by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) shows that while efforts are being taken by Japanese companies to embed human rights in their businesses, many continue to face challenges in implementing HRDD measures and managing human rights issues that are more systemic and require the collaboration of multiple stakeholders to address.[10] The same research reveals that companies face internal capacity issues such as a general lack of understanding of the importance of human rights among employees, low awareness of ways to address human rights issues, and insufficient staffing and budget to deliver human rights commitments.[11]

Delgado notes that while there has always been a high level of compliance to legal requirements among Japanese companies, as "observed in audits and assessments we have been conducting in Japan for the last ten years, still many companies struggle when it comes to implementing evolving human rights expectations in their Japan operations as well as in their global supply chains."

Navigating Japan's Shifting HRDD Landscape

In Japan, as in other countries, significant shifts in the macro business environment spurred by new regulations or large-scale projects involving a multitude of stakeholders often prompt government and/or other high-level stakeholders to go through self-examination and formally acknowledge labor and human rights issues.[12] In terms of large-scale projects, one of the recent drivers was the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which put a spotlight on the country and its industries as Japan raced to complete infrastructure and other adjacent projects by relying on foreign workers both from within and outside of its borders.[13] And as previously mentioned, recent legal HRDD drivers in Japan such as the Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains (Guidelines) further increased scrutiny on conditions of workers and on human rights in general, serving as catalysts for the business community's renewed interest in advancing HRDD compliance.

But while the Guidelines provide a key framework on integrating human rights into business operations, a November 2022 study[14] indicated challenges that Japanese companies face in implementing these guidelines in their international operations. The study of the "overseas business development of Japanese companies" showed that approximately 50-60 percent of the companies which participated in the survey were implementing or have shown willingness in implementing HRDD in their businesses. Only 10.6 percent of companies were found to be conducting HRDD. Companies that "plan to implement (HRDD) within a year" and "are considering implementing (HRDD) within a few years" accounted for about 50 percent.[15] The survey showed the following top issues in building supply chains that respect human rights abroad:[16]

- Unsure of concrete ways to tackle the issue (31.5 percent);
- Insufficient staffing and budget (23.1 percent);
- Complex problems cannot be solved by one company alone (18.1 percent);
- Lack of understanding of the importance of respect for human rights among employees within the company [in Japan] (17.6 percent).

Another study in November 2021[17] identified challenges related to the presence of systemic issues and effective methods and approach to address

them. The absence of any established methodology to assess the status of respect for human rights in the supply chain ranked as a priority, with at least 43 percent of companies citing it as a challenge.

Based on the results of these studies, Japanese companies acknowledge that there is a need for additional support in education and awareness-raising on the value of human and labor rights in business practices in order to implement HRDD successfully. DIWA's activities in Japan over the years consisting of social audits, trainings, and research, as well as strategic conversations not only with Japanese businesses but also government and CSOs/NGOs further indicated that sustainable HRDD begins with in-depth education and capacity-building which are based on worker-centered and risk-based approaches, ensuring that such HRDD programs are systems-based and go beyond mere compliance.

As DIWA deepens its work in the country, it relies on its more than two decades' experience in business and human rights as it further seeks partnerships with Japanese businesses and relevant stakeholders to advocate for, among others, robust HRDD systems which locate workers at their center. "[Companies] can have a public-facing or external-facing due diligence programs communicating policies to their suppliers, making their suppliers sign service agreements [and] contracts," Delgado notes. "But if within the company, they do not have the implementation structures, their own people do not understand what human rights are, what the impacts or potential impacts of their business operations have on people, then we do not think that due diligence program is going to be very effective," she adds.

Training and education are prime points of opportunity for collaboration in Japan at this juncture when the country's HRDD landscape is shifting and evolving. Apart from bringing its expertise and experience to the table, DIWA intends to develop long-term, sustainable relationships with Japanese business and other stakeholders to effect real change. Lowie Rosales-Kawasaki, DIWA Japan Country Director, expresses it succinctly,

> We recognize the effort at all levels and we want to be part of realizing the desire of making Japan a humane, fair place for foreign workers to live and thrive… and for Japanese corporations to be seen as humane corporations who have excellent standards.

Continuing the Pursuit Beyond Due Diligence

DIWA began as an organization specializing in social compliance auditing at a time when the spotlight was cast on egregious working conditions in global supply chains. Through audits, it has provided global brands and their suppliers with findings of violations and/or risks of violations against labor standards, and recommendations to address the same. DIWA has conducted its audits by drawing and analyzing information drawn from multiple sources with workers and the data and insights drawn from them occupying a preferential position in the assessment.

Building upon its social auditing expertise, which it continues to perform to this day, DIWA eventually evolved and expanded its scope of work to research, stakeholder engagement, capacity-building, consultancy, and policy advocacy over the last two decades. But even as it establishes relationships with other actors in the nexus between business and human rights, DIWA remains a partner of choice for global brands and their suppliers who are committed to improving working conditions and adhering to best practice on labor standards while pursuing their overall commercial objectives.

As it enters its third decade, DIWA embarks on reaching and engaging other companies and other sectors as international commerce navigates the shifting landscape of HRDD in global supply chains. The organization remains committed to putting workers at the center as it works with business and other stakeholders in the pursuit of an enabling environment in which companies go "beyond due diligence."

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Annexes

Annex A

Palm Oil Toolkit: Learning Resource on Labor Rights for Various Actors in the Industry

The Palm Oil Toolkit is a free, online, multilingual, and open-source material informed by the work of DIWA (known as VSEA during the toolkit's development) in the palm oil sector, as well as the initiatives and experiences by brands and companies with whom DIWA and Verité (USA) engaged over the years. Leading companies such as Mars, Nestlé, Wilmar International, Golden Agri-Resources, and Musim Mas were involved in various capacities in the development of this interactive toolkit.

The Palm Oil Toolkit was intended to assist palm oil mills and plantations of all types and sizes, at different stages of compliance and performance, in eliminating egregious worker rights issues, managing various labor risks, and ensuring that everyone in the sector works under decent, humane, and productive conditions. It is designed to help palm oil producers, who may not have the advantage of being part of certification units, to understand and assess their systems and practices against key labor standards. The toolkit is not intended to replace participation in the rigorous process of a comprehensive social/labor assessment, but rather to help palm oil suppliers prepare to engage in such assessment or certification activities, and work towards a sustained performance with respect to labor standards. While developed for the palm oil industry, the toolkit can also serve as an illustrative guide for businesses in other industries in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

The Toolkit is available in Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malay, Spanish, and English.[18]

Annex B

In-country Recruitment Toolkit: Guiding Thai Businesses of All Sizes in Ethically Hiring Migrant Workers

The In-country Recruitment Toolkit is a free, online, bilingual, and open-source material primarily intended for Thai businesses. The toolkit and the research on in-country recruitment from which it was based were both supported by the Australian Government-funded ASEAN-Australia Counter Trafficking program (ASEAN-ACT).

The project was developed and implemented during the COVID pandemic, when border closures cast the spotlight on Thai businesses and their recruitment of migrant workers who are already in Thailand to address the labor shortage. In-country recruitment has been a largely unexplored by inquiries involving migrant worker recruitment, which typically focus on cross-border issues and concerns.

The Toolkit was intended to aid Thai businesses in improving protection for workers through the implementation of robust policies, procedures, and practices which are applicable to in-country recruitment. It also includes recommendations for small and medium scale enterprises, whose circumstances present unique challenges in ethical recruitment. While the research that led to its development is focused on Thailand, the Toolkit is also useful for other jurisdictions in which in-country recruitment is practiced.

The Toolkit is available in Thai and English.[19] The research report which informed the development of the Toolkit is available online.[20]

Endnotes

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2 VSEA Australia Ltd., which is currently processing its name change to Dignity in Work for All Australia, Ltd.

3 For instance, see Dahan, N. M., Lerner, H., & Milman-Sivan, F. (2024). *Shared Responsibility and Labor Rights in Global Supply Chains.* Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-021-04988-w. Last accessed: 16 January 2025.

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6 See Benoza, Kathleen. (2024). Japan to end technical intern program and allow transfers to new jobs. *The Japan Times.* Retrieved from: www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/02/09/japan/society/technical-intern-program-scrapped/. Last accessed: 16 January 2025.

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15 Ibid, page 59.

16 Ibid, page 62.

17 Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) & Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). (2021). *Questionnaire survey on the status of human rights initiatives in the supply chains of Japanese companies,* https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/13826453/www.meti.go.jp/press/2021/11/20211130001/20211130001-1.pdf . Last accessed: 16 January 2025.

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Bahasa Indonesia, https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Verite-Palm-oil-toolkit-Bahasa.pdf

Bahasa Malay, https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Verite-Palm-Oil-Toolkit-Bahasa-Malaysia.pdf

Spanish, https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Verite-Palm-oil-toolkit-Spanish.pdf

English, https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Verite-Palm-oil-toolkit-English.pdf.

19 Thai, www.dignityinwork.org/in-country-recruitment-thailand; English, www.dignityinwork.org/in-country-recruitment.

20 In-Country Recruitment of Foreign Migrant Workers and Risks of Forced Labour and Human Trafficking in Thailand, https://assets.tina.io/4e719ac7-1f36-4aaf-a629-cdb8fd0463d8/Resources/In-Country%20Recruitment%20of%20Foreign%20Migrant%20Workers%20and%20Risks%20of%20Forced%20Labour%20and%20Human%20Trafficking%20in%20Thailand.pdf. Last accessed: 16 January 2025.

Human Rights and Citizenship Education in Higher Education Institutions in Iran: Achievements and Challenges

Mahya Saffarinia

The current Constitution of Iran recognizes many human rights and freedoms (Articles 19 to 42 under the title "Rights of the Nation," Chapter Three).[1] Accordingly, before referencing any other legal document in Iran, diverse activities must be undertaken to introduce and educate about these rights. Furthermore, Iran is a state-party to several international human rights conventions,[2] and has repeatedly submitted periodic reports to their monitoring bodies. Similarly, Iran has presented several rounds of periodic reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).[3] Naturally, the international commitments arising from the conventions to which Iran is a state-party, the recommendations stemming from the UPR, and the observations of the special rapporteurs of the United Nations Human Rights Council addressed to Iran also require educational and promotional activities at the national level to ensure better compliance.[4] These legal foundations have led to a focus on human rights education in Iran for many years.

In general, the trends in Iran regarding human rights education should be evaluated in two separate historical periods. The first period is before the 1979 revolution in Iran, which was under the rule of the Pahlavi kingdom and the political system coordinated with the American government and the Western countries, and the second period, which continues until now, is the period of the formation of a new political system called the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty, due to the positive relations of the Iranian government at the time with Western countries especially the United States, several notable events occurred from a global perspective. These include Iran's participation as one of the initial signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the hosting of the first World Conference on Human Rights in 1968 in Tehran, the capital of Iran, and

the accession to several international human rights conventions, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention Against Discrimination in Education adopted by UNESCO, and various binding documents from the International Labour Organization regarding the protection of workers' rights.

During this same historical period, some of the Shah's associates in Iran, although they did not have a good record of respecting people's rights and their misdeeds led people to revolt and stage a revolution against the government of the time, nevertheless, in order to maintain their prestige in international forums, created a formal and not very active mechanism called the Iranian Committee for Human Rights. One of the tasks of this Committee was to publish a magazine in Persian with less than fifty pages in order to translate some international human rights documents and publish news of the activities of the Committee.[5]

During those years, some professors and academic figures also included not very deep discussions of developments related to international human rights documents in their courses on international law or international relations. Alongside these scattered activities, some religious figures in Iran also worked during those years to publish and promote human rights or some of its related areas, such as women's rights from an Islamic perspective. Similarly, some history professors and national culture experts focused on disseminating and promoting certain historical records of human rights recognition in Iran's history, dating back 2,500 years to the reign of Cyrus the Great, when the vast territory of Iran included many of today's countries, and the charter left by him emphasized respect for certain human rights.

However, in the second period, which now spans over forty-five years, significant developments have occurred that have collectively impacted the trends in human rights education. During the first decade after the 1979 Revolution, Iranian society was engaged in an eight-year defense against the imposed war by Saddam Hussein, the then ruler of Iraq (Iran's western neighbor). For this reason, all official and non-governmental institutions focused on the issue of protecting the country and resisting foreign aggression, especially since Western governments including the United States,

supported and allied with Saddam in attempting to overthrow the new post-revolution political system in Iran.

During these years, relations between Iran and international human rights mechanisms were also negative because Iranian officials believed that Western governments supporting the aggressors against Iran were trying to use international human rights mechanisms as a tool against the new government. With the end of the war and the beginning of reconstruction in Iran, a new atmosphere naturally emerged at the national level and in Iran's foreign relations with other countries and international forums. Among other things, the interactions of the Iranian political system with the United Nations human rights mechanisms gradually entered into a process of diverse cooperation, and Iran took steps to submit its periodic reports to the treaty monitoring bodies, and accountability to the subordinate rapporteurs of the then United Nations Commission on Human Rights (predecessor of the Human Rights Council) also became more serious.

During the second decade after the 1979 revolution in Iran, internal developments and demands of the people in Iran made the discourse of seeking rights and freedom more prominent. Thus in the final years of the second decade (exactly May 1997), in the presidential elections, a person won the people's votes whose main slogans were reformism and the advancement of public rights and freedoms. In this same decade, the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission was established as an independent national institution for the promotion and protection of human rights in Iran.[6] Iran ratified a few more human rights conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Subsequently, in the third decade after the Iranian revolution, civil activities in the field of rights and freedoms also developed more seriously, and official centers put various activities on the agenda in response to the demands of the people.

Among the activities during this period was the establishment of a project to enhance the capacities for human rights education and research in Iran,[7] in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Tehran, which began its activities in May 1999. Following the implementation of this agreement, the Human Rights Research Center was established at the University of Tehran in January 2001 as one of the university's research institutions.[8] During the same period, a UNESCO Chair on Human Rights, Peace,

and Democracy was created at Shahid Beheshti University.[9] Additionally, the Master's program in human rights was approved by the higher education decision-making bodies of Iran in the law faculties of four universities, which was swiftly implemented with student admission and educational activities commencing.

In continuation of the developments in the third decade after the Iranian Revolution, from 2005 to 2010, a "Cluster Project on National Capacity Building for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Greater Access to Justice" was concluded between Iran and the United Nations Development Programme with the participation of eight Iranian governmental and non-governmental institutions including the University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, Mofid University, the Tehran Bar Association, the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission, the Deputy of Education of the Judiciary, the Professional Association of Journalists, and the Organization for the Defense of Victims of Violence. The Cluster Project was implemented in Iran for five years (2005 – 2010). In the course of this project implementation, numerous educational activities were implemented throughout Iran. [10]

Final Report on Cluster Project on National Capacity Building for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Greater Access to Justice, 2011 and some published books.

During these years, dozens of civil society organizations were established to work on various human rights and citizenship issues. In the judiciary, an institution called the Human Rights Headquarters was also established, which, over the past years, has pursued the implementation of certain educational programs.[11]

Since then, human rights education in Iran has gone through multiple phases, including higher education, school education, and general education or in-service training for personnel of government institutions. Currently, the level of technical

knowledge of human rights among trained personnel in Iran is quite advanced, with hundreds of specialized graduates in the field of human rights. Dozens of books and hundreds of specialized articles on human rights have been published in Iran;[12] consequently knowledge on human rights in this area has reached high levels compared to the past and in comparison to some countries. However, given the vast geography of Iran, its population of over eighty-five million, and the dynamic nature of human rights issues alongside related national and global developments, there are still significant educational needs. Continuous efforts are necessary to strengthen capacities and address gaps and deficiencies.

Considering the general explanations above, this article provides an overview of the status of human rights education in higher education institutions in Iran in response to the following questions:

- What content does the Master's Program in Human Rights in law schools include? What achievements has it resulted in, and what challenges does it face?
- What is the status of human rights or citizenship education in other academic levels or non-law disciplines at universities in Iran?
- How is human rights education implemented in religious educational centers in Iran, which are considered part of higher education institutions?
- What capacities, challenges, and future prospects are currently associated with the processes undertaken so far?

Naturally, this article will not address educational activities carried out at other levels in Iran, such as human rights or citizenship education within the school system, which covers millions of students, teachers, and the families of students. Nor will it delve into human rights or citizenship education aimed at the general public, delivered in various forms by civil society organizations or the media, or in-service training programs for government employees or private sector staff. Each of these areas requires separate and dedicated studies.

Master's Degree in Human Rights in Iranian Universities - From Establishment to Outcome

Human rights as a field of study was approved as a Master's degree program in Law in Iran on 4 March 2001 by the higher education authorities. Starting in 2003, it began admitting students at four universities in the country: the University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, Allameh Tabataba'i University[13] (all located in the capital, Tehran), and Mofid University, located in the city of Qom. Since 2018, the University of Mazandaran, located in northern Iran, has also been granted permission to establish this program.[14] Hazrat Masoumeh University in the city of Qom, which is an exclusive university for women, also obtained this authorization in 2021 and has been offering this program for two years.[15]

There are no restrictions for graduates of any undergraduate discipline to enter the Master's Program in Human Rights. Anyone who passes the national entrance examination can enroll in this program. However, if the accepted individual's undergraduate degree is not in law, they must complete a series of prerequisite courses. In the core curriculum of this program, students are required to study and complete a set of mandatory courses. Additionally, they must enrol a specific number of elective courses from the available options and pass their examinations. Overall, students must successfully complete thirty-two units within two years. The specialized and mandatory course titles for this program include:

- Critique of the Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights
- Civil and Political Rights
- Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Solidarity Rights
- State and Human Rights
- Global Institutions and Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights
- Regional Institutions and Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights
- Human Rights from the Perspective of Islam
- The Impact of International Human Rights System in Iran
- Human Rights Education
- Legal Texts in English

- Research Seminar
- Thesis.

The elective courses in this program, from which students must obtain a specific number of credits after passing the corresponding examinations, are as follows:

- Anthropological Basis of Human Rights and Cultural Diversity
- Women's Rights
- Children's Rights
- Labor Rights
- The Right to Self-Determination and the Rights of Nations
- Fair Trial and Judicial Management
- International Non-Governmental Organizations and Protection of Human Rights
- Refugee Rights
- Freedom of Expression, Assembly, and Association
- Protection of Minority Rights.[16]

Given that each law faculty offering a Master's program in Human Rights admits five to ten students annually through national examination, dozens of students have graduated in this field after more than two decades since the program's inception. Numerous theses on various human rights topics have been prepared and defended, with many subsequently published as books. During this period, dozens of academic and educational seminars have been organized by the human rights departments of universities offering this program. Additionally, the implementation of this program has led to the training of new faculty members, many of whom have become instructors in this field or have been actively involved in various human rights education initiatives across the country.

One of the professors in the Human Rights Program at Shahid Beheshti University has stated in an article that from the beginning of this program in the second half of 2003 until the end of 2015, five hundred students have been admitted to the Human Rights program in Iran, of whom approximately four hundred have graduated.[17] Nine years (2015 to 2024) later, dozens of others have also graduated from the program.

As evident from the course titles of the Master's Program in Human Rights, the majority of the subjects taught to students in this discipline are based on international legal standards, and only one two-unit course out of the thirty-two units of the master's degree is dedicated to the subject of human rights from the perspective of Islam. It is due to this inherent characteristic that graduates of this program, since a PhD in Human Rights has not yet been established in Iran, often pursue their doctoral studies in International Law if they wish to continue their education.

One of the challenges faced by graduates of the human rights program is finding employment after completing their studies. For this reason, if they enter common legal professions such as judiciary, advocacy, or legal consultancy, they must be familiar with the technical aspects of these professions and integrate their human rights knowledge into other specialized areas relevant to those jobs. Otherwise, their human rights knowledge will not be useful. In practice, many graduates of this field are recruited by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), where they engage in educational activities in various areas of human rights and citizenship rights. There are also many human rights graduates who join educational institutions, including the Ministry of Education, and play a role in educating students. Additionally, some have entered universities as lecturers, where they focus on teaching human rights and citizenship topics in various formats.[18]

The final point is that professors in the field of human rights are often individuals with the necessary academic and practical qualifications who can play a role in various educational programs outside the universities, whether for governmental or non-governmental organizations or for the general public in multiple areas of human rights. These professors have also authored and published numerous books over the years on various human rights topics or have prepared many articles that have contributed to the public knowledge of human rights in Iran.

Human Rights and Citizenship Education in Various Academic Disciplines in Iran

In Iranian universities, undergraduate students of all disciplines are required to complete a few general education courses in addition to the specialized courses related to their field of study. These courses amount to a total of twenty-two units, which are part of the one hundred forty units

of the curriculum, including mandatory and elective courses for each field of study.[19] Among the general courses, courses such as Introduction to the Constitution of Iran or Economic and Social Rights in Islam provide a basis for entering into human rights discussions.

Also, since 2018, the Ministry of Science of Iran has required that the course "Familiarity with Citizen Rights," which covers topics related to human rights and citizenship, should be included in the general courses at universities.[20] In this context, some universities have announced that they have implemented this directive.[21] For this purpose, books have also been commissioned by the Ministry of Science or authored by researchers to be utilized in universities for this course. [22]

Essays on Citizenship Rights

"Human Rights in Islam" curriculum

In addition to this course, the undergraduate law curriculum at all universities and higher education institutions in Iran includes a mandatory two-credit course titled "Human Rights in Islam."

This course was previously optional but was added to the list of required courses following the latest revisions to the law curriculum in Iran.[23] Naturally, instructors teaching this course are expected to engage in comparative analyses of human rights from the Islamic perspective with the international human rights standards. Furthermore, undergraduate law students are required to complete several credits in constitutional law and international law. These courses typically introduce students to topics such as public rights and freedoms within Iran's constitutional framework, human rights, international organizations, and other related issues.[24]

In addition to the law program, students in other fields such as political science, regional studies, and international studies are also introduced to human rights topics through mandatory courses like "Introduction to International Organizations" or "The United Nations." In recent years, there has been a growing trend for students in other undergraduate programs, such as sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and certain Master's programs in law (such as international law, public law, economic law, energy law, medical law, communications law, intellectual property law, environmental law, family law,[25] international criminal law, and juvenile criminal law) to engage with human rights topics within their curriculums. This trend aims to expand education and expertise in this field.[26]

The expansion of human rights discussions in Iran has led to students in fields such as engineering and medical sciences increasingly engaging with human rights topics in diverse ways. These engagements include integrating human rights themes into their studies, participating in academic discussions, or writing theses on related topics. Additionally, through scientific seminars or student association activities, these students often organize sessions to discuss human rights issues or contemporary topics from a human rights perspective. However, in some cases, active students have faced negative repercussions for their critical activities directed at official institutions. Examining these instances requires a separate and thorough study.

Another important point in this regard is that students and professors from various fields at the doctoral level engage with human rights topics in different ways within Iran's higher education institutions. The strongest connection with human rights topics is observed among students and pro-

fessors in fields such as public law, international law, political science, international relations, philosophy of law, religious studies, global studies or women studies. Consequently, numerous dissertations on various human rights topics have been authored and defended in these fields over the past two decades in Iran.[27] Professors in these disciplines have also produced a diverse range of publications, including books and articles, on subjects related to human rights.

Lastly, in the higher education system of Iran, various scientific associations are active, some of which specifically focus on human rights or the rights of particular groups of people, such as children, or on studies related to the United Nations or peace studies. Most of these associations have active journals and informative websites that continuously publish specialized content. Although the primary activities of these associations are research-oriented, they also engage in diverse educational activities that are often directly related to human rights topics, and therefore should not be overlooked.[28] Additionally, the research outputs of these associations are also beneficial and usable for those active in the field of human rights education in various contexts.

Human Rights Education in Higher Education Centers for Scholars and Experts in Religious Sciences

The centers of higher religious education, which consist of scholars and researchers on religious knowledge, naturally have significant influence in Iran. According to Article 4 of the current Constitution of Iran, all laws and regulations must be enacted in a manner that does not contradict Islam.[29] This necessitates continuous contact between religious thinkers and university professors in order to identify appropriate religious solutions for transformation, reform, and innovative thinking, which can then be utilized in the administration of societal affairs. Similarly, academics can assist religious scholars in understanding various topics so that, after sufficient comprehension of the subject, the scholars can issue views based on religious sources in each case.

In religious higher education centers, which generally have their own management and are separate from universities and higher education institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Science, there has been a significant increase in educational activities related to human rights, especially in terms

of aligning international human rights standards with Islamic perspectives, for several years. In this regard, some religious studies centers have implemented educational courses or authored research books on the subject. Furthermore, in some academic disciplines, particularly in the fields of jurisprudence (Islamic law), philosophy, or social and political studies from an Islamic perspective, topics related to human rights have been discussed or are currently subjects of scholarly debate.[30] In religious centers, as in Iranian universities, several academic associations have been established, some of which have engaged in human rights activities and contributed to the education of human rights and public freedoms.[31] In religious centers, some instructors have made the results of their education in the field of human rights available to the public in the form of books or audio files.[32]

In religious education centers, in order for a student to obtain a level 3 degree (equivalent to a master's degree) or a level 4 degree (equivalent to a doctorate in universities), they must write and present a thesis at the end of their studies. In these theses, there are several topics related to human rights, which indicates that within the educational environment of religious studies, individuals are inclined to focus their research assignments on human rights and related issues as part of their academic journey.

In many cases, religious studies centers or the researchers and professors themselves seek assistance from institutions such as the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission to access specialized resources and information on international human rights standards, or to jointly conduct educational courses in the field of human rights. The main city where prominent religious studies institutions and scholars are concentrated in Iran is Qom, which is located about one hundred twenty kilometers from Tehran (the capital of Iran). This proximity facilitates the ability of university professors (in Qom, Tehran and other cities near Qom) to implement various joint programs with religious studies centers in Qom.

Considering that, as previously mentioned, the course "Human Rights in Islam" is part of the law curriculum in Iranian universities, many graduates from centers of Islamic studies have developed the academic capacity to work in universities after obtaining the necessary academic qualifications (such as a Ph.D.). They can serve as instructors for this course or other similar courses related to rights and public freedoms across various academic disciplines.[33]

It is worth noting that within centers for the study of Islamic sciences, there is no singular perspective on human rights. Instead, a diverse range of intellectual approaches can be identified. In a general classification, three intellectual approaches can be distinguished from one another. Some hold a traditional perspective on understanding religious sources, which often leads to greater conflicts with international human rights standards. Others, on the opposite end of the spectrum, adopt a reformist or modernist approach to understanding religious sources, asserting that there is more than 90 percent harmony between international human rights standards and Islamic perspectives. A third group takes an intermediate approach, acknowledging areas of overlap between religious viewpoints and global human rights standards while also recognizing points of divergence or diversity of perspectives. Each of these three intellectual currents naturally reflects its specific views in its educational programs and research publications. Furthermore, serious dialogue is ongoing between scholars representing these perspectives and university academics, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas.

This diverse spectrum of thought is espoused by numerous individuals and institutions at various academic levels, ranging from the highest religious scholars to young students. The following publications, for example, by several prominent religious scholars highlight the significant differences in their opinions: *Philosophy of Human Rights* by Professor Javadi Amoli (Esra Publishing, 5th edition, 2006), *Human Rights from the Perspective of Islam* by the late Professor Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi (Imam Khomeini Educational Institute, 2009), *The Treatise on Rights* by the late Professor Hossein Ali Montazeri (Sarayi Publishing, 7th edition, 2015), the *Fiqh and*

Books on religion and human rights

Life volumes containing the views of the late Professor Yusuf Sanei (Fiqh al-Thaqalayn Institute Publishing, the 2000s), and also the *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Rights of the People and the Religious Government in the Thoughts of Imam Khomeini* (founder of the 1979 Iranian Revolution), four volumes (Orouj Institute Publishing, 2015). Aside from these first-rate religious scholars, dozens of books and articles have been written by researchers in religious sciences with diverse viewpoints on human rights, especially over the past two decades in Iran, written in Persian or Arabic.

Concluding Remarks

Human rights education in any country serves as a foundation for effectively benefiting from scientific and experiential training, and contributing to comprehensive development and observance of everyone's rights. Therefore, all nations need to pursue and implement such education at various levels, from pre-school to primary and secondary schools, then in higher education institutions, and subsequently in workplaces and communities. A society that neglects human rights education essentially paves the way for intolerance among individuals and the emergence of various rights violations and injustices. No individual can be a beneficial member of society or even for themselves without adequate awareness and the necessary capabilities and skills to play a positive role in their personal and social life. The role of higher education in implementing a national education program in any country is highly impactful, as higher education institutions not only train educated professionals for all sectors of national administration but also produce the most significant scientific works that can be utilized in educational programs across all levels of society, primarily within the higher education system of countries.

As reviewed in the present study, the subject of human rights education in Iran, like in many other countries, has grown significantly over the past two decades. Overall, the training efforts carried out in Iran's higher education institutions are remarkably extensive and noteworthy. If we are to summarize the successes or capacity-building efforts in the field of human rights education within Iran's higher education system, the following points can certainly be emphasized:

1. Over the past two decades, the topic of human rights education in Iran's higher education system has been firmly established in various forms, so that, in addition to the existence of a specialized human rights program at the master's level in the field of law, human rights studies and education have been integrated into numerous other disciplines and at various levels in universities and religious higher education institutions. What has occurred in Iran during this period has no comparable precedent in the past;

2. Through human rights education in Iran's higher education system, dozens of instructors and hundreds of graduates, both male and female, have been trained with a focus on human rights. Similarly, thousands of professors and students, both male and female, Muslim and non-Muslim, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, have engaged in discussions on human rights across various academic fields in universities throughout different provinces of Iran or in religious higher education institutions,[34] thereby enhancing their specialized knowledge in this area. In this process, dozens of books on human rights have been authored or translated, hundreds of articles on various human rights topics have been published, and hundreds of theses focusing on human rights issues have been written at the master's or doctoral levels.

The following publications are some of the specialized books on human rights education that have been authored or translated by academic researchers:

- Mahya Saffarinia (Translator), *OHCHR Handbook on National Human Rights Plans of Action,* Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2008;
- Bagher Ansari and Others (Translators and Compilers), *Human Rights Education,* Majd Publications, 2009;
- Reza Eslami and Colleagues, *Human Rights Education,* Majd Publications, 2014;
- Bahram Mostaghimi and Others (Translators), *Human Rights Education: International Legal Approaches and Solutions,* Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission Publications, 2008 (The author of this article is one of the translators of sections of this book);

Human rights books

• Mohsen Moghimi Kakhki (Translator), *Human Rights Education in the International System,* Jihad Daneshgahi of Qazvin Publications, 2022.

These scientific contents are definitely useful for educational programs for any instructor. The organization of dozens of workshops or training courses on human rights is one of the significant outcomes in this field;

3. In the past three decades, Islamic studies in Iran, as well as studies related to other religions, have developed a significant connection with the topic of human rights. This has led various researchers to write or translate valuable scholarly works in this area, organize educational programs, and conduct comparative studies between international human rights standards and Islamic sources. Additionally, interdisciplinary human rights studies or field researches in this area have seen notable growth in Iran.

4. The growth of human rights and citizenship education in Iran's higher education institutions has positively influenced the teaching of these concepts at other levels. This includes the education of humanistic concepts in schools, human rights or citizenship training for government employees and governing bodies,[35] and public or media education on human rights and citizenship. Overall, the discourse on human rights and related demands has been enhanced, becoming a part of public sociopolitical discourse, rather than being limited solely to elite or expert environments. Of course, in the discourse of human rights, there is no single interpretation of the concepts, and a variety of viewpoints can be found. Some are more aligned with international standards, while others offer more critiques of international norms or certain aspects of these standards.

Compilation of international human rights instruments translated into Persian language.

5. Independent and civil institutions have also played a significant role in the efforts of the past three decades to raise awareness about human rights in Iran. These institutions, based on their scientific capacity and capabilities, have naturally contributed to organizing various human rights education courses—albeit in informal education formats. Certainly, the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission is the most important independent national institution in this field. By engaging with numerous professors of law and other academic disciplines, the Commission annually conducts a variety of courses that are highly beneficial for master's and doctoral students in diverse areas of human rights education. Additionally, it has been instrumental in producing specialized and technical content in this domain.[36]

This institution has also sought to establish a form of continuity and synergy between human rights education at higher education levels, general education for the public, specialized training for government employees, and collaborations between academic institutions and Islamic studies centers.

6. In Iran, over the past two decades, there has been significant growth in the production of specialized content and various educational programs in the field of international humanitarian law or humanitarian rights from an Islamic perspective, which in itself requires a separate discussion to explore its dimensions.[37]

Despite all the capacity-building efforts in the field of human rights education in Iran's higher education institutions, the existing challenges and shortcomings cannot be overlooked. Some of them are mentioned below:

- Undergraduate legal education, in general,[38] and graduate programs in law, including human rights, are largely focused on theoretical aspects. Students are less exposed to practical issues and the essential skills needed to apply their knowledge for problem-solving, which constitutes a significant weakness. This issue has led to a significant number of university graduates being unable to successfully pass practical tests when they enter institutions or organizations for employment. Alternatively, when they do enter an organization, they often need to spend considerable time working there to gain the necessary experience to demonstrate professional competence. This problem calls for reforms in teaching methods to enhance students' skills in human rights topics and, at the same time, to train students according to the country's needs in various sectors;
- Given that the field of law in Iran, after the 1979 Revolution, faces a kind of duality, where some legal rules are secular and derived from human intellectual experiences or the regulations of other countries, while others are based on Islamic sources, some university instructors tend to be more inclined toward secular, rational, and global experiences, while others are drawn to Islamic sources. This duality has also had its impact on the field of human rights studies and human rights education. Some instructors focus solely on teaching international standards and translating international texts and research, while others prefer to disregard or downplay international norms and instead discuss human rights based on religious principles. This sometimes creates challenges, especially when instructors or students lack the necessary knowledge in both international standards and Islamic sources, and are unable to establish the necessary connections and commonalities between these two frameworks. This challenge may prevent some of the mentioned instructors from effectively utilizing theoretical discussions to propose practical solutions for the real advancement of human rights;[39]
- In Iran's foreign relations with certain Western countries, particularly the United States, tensions have persisted since the 1979 revolution.[40] Among Iranian officials and a significant portion of the Iranian public, there is a perception that the governments in conflict with Iran have never genuinely aimed to promote human rights in the country. Instead, they are believed to have consistent-

ly sought to advance their political objectives under the guise of various tools, including human rights. This perspective has naturally fostered a political, and even security-oriented, mindset towards human rights among many individuals. In such a context, human rights educators and students must always be cautious not to create the impression that the instructor or student is serving anti-national political circles, undermining national security, or opposing Islam. This sensitivity, in some cases, leads to a degree of self-censorship. Similarly, on the opposite end of the spectrum, some educators or students might be inclined to prioritize political concerns over legal education, thereby infusing academic discussions with non-academic motivations. This dynamic can, in some cases, even lead individuals to hesitate about pursuing a master's degree in human rights or about career prospects following graduation. In some cases, certain educational activities of individuals under the title of defense of human rights may lead to accusations against them, resulting in legal and judicial consequences;[41]

- Considering that most research and education related to human rights in Iran is conducted in Persian, it lacks sufficient visibility at the transnational level, particularly in English- or French-speaking academic communities. This limitation deprives educators and researchers of international critiques and perspectives on their national educational or research activities. If the extensive ongoing activities in Iran were to gain global recognition and presence, there would be a need to create opportunities for numerous academic dialogues and mutual exchanges, fostering scientific growth and development.

Of course, it is undeniable that the current educated youth generation in Iran often develops their foreign language skills, which enables them to easily utilize international resources or participate in global educational programs. Modern information and communication technologies have also provided suitable platforms for people around the world, including Iranian students, to expand their knowledge.

Given that there are still no official administrative positions in the country designed to make use of graduates in human rights or individuals with the necessary academic and practical expertise in this field, it is not the case

that, for example, a specific number of human rights experts are recruited as human rights advisors to ministries, or as human rights lawyers to pursue related specialized cases in official organizations. Similarly, they are not appointed as official advisors to parliamentary committees, or as teachers of human rights or citizenship rights in schools, or as human rights judges in the judicial system to handle specific cases or complaints.[42]

The gap and deficiency regarding the connection between the output of academic institutions and executive, judicial, and legislative organizations result in harm for both sides. For someone who has studied human rights, it is a loss because they cannot apply their expertise in official institutions with a defined job. For governing authorities, it is a loss because significant public resources are spent on training dozens of professors and students in human rights over several years, yet most of them do not provide systematic, substantial assistance to official bodies. At the very least, their specialized consultations could offer solutions to help official centers achieve better governance.

Since a doctoral program in human rights has not yet been established in Iran, graduates of master's programs in human rights are naturally compelled to pursue their doctorates in other fields, such as international law or public law. Consequently, they cannot join higher education institutions as faculty members under the title of "Graduated with a Ph.D. in Human Rights." However, if they are hired as faculty members with doctorates in other fields, they still have the opportunity to introduce human rights topics to their students in various ways.

Considering the achievements and existing challenges that have been briefly addressed in this paper, it seems that the future outlook for the trends in human rights education at higher education institutions in Iran depends on how much the Iranian society can develop its strengths and existing capacities. In turn, it will need to overcome challenges and shortcomings through effort, perseverance, innovation, and patience. This can only be achieved through the collaboration of all branches of governance among themselves and with the people, as well as by fostering improved cooperation between Iranian society and other communities and nations. The more Iran's formal system strives to genuinely enhance the rights of its people and demonstrates a commitment to upholding human and citizenship rights, the more public trust will be strengthened. Consequently, dis-

cussions around human rights education will be taken more seriously, leading to greater public participation in addressing the country's challenges.

This is the best outcome for human rights education: the recognition of the inherent dignity of all individuals, the practical elimination of discrimination, the implementation of justice for all, and the progressive realization of human rights for everyone in their daily lives.

Hoping for a better and brighter future.

Endnotes

1 The current Constitution of Iran was ratified in December 1979 through a public referendum. In 1989, some amendments were made, which were again approved by the people through another public referendum. Aside from Chapter Three, various articles in the Iranian Constitution address human rights issues. For example, Article Two, which outlines the foundations of the political system, explicitly states that it must respect human dignity. Additionally, Article 156 describes the duties of the judiciary, stating that it should act to restore the rights of the general public. Moreover, the principles related to Iran's foreign policy clarify that the political system must always support the rights of the oppressed anywhere in the world.

2 To view the human rights conventions to which Iran is a party, refer to the relevant page on the website of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org.

3 Iran has recently submitted its report for the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). For related documents, refer to: www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ir-index.

4 The history of the Islamic Republic of Iran's interactions with United Nations human rights rapporteurs over the past four decades has had many ups and downs and is itself the subject of extensive study.

5 The head of this Committee, Ashraf Pahlavi, was the sister of the king and absolute ruler of Iran at the time.

6 The Commission was established in Iran in December 1994 and its full-scale activities began in the fall of 1995. The then UN Human Rights Commission welcomed the establishment of this institution in Iran, pursuant to Resolution No. E/CN.4/RES.1996/64 on national institutions, see "1996/64. Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asian and Pacific region," E/1996/23, E/CN.4/1996/177, Commission on Human Rights Report on the Fifty-Second Session (18 March-26 April 1996), Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 1996, Supplement No. 3, para 17, page 209, available at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/237721?v=pdf.

7 This plan was adopted in line with final document issued in the Sixth Workshop on Regional Human Rights Arrangements in the Asian and Pacific Region (held in Tehran on 28 February to 2 March 1998).

8 In the following years, the Human Rights Research Center at the University of Tehran changed its identity based on the opinion of university officials, and its new name became the Institute of Public Law at the University of Tehran.

9 Following the conclusion of a joint memorandum of understanding between UNESCO and Shahid Beheshti University in 2001, the Chair was officially introduced as an interdisciplinary study center in the field of human rights, peace, and democracy at Shahid Beheshti University and independent of the various university faculties. Although not a UNESCO-affiliated initiative, a research circle within the university had been organized three years earlier working on similar issues.

10 A report on the extensive training courses that were implemented in Iran over the past five years in various fields of human rights is reflected in the following book by the Executive Secretariat of this project and the United Nations Development Program: FINAL REPORT of Cluster Project on National Capacity Building for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Greater Access to Justice (2005-2010), Secretariat, UNDP, Gerayesh Publication, 2012.

11 This institution is initially known internationally in English as the Judiciary Human Rights Headquarters and later as the High Council for Human Rights of Iran.

12 In a bibliography published in Iran on the subject of human rights, hundreds of works, including books and articles, on the subject of human rights that have been presented in Iran in the last few decades have been introduced. The title of the book in question is as follows:

Nasrin Mosaffa, Monavar Mirzaei, *Bibliography of Human Rights Studies and Researches in Iran,* Ganje Danesh Pub.(Tehran-Iran), 2018, 644 pages.

Since the publication of this book, dozens of new works on the subject of human rights in Iran have been published, which should be considered in a new bibliography.

13 The admission of students in the Human Rights Master's degree program at this university was suspended for some reasons from 2009 to 2015, but the obstacle has now been removed.

14 This issue is reflected in the information provided by the law school of the University of Mazandaran: https://law.umz.ac.ir.

15 The launch of this program has been reflected on the university's website: https://hmu.ac.ir/Category/category/5404/1.

16 Taken from the following site, which introduces the Master's in Human Rights and related fields: http://iranianpath.com/master/law/%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%81%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D9%88-%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%BA%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B73283.html.

- The curriculum and unit distribution for the Master's degree in Human Rights at Mofid University (excluding the final thesis) is available on the university's website: www.mofidu.ac.ir/?lang=en; www.mofidu.ac.ir/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87_%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%83__%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AA%D9%87_%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%AF_%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82_%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1.pdf.

-Allameh Tabatabaei University has made the Human Rights program available to the public at the following address: https://lpd.atu.ac.ir/file/download/page/1668402637-.pdf.

17 Ansari, Baqer, (2019), *Critical Research on Humanities Texts and Programs*, Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Year 19, Issue 12, March 2019, page 104.

18 Precise statistics on the employment status of human rights graduates in Iran have not been made publicly available.

19 In the directive issued by the Ministry of Science to universities and higher education institutions across the country, the titles of one hundred forty course units, including general courses, mandatory specialized courses, and elective specialized courses, are listed. For an example of this directive, which has been made publicly available by a non-governmental higher education institute in Qom, Iran, or by Al-Zahra University in Tehran, refer to the following sources:

- www.tolouemehr.ac.ir/images/uploads/13970612-4.pdf
- https://economics.alzahra.ac.ir/Dorsapax/userfiles/Sub9/pdf/vaheddarsi.pdf.

20 The Assistant Minister of Science in Iran announced in February 2019 that this matter has been communicated to the universities (according to the Iranian Students News Agency, dated 5 February 2019, news code 97111609105).

21 The University of Yazd, located in one of the eastern provinces of Iran, announced this matter on its website in June 2021.

22 For example, the preamble of the book *Introduction to the Fundamentals of Citizen Rights* written by Seyyed Javad Varai, published by the Research Institute of the Seminary and University in 2020, states that after the Ministry of Science approved the teaching of a course titled "Citizen Rights" in universities, it requested the publication of this book.

23 One of the legal scholars and authors of the book in this field has stated that, according to the resolution of the Council for the Transformation and Promotion of Humanities Sciences dated 13 November 2015, which reviewed and updated all undergraduate law courses, this change in status has occurred. See Hossein Javan Arasteh, *Human Rights in Islam*, published by the Research Institute of Islamic Culture and Thought, Winter 2018, page 2.

24 The study of fundamental rights in the undergraduate law program is conducted in three separate semesters, one of which focuses on the subject of public rights and freedoms and an explanation of the Iranian Constitution in this regard. International law is also taught in three separate semesters, in which students learn about human rights and international humanitarian law in one of the three courses of public international law.

25 The author of this article has published a book titled *Family in International Instruments: Rights and Duties, Achievements and Challenges*, published by SD Institute of Law in 2014. This book is used as a course textbook at the Ph.D. and Master's level in Family Law at various universities in Iran, and its content mainly explains the human rights aspects related to the family.

26 In some of the aforementioned master's degree programs, students must take mandatory courses in the field of human rights or human rights-related to their field of study, such as children, fair trial, media, patients' rights, or socio-economic rights, and introducing human rights topics is not based solely on interest and choice. In addition, see the latest titles of master's degree programs in law in Iran: Booklet for Registration and Participation in the Entrance Exam for Non-Continuous Master's Degrees, National Organization for Assessment and Evaluation of the Country's Education System , Academic year 2025, page 41.

27 There are no precise statistics available to us on the defended theses with human rights topics; however, estimates indicate hundreds of cases, as numerous higher education institutions in Iran offer doctoral programs in these fields and are distributed across various provinces. One of the officials from the Ministry of Science in Iran stated in 2023: "Currently, we have 2,183 higher education institutions in Iran, and with the implementation of the higher education reform plan, these universities will be merged, reducing their number to 400." (Quoted from Asr Iran, June 21, 2023, news code 894742). As of the time of writing of this article, no news has been published regarding the process of reducing the number of higher education institutions in Iran.

28 According to statistics from the Iranian Ministry of Science, more than one hundred fifty scientific associations in various specialized fields with the presence of faculty members from universities and higher education centers are currently active in Iran. For details of their names, scientific rankings, and activity reports, see the following sites: https://isac.msrt.ir/fa, https://www.saref.ir/AssoType1-4.

29 To implement this principle of the Iranian Constitution, a government institution called the Guardian Council of the Constitution has been established whose duty is to monitor all parliamentary enactments to ensure that they do not violate the Constitution or Islamic principles. After approval by this institution, every parliamentary resolution becomes law.

30 The number of these courses and the institutions involved in this subject is numerous, as many of the mentioned courses have been conducted in collaboration with the Office of the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission in Qom. Examples of programs held include an educational course on Islam and International Humanitarian Law organized by the Aema Athar Fiqh Center, a course on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of human rights in Islam and international human rights standards held by the Supreme Council of Islamic Wisdom and the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission, teaching a human rights course at Dar al-Hikma, and organizing educational courses on children's rights at the Aema Athar Fiqh Institute. Links to news about these events can be found on the websites of the respective institutions:

https://research.markazfeqhi.com/taxonomy/term/5

Shorten Address of sites: https://shorter.me/TtHLO, https://shorter.me/oiovQ
https://edihe.ac.ir/docs/100

31 More than twenty-five scientific associations have been established in religious seminaries. For their names and reports on their activities, see the following websites: https://anjomanhawzah.ismc.ir/, https://anjomanhawzah.ismc.ir. Shorten Address of site: https://shorter.me/7fILS.

32 For example, one book, *Islamic Human Rights System,* published by Makhs Andisheh in three volumes (2017, 2019 and 2021), is the result of the teaching of Mohammad Javad Arasta, one of the lecturers in the field of Islamic studies, who conducted a comparative analysis of human rights in Islam and some international human rights standards. Audio files of several years of teaching sessions of Arasta and some other religious experts including Mohammad Soroush Mahalati and Javad Varaie are available to religious scholars in Qom.

33 Among the lecturers of the Human Rights in Islam course in the field of Human Rights at Shahid Beheshti University are Rahim Nobahar, Ph.D. and Hossein Mehrpour, Ph.D., both of whom initially studied for years in Islamic sciences and then received their doctorates in specialized fields of law at the university. These two lecturers are also authors of books on human rights, whose books have also been used as teaching resources in some other universities in Iran. The titles of some of the works of these two well-known lecturers are the following: Rahim, Nobahar, *Islam and the Foundations of Human Rights,* Contemporary Publishing, 2023; Hossein Mehrpour, *The International System of Human Rights,* Information Publishing, 6th edition, 2017; *Human Rights in International Documents,* Information Publishing, 3rd edition, 2016; and *Human Rights and Strategies for Its Implementation,* Information Publishing, 2nd edition, 2009. Similar to these professors, there are a significant number of lecturers in Iran today who have both seminary and university education and who present opinions on human rights.

34 Only Muslims are present in the centers of Islamic religious studies.

35 In recent years, due to the growing emphasis on human rights and citizenship issues in Iran, several national documents have been adopted to ensure that these concepts are observed in governing bodies, and to provide stronger support for public demands. The Citizens' Rights Charter, issued by the President in December 2016, the Citizenship Rights Directive in the Administrative System, approved by the Supreme Administrative Council of Iran (issued in March 2017, and the Directive by the Head of the Judiciary, titled "Preserving Dignity and Human Values in the Judiciary," (2020) are some of the key documents that have been incorporated into the educational programs of the executive and judicial systems. For a sample of institutions implementing these educational programs, please refer to the website of the Jihad Daneshgahi Organization: https://shorter.me/vj8de.

36 Among the works published by the Commission is the translation of all international human rights documents into Persian, presented in five volumes. The details of this publication are as follows: Bagher Ansari (Translator), *International Human Rights Documents (1924–2015),* Khorsandi Publishing, 2017.

37 In Iran, since 1999, the National Committee for Humanitarian Law has been established within the Iranian Red Crescent Society. This institution, along with the Tehran office of the International Committee of the Red Cross, typically pursues studies and promotional activities in the field of international humanitarian law in Iran. However, this specialized field is also seriously addressed in universities, higher education institutions, and by some independent organizations, such as the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission, in parallel with human rights initiatives.

38 Some researchers in Iran have highlighted this issue in their studies alongside other challenges, such as degree-oriented attitudes and the lack of emphasis

by many students on acquiring the necessary scientific knowledge and skills. For example, see Seyyed Hassan Vahdati Shobeiri, "Pathology of the Law Discipline in Iran," *Rahbord Farhang Journal,* Issue 19, Fall 2012, page 174.

39 Some human rights scholars in their research have recommended that in the Master's Program in Human Rights, it would be better to focus on human rights issues in Islam not just in a separate two-credit course among other courses of this program. The instructor should try to incorporate Islamic perspectives and introduce various viewpoints in all courses so that students can develop the necessary mindset to find common ground and establish coordination between the two international and Islamic perspectives in order to practically promote human rights in a society where the Constitution states that all regulations must not contradict Islamic principles. See Baqir Ansari, "The Human Rights Program in Iran in Relation to Its Connection with Islamic Thought," *Critical Research Journal of Humanities Texts and Programs*, 19th Year, 12th Issue, March 2020, page 117.

40 Western governments such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France supported the deposed kingdom of Iran in the years before the Iranian Revolution. After the revolution, during Saddam Hussein's imposed war against Iran from 1980 to 1988, these governments backed the aggressor, Saddam, the dictator of Iraq at the time. For political reasons, they have also consistently supported some groups opposing the Iranian government. This history of actions has fostered a negative perception of these countries among post-revolution Iranian authorities and has kept tensions alive. However, during the tenure of certain administrations, both sides have attempted to set aside these historical grievances, manage tensions, and strengthen paths of mutual respect and cooperation.

41 There are no precise statistics available regarding what has occurred in practice. According to what has been reported in the media so far, no individual has faced charges solely for teaching or instructing at the master's level in human rights. However, in some cases, individuals engaged in educational or non-educational critical activities aimed at what they perceive as defending human rights, whether related to issues inside or outside of universities, have faced certain challenges.

42 Some studies have described the lack of a national institution specifically dedicated to human rights education or the ambiguity in the laws regarding the institution responsible for comprehensive human rights education as challenges in the state of human rights education in Iran. See Fakhruddin Samadi, et al., "A Qualitative Study of Human Rights Education in Iran from the Perspective of Professors of Universities in East and West Azerbaijan," *Journal of Medical Law*, Special Issue on Human Rights and Citizenship, 1399 (2020), page 320.

Global Citizenship Education and Experiential Learning through "One Village One Product" Project in Kyrgyz Republic

Yumi Takahashi

In 2005, the Kyrgyz Republic revived a USSR-era basic "unit of local socio-economic activities." The Kyrgyz government reaffirmed the importance of communities and passed the Law on Community-Based Organizations (OCB) in February 2005.

On the other hand, Japan started implementing development and technical cooperation projects with the Kyrgyz Republic in 2006. One priority component of the projects was about community empowerment and community revitalization.

Japan has been promoting community development using the "One Village One Product" (OVOP) model. OVOP started in a rural area of Oita Prefecture in Japan in 1961. It is a government-initiated movement which empowers local residents to voluntarily lead the development of their communities. The OVOP experiment in Oita prefecture was successful and resulted in the development of an OVOP movement in Japan. The concept focuses on developing one specific product from each village, using local resources such as agricultural products, specialty items, and tourism attractions. The vision of the OVOP movement was to increase the income and wealth of local people in Japan.

Although OVOP was developed in Japanese rural setting, the Japanese government promoted and adapted it to situations in other Asian countries including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Mongolia.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), a major institution that delivers the official development aid of Japan to other countries, adopted OVOP as a major focus in its work in the Kyrgyz Republic.

It developed an OVOP model adapted to the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic and based on the lessons in the previous countries' failures and challenges in implementing OVOP projects. JICA named the model OVOP +1 Kyrgyz model.

JICA OVOP +1 project was implemented in the Issyk-Kul region in 2011 after JICA's feasibility study in 2006. OVOP+1 was quite successful. The project proceeded to the next step. In 2017, the OVOP Issyk-Kul model was disseminated all over the Kyrgyz Republic with around three thousand members producing products such as felt, handicrafts, food processing, and cosmetics.

In each community with an OVOP project, an OVOP Association was organized. The OVOP Association acts as the local producer of the products of the community (village). It was decided that each OVOP Association would have "+1," which refers to the extra support system on provision of technical, marketing and logistics support. Thus "+1" include support in meeting international needs: designing and packaging products, resolving logistics issues domestically and internationally, and maintaining quality and stock controls.

"+1" is very significant because technical support such as advanced dying techniques based on expertise from Tokushima University can be extended to a community in Kyrgyzstan.[1] The technical support can also cover marketing support. OVOP felt products can be sold in Mujirushi shops (as well as online), a non-brand quality goods store in Japan. This company believes in the philosophy of simplicity and universality. Producers and support systems work together to sell their products and make profits.

Under OVOP+1 model, the community and its partner create a win-win relationship. There is also one more function of OVOP+1 model, it has a brand committee, a third-party organization that certifies brand products.

Course on Global Citizenship Education

The American University of Central Asia (AUCA) located in Bishkek in the Kyrgyz Republic has a course where students explore Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as a transformative education aimed at building a just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable society. Students learn about the universal principles of GCED: Human Rights, Gender Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Non-Violence and respect for all. This is the "International Development and Cross-Cultural Communication" course which started in 2021.

Throughout the fifteen-week course, students learn Cross-Cultural Communication theories, "Cultural Intelligence," Emotional Intelligence,"

"Suspension of Judgement" toward people from different cultures and different human behaviors and "Six Dimensions of Cultural Categories."

Throughout the course, students pay attention to mode of communication. Soft skills and applications, particularly communication skills, are essential including "[a]ctive listening, self-expression, paraphrasing, and reframing, assertiveness, ability to cooperate, critical thinking, ability to think critically about prejudice, ability to deal with stereotypes, dealing with emotions, problem-solving, ability to generate alternative solutions, constructive conflict resolution, conflict prevention, participation in society on behalf of peace and ability to live with change." (Ofojebe, 2014).

Students apply these ideas through communication with fellow students and other people inside and outside the classroom.

This course facilitates the development of skills needed to navigate cross-cultural communication challenges in international organizations. Countless organizations are working on economic development around the world. Their employees are a wonderful diverse mix of international experts and local practitioners. Opportunities are everywhere for misunderstandings and errors in handling local customs and traditions. To help students prepare for and thrive in a multi-lingual, multicultural world, this course provides students with a solid grounding on the relevant theories of cross-cultural communication. Students learn how to apply theories to real-world situations that students would likely encounter while working with multinational development organization.

The course uses the GCED framework that involves three domains of learning: cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral. Non-cognitive domains such as social-emotional and behavioral domains are equally important as cognitive domain. Cognitive domain includes knowledge acquisition of local, national, regional, and global issues and their interconnectedness and critical thinking skills. Social-emotional domain encourages students to recognize the values and acquire social skills to be able to live with others peacefully with a sense of belonging to a common humanity. Behavioral domain requires students to act responsibly in making a more peaceful and sustainable world through civic engagement at both local and global levels.

Thus, at the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify and analyze challenges facing global organizations today. (GCED – Cognitive domain)

- Demonstrate the role of insight and attribution in Cross-Cultural Communication. (GCED – Social-emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Explain the affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements of intercultural communication. (GCED – Cognitive domain)
- Describe cultural patterns that influence how people deal with and try to resolve conflict. (GCED – Social-emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Relate to the significant elements of classic, intercultural communication theories, explain their origins, and reflect on their relevance to international development practice. (GCED – Cognitive and Social – emotional domains)
- Translate a social problem into an opportunity to co-create a social value and activity by applying social projects, social innovation research, and models. (GCED – Cognitive and Behavioral domains)
- Recognize major elements of sociocultural diversity within the world. (GCED – Social-emotional and Behavioral domains)

Students are also expected to develop the following skills during the course:

- Good reading habits, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (GCED - Cognitive domain)
- Working independently and as part of a team through assignments and production of project videos (GCED Social–emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Emotional and Cultural Intelligence including suspension of judgment toward different culture and human behaviors throughout the course (GCED Social–emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Constructing personal reflection on one's own values, perspectives and behaviors and attitude change (GCED – Social–emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Building capacities to take responsible action personally, communally, and socially (GCED – Social–emotional and Behavioral domains)
- Learn critical thinking, creative thinking. and practical thinking (GCED - Cognitive domain)

The course employs experiential learning as pedagogy. Through this pedagogy, the students are asked to come up with ideas and applicable ways to make a positive impact and lead to more peaceful and sustainable world in both personal and local levels and possibly global level.

Introduction to OVOP and GCED

Empowerment through GCED

Using experiential learning, the "International Development and Cross-Cultural Communication" course:

- integrates knowledge gained on topics assigned with experience in fieldwork;
- requires students to analyze and formulate their findings and reflections on the experience acquired from fieldwork;
- allows students to work independently and as part of a learning community, and document their fieldwork experience;
- requires students to use their skills in writing scripts and producing media materials.

Ten students in the course from different countries (Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Republic of Uzbekistan, and Japan) and belonging to different programs (Business, Anthropology, Political Science, Economics, and Liberal Arts and Science – Entrepreneurship), and leaders of the AUCA Japanese Club observed OVOP+1 projects initiated through JICA.

Course students

They were divided into three groups with different assignments:

Group 1 - Empowerment of Women through small-scale business in the villages of the Issyk-Kul region applying "The Women's Empowerment (Longwe) Framework."[2] Students observed female working conditions and their situation in OVOP projects through the lens of the Longwe framework. They observed women's participation in the decision-making process, their access to resources including welfare, and the conscientization, participation and control aspects of the projects.

(This page and opposite page, top) Learning the felt production technique.

Visiting the new OVOP manufacturing facility in Karakol city.

OVOP shop in Karakol city.

Group 2 - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Students studied the SDGs using resources from the United Nations.[3] Before visiting the Issyk-Kul OVOP site, they gave a presentation including a game activity related to SDGs. After the visit, students reviewed the report entitled "Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in the Kyrgyz Republic 2014-2018" published by UNICEF.[4] The students observed that this UNICEF report discussed how the achievement of a number of Goals supported the OVOP. The selected Goals were 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth, 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Video presentation on SDGs.

(Bottom and opposite page, top) Students playing game on SDGs inside a *yurta*.

Group 3 - Global Development (New/Alternative Development Paradigm). Students in this group presented "A Framework of New/Alternative Development Paradigm" focusing on sustainability as a core principle, and emphasizing inclusive growth, a collective journey towards prosperity, and cultural considerations. They studied the P.E.A.C.E. paradigm of development and a model by Toh Swee-Hin.[5] The students also studied "The Pursuit of Happiness: A New Development Paradigm" of David Korten.[6]

The students had a two-day trip to Issyk-Kul villages and Karakol city on 5-6 October 2023.

Issyk-Kul villages and Karakol city

The Issyk-Kul region, well-known for its stunning Issyk-Kul Lake (one of the largest and deepest saline lakes in the world), draws tourists from all over the globe. In 2011, the OVOP +1 project was introduced in the region to support local communities and promote sustainable economic development. Today, there are twelve OVOP felt workshops, four food production workshops, and two cosmetic workshops, which employ around 2,750 members. These workshops produce a range of goods, including natural-dye felt crafts, sea-buckthorn juice, jam, and oil, as well as apricot-based products like dried apricots, apricot oil, soap, and scrubs. Other unique food items like dandelion jam are also made in the region.

On the first day of the site visit, students explored a few villages: Shorburak, where they learned about the needle-felt technique; Bokonbaevo, where they enjoyed lunch and a workshop; and Ak-Terek, where they observed the wet-felt technique. The day concluded with a trip to Karakol city.

On the second day, students toured felt, food, and dyeing workshops and attended an OVOP presentation at a new manufacturing facility in Karakol, established in 2022. Visiting the OVOP shop in Karakol city broadened the students' understanding of the region's rich artisanal traditions and how these were integrated into the local economy.

The students monitored the implementation of the initial model of OVOP +1. They observed the working conditions of the women involved in the OVOP projects. They inquired into the participation of the women in the decision-making process in the projects as well as their access to resources including welfare.

They observed and critically analyzed JICA's policy of equal opportunities for local communities through development projects as a part of Japan's unique international development projects.

After the trip, Gender Group recording.

Project Output

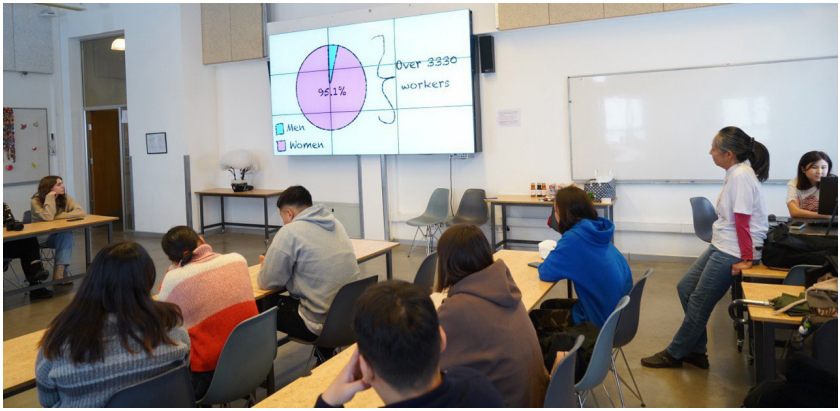
The students documented the visit to Issyk-Kul villages and Karakol city by creating videos of their interaction with the people of the villages.

They uploaded on YouTube the video entitled "Students' Engagement with Global Citizenship Education through One Village One Product

(Kyrgyzstan)" on their visit to Issyk-Kul villages. (www.youtube.com/channel/UCV8_jNFg4PB3ablu2_UJ2wQ) and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4XhaaQOzYl/?igsh=MWp4NDFoOTk3eGtrNQ==).

The video describes the Kyrgyz society as a patriarchal society where women do more work than men. The OVOP + 1 project recognizes this situation and provides for flexible work hours and remote working conditions for women. The video shows two young girls working at a felt workshop. Felt is made mainly by middle aged and elder women, but the video shows opportunities for young girls in a rural area in the project. Earning money can teach them how to become independent and responsible at a young age. This may seem small but this can be a shift towards mental and emotional independence.

Watching OVOP and GCED videos made by students.



Women's empowerment video.

New development paradigm reflection session.

In relation to the SDGs and OVOP, the students obtained the following findings:

Goal 1: No Poverty

Ovop's community empowerment supports the Kyrgyz national economic policy. The goal of eliminating poverty necessitates community empowerment, recognized in national policy, and positive impacts on local economies. Ovop contributes to these areas.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Ovop provides a large number of people with work opportunities. Under ovop, many producers are connected with each other and with consumers. This is a truly unprecedented business model in Kyrgyz Republic.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Ovop helps in the conservation of cultures, revitalization of rural communities, economic transformation and environmental sustainability in Kyrgyz Republic.

Goal 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production

Ovop strives for sustainable ways of obtaining natural materials for its production. Ovop also promotes the consumption

> of eco-friendly and 100 percent natural products even if such products can cost higher than other products.

Regarding the Global Development (New/Alternative Development Paradigm) research, the students observed the combined use of local traditional values and appropriate technology in the OVOP projects. A student observed the time-consuming production process involved in making products that made him understand why the price of the products should be high. Learning took place as students witnessed the theories being applied into practice.

At the conclusion of the course, a final event titled "Students' Engagement with Global Citizenship Education through One Village One Product (OVOP) in Rural Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan" was held on 9 December 2023 with the support of AUCA Japanese Club. The event included discussion of the concept of GCED and the importance of Cross-Cultural Communication (Social-emotional Domain).

Three videos addressing various domains were shown:

- Empowerment of Women in the Issyk-Kul Region
- Sustainable Development Goals and OVOP
- New/Alternative Development Paradigms and OVOP.

There were around forty to fifty attendees, including AUCA faculty, staff, alumni, and students, as well as students from Kyrgyz National University, Bishkek State School № 70, Kyrgyz State Medical Academy, International University of Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University.

Additionally, the students created a Kahoot quiz (an online game used as a learning tool) with fifteen questions to test the attendees' knowledge. The quiz was well-received, with active participation from all attendees.

Kahoot quiz.

Final event on 9 December 2023.

Students' Awareness of GCED

Students' awareness of GCED was measured using a survey form before the course was held and reflection paper at the end of the course. Analysis of the pre- and post-course assessment shows a number of significant points.

The pre-course survey shows that no student knew GCED. But at the end of the course, the reflection papers of all students answered the question "What is Global Citizenship Education?" Some answers cover the three domains (cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral) of GCED:

#1. It gives me the education I need to be aware and act as a responsible global citizen. It is more than academic knowledge. It entails thinking critically, cultural competence, and social justice. Through GCED, I am inspired to think globally and respect different people's cultures as well as my own. It also makes me responsible and motivates me to play a positive role in making my society better and in affecting the global sphere.

#2. Global Citizenship and Global Citizenship Education, to me, means understanding our interconnectedness and taking responsibility for promoting positive change on a global scale. It involves recognizing diverse perspectives, fostering empathy, and actively contributing to a better world.

#3. Global citizen is the person who takes action ... in order to make a peaceful and sustainable life in his community. Global Citizenship Education fosters values necessary to become a global citizen, promotes critical thinking and the notions of interconnectedness of our world and the interconnectedness of the challenges of the 21st century, and develops knowledge about related topics like human rights, diversity, international development, SDGs, etc.

#4. Global Citizenship Education represents an innovative methodology for learning that extends beyond conventional educational frameworks. It [cultivates] awareness of global concerns, appreciation of cultural variety, and promotion of fairness and justice. By imparting essential knowledge, abilities, and moral principles, GCED strives to enable individuals to actively participate in resolving pressing international problems and constructing a more inclusive and environmentally sustainable society.

Students' Practice of Global Citizenship

A Pamirian[7] student in the course mentioned that she faced challenges working with a group making video together with students from different academic backgrounds. But she tried to find the common ground to work with them. She mentioned that she developed her communication skills, critical skills and other video-making skills from groupmates. She was learning how to become a better learner.

During the field trip, two incidents happened. The first one was about a person in charge of documenting the field trip, he left the school's video equipment at a restaurant. A Japanese student left his expensive headphone in the restaurant as well. They noticed this problem two to three hours after

leaving the restaurant. As a group, one solution came up: Call the café and order a taxi driver to bring the cameras and the headphone to the OVOP shop in Karakol city where they went. All the arrangements were done by a Kyrgyz student and an Uzbek student. Another student who could speak Kyrgyz language also helped communicate with the restaurant and the taxi driver. The learning experience involved problem-solving, practical skills, communication skill, emotional intelligence skill such as caring and empathy.

The second incident was when a Japanese student accidentally misunderstood the purpose of stopping in a rest area. He started eating dinner at the rest area cafe. He even invited a Pamirian female student to join him. When the other students found out that he was eating at the café, everyone was patient and made no judgment. When the Japanese student and the Pamirian student were about to return to the bus from the café, an Uzbek student suggested to pretend that they were leaving them behind. The instructor and the bus driver agreed to do so. This was just for fun. The Japanese student and Pamirian female student realized that the bus was leaving them behind and started running toward the bus. But they were smiling while running to get on the bus. Other students on the bus were also smiling and having a good time witnessing the whole situation.

Throughout the course, as the instructor, I created a safe but challenging atmosphere for students to think outside the box. Cultural Intelligence is very crucial. Promoting empathy, non-violent communication and suspension of judgment are important. On the other hand, I encouraged them to think critically about the topics that were presented in the class.

Knowing the existence of patriarchy in Kyrgz society, students gave suggestions on ways to address the issue.

A male student suggested:

> The next step could be the implementation of specific programs that address the gender issues... I personally would support and be part of community initiatives that promote gender equality, educate about women's rights and create opportunities for skill development and economic empowerment for women.

A female student suggested:

> Conduct educational trainings or sessions in order to promote gender issues. Also, modify the school's curriculum (for 9, 10, 11 grade) and add some gender equality courses.

Another student gave a two-step suggestion:

> First step is to educate young girls and women on gender inequality problems and to empower them to be more independent and gain equal rights at family and community levels;
> Second step is to provide skills and knowledge necessary to expand women's opportunities even more. But even at the current level, I think OVOP+1 had a significant positive impact on the lives of women in rural Kyrgyzstan since these women were mostly occupied in unpaid household work.

Conclusion

The "International Development and Cross-Cultural Communication" course in AUCA is designed to make the students understand the meaning of global citizenship in its practical sense.

This objective can be achieved only with a proper pedagogy. I chose experiential learning as pedagogy in conjunction with my aim of examining how a national economic policy can take concrete form at the community level.

JICA's OVOP +1 in Kyrgyz Republic provides the opportunity to employ experiential learning to understand community-level efforts that support the achievement of SDGs as well as promote GCED concerns particularly gender equality.

By visiting OVOP +1 projects in the Issyk-Kul region for two days and reflecting on their time on the field and workshop, students learned firsthand how small-scale business was making impact on Kyrgyzstan. Since OVOP +1 started, the local producers reached around three thousand three hundred and thirty people all over the country.

The fifteen-week course promotes the "Human Dimension, Caring and Learning" cycle where students experience working and learning together in small groups. Students learned the importance of being sensitive to each other's culture to have better communication in a diverse world.

By working together, students started to be open-minded and to build trust relationships. Furthermore, students developed various communication skills by combining theories and practices.

Students in the course comprehended the challenges that Kyrgyzstan faces by learning about gender, SDGs and Alternative Development Paradigm, and the P.E.A.C.E. paradigm of development (Participatory, Equitable, Appropriate [keeping local traditional values, and appropriate technology], and Critical Empowerment).[8]

GCED brought positive changes to the thinking and behavior of the students and the AUCA community.

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Endnotes

1 For more information on this, see Yumi Takahashi and Aidaana Khasanova "Living Heritage of Indigo Dyeing as a Bridge between Japan and Kyrgyzstan" that appeared in the IISNC-UNESCO, Journal of Intercultural Dialogue, 2023, volume 1, https://online.fliphtml5.com/sedrz/ahul/#p=1.

2 For more information on Longwe framework, see Equality and Empowerment (Longwe Framework), Equilo, www.equilo.io/gender-analysis-framework-equality.

3 See, for example, Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/.

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Education for Living: Human Rights Education for Social Interdependence

JD Parker

What can a school do to prevent sad lives? This question lays the foundation for the creation of a human rights education-centered program called "Education for Living" at a school in Osaka, Japan. This paper undertakes an inquiry into this specific human rights education program to deepen the understanding of how human rights education is actualized by educators in Japan.

The "Education for Living" program stands out as distinctive for its broader goals of interdependence (here understood as the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other) by emphasizing a holistic, interdisciplinary approach that promotes horizontal connections between people, empathy, compassion and the building of relationships. Although there is no one single approach to implementing human rights education in Japan, this case study makes recognizable certain practices, rooted in Japanese culture and social habits, that may foster in educators the ability to contemplate alternative understandings of human rights education. As such, this paper dialogues with various human rights education models across Asia and the world, while stressing the need to account for and understand local contexts, cultures, and traditions in educational models.

Introduction

Insofar as the "Education for Living" program is deeply rooted in local traditions and cultural practices, it also contributes to the broader global conversation on human rights education. I argue that localized approaches can offer valuable solutions to challenges faced on a global scale.

Addressing the pressing global challenges that are collectively faced requires urgent and effective action. Many leaders, politicians, and intellectuals have made significant commitments to promoting human rights frame-

works as the most effective path to achieving peace. Countries worldwide have adopted progressive human rights discourse, identifying education as a human right while also integrating human rights education into school curriculum (Choi, 2024; Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005; Suarez 2007a, 2007b). Human rights education programs across the globe are tasked with building a consciousness of *universal* human rights that, "are *inherent* [emphasis added] to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status" (UN, 2021). Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, and teachers have introduced human rights education into their classrooms with the stated intention of creating a more equitable and peaceful world where human dignity is respected, and abusive powers are held accountable.

The global adoption of human rights frameworks has not only shaped educational systems but also played a crucial role in inspiring and catalyzing transformative movements across diverse societies. Increased awareness of human rights through formal and informal education has impacted and catalyzed social transformation projects and movements. These include the downfall of apartheid in South Africa, bans on female genital mutilation, racial injustice movements, the abolishment of the death penalty, and others (Tsutsui, 2017). Global human rights have also enhanced the overall level of activism at the micro-local level (Bajaj, 2017; Tai, 2010; Tsutsui, 2017; Ramirez, et al., 2007). By attaching local struggles to internationally accepted frameworks, home-grown movements have been able to gain credibility, attention, and momentum. The universal principles bestowed upon a human rights framework has been accessed and leveraged by disadvantaged groups around the globe to promote the protection of their rights. Human rights-based arguments have a record of giving voice, legitimacy, and solidarity to groups whose rights are violated.

However, human rights frameworks have demonstrated limitations in addressing some of the world's most critical challenges. Suffering continues in regions like Gaza and Ukraine, as well as among racial, ethnic and sexual minority populations world-wide, together with the ongoing prevalence of state-sponsored death penalties in many countries. Moreover, these frameworks have yet to fully grapple with planetary survivability concerns, as climate-related crises escalate globally, affecting both human rights and the future of life on Earth. A more pluralistic understanding of human rights education can open new possibilities for addressing issues that cur-

rent frameworks struggle to resolve. While human rights frameworks have made significant achievements, there remain areas they either fail to address or even worse, exacerbate. Some critiques contend that these frameworks contribute to issues such as the atomization of individuals (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017), human rights inflation (Deleuze, 1995, Miyamoto, et al. 2024), and the division of the human from nature (Motokawa, 1989, Rappleye, et al. 2024, Rappleye, 2024). This paper presents an approach to human rights education that can offer onto-epistemological perspectives on the issue of human rights that promotes the emergence of alternative, novel takes on contemporary pressing issues. This analysis centers exclusively on the human rights education practices within one particular school, illustrating how its unique context shapes the way teachers are helping students tackle the challenges they face. By focusing on this specific program, I hope to highlight general phenomenon in Japan's approach to human rights education, as emerged in this particular situational context.

This paper explores potentially divergent ontological and epistemological themes found through the use of a case study of one school's use of human rights education. To accomplish this, first, I will position my article by emphasizing the importance of recognizing positive contributions within human rights education. I then trace the historical development of human rights education in Japan, briefly outlining its evolution and the socio-historical contexts that have shaped its trajectory. This will provide context and insights into what contemporary human rights education may look like in Japan. Next, I will engage with critiques of human rights education in Japan to highlight concerns raised by academics regarding its purpose and success. Next, I will frame my discussion by establishing a conceptual framework grounded in ontological understandings of interdependence to guide my analysis of human rights education practices in Japan.

Central to this exploration is a case study of the "Education for Living" program, focusing on the school that developed this initiative. I will then explore the background of the program's creation, the motivations behind its implementation, and the core tenets that define its approach to human rights education. By examining these elements, I aim to provide a nuanced understanding of how human rights education is conceived and practiced in this specific context. Finally, I will reflect on the broader implications of these findings for understanding global discourse on human rights education, considering how localized practices in Japan can inform and enrich

international conversations about human rights education. Through this structured analysis, I hope to contribute to deeper appreciation of human rights education's potential to foster positive social change while addressing the criticism it faces.

Significance of Human Rights Education in Global Educational Debates

This study examines a case study of human rights education at a combined primary and lower secondary school in Japan which aims to overcome "disorderly behavior" and other issues by strengthening human rights education through a transdisciplinary and school-wide "Education for Living" program. It investigates how school stakeholders – teachers, administration, Parents-Teachers Association (PTA), school staff, child social service staff, university researchers, lawyers and other relevant actors address problems found in their school by centering on horizontal relationships between people.

This paper has the explicit purpose of providing an update on human rights education in Japan by providing visibility to the lived experience and condition of the human rights education teachers, as well as the discourses and educational knowledge they produce. Steiner-Khamsi (2000) argues that scholars "must direct our attention to agencies, resisting, inverting or indigenizing education imports" (page 158). With human rights education in Japan launching less than twenty years ago, there is a dearth of research focusing on human rights education implementation and recontextualization within the country. This research is particularly relevant given the global debates around the increasing influence and participation of global education governance in schooling practices (Edwards, 2021, Takayama, 2017, Verger et al, 2017). Japan is a particularly understudied area within the human rights education literature, despite being an early adopter of human rights education and having non-western ontological foundations.

Teachers at Tajima Minami School in Osaka, Japan have utilized collective strength to solve local problems by forgoing their own path, escaping "petrified" ready-made forms to reinvent human rights education in a way that meets the specific needs of their students. While this study offers valuable insights into the application of human rights education within the boundaries of this case study, understanding the full significance of this approach requires a deeper theoretical explanation.

Reparative Reading of Human Rights Education in Japan: Highlighting Positive Contributions

This study engages in a "reparative reading" through a constructive critique of human rights education in Japan by utilizing Sedgwick's reparative approach (1997). Although this study may call attention to some ways in which human rights education in Japan may be problematic, rather than a critique of human rights education in Japan in of itself, this study's contribution is to show what one Japanese school does well. In this way, conducting research through a reparative position allows the researcher to work with various human rights education stakeholders to find "good surprises" in their own terms. By highlighting potential positives found through a case study on one school, the intention is not to defend the status quo and dominant power structures within Japan. Rather, it showcases positive contributions that can empower and establish new baselines in understanding human rights education both regionally and globally.

Historical Context and the Development of Human Rights Education in Japan

Human rights discourses and educational practice in Japan are uniquely shaped by the influences of cultural, political, economic, historical, and social realities. Scholars acknowledge the problematic nature and difficulty of understanding the concept of human rights in Japan without considering its varying historical and social developments, cultures, and traditions. (Hirano, 2020; Meyer, 2020; Takeda, 2012). Bajaj (2012) notes that with the relatively short history of human rights education, definitions of human rights education are often malleable, and highly contextual to location and time. The same can be said of Japan, where human rights education first gained official recognition in the last two decades. I hope to showcase how Japan's human rights education offers insights into how interdependent concepts of self influence general understandings of human rights and the envisaged goals human rights education more generally.

The notion of human rights was first introduced to Japan from the West in the late nineteenth century. Just as the West worked out the meanings of "rights" and "human" with their entrance into nation-statehood, Japan needed to define the citizen in this new model. Yukichi Fukuzawa was one of

the most influential intellectuals during this period of nation-building. He found the translation of Western concepts particularly challenging (Takeda, 2012). This included the development of the term *kenri* (rights) and distinctions between *minken* (people's rights), *jinken* (human rights), and *kokken* (state's rights). Facing domestic political competition and foreign pressures, the Meiji government chose *minken* to represent individual rights granted by the government and, crucially, through the relationship with the emperor as a living god (Takeda, 2012). By 1947, Article 11 of the newly written Constitution of Japan guaranteed fundamental human rights to the people as eternal and inviolate rights. This made Japan one of the first countries in the world to galvanize human rights in their constitution.

Following the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the United Nations adopted the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education in the following year (1994). In 1996, prior to the adoption of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004) [1], Japan took several steps supporting human rights education. The Japanese government rapidly created the Head Office for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education within the Cabinet in 1995. In 1996, the government enacted the *Jinken Yōgo Shisaku Suishin Hō*, or the Law for the Promotion of Human Rights Protection Policies (MOFA, 2015; Takeda, 2012). These new policies allowed for the implementation of human rights education teaching in schools, beginning in the mid-1990s. The Cabinet also decided in 1996 to reconstruct a set of home-grown social justice education programs called *Dōwa Kyōiku*. The focus of these educational policies, originally aimed at addressing discrimination and promoting the social integration of the historically marginalized Burakumin group, was incorporated into the broader agenda of human rights education. Human rights education then reflected not only what was recommended by the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, but also both the influences of *Dōwa* and moral education classes. The stated purpose of the plan was the comprehensive and systematic advancement of human rights education and human rights promotion.

In its current form, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) delegates most decision making on human rights education to the Board of Education (BOE). MEXT (2023) states in the basic plan to promote human rights education, "Promote correction and enhancement of human rights education activities at boards of educa-

tion and schools by preparing and disseminating reference materials based on recent trends, etc., conducting surveys and research, and disseminating their outcomes" (page 56). Human rights education is not currently a mandatory stand-alone subject in Japanese schools. Instead, human rights education is integrated across various subjects, such as social studies, civics, and most notably in moral education classes. It is also promoted through a range of extracurricular activities like essay, poster, poetry and speech contests, fields trips, human rights festivals and special programming during human rights week in December. Since the 2015 moral education reforms, moral education has been reintroduced as a formal subject in the national curriculum. Although schools continue to allocate moral education time for lessons on human rights, the subject now faces increased competition with other content for instructional time (Bamkin, 2024).

Human rights education in Japan is regularly linked with anti-bullying programs, which offers schools some direction in determining how extensively it is taught and what specific content is covered (MEXT, 2023). This decentralized approach leaves significant discretion to individual schools. Most of the guidance and encouragement for human rights education initiatives comes from municipal and prefectural boards of education, rather than a top-down national mandate. This system generally allows schools to adapt their human rights programming to local contexts but also results in varying levels of implementation across the country. In the following section, I position my research within the broader academic conversation surrounding human rights education in Japan.

Is Japan's Human Rights Education in Crisis? Reviews from the Field

Assessments of human rights education in Japan frequently focus on two major issues. First, scholars argue that there is an overemphasis on the moral and philosophical aspects of human rights rather than on the legal frameworks and structures that uphold these rights (Fujita, 2022; Ushitora & Akuzawa, 2023). The use of *omoiyari* (compassion) is criticized (Fujita, 2022; Takeda, 2012), claiming it can create hierarchical relationships between the "giver" and "receiver," reinforcing unequal dynamics or that it dilutes the responsibility of the state to guarantee human rights (Kikuchi, 2024). Second, critics assert that human rights education in Japan often prioritizes local issues, such as those related to *Burakumin* discrimination, over

addressing broader, universal human rights frameworks (Takamatsu, 2024). Additionally, it is asserted that Japan's human rights education lacks alignment with Western rights-based models that emphasize individual rights and legal protections, lacking a combative side where citizens learn how to demand their human rights through a variety of mechanisms. However, I argue that these critiques may stem from viewing Japan's culturally influenced differences in human rights education as deficiencies rather than as alternative approaches. For example, as will be discussed further in this paper, Tajima Minami uses compassion and relationship-building to foster interconnectedness and collective responsibility. This contrasts with the Western Enlightenment-influenced emphasis on individualness and separateness, reflecting deeper cultural differences in the interpretation of human rights. By focusing on relationships and connections, care, and interdependence, Japan's human rights education fosters a community-centered approach to human rights education that aims to build solidarity and shared responsibility as a foundation for social justice (Kitayama & Hashizaki, 2018).

Takeda (2012) gets to the heart of the matter when stating that while, "norms of Japanese people's behaviour are formed by duties and obligations, individualistic ideas of human rights may face enormous difficulties in being accepted in society" (page 19). This observation remains relevant today. Supporters of human rights education must acknowledge the ontological implications of prioritizing western outlooks over Japanese perspectives. Although both parties share the same goal in the alleviation of human suffering, their approaches are undergirded in different understandings of the self.

It is also important to mention how crisis language is often employed to advocate for a future aligned with specific political goals. Those who use crisis language often first target education systems as a perceived means to implement change aligned with their political interests. "Crisis" in educational debate has been shown as a global trend, with Japan experiencing the phenomenon in reactions to *yutori kyōiku* (relaxed education) and *yomigaere nihon* (Revive Japan) (Takayama, 2007). In the context of these global debates, the presentation of Western ideas as the solutions to educational crisis contributes to homogenization of education knowledge.

Finally, important for this case study is an understanding of the relationship to power structures within human rights education, as this will help position human rights education at Tajima Minami in later analy-

sis. The power and influence of global human rights discourse are closely linked to a group's proximity to central authority. At the classroom level, Bajaj (2012) found that the distance from power may serve as a key indicator of a human rights education program's ideological orientation through a comparative case study in India. As illustrated in Figure 1, locations that are physically or metaphorically closer to power structures tend to use human rights discourse to maintain the status quo while framing human rights as shared morals through the lens of global citizenship. This perspective aids in understanding the nature of human rights education at Tajima Minami. Tajima Minami's peripheral position provides a unique case study within Japan that not only challenges the prevailing assumptions about human rights education but also disrupts existing uneven power relations in the country (Takayama, 2020).

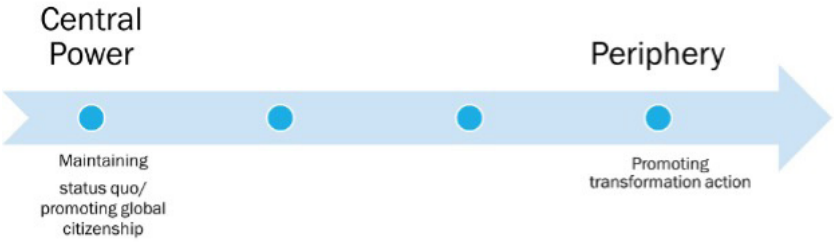

Figure 1. Power Dynamics in Human Rights Education

Conceptual Framework – The Interdependent "Human" in Human Rights

Let's return to the opening line of this article. What can a school do to prevent sad lives? For teachers at Tajima Minami, the answer lies in creating a school atmosphere grounded in human rights education. Understanding how teachers intend to do this requires a closer examination of their core objectives, helping students to live happy lives. Happiness, as a concept, is inherently context dependent. "In Japan, the empirically observed, dominant predictors of a happy person are an orientation toward relationships, a sense of fitting in, relational attunement, and social support" (Uchida & Rappleye, 2024, page 72). Moreover, Uchida and Rappleye (2024) assert that happiness indicators based on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) cultural frameworks fail to account for alternative cultural conceptions of happiness to be recognized. Ranking measures often

reflect values associated with individualism, such as a strong sense of pride, the ability to stand out, having high self-esteem, self-respect and high income (Uchida & Rappleye, 2024). They argue that the culturally mismatched measurement criteria may be able to better explain Japan's relatively low position on global happiness and life satisfaction rankings. In East Asia, the most consistent indicators of happiness are linked the realization of social harmony and relational attunement (Uchida & Rappleye, 2024, page 74). Further, empirical research has shown that in East Asian contexts, social harmony is a more reliable predictor of happiness in East than self-esteem (Endo, 1995; Kitayama & Markus, 2000). When considering members of a culture as a whole, interdependent tendencies and patterns may emerge (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Importantly, the purpose here is not to homogenize members of a cultural group or overlook differences within that group, but rather to illustrate how supposedly neutral expectations are often shaped by distinctly Western cultural values. Framing Tajima Minami's approach within this interdependent framework is essential for a deeper exploration of their human rights education program later. This contextualization allows us to better understand how the school's initiatives both reflect and challenge cultural assumptions about the "human" in human rights education.

What does an interdependent mode entail? In essence, and given space limitations, it refers to how people in certain cultures view themselves as deeply connected to others. Rather than seeing oneself as independent individual, people in interdependent cultures prioritize being in tune with one's surroundings, their relationships and roles within families, communities, and social groups (Kasulis, 2002).

In examining how individuals engage in conscious reflection, a profound sense of belonging within social relationships emerges as a fundamental aspect. From this perspective, the relationship itself becomes the primary unit of conscious reflection, stressing the interconnectedness of individuals within their social contexts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These fundamental connections are based not only on the relationship between oneself and others, but also between everyone and everything. Consequently, a primary imperative of interdependent culture is to actively sustain and nurture this interdependence as vital for both individual and collective well-being. Lebra (1976) suggests that in Japanese society, individuals reach their fullest expression of humanity through their relationships with others. Understanding this conceptual framework is crucial for comprehend-

ing how human rights education is taught at Tajima Minami, as it shapes the approach to fostering relationships and cultivating a nurturing learning environment.

The ability to investigate the underlying developments towards an orientation centered on individualism between the West and Japan (East Asia) in greater depth is further limited by the length of this article. However, a simple example of difference can be given by looking at the way one addresses oneself. "I" is used in the English to refer to oneself, where as in Japan``自分" or *jibun* is common. The Chinese characters of *jibun* literally means "one part of a whole." The Japanese self is formed through matrices of relations to others, and happiness is understood through one's different self's attunement with one's surroundings (Kasulis, 2002; Uchida & Rappleye, 2024). If the individual (and individual rights) is indeed central to the human rights project, the divergence in the concept of self in Japan poses significant cultural challenges for implementation and acceptance of paradigmatic Western human rights within Japanese society.

Case Study: "Education for Living" Program

The case study format allows the research to highlight general phenomenon through a particular situational context, as it exists within the boundaries of one human rights education program. The "Education for Living" program has garnered a significant amount of attention from both popular media (Okubo, 2023) and through a book series (See Figure 2. *Ikuno Minami Elementary School, Educational Practice Series* 1-4, 2022-2024) written by school staff in collaboration with educational scholars from universities in Japan. This research relies on document review and includes translations directly from the book series, school website or other locations. Since the scholarship presented in the *Ikuno Minami Elementary School Educational Practice Series* volumes are written in Japanese for a Japanese audience, it becomes virtually invisible to international English-language scholarship due to its linguistic inaccessibility (Yonezawa, et al., 2018). By bringing Japanese-language scholarship into dialogue with the international human rights education stakeholders through this English-language publication, these differences illustrate "how the process of learning about others can unsettle our existing horizon of knowing and result in a process of unlearning and relearning" (Takayama, 2020, page 62). Finally, as this educational

practice series is written in Japanese for a Japanese readership, it can be assumed that it is situated within domestic policy debates about human rights education in Japan.

Figure 2. Ikuno Minami Elementary School, Educational Practice Series 1-4, 2022-2024

From left to right, the titles of the books in Figure 2 are Vol. 1: *"Education for Living": Develop self-esteem and learn how to value yourself and others*; Vol. 2: *Nurturing the Mind: Japanese Language Education: Developing the "power of words" in small steps*; Vol. 3: *Creating Schools that Make Children's Lives Brighter; Trauma-informed education* and Vol. 4: *Education for Living Complete Lesson Plan Collection: A nine-year educational program that guarantees "safety, security and love."* This study was also foregrounded by approximately ten visits to the school over the past year, including participation in two large-scale open school events highlighting the "Education for Living" program.

Finally, as the school documents and quotes utilized come from already publicly published books, websites, and media sources, the school's name and teacher names will not be anonymized. In the following section, I briefly introduce several aspects of the "Education for Living" program that offer fruitful areas of inquiry.

The School and Program Background

Tajima Minami School, formerly known as "Ikuno Minami," is a municipal combined primary and lower secondary school in Ikuno Ward, Osaka, Japan. In 2022, previously separate primary and lower secondary schools were fully merged, creating a continuous educational environment for students from 1st through 9th grade. This structure is unique compared to the

typical primary "1-6" and lower secondary school "1-3" designations found elsewhere in Japan. The continuity in school environment over the course of nine years is one of the school's strengths, particularly regarding its human rights education program. The extended timeline allows for greater depth and continuity in students' learning, as teachers collaboratively plan and align the human rights education curriculum across the entire period of 1st through 9th grade compulsory education.

Ikuno ward is distinguished by its high population of residents with foreign roots, accounting for 21.6 percent of the ward's population in 2017 (Ono et. al, 2024). Within this foreign population, a significant proportion consists of Korean-Japan residents, who make up approximately 75 percent of the foreigner demographic. Additionally, around 10 percent of students at Tajima Minami School come from local child welfare facilities.

The "Education for Living" program at Tajima Minami School is notable for its interdisciplinary approach and its responsiveness to the specific needs of the student population. The program's curriculum has been developed over time and draws language from fields such as medicine, psychology, welfare studies, and law, reflecting the broad range of issues addressed. See Figure 3 to better understand the historical development of the program over the course of several years. Teachers at the school are actively involved in identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by their students,

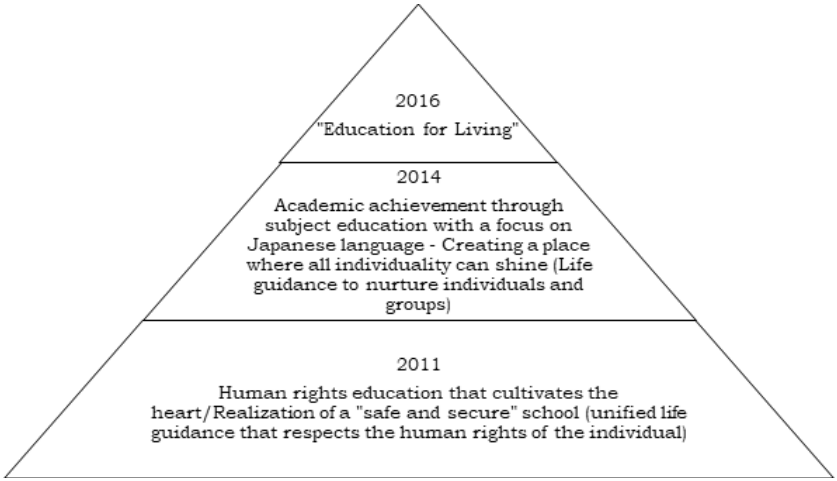

Figure 3. Historical Development of "Education for Living" Program (translated from Ono et al., 2024, p 16.) overview of the chronological order in which the school improved its curriculum.

demonstrating their acute awareness of their students' needs. For example, they frequently consult external experts, purchase relevant materials, and engage in ongoing professional development to deepen their understanding and improve their teaching practices (Osaka Municipal Tajima Minami Elementary School and Tajima Junior High School, 2022).

The implementation of the "Education for Living" program has had a significant impact on student behavior over the past decade. One teacher explains that in 2011, the school faced numerous incidents of violent and disruptive behavior, including physical aggressions, theft, and defiance of authority. These behaviors were notably severe, with instances of students physically attacking each other where in a moment, "as hitting someone in the temple with the speed of a professional boxer, kneeing them in the solar plexus the moment they crouched, grabbing the hair of a staggering opponent and slamming their forehead into the wall, and straddling them while they were down and beating them up" (Saimura, et al., 2022, page 10). However, consistent application of human rights education, along with focused research on Japanese language education and efforts to promote students' academic achievement, has led to a marked improvement in behavior. Today, the school remains committed to providing opportunities for each child to shine in their daily lives and events. While recognizing that they cannot fully eliminate the challenges rooted in broader social backgrounds, the school continues to support students in navigating these difficulties.

Human Rights Education Curriculum

> Bringing a breath of justice into an uncomfortable space where fear could not be completely wiped away was the first step in full-scale human rights education. (Ono, et al., 2024, page 76).

To examine the implementation of the "Education for Living" program at Tajima Minami, I will explore its practical integration within the school. Due to space constraints, this article will not provide an exhaustive description of the entire curriculum. However, I have selected a number of examples to draw attention to how interdependence is integrated into the curriculum and have also translated several figures that present a macro-level overview of Tajima Minami's human rights education program guiding points and goals, as they try to provide a "meaningful learning experience for all children, not just those who have experienced adversity" (Saimura, et al., 2022, page 16).

Table 1. Guiding Steps of Human Rights Education Lessons at Tajima Minami [emphasis added by author] (Ono, et al., 2024, page 78).

Guiding Steps for Human Rights Education Lessons
1. Learn the **facts of discrimination** through **step-by-step** learning.
2. Be able to **distinguish between facts and prejudice** by knowing correctly.
3. **Recognize and respect "differences"** after knowing the facts (history and culture).
4. Discuss **ways to eliminate discriminatory feelings**, not **allow them to occur**, or not **show them in words and actions**, from a problem-solving perspective.

The guiding steps for human rights education lessons in Table 1 provide a structured framework for fostering students' understanding of human rights issues. Teachers emphasize that the sequence of these steps is crucial in helping to bring delicate and timely issues to the surface as human rights concerns. This structured approach allows these concerns to be addressed within an educational context, helping students understand and confront them.

While there is a great deal of variation in the content covered over the course of nine years of the "Education for Living" program, the consistently emphasized goals include: 1) learning how to maintain an appropriate distance so as not to fall into domination or dependency, 2) acquiring the ability to receive help from the right people when in trouble, and 3) forming an identity based on the hope that even if the past cannot be changed, the future can be created. (Osaka Municipal Tajima Minami Elementary School and Tajima Junior High School, page 10). This approach focuses on incremental progress, emphasizing the importance of taking small steps in the learning process. Tajima Minami also established its "8 Pillars of Human Rights Education" based on this school's specific needs. The interdisciplinary breadth of human rights education in the "Education for Living" program can be seen in the goals presented below in Table 2. Emphasis was added to sections to highlight the blanket character of interdependence in the framework.

Table 2. Goals of the "8 Pillars" of Human Rights Education [emphasis added by author] (Translated from Ono, et al., 2024, page 78).

Pillars	Goals
"Education for Living"	To enable everyone to live a safe and secure life, fostering the **ability to care** for **one's own and others'** minds and bodies, learn the knowledge necessary for life, and think about the **connections and distances between people**.
Education for Foreigners living in Japan	In particular, the program aims to learn about the **connection** between the Korean Peninsula and Ikuno Ward, Japan, and to foster a deeper understanding of the region. The program also focuses on the practice of calling people's (real) names and presenting them in practice.
Peace Education	Learn about the history of wars that have occurred in Japan and around the world, as well as the lives, thoughts, and family ties of the people. Also, consider how to **understand each other's positions and maintain a state of peace**.
International Understanding Education	To develop a broad perspective, to **understand** and **respect different cultures** from various countries, and to develop the ability to **live together** with them.
Sex Education (Gender Coexistence Education)	By getting to know one's own body, keeping it clean, and caring for it, one will develop the ability to maintain their health. **Cultivate hearts** with the ability to **care** for one's **own body** as well as the **bodies of your friends**.
Education for Understanding People with Disabilities	Deepen knowledge and understanding of disabilities. Within the class, homeroom teachers will act as intermediaries and work **to build good relationships** between those students with and without disabilities.
Dōwa Education	Learn about the facts of **Buraku** discrimination throughout Japanese history, become aware of its **irrationality**, and develop one's own opinion.
Community Learning	By carrying out learning activities related to the **local area** appropriate to each grade level, students will learn about the area where they were born and raised, develop a sense of cherishing it, and develop a sense of self-affirmation.

Learning Human Rights Education Together – Building Social Capital and Empathy

Human rights education at Tajima Minami emphasizes horizontal relationships, highlighting Kikuchi (2024)'s assertion that human rights education in Japan focuses more on fostering respect and responsibility among members of society than the vertical relationship between the state and its citizens. Central characteristics of the human rights education program at Tajima Minami nurture social cohesion within the school community by facilitating relations, mutual learning and compassion for others. This emphasis on shared objectives, social cohesion and cultivating strong networks aligns with broader concepts of what has been termed 'Social Capital.' The notion

of Social Capital has been discussed by both Putnam (1995) and Fukuyama (1996) as aspects of social structure, such as networks, shared norms, and trust. Putnam highlights how communities with robust Social Capital are better able to resolve challenges through collective action, enhancing the quality of life in democratic societies. Fukuyama stresses that strong social ties promote more cohesive communities and enhance collective action. In a similar way, Tajima Minami's focus on building interpersonal relationships and fostering empathy aligns with these concepts, as "Education for Living" encourages the fostering of relationships in which students recognize their differences, support each other, and learn from each other, and where subject instruction cultivates compassionate hearts and attitudes as they learn together (Ono et al., 2022).

In describing the program, the teachers underscore the need to, "think about the causes and solutions when encountering difficulties from the perspectives of 'environmental adjustment' and 'connections with people'" (Saimura et al., 2022, page 14). By recognizing "connections with people" not only as a solution, but more significantly, the lacking of such connections as a fundamental cause of the challenges faced by their students, the school underscores the complex role that social relationships play in both contributing to and resolving these issues.

Kasulis (2002)'s work on philosophy and intercultural understanding provides insight into the way relationships are perceived in relational societies like Japan. He introduces the concept of the "intimacy model," where connections between individuals extend beyond mere social ties and become the fundamental units of meaning. In this model, relationships are not just about interactions but are essential for shaping internal relation with the surrounding world. This understanding of "intimacy" highlights the deep significance of personal and communal bonds in Japanese culture, positioning them as central to how individuals relate to and make sense of their surroundings.

One significant feature of human rights education at Tajima Minami is the "Thinking about our Real Names Initiative," which encourages students to reflect on their "real name and surname." Many individuals of Korean heritage in Japan are assigned both Japanese and Korean names. The choice of which name to use in daily life often becomes a deeply personal decision, as it carries implications for identity and social perception.

For Korean residents, choosing to use their Korean name may lead to their immediate identification as a foreigner, despite being born and raised in Japan. On the other hand, using their Japanese name may cause a sense of alienation from their heritage, distancing them from the name their family traditionally calls them by. This dilemma highlights the complexities of cultural identity in Japan, where navigating between Japanese and ethnic heritage involves both personal and societal dimensions. The curriculum in "Education for Living" engages students in these issues.

Through learning about the historical context of Korea-Japan relations and the system of dual naming, students are encouraged to discuss their "real names" in a safe and supportive environment. An after-school Korean ethnicity club, which draws participation not only from students of Korean descent but also from those without Korean heritage, further provides opportunities for learning and collaboration. Through these club activities, projects aimed at fostering cooperation with the local community are realized. As part of this program, students are guided to develop a broader sense of human rights, empathy, and intercultural understanding. As one of the teachers reflects, Ms. Ono shares, "Through these various learning experiences, we hope to help students develop a sense of human rights and develop the ability to see the inside of people's thoughts, feelings, and ways of interacting with others, without judging them based on their outside. We also hope that students will learn to live with compassion for themselves by making an effort to polish their insides, rather than only caring about the outside of themselves" (page 94). This educational approach allows students, especially those with Korean heritage, to gradually feel more comfortable revealing their "hidden" identities or discussing their second names. The initiative encourages them to reflect on their real names and the significance behind them.

The Importance of *Omoiyari*

In Japan, *omoiyari* (compassion) is integral to understanding oneself in relation to those around you. The teachers at Tajima Minami are not only aiming to teach students human rights education, but are also teaching them how to live in an interdependent society. Se and Karatsu (2004) see *omoiyari* as, "the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling and to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain, even without being told ver-

bally" (page 276). Developing this foundational skill is an indispensable aim of education. For Ms. Besshō, a dedicated human rights education teacher, "The goal is for children to acquire a sense of various human rights, to accept the differences between themselves and others, and to develop a heart that can value the feelings of others" (Ono, et al., 2024, page 82). Teachers at Tajima Minami have successfully integrated aspects of human rights education into a program that emphasizes compassion, teaching all students how to be empathetic in a world where discrimination stems from a lack of compassion. While other studies on human rights education in Japan have mentioned the strong focus on *omoiyari* in the classroom and have offered valuable insights (Kikuchi, 2024; Kitayama & Hashizaki, 2018), they do not fully capture and position its central importance within Japanese culture. In a society rooted on the relational self, *omoiyari* is a vital skill for maintaining harmonious relationships. When harmony is achieved, it contributes significantly to an overall sense of well-being. In a different volume, Ms. Besshō elaborates again on the centrality of *omoiyari* stating:

> "Education for Living" was born from the idea of what knowledge children should know and what skills they should acquire in order to survive and protect their hearts. We believe that by learning about various human rights issues and *feeling an understanding and empathy for people* [emphasis added] in various positions, children can develop even stronger hearts. We hope that an environment where children can learn both, rather than just one or the other, will become more widespread. (Osaka Municipal Tajima Minami Elementary School and Tajima Junior High School, page 27)

This quote highlights how human rights education at Tajima Minami heavily relies on both knowledge development and emotional development. Learning about human rights issues in isolation may lead to theoretical understanding, but without empathy, this knowledge lacks the emotional depth needed to motivate meaningful change. By fostering empathy, the "Education for Living" ensures that students can relate to the experiences of others, making human rights more than just an abstract concept. Human rights education becomes a lived, felt responsibility where *omoiyari* is what transforms the recognition of human rights from a legal or social framework into a personal and emotional commitment to justice. After discussing how the school fosters interpersonal relationships, the next focus will be on the

connection between these relationships with students' ability to seek help when needed.

Sōdan Centers – Seeking Aid, Protection or Sympathy

The heart of human rights education at Tajima Minami is the emphasis on building relationships between students, between students and teachers, and between the school and the community. When these connections are established, students are taught both where to seek advice and how to be supportive through *sōdan* (consultation); not only helping them navigate difficult situations themselves but teaching them to be a trusted source of support for their friends. According to educators at Tajima Minami, a tragic case significantly motivated the decision to concentrate on *sōdan*:

> The background to the development of this program was the shock of the Atsugi City 5-year-old boy who died of starvation (May 30, 2014). In that case, the father who caused the 5-year-old boy to die of starvation was a single father with an intellectual disability. He also grew up with a mother who had a mental illness. If the father himself had been able to recognize his own disability and *seek the necessary help* [emphasis added], perhaps this incident would not have happened. (Saimura, et al., 2022, page 14)

For teachers at Tajima Minami, this tragic situation of child abuse underscored the importance of recognizing the need for help and fostering community connections for students, teachers and parents. The blame of this case did not focus solely on the tragic actions or non-actions of the individuals involved but was interpreted as the consequence of an inability to be dependent on others, to seek aid or protection. Students reviewed this case in class, where they learned definitions of abuse, laws, and about the counseling agencies and welfare systems that can help. This case demonstrates how fostering empathy and reliance on others is meant to prevent such tragedies, bringing students back to the values of support networks and social services.

For children, it can be difficult to share personal challenges, especially at a young age. Teachers play a critical role in bridging that gap, providing a model of trust and care that encourages students to open up and disclose the troubles they face. At Tajima Minami, specific lessons on children's rights

encourage students to reflect on what they can do when their rights are not respected or when facing challenging problems. For example, over several lessons, third-grade students learn about children's rights, rank these rights based on their own perceived importance, review real-world examples of rights violations, and discuss where and how to seek assistance. Using case studies, they identify appropriate sources of help for different situations. The school teaches students they can seek support from parents, teachers, friends, trusted adults, or institutions like schools, police stations, and consultation centers. And while difficult subjects are discussed openly in class, the school also utilizes a "Problem Counseling School Post" box, which allows students to submit letters about problems they are experiencing. This has surfaced cases on issues like bullying, gender identity, neglect, and refusing to attend school. This proactive approach turns learning into tangible, real-world support systems for students in need.

Ms. Ono, a key figure in the development of the "Education for Living" program writes that

> Rather than avoiding children because they are in the midst of problems, we need to ensure that they know that there are places in the world that will help them and people who will protect them. We also want the students to experience and feel firsthand in class that there are peers who are seriously thinking about solving the problems that they have been carrying alone and that they cannot solve on their own. This is what we most want to teach in our 'Education for Living' lessons. (Saimura, et. al., 2022, page 16)

These bonds help develop emotional resilience, a key part of *omoiyari* (compassion), where students learn that connections lead to stronger hearts in the pursuit of human rights. Consistent with the sense of interdependency, Kasulis (2002) suggests that "Only when we enter a relationship for the creative aspect of the relationship itself are we on the way to intimacy" (page 44). The relationships between teachers, students, and peers are not just a means to an end (being able to rely on someone else) but are valuable for their own sake (relationship as objective). The school nurtures a sense of shared responsibility, encouraging children to view others' problems as their own. This holistic approach to human rights education teaches students that emotional support and reliance on others are integral to individual and collective well-being.

Lastly, teachers aim to instill in students the idea that their experiences, no matter how difficult, are valid and that their classmates and society are there to help:

> We need to raise all children to turn their attention to their friends and society, and to think that happy and sad things are not just someone else's problem. Children who were not cared for as babies, children whose rights were not respected. Children who should not be told the truth about their background... We need to be considerate and continue to carry out practices that test our resolve. But the children are watching closely to see if their teacher will accept them for who they are. (Ono et al., 2024, page 16)

By modeling this acceptance and fostering an environment of mutual care, Tajima Minami's program highlights how human rights education starts with the recognition that no one is truly alone in facing life's challenges. As such, we see the fostering of Social Capital as a return to the community: a revisiting of the need for connections, networks and social services to prevent the terrible things that occurred in this case.

Making the Local Center

Decisions regarding the planning and implementation of human rights education are made at the local level, allowing for greater flexibility in addressing specific community needs. In the interdependent mode, individual actions are understood to be bound within specific situational contexts, a configuration of relationships that each person has established (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is important to foreground how human rights education is tailored within these situational contexts to address local issues in a localized way, as seen in Tajima Minami's approach. This school incorporates what is referred to as *Osaka-rashiku*—an Osaka-style approach—into its lessons. At Tajima Minami the term *Osaka-rashiku* refers to lessons that are deeply embedded in the local context, using culturally specific "Osaka-style" humor and communication styles unique to the region. These lessons reflect local experiences and values that cannot be easily found in standardized textbooks.

In this localized approach to human rights education, educators in Tajima Minami work to address the local "unfreedoms" that hinder their students from forming relationships, seeking help, or connecting with oth-

ers. The "unfreedoms" being addressed manifest in specific local challenges faced by the students. Drawing on Nancy (1993)'s concept of freedom as understood as not "… a philosophical absolute … but a relational and contextual practice that takes shape in opposition to whatever is locally and ideologically conceived as unfreedom" (Nancy, 1993 in Brown, 2020, page 6), in the context of Ikuno Ward, where students face specific challenges related to socio-economic conditions, cultural heritage, and discrimination, teachers aim to restore students' freedom by equipping them with the tools to reconnect with others. This is particularly important in areas where marginalized groups live. Through human rights education, teachers help students build social relationships and a sense of belonging, which are viewed as critical components of their freedom.

The teachers at Tajima Minami argue that this model of human rights education is applicable to all students, not just those who have experienced trauma. The ultimate goal is to foster happiness among students by strengthening their sense of self and their ability to form meaningful connections. A teacher's message encapsulates this adaptive, localized approach to education:

> There is no manual for "education for living." Although there is a basic framework, the issues that arise vary depending on the municipality and the circumstances of the area. As society and the situation of the children constantly change, the content of education must also evolve. The essence of 'Education for Living' is teaching students how to take care of themselves—physically, mentally, and emotionally—so they can take care of others as well. (Saimura, et al., 2022, page 18).

This perspective underscores how much value teachers place on the responsiveness to the local context and the evolving needs of students in creating effective human rights education programs.

Discussion

The study of school systems is, in and of itself, an analysis of the global landscape of national educational frameworks, where "the grammar of schooling is global" (Baker and LeTendre, 2005, page 9). This inquiry into the practice of human rights education occurs at the intersection of domestic (local and national) and global contexts, where private, non-governmental, and

governmental institutions engage with onto-cultural phenomena. Japan presents a unique opportunity for study, not only due to its epistemic and ontological differences but also due to its particular organization of human rights education and the responsibilities allocated to local municipal boards of education. This study has raised critical questions about the direction of human rights education in Japan. Are critics attempting to reshape Japan's human rights education to align more closely with individualistic models to promote human rights-based agendas? Instead, why not leverage the strengths of Japan's interdependent social fabric to effect social change? This approach may provide more culturally resonant human rights education programming that reflects the unique ontological dynamics in Japanese society.

The type of human rights education we witness being taught at Tajima Minami counters neoliberal market logics that emphasize individualism and competition. By fostering on community connections, the program demonstrates how human rights education can be a collective endeavor. The "Education for Living" program exemplifies how Japanese teachers can localize human rights education from an individualistic focus to a more interdependent orientation. The intersection of education and human rights education lies in the space where those that experience discrimination can find solidarity with allies. In this way, human rights education is being used not to isolate an individual, but to bring in those in the periphery in commonality and connection with others. This may be a space where the convergence of Western and Japanese practices creates hybridity, as human rights education is used within Japanese ontological boundaries. As Ms. Besshō states, "in the small society of the elementary school, children should learn the importance of justice prevailing." (Osaka Municipal Tajima Minami Elementary School and Tajima Junior High School, page 25)

By employing a hermeneutics of hope, this research reveals how investigations can become entangled in suspicion, losing the ability to illuminate success stories that are essential for fruitful dialogue. By highlighting the school's focus on relationships, scholars may feel empowered to celebrate the unique interdependent modes found in their visions of human rights education.

I finish this paper with an image that is not uncommon in Japanese schools (Figure 4). 'Sports Day' activities at Japanese schools often feature impressive human pyramids, where students demonstrate teamwork and

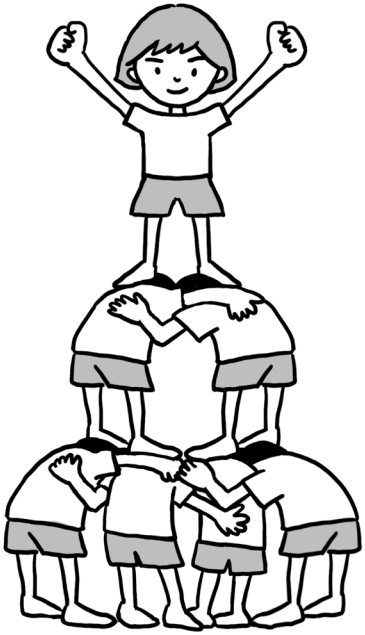

Figure 4 - How Interdependence Supports Independence (illustration by Nami Shimada)

cooperation by stacking themselves in creative formations. In this visual, the students at the bottom symbolize interdependence, providing a strong foundation that supports the individual at the top, who represents independence. This dynamic illustrates that true independence is achieved through the strength of relationships and community, highlighting the idea that independence means increasing the number of people you depend on (Kumagaya, 2024).

While the relationship between interdependence and independence is often characterized by tension, viewed as oppositional concepts, "Education for Living" illustrates that students can achieve personal growth and self-actualization within interdependent frameworks. By focusing on interdependent possibilities, this study sought to contribute to alternative approaches for addressing human rights abuses and protecting the vulnerable. Understanding Japan's approach to human rights education is imperative for tackling social issues where students navigate the ontological complexities of individualism and interdependency. Human rights education programs that incorporate cultural traditions that value harmony, community, and respect for others contrast with Western models that prioritize legal frameworks or individual rights. Human rights education teaching in Japan reflects an interdependent self-construal, teaching interdependence with the surrounding environment. Rather than being seen as lagging behind Western models due to a lack of alignment with legalistic or rights-based frameworks, this case offers alternative pathways for understanding and promoting human rights. Bringing these two types of human rights education into dialogue may create opportunities to strengthen both approaches, leading to a more nuanced understanding of human rights education. By examining how this school localized its version of human rights education, we are presented

with counterbalances to dominant global human rights discourse, opening new avenues for culturally sensitive approaches to human rights education.

By consistently reinforcing that students are not alone and encouraging them to reach out to *sōdan* centers, Tajima Minami's teachers foster relationships as ends in themselves rather than means to an end. In doing so, they recognize that by promoting an interdependent mode, they are directly contributing to the happiness and well-being of their students. This type of human rights education offers alternative perspectives on how interdependence can serve to support independence. For how well intended internationally agreed-upon human rights initiatives are, if their push towards schools globally is not inclusive of local alternatives and sensibilities, these initiatives themselves may become sources of hegemonic power.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the exploration of the "Education for Living" program at a school in Osaka provided critical insights into how human rights education can be effectively actualized within the unique cultural and social landscape of Japan. By addressing the foundational question of what schools can do to prevent sad lives, this inquiry highlights the importance of fostering interdependence and building strong relationships among students.

Alternative conceptualizations of human rights and human rights education receive limited attention. The "Education for Living" program's emphasis on empathy, compassion, and horizontal connections among individuals not only reflects the specific practices rooted in Japanese culture but also offers valuable lessons for educators globally. As this case study demonstrates, engaging with local contexts and traditions allows for a more nuanced understanding of human rights education, encouraging educators to consider alternative models that promote the well-being of students. Ultimately, the "Education for Living" program serves as a vital example of how schools can play an active role in cultivating not only knowledgeable citizens but also compassionate individuals who are equipped to contribute positively to their communities.

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Key Concepts for Understanding Global Citizenship Education in Japan

Thomas Fast

> "It is expected that citizens' perception of the world beyond Japan will always be refracted through the prism of their Japaneseness."
>
> UNESCO, 2017, page 112

A Need for Global Talent

Since the 1990s, Japan has endured a slow and gradual decline in economic power and political influence in the world. Of course, this is the opinion of the nation's leaders. From an international perspective, Japan is still a global force with the world's fourth largest economy (only recently surpassed by Germany), a solid reputation for peace and stability (despite having dropped from 9th to 17th on the Global Peace Index between 2023 and 2024), and entrusted as a nation with the perhaps unique ability to safely and successfully host the Olympics during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In other words, Japan is in a position that is doubtless envied and admired by many other nations. Still, the March 11th triple disaster of 2011 was a major blow, both economically and psychologically. To recover, Japan's leaders realized that the population could not continue to turn inward, to be simply an island nation, as it had in the past, but to reach out to others and participate more in the global community.

Scholars have drawn parallels between the post 2011 period and the beginning of the Meiji Era. In both cases, Japan has been described as a "nation at risk" and in need of "catching up" with the outside world (Rappleye and Kariya, 2011). Initially this was in reference to the West. More recently, keeping up with neighboring China and Korea have become the political and economic imperative. To resolve the situation, the Japanese Business Federation (*Keidanren*) has called for 'global *jinzai*' (global human resourc-

es), urging the Ministry of Education (MEXT) to foster students with critical thinking, creative thinking (problem solving) and communication skills, particularly in English (Tsuneyoshi, 2019).

Japanese universities have their own interests for attracting and cultivating global students, chiefly as a means to improve their global rankings, as determined by organizations such as Times Higher Education (THE). Japanese institutions have responded to the call with the creation of new "global" programs offering increased study abroad opportunities, additional courses in English, and other approaches to internationalization. But, MEXT guidance on fostering global *jinzai* has been vague at best, which has led to a lack of unified vision on how to foster global graduates at Japanese universities (Hammond and Keating, 2017).

Additionally, while the pandemic expanded opportunities for virtual exchange via collaborative online international learning (COIL), it almost wiped out the study abroad. From 2020 to 2022 Japan's borders were all but closed, making it very hard for international students to come and for Japanese students to go. Since 2022, there has been a greatly increased desire for "revenge travel" however, the study abroad industry, which lost many of its hosting organizations, language schools, etc., has been slow to catch up with demand. Opportunities for intercultural interaction, whether virtual or real (preferably the latter), are vital if Japan is to foster the global talent it needs.

Top Global University (TGU) project

In an effort to reclaim its globally competitive edge, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) launched the Top Global University (TGU) project in 2014. Among its goals were to educate students to become global *jinzai* (global human resources), seen by leaders in government and the business community as essential for Japan to maintain its presence and leadership in the world. In response, TGUs and other Japanese institutions have opened new "global" faculties offering internationalized curricula and English Medium of Instruction (EMI) for local and international students.

Global human resource education can be seen within the larger field of global citizenship education (GCED). Scholars have proposed that global citizens have a particular set of competencies (cultural knowledge, communication skills, open-mindedness, etc.) that allow them to better understand

how the world works, and to take actions that bring benefits beyond the region where they were born or reside. By educating students in these "global competencies" they can become global citizens. But the global human resource model is often criticized by GCED scholars as being too nationalistic. As global human resources, their knowledge, traits and skills are to be used primarily for the benefit of their nation, not the global community. Researchers stress the need for GCED to foster more transformative global citizens who utilize their powers for the good of humanity and the planet.

An investigation of the literature of GCED and the ideologies of established education organizations such as UNESCO, Oxfam, International Baccalaureate (IB), the OECD, etc., as well as a thorough review of recent GCED literature from Japan, and a document review of global frameworks from Japanese universities, which participated in the Go Global Japan (GGJ) Project from 2012 to 2016, revealed a number of issues affecting GCED in Japanese universities.

According to the literature, uninformed attempts at fostering global human resources may actually perpetuate existing regional and global imbalances. Japanese universities should heed the advice of GCED researchers in Japan and overseas to train transformative global citizens who are equipped to address not only the concerns of their nation, but those of the planet as a whole.

Definitions, Key Concepts and Criticisms

Described and critiqued below are the key concepts of Japanese education that most factor into Japanese GCED, including global *jinzai*. Some are directly linked to GCED world-wide, others less so, but still influential in that they promote the development of what can be considered 21st century global competencies.

1. Zest for Life

"Zest for Life" (*ikiru chikara*) has been the driving concept behind Japanese education since 1998 (Kimura and Tatsuno, 2017). It is based on the Japanese principle of *chi-toku-tai* (academic prowess, moral, physical and mental health). The promotion of 21st century competencies such as: communication, collaborative thinking and problem solving have also been incorporated into the Zest for Life ideology, along with the promotion of

the "Japanese spirit" (*Nippon damashi*), and "the power of being human" (*ningen ryoku*).

Lacking a more detailed definition from MEXT, Sato criticizes these concepts as vague even in Japanese, claiming they are "empty but somehow nevertheless carry a clear implication that education should be implemented with a nationalistic mind. These confused and deceptive words have occupied a dominant place in the leading canon of educational reform for nearly two decades" (2011, p. 236).

Despite significant reforms to the Course of Study (指導要領) on the part of the government, and some local examples of successful implementations of Zest for Life, 21st century skills and other recent ideologies, Japanese education has changed little in the last twenty years, primarily due to entrenched policies focused on high stakes entrance exams, and teachers being overworked and under trained in how to teach new concepts to their students (Kimura and Tatsuno, 2017). This continues to be the case in post pandemic Japan, where teachers' work life balance has been further blurred by their increased ability to work from home.

2. Global Jinzai

A key concept at the university level is global *jinzai* or global human resources. The definition for 'global *jinzai*' originally appeared in a 2010 Report by the Global Human Resource Development Committee of the Industry-Academia Partnership for Global Human Resource Development, which

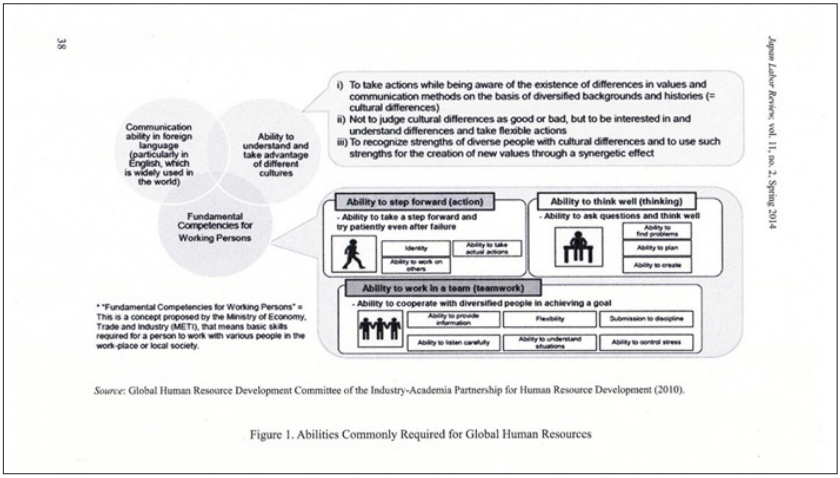

Figure 1. MEXT Global Human Resource Framework

was made up of members of both MEXT and the Ministry of Economics Trade and Industry (METI). The definition is summarized in terms of abilities: Communication ability in foreign language (particularly English); Fundamental Competencies for Working Persons; and Ability to understand and "take advantage" of different cultures.

The Japanese version of the report has since been taken down from the MEXT website, thus we are left with the English above. It is unclear whether it was just a poor translation or whether the authors actually meant that global *jinzai* should "take advantage of different cultures." A 2012 follow up report by the Council on the Promotion of Human Resources for Global Development updated the definition of global *jinzai* and the controversial phrase is no longer present. According to the 2012 document, global *jinzai* possess three factors:

> Factor I: Linguistic and communication skills. In particular the report noted communication skills for travel abroad, skills for interaction, business conversation and paperwork, linguistic skills for bilateral negotiation, and linguistic skills for multilateral negotiation.
>
> Factor II: Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, as sense of responsibility and mission.
>
> Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese.

Below each of these factors is described in more detail with critiques from independent scholars and educational organizations such as the Asia Society, UNESCO and the OECD.

2.1. English Ability

Factor I above describes the need for Japanese university students to acquire English, particularly for business communication purposes. Scholars overwhelmingly agree with the policy of emphasizing English education in Japan, although its implementation has been criticized for decades. Since the 1960s there have been recurring attempts at promoting communicative language teaching (CLT) over grammar-based instruction, without much success. According to the EF English Proficiency Index of 2023, Japan was

ranked 87th of one hundred thirteen nations included in the survey. It was 53rd in 2019 (EF, n.d.). Now with the call for global human resources CLT is being encouraged again. As a former Spanish teacher from the US with over twenty-five years experience teaching English in Japan, I agree that major changes still need to be made to the education K-12 system to make Japanese students more communicative in English, particularly via pre-service English teacher education programs.

Tsuneyoshi describes the importance of English as "central to the definition of global talent in the Japanese context" (2019, p. 30). Indeed, for many in Japan, English ability is mistakenly seen as the primary, even *sole measure* of global competence (Shimizu, 2019). Still, some disagree with English being promoted as the *only* foreign language that matters:

> Skewing foreign or second language curricula almost exclusively towards English threatens to exacerbate rather than reconcile divisions both within and between societies. In practice, the spread of proficiency in English, while opening up a world of opportunity for the privileged, can widen the gulf in experience and sympathy that separates them from the mass of their compatriots. At the same time, promoting the learning of English while neglecting the study of Asian foreign languages (or those of domestic 'minorities') can foster amongst elites habits of invidious comparison with 'the West', while leaving them largely ignorant of the culture or outlook of their closest neighbours."
>
> UNESCO (authored by Mochizuki and Vickers), 2017, p. 26

UNESCO warns against English education practices that are accessible to elites only, and reminds us of the importance of learning other foreign languages, particularly those of neighboring countries. I agree that English is an important tool for my students, but it should not be the sole measure of their competence as global citizens. Nor should it be the only foreign language offered to them in lower and upper secondary schools. In order for Japanese to identify more with their neighbors, both at a national as well as at the community level (my next-door neighbor is Korean), more institutions need to offer languages such as Korean and Mandarin as electives at least. Korean pop culture has been continuously gaining in popularity in Japan over the past twenty years and would be a popular subject for young Japanese that could help to mend the past cultural divisions between

the two nations. And with China's growing influence in the region and the world, Mandarin could prove to be as useful as English.

2.2. Employability

Factor II describes the 'human resources' aspect of global *jinzai.* Listed are the Japanese business sector's most desirable qualities of a loyal employee (Yonezawa, 2014). In Figure 1 above we can see such "Fundamental Competencies for Workers" as abilities to think, take action, and work as a team -- the latter including such sub-skills as abilities "to listen carefully," "understand situations," "control stress" and "submit to discipline." The 2012 follow up report also articulates a "sense of responsibility and mission."

Many have argued that the MEXT global human resource model focuses too much on employability. Hammond and Keating (2017) see the policy as a "reflection of a widespread corporatization and co-option of higher education by a neoliberal agenda" on the part of the Japanese government (p. 17) and add that overemphasizing employability could detract from universities being able to develop "critical, socially engaged citizens" (p. 5).

While there are similarities, I do not agree that global *jinzai* are not an exact copy of western neo-liberal ideals. For example, "submitting to discipline" is a conservative Japanese requisite for workers. Western neo-liberals might actually encourage workers to think more critically, creatively and have opinions that differ from their superiors, if they ultimately benefit the company.

Yamamoto et al, observe both nationalist and internationalist agendas being brought together: "the concept of global *jinzai* prioritizes skills that are regarded as necessary in the global business environment. The standpoint is both economical and political. Japan needs globally competent human resources to ensure that the nation remains a leading economic power, especially next to its East Asian neighbours" (2016, 61-62). Ishikawa defends the competitive nature of Japan's global education ideology as being necessitated by the many domestic problems the country faces, e.g., aging population, declining birth rates and shrinking workforce (2011). In their 2017 Asia Society report, Kimura and Tatsuno acknowledge that employability is important for survival in a globalizing and uncertain world, but urge Japanese institutions to "think about students' freedom of choice, not only fostering students to contribute to Japanese society but at the same time… cultivate global citizens to 'act for a sustainable world'" (p. 34).

Like Yamamoto et al, I also see nationalist and globalist elements in the government's promotion of global *jinzai*. And I agree with Ishikawa, Kimura and Tatsuno that employability is a priority for my Japanese university students. Still, it would be in the nation's best interests to educate their global *jinzai* with skills that could be used not only to get good jobs but could also help Japan build relations with its neighbors. As Bregman claims in his critically acclaimed book, Humankind, we must "think in win win scenarios" because it is not in human nature to be "locked in competition with one another." (2021, p. 387)

2.3. Cultural Understanding and Japanese Identity

Factor III of the global human resource framework was initially described as the "ability to understand and take advantage of different cultures." Perhaps noting how this might be negatively interpreted, the Council on the Promotion of Global Human Resources 2012 follow up report describes Factor III as, "Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese." Yonezawa and Shimmi (2019) observe that Factor III contains elements of similar international concepts, such as global leadership, intercultural or global competence and global citizenship. Global leadership emphasizes the power of individuals to influence people of different cultures. Intercultural/global competence refers to Deardorff's knowledge, traits and skills (2012) that allow a person to communicate effectively between cultures for the purpose of mutual understanding as opposed to power over others. Global competence also includes identity of self within a global context. And while having a strong sense of cultural identity is generally a positive, Yonezawa and Shimmi explain that

> social responsibility and global civic engagement, which are associated with international equity and sustainable development, are not directly relevant to the current discussion of global human resources in Japan. In addition, the current definition of Factor III stresses national identity as Japanese that may sometimes contradict identity as a global citizen. (2019, p. 46)

In other words, strongly identifying as a Japanese global *jinzai* may actually conflict with being a global citizen, particularly if you are seeking to "take advantage" of people of other cultures for the benefit of your own.

In 2020, Chen conducted a study of global citizenship education in the national curricula of Japan and China. The Japanese K-12 educational guidelines promoted the following: Communication, critical thinking, and sympathy for others (*omoiyari*). Loving the nation (land, history, customs and culture) was also clearly stated, as was the promotion of an awareness of "being Japanese." (*nihonjin toshite no jikaku*). According to Chen, "such clear and repeated expressions indicate that what the guidelines aim to develop is the loyal character rather than the reflexive attitude towards the nation, though the two do not necessarily stand against the other in theory" (p. 351). On a less critical note, Chen also observed that commitment to a just world order is taught in Japan via Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), i.e. developing a sustainable society "from local to international." But "the view of justice in an international context is completely lost." (Chen, 2020, p. 351).

Japan is not alone in its promotion of the nation before the planet. Chen found Japan and China's curricular guidelines to be similar in that respect, and other scholars have noted the strong nationalist ideologies of Asian neighbor nations (Haffner et al, 2009). According to a 2017 UNESCO Report on the state of GCED in Asia, all twenty-two countries covered in the study promoted an overwhelmingly nationalistic model of citizenship. The same can be said for many countries outside Asia as well. According to UNESCO, in Japan "from primary level, students are expected to acquire 'love' for 'their country' and a commitment to the development of state and society" (2017, p. 79). Hammond and Keating (2017) point out that teaching a love for the nation is nothing new in Japan. Prior to WWII, students were educated to become loyal *shinmin* (subjects) to the Emperor. In the post war years, they have been trained to become loyal *shimin* (citizens).

The UNESCO report also contained findings on Japanese school curricula, which had been examined for concepts associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7: gender equality, peace and global citizenship. They found that these SDG topics were "widely absent" from national education policies and documents analyzed. National identity was the most commonly identified concept in the curricula with relatively low emphasis on humanity as a whole. Japan was not alone in this regard:

> In most countries surveyed, an intense and often chauvinistic curricular emphasis on moulding national identity poses an acute challenge to a vision of citizenship education based

> on 'universal values' (e.g. human rights and cultural diversity). SDG 4.7 envisages preparing learners to live together on a planet under pressure, promoting tolerance and understanding both within and between nation-states. However, curricula in many Asian countries uncritically endorse strongly ethno-nationalist identities, often effectively reducing minorities or migrants to second-class status. Narratives of foreign hostility or inferiority are widely used to bolster national loyalties. Despite scattered references to the desirability of a 'global' outlook, fostering a strong national 'selfhood' takes precedence — as curricula prepare students for an international arena seen as characterised by inveterate competition."
>
> UNESCO, 2017, p. XX

Thus, it appears based on the research done by UNESCO and other scholars, that nationalism is alive and well in the curricula of not only Japan, but its neighbors and a growing number of countries in the world. As we see in the Olympics every four years, it is possible to promote national pride and celebrate being part of a global community at the same time. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive, although I agree with Yonezawa and Shimmi that stressing national identity can be in contradiction with being a global citizen. If Japan and its neighbors are serious about achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, then the government needs to make a greater effort at implementing SDG 4.7 and replace some of its nationalism with more universal values.

3. Japanese Exceptionalism

Japanese exceptionalism is another recurring theme in the literature of GCED in Japan. In fact there is an entire book on the subject, Globalization and Japanese "Exceptionalism" in Education (Edited by Tuseyoshi, 2019). It is a loaded term that can be associated with both Japan's unique successes and failures, as well as more questionable references to the so-called uniqueness of the Japanese themselves (Tsuneyoshi, 2019). In terms of successes, some scholars point to Japan as 'exceptional' for having developed a highly successful education system that serves as an example to non-Western and non-anglophone countries. On the other hand, Japanese institutions are also regarded by some as 'exceptional' failures in internationalization and English education.

Regarding the government's call for global human resources with a strong "Japanese identity," Roesgaard interprets this and other articulations (particularly those in Japan's Moral Education Guidelines) as defensive reactions on the part of educational policy makers who are seeking to bolster students' sense of self and *aikokushin* (patriotism). To Roesgaard this is a form of "cultural immunology" or an attempt at "preserving what are considered the fundamental cultural values for a Japanese citizen" in the face of mounting globalization (2011, p. 94).

Putting aside for now, the defensive, negative associations with Japanese exceptionalism, obviously, Japanese can be proud of aspects of their society and culture that *are* exceptional, such as the education system. Based on nationalized exams and other measures, such as PISA exam scores of Japan's fifteen year olds, or the global scientific contributions of Japan's universities, it is true that Japanese institutions could be seen as models and alternatives to better known Western (particularly English language) institutions.

Still, Japanese schools and universities need not be used to bolster patriotism or nationalism. Sato argues that the Japanese government's "neo conservative policies" have negatively influenced current understandings of global citizenship. The country's Fundamental Law of Education, which had been the cornerstone of democratic education since 1947, was revised in 2006. "The three canons of 'Education for World Peace, 'education for democracy' and 'education for equality,' were replaced by 'education for national interests,' 'education for competition' and 'education according to different abilities'" (Sato, 2011, p. 229).

How these mandates influenced local institutions varied, but in the private high school where I taught at the time, the effects were immediate. Japanese national flags went up in every classroom, and students and teachers were required to sing the national anthem at assemblies. Prior to 2006, patriotic displays like these had been much less systematically enforced. Curricular changes were also encouraged if not required. In the English course, I was advised to have students read and discuss Nitobe Inazo's *Bushido* (originally written in English) with all first year students before they studied abroad in Australia and Canada. The Principal thought it would be especially meaningful if an American taught them about the "beautiful" (*utsukushii*) aspects of Japanese culture in English. Ultimately, I declined mainly because the text was beyond their level, and it would have taken too much time out of their already busy schedules. I was also instructed to

teach them how to explain why whaling is important to Japanese culture in English to their future host families. I admit my situation might not have been the norm. Still, the Fundamental Law of Education reforms were welcomed by the more conservative Japanese educators at the time.

In the 2009 book, Japan's Open Future: An Agenda for Global Citizenship, Haffner et al argue that while Japan is surrounded by countries that also have quite strong nationalist ideologies, it is still in Japan's best interests to adopt more internationally open and friendly policies, especially with its neighbors. They argue that Japan should embrace a "global-is-Asian" approach, using its exceptional powers and close ties with the West, to become a champion of Asian interests with the goal of regional stability and prosperity. With Prime Minister Kishida, Japan has remarkably improved its ranking on the Commitment to Development Index to 15th out of 40 countries (up from 21st under Prime Minister Abe). So this is a sign of hope for the future.

With regard to Japanese exceptionalism within higher education, Japanese scholars such as Tsuneyoshi (2019) and Ishikawa (2011), take a somewhat defensive stance. They rightfully point out the difficulties of internationalization, particularly for non-Anglophone universities. In addition to the language barriers, institutions have to deal with the imposition of Western educational practices and ideals and standards (Shimizu, 2019, Tsuneyoshi, 2019).

Japanese exceptionalism is also a controversial topic in Japanese English language education. A 2017 MEXT report claimed that a primary reason to promote English is so that students will better understand traditional, Japanese culture and communicate it to foreigners. Aspinall writes, "the perceived problem is that Japanese people when they talk to foreigners are letting themselves and their country down in two main ways: They are failing to communicate effectively and clearly; and they are failing to present the proper `Japanese face` to the outside world" (2013, p.7).

Of course, there is a reasonable argument for why Japanese culture content should be taught in English: Topics relating to Japanese society, history, culture and religion are likely to come up when speaking to non-Japanese. However, the MEXT report also contains the underlying perception that Japanese students have a lack of interest or knowledge of their own culture, and need to have it reinforced before communication with foreigners should take place. And then there is the more sinister concern that exposure

to a foreign language and culture may tarnish young Japanese students' own sense of themselves as *Japanese*. This is reminiscent of Roesegaard's claims regarding "cultural immunology." As Aspinall writes, "the conundrum for education policy-makers is how to put in place mechanisms whereby Japanese students can become good at English while still remaining 'immune' to deeper cultural contagion" (Aspinall, 2011, p. 138).

This is a conundrum that I believe English teachers in Japan need not worry about. Japanese students should be exposed to new cultures in their English classes and they should also be given the chance to *reflect* on their own culture and values. After all, the ability to reflect on one's self is a global competency (IBO, n.d.). Of course, they may discover aspects of a foreign culture that they prefer over their own, for example my female students might be envious of the fact that women enjoy greater equity with men in the US than they do in Japan, which is currently ranked 118th in the world on the Gender Gap Index (nippon.com, June, 21st, 2024). But they might also be revolted to learn about American gun violence, making them greatly appreciate the safety and security of life in Japan. Thus, students should be allowed to learn about other cultures in English, as well as their own, but with a critical eye. And in so doing, perhaps even develop a stronger sense of their own cultural identity.

4. Multiculturalism

Another common GCED theme is multiculturalism or cultural diversity. Education in Japan promotes awareness of cultural diversity. But it is recognized as existing mostly outside the nation and not within. Cultural diversity "tends to be oversimplified as differences between foreign and national cultures, with the former being portrayed as heterogeneous to the presumably homogeneous latter" (Chen, 2020, p. 350). A failure to acknowledge the significant numbers of immigrants living in Japan, translates to even less perceived need to teach multiculturalism. According to UNESCO, multiculturalism is discussed in Japanese textbooks primarily in terms of regional differences among Japanese within Japan (e.g. traditions, food, festivals, etc.), although specific references to other cultures living in Japan (e.g., Brazilians, Chinese, Koreans, etc.) do receive mention in some secondary school civics texts.

UNESCO found that while respect for other countries is taught, respect for other cultures within Japan goes unmentioned. According to Shimizu,

a global education must "offer courses that prepare students to engage in successful, peaceful, and effective interactions with the people of diverse backgrounds. To achieve this ideal of coexistence within a multicultural environment, individuals must be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and a profound sense of understanding of world cultures and situations in order to respond in ways that are seen as appropriate, non-threatening, and respectful" (2019, p. 95). Making young Japanese more aware of the many cultural groups that are here contributing to Japanese society would be a good start.

5. Peace Education

Peace education, an important concept in global education, is given moderate attention in Japan (UNESCO, 2017). Advocates of transformative GCED might take comfort in this, but according to UNESCO, there are complications. In secondary school textbooks, Japan is presented as a "uniquely qualified messenger of world peace" due to having suffered the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Texts however, place far more attention on war-time suffering of the Japanese than on the suffering of others at the hands of the Japanese military (i.e., comfort women, prisoners of war, the Chinese population of Nanking, etc.). Also highlighted are individual stories of Japanese sacrifice and heroism against the vague enemy of war itself (UNESCO observes that Korea and China have similar approaches in their texts but paint Japan as the clear enemy).

UNESCO warns not only Japan, but other Asian nations as well, that "the narratives of national identity that underpin societal cohesion in East Asia carry a potentially catastrophic long-term cost, in so far as they fuel nationalist chauvinism and condemn the peoples of the region forever to relive the conflicts of the past. That cost is also borne by domestic 'minorities' and migrants who fail to conform to dominant conceptions of nationhood… Without a shared sense of regional identity, global citizenship is meaningless" (UNESCO, 2017).

My own observations have been very similar to what UNESCO has revealed. During my fifteen years as a secondary school teacher in Japan, I was shocked to discover how little my students knew about WWII history. They would often come back from study abroad, telling stories of how they were at a loss for words when their Canadian host family or new Korean friend had asked them their thoughts about Japan's actions in WWII. When I discussed this with their social studies teacher, he responded somewhat guiltily

that every year he finished his Japanese History curriculum with the Taisho era, prior to the start of WWII. This was for two reasons: 1) It was simply not possible to dedicate enough time to Japan's long history during limited class time; 2) If something needed to be left out, the controversial WWII era was the "safe" choice. Instead, he told students to study up on modern and contemporary Japanese history "on their own" in preparation for university entrance exams.

Since becoming a university professor, I have discovered that this practice is not uncommon. Generally my students have little knowledge of WWII, and when asked they are usually only able to provide examples of Japan as a victim, never an aggressor. This is highly unfortunate as young Japanese are missing a vital part of their history, while their neighbors in Korea, China, and the Philippines are taught never to forget it.

On a final note, while my description of (official) peace education in Japan has been rather critical, I should also acknowledge the efforts of the peace education scholars (e.g., Nakamura, 2006) and organizations in Japan such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Hiroshima Organization for Global Peace, and Hiroshima Peace Center, among others. Their goals and methods for achieving them are applauded and have much in common with transformative GCED.

Concluding Thoughts

This article has described how GCED is conceived in Japan and how it has been criticized by both Japanese and international scholars for: 1) its nationalist leanings, 2) its overemphasis on English language education, and 3) producing employable graduates, as well as its 4) tendencies toward Japanese exceptionalism, and finally 5) it's blind spots with regard to multiculturalism and 6) peace education.

Still, efforts over the past decade to foster global human resources *have* been somewhat transformative. For example the growth of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and a nation-wide obsession with fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Academic institutions paying more than lip service to the SDGs may actually be training their students to be more knowledgeable, open-minded, peaceful, multicultural and active global citizens in the process.

But there is still much that can be done through the education system to create truly transformative global citizens -- a much needed resource as the nation continues to globalize its economy, welcome a great deal more foreigners as tourists and residents, and grapple with global issues such as regional tensions and climate change. Maintaining the current nationalistic approach of creating global competitors will not help Japan to resolve these issues.

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