Bangladesh NHRC: Baseline Survey Paves Way for Human Rights Education

National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh

The appointment of three Commissioners on 1 December 2008 completed the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRC). But with a new law enacted in June 2009, the National Human Rights Commission Act, and upon retirement of the then Chairperson, the NHRC was reconstituted on 23 June 2010. In addition to a new Chairperson, the newly-constituted NHRC comprises of one full-time member and five honorary members.

In accordance with its official mandate, the NHRC serves as the major national human rights watchdog: monitoring implementation of state obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of every single member of society, addressing specific human rights complaints through investigation, mediation and conciliation, and where necessary, through constitutional litigation, and more broadly through raising public awareness.

In May 2010, the Government of Bangladesh entered into a five-year agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launching the National Human Rights Commission Capacity Development Project (NHRC-CDP). The project aimed to build the NHRC as an effective and sustainable institution. The project has four objectives focusing on the following concerns:

1. Institutional development
2. Monitoring and investigation of human rights situation
3. Awareness raising about human rights
4. Research on human rights, reporting and policy development.

With the support of this and other projects, the NHRC anticipates to have the capacity to provide human rights education and training towards making a culture of human rights take root in the country. The project aims to equip NHRC with the necessary tools to implement its human rights

awareness program and to focus on issues of concern. In this connection, a communication and information dissemination strategy is being prepared under the project.

NHRC Strategic Plan and Key Themes

To begin with, NHRC took the initiative to develop a strategic plan for its future journey. Through a broad consultative process, the NHRC has developed and is implementing its first Strategic Plan, which has identified four focal areas including human rights awareness. The provision on Human Rights Promotion, Education and Awareness-raising of the Strategic Plan reads as follows:

> National institutions need effective human rights information, education and communication strategies, including extensive human rights awareness-raising programmes. This recognises that unless NHRI [national human rights institutions] constituents are aware of and understand their rights, they will be unable to access them. That being said, the NHRC is aware that there have been a range of human rights awareness-raising programmes initiatives in various parts of the country over a considerable period of time. Whatever the Commission does in this area should complement and build on these initiatives and the Commission is committed to working with NGOs [non-governmental organizations] to spread the NHRC's message countrywide.
>
> As a starting point, the Commission proposes to undertake a detailed baseline study to determine public attitudes and awareness of human rights as well as awareness of the Commission's existence and role. The Commission will also learn about and review recent awareness-raising initiatives to better coordinate future information and education strategies.
>
> These activities will provide critical baseline data which will support the development of appropriate and targeted community education campaigns by the Commission. It is intended that the baseline study be repeated at appropriate times to enable the Commission to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes. The capacity development project coordinated by UNDP will support these activities, including assisting with the design and implementation of a comprehensive public education and information strategy based on the results of the study.

> If the Commission is to meet its long-term goal of a just society where violence by state is an episode of the past and officials know, and are held accountable for, their responsibilities, extensive training programmes and policy initiatives are required. Just as the Commission does not have the capacity by itself to develop a human rights culture throughout the country, so it will need considerable assistance from partners to make officials aware of their responsibilities and ensure that they comply with them. The Commission intends to work with all relevant training institutions and departments in the official sector to train their trainers to mainstream human rights into their own training programmes.
>
> In time, the NHRC intends to undertake regular national inquiries into specific human rights issues. While the intense nature of national enquiries and the extensive resources they will require means the first inquiry will need to wait until the Commission is at full capacity, it is a medium term strategy to take advantage of the profile and effectiveness that such initiatives can generate.

The NHRC undertook a detailed baseline study as provided for under the Strategic Plan to determine public attitudes and awareness of human rights as well as public awareness of its existence and role. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative methods, with the quantitative aspects involving a household survey covering the entire country.

Objectives of the Baseline Survey

The objectives for the baseline survey were:

- To assist the NHRC in developing appropriate public education and awareness human rights messages and methods targeting the most important human rights issues facing Bangladeshis by:
  - Determining the levels of understanding and awareness of human rights among Bangladeshis generally.
  - Determining the major types of human rights issues facing Bangladeshis generally, but with a primary focus on the human rights issues prioritized by the NHRC.
- To assess the level of awareness and understanding of the NHRC, its mandate, and its roles and functions.
- To determine where people go when seeking redress for human rights violations, why they choose this option rather than other op-

tions available to them, and to assess their level of satisfaction in the services provided.

- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the legal and policy framework for the protection of human rights in Bangladesh, including the level of commitment to and domestication of key international human rights instruments.
- To determine and suggest how stakeholders and role players in human rights protection and promotion will support the NHRC to improve the human rights situation in Bangladesh by giving special emphasis on the selected priority thematic areas.
- To determine a baseline/benchmark against which to measure the success of future public education and awareness campaigns (and NHRC's other interventions).

The Survey Team, comprised of renowned national and international consultants, undertook the study from late June to mid July 2011. The survey report was disseminated on 1 November 2011.

Baseline Survey Results

In the survey report, entitled "Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding" the Survey Team notes that

> [I]t is important to stress at the outset though that the study, and this report, deals primarily with perceptions, attitudes and understanding. While it includes references to previous research and identifies major problems under each theme, it does not and cannot analyse each and every issue in detail. Many of the issues considered in the baseline appear ripe for further and more detailed study and analysis and these have been mentioned where appropriate.

The following are the highlights of the baseline survey results.

General understanding of human rights

Major problems identified

Respondents were asked to identify the major problems facing Bangladesh. Since almost any problem facing a society has a human rights-

related dimension, this question was deliberately kept vague, requiring respondents to focus on problems and issues without using the term 'human rights', with which some people might not have been familiar. Of the problems mentioned, the following emerged as the most pressing:

Table 1 – Major problems identified

N	3,632
Price hike of essential goods	80.9
Electricity/gas/water problem	51.6 %
Communications and roads problem	44.7 %
Unemployment	30.6 %
Education	24.5 %
Lack of income and employment opportunities	23.6 %
Population	23.3 %
Lack of health care facilities	18.8 %
Non-availability of agricultural inputs	15.3 %
Corruption	15.3 %

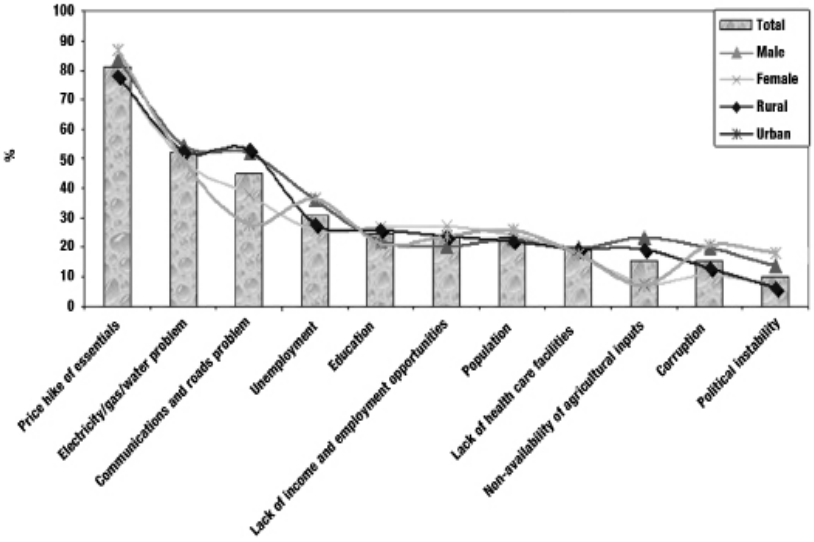
Note: The survey respondents were asked to prioritize the problems and pick multiple answers. The response percentage for each answer is computed in relation to the total number of respondents and thus the percentages do not add up to a hundred percentage. This applies to all other presentations of statistical results of the survey in this article.

Understandably for a poor country like Bangladesh, the major issues facing people in their daily lives relate to poverty and lack of access to and protection of socio-economic rights. Other than socio-economic issues, the following problems facing the country were raised:

- Political instability (10.1%)
- *Hartal* (general strikes) (7.8%).
- The situation regarding law and order (7.5%).

It is clear then that access to socio-economic rights is an area on which the NHRC should focus. But poverty impacts on all aspects of life and poorer people struggle to demand their civil and political rights and to protect themselves from government abuse of power. Given that the question was framed broadly to include any type of problem facing the country from the respondent's personal perspective, and given levels of poverty, it is to be anticipated that civil and political rights issues identified by the NHRC

Fig. 1. Major problems facing Bangladesh at the moment



during the consultative process to develop their Strategic Plan would score lower than the issues related to poverty that people face on a daily basis. Nonetheless, civil and political rights-related issues identified in the survey are similar to those prioritized by the NHRC in its Strategic Plan—for example:

- Lack of access to justice (4.1%)
- Harassment by law enforcement agencies (2.2%)
- Extrajudicial killing (1.2%).

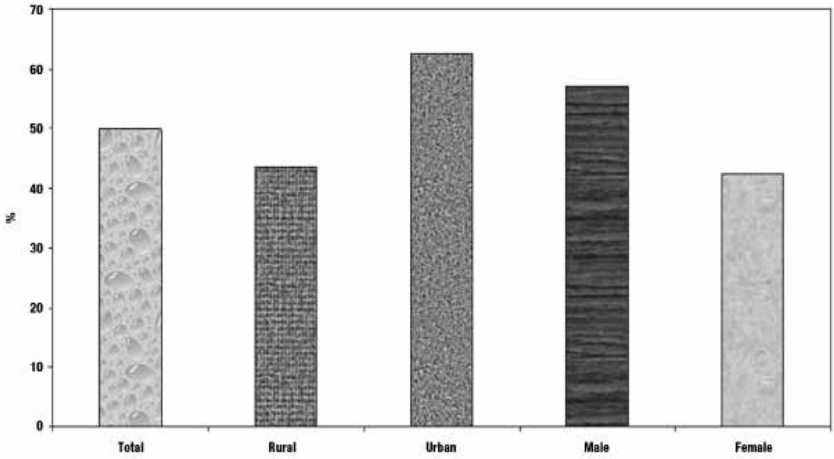
What are human rights and which should be protected?

Half of the respondents (50.2%) had not heard the term 'human rights' at all, which indicates the need for at least some basic awareness-raising regarding the term and what it means in all public awareness messages. Differences were fairly pronounced when the data are disaggregated:

- Those in urban areas (62.5%) were far more familiar with the term 'human rights' than those in rural areas (43.6%).
- More men (57.1%) have heard the term than women (42.5%).

- The higher the level of education, the more likely that someone will have heard the term—88.2% of educated people have heard it compared to 23.8% of non-literate respondents.
- The least poor (74.3%) are also far more familiar with the term than the poorest (39.8%).

Fig. 2. Heard the term 'human rights' before



When asked to identify what the term 'human rights' means, the following were the most common responses:

- The rights we all have (43.7%)
- Basic rights (28.4%)
- Freedom of movement (17.4%)
- Right to express opinions freely (11.1%)
- Personal freedom (10.1%)
- Rights we have from birth (7.5%)
- Right to education (6.1%)
- Protects our basic liberty and freedoms (5.9%)
- Right to vote in elections freely (6.1%).

This indicates a fairly good understanding of what the term **means** among those familiar with it and can be compared with responses to the question what people have to do to earn their rights. When responding to

this, many people understood that privilege and influence ('be rich', 'good relationship with the administration') play no role (at least in theory). Instead, knowledge of rights is regarded as the most effective way of claiming one's rights.

Table 2: What do you have to do to earn your rights?

Rank	What do you have to do to earn your rights?	% of respondents
N		1,809
1	Be aware	50.0
2	People to be made aware	33.8
3	Be educated	26.5
4	Don't know	16.0
5	Not to tolerate any illegal activity	15.3

When asked what human rights people should have, people recognized the right to life as the primary human right as well as key civil and political rights such as equality and freedom from discrimination, personal freedoms and freedom of expression. Understandably in a country with high level of poverty, there was also a strong focus on socio-economic rights and access to services:

Table 3: The rights citizens should have

Rank	Rights	% of respondents
N		3,632
1	Right to life	50.6
2	Right to education	46.4
3	Rights to have food	40.2
4	Right to health	31.8
5	Rights to have shelter	30.8
6	Right to clothing	17.0
7	Freedom of expression/opinion	15.3
8	Personal freedom (to do anything that I want to do)	13.1
9	Equal treatment/equality	11.5
10	To protect myself and my property	8.7

3. Protecting human rights and the Constitution

When asked how human rights are protected in the country, many respondents (30.8%) either did not understand the question or simply did not know that human rights (or at least some of them) are legally protected and enforceable in Bangladesh. 19.5% answered that they are 'not protected', but it is not clear whether this meant that they were unaware of the legal protections or whether they meant that they are not protected in practice.

Of those who believed rights **are** protected, the most common answers for how they are protected were:

- By the law (34.7%)
- By the administration (6.8%)
- By the Constitution (6.1%)
- By social norms and values (4.6%).

The low level of understanding that the Constitution protects human rights was mirrored in the answers to the question 'what is the Constitution':

- 58.4% of respondents had not heard of the Constitution, with those in the urban, least poor and higher education categories apparently more aware of it than those in lower income and rural groups.
- Men (57.2%) are more ($p<.000$) likely to have heard of the Constitution than women (26%).
- The educated (89%) appear considerably more familiar ($p<.000$) with the term than non-literate (14.3%).

When asked to describe in more detail what the Constitution is, those who knew of it understood the basic idea:

- The law that regulates the state and how it is governed (22.9%)
- It is a law (21.4%)
- A law for ruling the country (15.9%)
- Highest law (12.4%)
- Parliamentary law (12.0%)
- Supreme law (9.0%)
- Basic law (6.8%).

Rights and obligations

The survey included two questions to test people's understanding of the link between human rights and the attendant responsibility to respect the

law and the rights of others. When asked 'if you have the right to life, what duties or obligations do you have regarding other people', the top five responses were:

- Abide by the law (40%)
- Make yourself and others become aware (22.5%)
- Protest injustice (21.4%)
- Protect other people (14.8%)
- Be aware of specific rights (10.9%).

Similar responses were received from respondents when asked to consider what obligations arise if you want to claim protection of the law:

- Not break the law (43.1%)
- Be aware of the law (20.3%)
- Respect the rule of law (15.1%)
- Cooperate with government (10.3%)
- 'Protest when someone breaks the law' (4.1%) and 'cooperate with law enforcement agencies' (4.2%).

These responses generally indicate an awareness that rights and obligations are interlinked—especially the obligation to know and abide by the law. However, a large number of respondents answered 'don't know' to these questions (23.3 % and 32.1% respectively), indicating a need for public awareness campaigns to include messages that human rights create obligations as well.

Methods – education and awareness

People are only able to claim and protect their rights when they know what human rights are, that they are (mainly) legally enforceable, and when they are aware of what institutions, including the NHRC, exist to assist them when their rights are violated or ignored. There are a multitude of methods for conducting public education, awareness and information campaigns alone or in partnership with others.

a. Joint campaigns

Most national human rights institutions (NHRIs), including the NHRC of Bangladesh, have limited human resources and other capacities to deal with their wide mandates. At the same time, NHRIs' public education and awareness campaigns almost invariably focus on areas that civil society or-

ganizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and others have already prioritized. These organizations and agencies have laid much of the groundwork around awareness and education on human rights issues and provide excellent starting points for an NHRI, but there is also the potential of overlaps, duplication of effort and wasted resources as a result.

Recommendations

- It will be important for the NHRC to liaise with NGOs and UN agencies prior to entering into any awareness and education campaign to see what these are doing or planning, what messages and methods will be used, and whether these are in line with its own strategy. Where they are, the NHRC has two options:
  - To leave the awareness and education to others to conduct and then to focus on areas where gaps exist; or
  - To consider a joint campaign bringing its own resources and outreach to the table to increase the effectiveness and impact of any such campaign.

b. Will targeted campaigns be required?

Although differences are found when the data from the baseline survey are disaggregated, these are not profound enough in most cases to suggest that specific campaigns are required to reach specific targets and that campaigns aimed at the general population will be as effective as campaigns aimed at specific individuals. Exceptions to the rule are campaigns aimed at the rights of *Adibashis*[1] that should focus primarily on the areas where *Adibashis* are most commonly found.

Recommendation

Except for campaigns on the rights of *Adibashis* specifically targeting communities where *Adibashis* are commonly found, public awareness and education campaigns should target the entire country.

c. Human rights in formal education

Responses in the household survey indicate that people across the spectrum benefitted from human rights education messages at school, which suggests that including human rights education in the formal curriculum

should be prioritized. In this regard, and for primary school education in particular, UNESCO provides useful materials for early learners that NHRC might find useful to consult.

Other campaigns could also target schools on a broad range of issues. Such campaigns could include events at schools and essay, art, debating and other competitions and workshops aimed at raising awareness of gender equality, other cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups, and issues of disability.

In this regard, it should be noted that Bangladesh is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 13 of which calls for state parties to:

> Agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Recommendations

- NHRC should lobby for human rights education to be included in the formal education curriculum as a distinct subject at different levels.
- Once this has been achieved, the NHRC can assist in the development of the curriculum and in learning material development, and can assist in training of educators using the training of trainers approach.
- In the interim, the NHRC might consider:
  - A separate activity to scope all existing textbooks for discriminatory, abusive, sexist and other comments and issues
  - Campaigns (such as art and essay writing competitions) targeting school-goers as a way of raising awareness and understanding of human rights.

d. Television and radio

Television and radio were identified in the study as the main sources of information and knowledge on human rights. Both have the potential to reach wide target audiences and benefit from being able to convey messages to everyone, including the non-literate, poor and rural dwellers who are less likely to be reached using printed materials than richer, wealthier and better educated people in Bangladesh.

Radio and television adverts can be expensive, but there are ways of keeping these costs down and there are other ways of using the media—such as by encouraging radio and television stations to hold discussions, interviews and call-in shows using Commissioners and senior staff of the NHRC and other human rights experts identified by the NHRC. These ideas are expanded upon in Annex A.

Recommendation

- Radio and television should be prioritized, or at minimum considered, when designing education and awareness campaigns.

e. Publications

Publications such as booklets and pamphlets are commonly used and very effective methods for awareness and education. Their main drawbacks are the cost involved and that they are only of value to literate members of society. On the other hand, they are long lasting, capable of reaching large numbers of people and provide options for education, information and awareness. The most commonly used are:

- Booklets (best used for education campaigns)
- Pamphlets (most appropriate for information and awareness only—both on human rights issues and for information and awareness of the roles and functions of the NHRC)
- Comics (used mainly for specific age groups that read these)
- Posters (mainly used for information only since text should be kept to a minimum. They can also be used effectively to raise awareness of the rights protected by the Constitution by listing the rights in Part III and by providing very simple definitions of what these rights mean)
- Newspaper inserts on various human rights issues that can also be used as posters in schools
- Newsletters (including electronic newsletters), which can be used to keep people informed of the work of the NHRC
- Postcards
- Billboards (which are really just large posters and are mainly used for information and awareness rather than for education).
- Stickers
- Adverts on buses and rickshaws

- Use of popular art, cinema poster style graphics and rickshaw paintings.

Ideally, publications should be translated into various languages. Tips and ideas for developing publications, and for keeping the cost of translations to a minimum, are included in Annex A.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the NHRC consider a broad range of publications targeting specific human rights issues, and at minimum a plain language pamphlet on the role and functions of the NHRC. Ideas for what publications might work best are included in the recommendations that follow.

f. Workshops, street theater and community meetings

The high levels of people reached through neighbors and public discussions indicate that some forms of community meetings, workshops, courtyard meetings, street and popular theater, and even (and possibly e-learning programs and television programs using Skype communications) should be considered. Of course, all of these methods are fairly labor intensive and only reach comparatively small numbers of people at a time, but the reach of workshops in particular can be increased by encouraging NGOs and others to use workshops developed by the NHRC and also to include awareness and information on the NHRC and its roles and functions in workshops they already run.

Tips and ideas for designing and conducting workshops and dramas are included in Annex A.

Recommendation

The NHRC should consider developing a general workshop (including a manual for trainers) on human rights and its role and functions. Ideas for other workshops that might prove useful are included in the recommendations that follow.

g. Low cost and no cost methods

Lessons learned from child rights organizations in Brazil and the South African Human Rights Commission show that there is potential for low and no cost activities to be run, such as encouraging those who package goods

that poor people most often use, like candles and matches, to carry human rights messages on the packaging.

A variety of low cost and no cost ideas are included in Annex A.

Other methods

While education and awareness-raising campaigns are powerful tools in bringing about greater respect for and protection of human rights, they are not the only weapons in the NHRI arsenal. NHRIs occupy a unique position in any country—one that many have failed to grasp. Perhaps because members and staff often have a civil society background, there is a tendency for some NHRIs to operate in very similar ways to NGOs. Most NHRIs, including the Bangladesh NHRC, have various roles and broad mandates including public education and awareness, receiving and investigating complaints, monitoring government compliance with human rights norms and standards (including those in the Constitution and international and regional instruments) and advocacy and lobbying.

Although the survey team was not required to consider other methods, education and awareness are not always the most appropriate methods to use when seeking to address particular human rights violations and problems. As a result, the following should also be considered by the NHRC.

a. Advocacy and lobbying

Given their status, NHRIs are uniquely positioned to lobby governments to adopt or amend legislation to bring it in line with human rights norms and standards, to submit reports to UN agencies and bodies, and to advocate for an end to systemic and systematic human rights abuses. Many of the issues that have been raised during the baseline survey are issues that are best dealt with via advocacy and lobbying instead of, or together with, a public education and awareness campaign.

In addition to lobbying for human rights to be included in the formal education curriculum, other areas arising from the survey where NHRC might lobby and advocate are included in the appropriate sections below.

b. Training

As suggested by many of those consulted as part of the qualitative survey and indicated in research, there is clearly a need for human rights training to be provided to those who, because of the nature of their functions, are

traditionally seen as the most likely to violate human rights in any society in the world—the police (including Rapid Action Battalion [RAB]), military and prisons. But there are others too who would benefit from such training, including officials responsible for migrant workers, health service providers, teachers, and officials in all of the government departments and bodies providing socio-economic services. Of course, there is no way the NHRC could conduct all of the training that would need to be provided and it is suggested that this is not really their role. Instead, the role of the NHRC should really to make sure that such training happens and that it is in line with the Constitution and international human rights standards. The NHRC should in particular be wary of providing training directly to RAB given current debates and controversy in this area.

Recommendations for where lobbying for and assisting in training might be appropriate are included in the sections below.

c. Investigations

Predictably for a national survey and the recent establishment of the NHRC, virtually none of those in the household survey have yet reported a matter to it—99.7%. But this will change as knowledge and awareness increase. Since many NHRIs become overwhelmed by complaints, the NHRC too will need to consider how to deal with these without being swamped.

NHRIs are generally involved in three broad types of investigations:

- Individual complaints (or complaints from small, easily identifiable groups). These are usually reported to the NHRI by the individuals or groups concerned, but they may also be identified from reports of other organizations and in media reports.
- Major Events – such as riots following elections or in response to killings by the police and others.
- Systemic violations (such as discrimination against women, *Adibashis* and people with disabilities, and child labor).

The options available to an NHRI when dealing with human rights violations depend on the powers in its founding legislation but could include:

- Referring the matter to another or better placed national or international institution, or to a relevant civil society organization.
- Mediation and negotiation.

- Reporting the matter to the police for investigation and prosecution (either after the violation has been fully investigated or, where the police can be trusted to investigate properly, once it becomes clear that a crime or crimes have been committed).
- Bringing a civil action (either for civil damages or to prevent the harm from continuing or arising again).
- Holding an inquiry (usually following a major event or into systemic violations).
- Making recommendations on addressing the issue.
- Lobbying and advocating for new laws or amendments to laws.

Many systemic violations of rights can be addressed through education and awareness. Researchers, investigations staff, senior managers and Commissioners all have a role to play in this regard. It is important to keep and analyze records of complaints received, media reports and reports of other role players to spot when problems are systemic and where education and awareness might be more effective than dealing with each complaint individually. For example, if there is a steady increase in complaints around child labor, then it is an indication that the problem is systemic. While the NHRC may decide to deal with each complaint separately, it may make better sense to deal with one or two as test cases, coupled with an education and awareness campaign that talks not only about the law and harmful effects of child labor, but that also includes information on what happened in the test cases to warn employers of the consequences they too might face. The NHRC should also consider engaging or intervening in existing cases by undertaking broader investigations that courts cannot do, or to monitor the implementation of judgments.

Lastly, it was suggested by many people consulted during the survey that, in addition to collaborating with NGOs on public awareness and education campaigns, NGOs can also receive and refer complaints to the NHRC, giving it instant and great outreach in the absence of offices outside of Dhaka. This approach has been followed effectively by NHRIs in places like Malawi, but a word of caution is required: using NGOs and others to receive and refer complaints to NHRIs increases their outreach at minimal cost, but it also has the potential to put enormous strain on their capacity to deal with the increased number of complaints. And failure to adequately deal with all

complaints received can lead to frustrated expectations and seriously damage the reputation of the NHRI concerned.

Conclusion

The NHRC of Bangladesh is very keen to conduct comprehensive human rights education program involving different stakeholders. NHRC strongly believes that, with its various activities, it will be able to see remarkable changes in the perception and attitude of the people of Bangladesh in the coming days.

This article is an extract of the summary report written by Elizabeth Wood based on the detailed report prepared by Data Management Aid and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

Endnote

1 'Adibashi' is an indigenous word that indigenous people in Bangladesh use to define themselves. The baseline survey report takes note of the Government's position declared in August 2011 that there are no indigenous people in Bangladesh. However, since the survey was conducted prior to this government declaration, the term 'Adibashi' has been kept in the survey report to accurately present the questions asked and the answers obtained.

Annex A

Tips and Ideas for Education and Awareness Campaigns

INTRODUCTION

The following tips and ideas are extracted from a draft training program written for the Adilisha project by Greg Moran. Adilisha is a project of Fahamu, an Oxford University-based non-governmental organization (NGO), targeting NGOs in Africa.[1]

Although the materials were written for African NGOs and are in very plain language, they are provided in the hope that some of the ideas, practical tips and case studies will be useful to the NHRC when deciding what materials and methods to use for conducting public education and awareness campaigns.

PUBLICATIONS

a. Booklets

Booklets are a popular method of providing non-formal education. Since you have a fair amount of space, you can cover a topic in some detail.

However, booklets need to be read. If your target market is illiterate or semi-literate, you may well be wasting time and money producing huge numbers of booklets.

Many NGOs have already produced booklets on general human rights topics such as 'what are human rights' or your local bill of rights. Before deciding to produce a similar booklet, look around and see whether you cannot get free copies from other NGOs or whether you cannot help them to produce copies for you by:

- Buying them;
- Paying for re-prints; or
- Paying for the booklet to be translated into languages that suit your needs.

Of course, you must read their booklets before deciding to do this to make sure they are correct and that they are suitable for your target market.

You may even find that another NGO has produced a booklet on a specific topic you want to cover and that this is suitable for your target market. For example, there are many publications around on HIV/Aids. Rather than producing a new one, see if you cannot use one already produced by another NGO.

Booklets can be used:

- By schools;

- By other NGOs;
- When conducting workshops (as support material);
- To educate the public generally.

Tips:

- Booklets should be in plain language and kept as simple as possible;
- If you have the money, translate them into local languages. Or, use staff members who speak these languages to do this for you for free. Note though that each time you produce a new language version of a publication, you need to print it and the costs of this are the same as if it were a completely new publication.
- Include pictures, diagrams and other images to explain what you mean. Try not to rely too heavily on text.
- A5 booklets seem to work best. Also, keep the number of pages down to around sixteen inside pages. If a booklet is too big or too thick, some semi-literate people will be scared off.
- Make the cover as attractive as possible. You want to make sure that someone will pick the booklet up and read it, even if there are other publications lying next to it.
- Limit the booklet to one topic only, even if the topic is human rights generally. For example, do not put out a booklet dealing with child rights, the rights of people with HIV/Aids and the rights of refugees. Rather produce a series of booklets—one per topic.
- Do not be scared off completely by low levels of literacy. Often, adults who are only partially literate will have family member read the booklet for them.
- Never justify text (which is where you get all the text to line up on the right hand side of the page). People who do not have great reading skills find it much easier to read text that is not justified because each line of text looks different to the others.
- Make the text as large as you can. Obviously, if you have limited funds and need to put a lot of information into one booklet, this becomes difficult. But try to make it possible for older people or people who are partially sighted to read the text.
- Use as much white space as you can. That is, do not fill the page with text.
- Avoid 'widows and orphans'—which is where you start an idea on one page and finish on another. Also avoid starting sentences or paragraphs on one page and having them run over onto the next page.

b. Pamphlets

Pamphlets are very good information and awareness tools. Since they have much less space than a booklet, they are not that good as educational tools.

All organizations should try to produce at least one pamphlet on their own organization. This should state clearly who you are, what you do and how to contact you. If you produce a number of publications, consider putting out a pamphlet that lists these and says how people can get copies.

Pamphlets can also be used as awareness-raising tools for a variety of human rights issues. They work best if they lead people to other educational methods (publications that you have or workshops you run) within your organization.

Tips:

- Keep pamphlets to an A4 size, either z-folded or three-folded.
- If you can afford color printing, use it, since a pamphlet needs to be as attractive as possible. In some ways, a pamphlet on your organization is actually an advert.
- By keeping publications to A4 size, you can easily photocopy these if you run out or if you cannot afford to print large numbers.
- Keep text to a minimum. Pamphlets should not have more than around one thousand and two hundred words.
- Use the 'back page' of the pamphlet for all your contact addresses (and the addresses of other organizations that offer assistance or services). By listing other people's organizations on your pamphlet, the chances are they will return the favor, giving you free publicity.
- Keep text as simple as you possibly can.
- Avoid graphics, since these take up a lot of space.
- Keep the 'front page' of your pamphlet as clean and attractive as possible. Avoid too much writing and don't start providing information on this page. Instead, put your logo on the front, the name of the pamphlet and not much else.

c. Comics

Comics can be used to provide education in a fun and entertaining way. However, be careful with who you target these at. Many adults regard comics as 'children's books' and will not read them. Some NGOs have reported success with adult comics by using photographs rather than drawings, but this can be expensive to do.

Instead, aim comics at the age group that usually reads them (5 – 18). Within this

age group, be aware that there is a difference between the artwork that appeals to children and that which appeals to older members of the target group.

Comics are quite specialized and are usually very expensive to produce. You need to use experts (such as artists and story-tellers) or your activity will fail.

Tips:

- Target your comic properly.
- Use proper artists to provide artwork. The primary form of communication in a comic is a combination of image and text but it is the images that people notice first. If your artwork is poor, readers will not be interested in reading the story.
- Use color if you can afford it. In fact, if you cannot afford a color comic, you should perhaps think of using another method.
- Luckily, you can save costs by using very cheap paper (such as recycled newsprint), since most commercial comics are printed on the same paper.
- Keep text to a minimum. Speech bubbles should not cover the page or the images you use.
- Use people who have shown they are able to convey a message by using an interesting story. Comics work best when they tell a proper story and where the characters learn about a particular issue during the story.
- Use simple and straightforward language.

d. Posters

Posters serve a number of functions:

- Awareness-raising. For example, you could develop a poster with a simple message on child abuse (rather than an educational booklet on child rights).
- Information. This could be:
  - An advert for an event you are running (like a music concert);
  - An advert for an activity (like a workshop or public meeting);
  - An advert for your organization saying how to contact you; or
  - Even a notice pointing out where the toilets are at a workshop you are conducting.
- Celebrating special days. For example, if your organization focuses on HIV/Aids issues, you might want to produce a poster commemorating International Aids Day (1 December).

Remember that posters are usually placed where people are passing by. They will usually be stuck on a wall, tree or telephone pole and they are designed to attract the

attention of a wide range of people. Ideally, a poster should have an eye-catching image or design and a slogan or headline. The idea is that someone who is not really looking for the information you are providing is caught by the image or headline. Hopefully, this will cause them to come closer and read the information. Also, because most people put their posters in the same type of places, you will be competing for attention with other 'advertisers'.

While there are different types of posters, some basic rules remain the same:

- Follow the "one idea—one poster" rule.
- Text needs to be kept to a minimum.
- You need to have an eye-catching image on the poster. While it does not need to be in color, color definitely helps to draw people's attention.
- You need a slogan to draw people closer.
- You can have a fair amount of information on the poster in much smaller text. Beware that this can only be read from close up though.
- The larger the poster, the better. And the larger your text, the better too.

Before designing a poster, think about where you are going to place it. For example, a poster on your bill of rights that will be given to schools to put up in their classrooms can have a lot more text than one that will be on a street pole. This is because children in class have time to read the poster when they have finished work, are waiting for a teacher and so on. People driving in a minibus past a lamppost have only a few seconds to read your message.

Also, a poster advertising an event or celebrating a particular day will have far less text than one showing how to cast your vote.

Lastly, think about how big the poster should be. A poster that people will only see fleetingly or from far away needs to be much bigger than one that they will have time to read from close up. As a general rule, posters should not be less than A2 size. If you can afford them, A0 posters are usually the most attractive.

Note: A2 is four times the size of an A4 sheet. A0 is sixteen times as large as an A4 sheet (or twice as big as an A1 and four times as big as an A2).

e. Newspaper inserts

A newspaper insert is a 'pull-out' section of a newspaper. They are also often called 'supplements'. It could be any size and address any issue. Most often though, they are a double spread page in the middle of the newspaper.

These more common types of inserts can also be used for almost anything. A good idea though is to use the outside pages for text, your message, your addresses and so

on and the inside double page as a poster.

Example

If you have a poster on your bill of rights that you would like teachers to put up in their classrooms, you could develop an insert. Use the inside pages for the poster and the outside pages to provide additional information, such as:

- What are human rights;
- What is the bill of rights;
- Why is the bill of rights important;
- How to teach human rights in schools;
- Some classroom exercises for teaching human rights;
- Some information on your organization and what it does;
- Contact details for your (and possibly other) organization.

Newspaper inserts can be quite expensive. If you are producing an insert that is of a different size to the newspaper (such as a small booklet or pamphlet), it has to be printed and physically inserted into the paper. Ordinarily, you will be expected to pay both costs. You can reduce the costs to your organization (or avoid them completely) by:

- Forming a relationship with the newspapers, so that they carry some or all of the costs. They can advertise the insert in advance, which might make more people buy the newspapers than usual.
- Keeping your insert in black and white.
- Making your insert the same size as the newspaper and making it the middle pages. In this way, the newspaper can be printed as usual with extra pages, saving the cost of having people actually putting the insert into the newspaper after it has been printed.
- Asking advertisers to sponsor the insert. You can put their adverts into the insert if they agree to pay the costs. This is usually much cheaper for them than placing an advert in the newspaper itself. However, beware of who you ask to advertise in this way. For example, you would not want an alcohol manufacturer to place an advert in an insert aimed at children.

f. Newsletters

Many NGOs have developed regular newsletters. These are quite cheap to produce (depending on what paper you choose, whether you use colour, whether you photocopy them or use printing companies and how many you need to produce).

A newsletter can be used to serve a number of purposes:

- Keeping your communities informed of what you have been doing;
- Providing information on what you are planning to do in the near future;
- Advertising new publications you might have produced and, sometimes, distributing copies with the newsletter;
- Providing education on a selected topic for each edition;
- Lobbying and building popular support;
- Public participation (by saying what you are planning and asking for comments).

Newsletters can be printed on any paper, can be any length and can be brought out as often as you choose. Before deciding to produce these though, you need to first think about who you will be sending them to and what this will cost you. For example, you may have to pay postage costs if you are planning on mailing them. You also need to develop a mailing list of people who receive the newsletter. You can do so by using MS Word features that will both keep a mailing list and print sticky labels as required.

Email newsletters

Newsletters can also be emailed, which saves printing costs completely. A good example of this is the newsletter produced by Pambuzuka (an organization closely linked to Fahamu). To receive this newsletter and see how it is done, write to the following address and ask to be placed on their mailing list: admin@pambazuka.org

Note though that such a newsletter will only work if the people you want to receive it have access to email.

Some tips:

- Use newsprint to save costs (if you are having the newsletter printed);
- If you are only planning to circulate a small number, think about photocopying them. Remember though that you must consider how many pages each one will be and to work out the cost of doing this. Costs will include paper, toner, electricity, wear and tear on your copier and staff hours for someone to actually photocopy, bind, staple, fold and so on.
- If you cannot find sponsors for the newsletter, offer to put their advert on the back page or inside for free.
- Keep the newsletter regular. Decide in advance whether you will produce twelve, six or fewer per year and stick to the plan you set.
- Use photographs of events you have conducted in the newsletter to brighten it up.

- Introduce a letters page so that people can write to you and have their ideas, concerns or comments printed. Invite people to tell you what to think in each issue.
- Have your chairperson or director write a regular column.
- If you are running a competition of any sort, publish an entry form in the newsletter. Also, use the newsletter to advertise the competition and to tell people about the deadline, prizes and so on.
- Once you have run a competition, publish winning entries or information about the winners in the newsletter.
- Choose a name that people will remember and that also means something. Many NGOs use a word in one of the local languages as the name of their newsletter.
- Include a slip that people can fill in if they want to receive regular copies of your newsletter. Remember that people reading it may not be the ones you first sent it to and they may enjoy it so much that they want to subscribe to it. Be sure to add all new subscriptions to your mailing list.
- Keep your language plain and simple.

g. Postcards

Postcards with a human rights message on the front are a good way of raising awareness and popularizing your organization. As something practical people can use, these are very popular.

Tips:

- Use artwork from an existing poster you have produced to make best use of money spent on it.
- Use your logo on the front.
- Print a small human rights message on the back.
- Remember to use thicker paper.

h. Billboards

Billboards are like very large posters and many of the rules are the same. Because billboards are on the side of the road or railway line, most people only see them when travelling past them. As a result, you need to make them attractive and to use as little text as possible on them.

Tips:

- Keep your message simple and use a colorful or striking image.
- Remember that billboards usually remain up much longer than posters. As a result, they are better suited for raising awareness than to advertise an event.
- Billboards are expensive because you have to pay for printing, costs of putting the billboard up and renting the billboard itself. Reduce costs by seeing whether the owners of the billboards will donate space to you if they have a billboard that they have not rented out.
- Drive past, or take a train past billboards to see which are easiest to read. Look at both what the billboards that work best look like and also which sites are best. For example, a billboard at a taxi rank or train station is seen for much longer than one on the side of a busy main road.

i. Banners

Banners are used mainly to advertise your organization or an event. Because of the very high costs involved, you should really only produce banners that can be used over a long period of time or at a wide variety of events. The best example is one that merely has your organization's name and logo on it. You can use this when holding a press briefing, prize-giving ceremony, event and so on.

The main advantage of a billboard is that it shows up well in photographs of the event you use it at. Make sure that you position it behind the place or person that photographers will concentrate on.

For example, if you are putting on a music concert, hang your banner at the back of the stage. If you are holding a press briefing, put the banner behind the person from your organization who will lead the briefing. Then, when pictures of the event are broadcast on television or printed in a newspaper, your banner will show up clearly.

ADVERTS

There are three main types of adverts your organization could produce:

- Radio adverts;
- Television adverts;
- Newspaper adverts.

All serve more or less the same purpose. Because of the costs, they need to be quite short and so work best for:

- Raising awareness of your organization and what it does;
- Providing information on your organization (such as how to reach you);

- Raising awareness or providing information on a particular issue;
- Advertising an event or competition that you will be running.

Even when dealing with something other than what your organization is or does, you should still mention the name of your organization somewhere in the advert. This helps to advertise the 'thing' you are advertising as well as raising awareness of your organization.

Lastly, remember that these are adverts. Whether on radio or television or in a newspaper, they will be competing with other adverts, usually made by companies with far more money than you have. As a result, they need to be attractive, exciting and engaging, otherwise people will ignore them.

a. Radio

The most cost-effective radio advert is one of about thirty seconds, although this may differ from country to country. In any event, the length of time available for a radio event is surprisingly short.

Some tips:

- See if you can get a radio station to offer you free time. Then, at the end of the advert, say something like 'this advert was brought to you free of charge by Funky FM, the station for the funky at heart'.
- Recording an advert is one of the most expensive parts of producing one. Most radio stations require the advert to be recorded on high quality machines using high quality tape or CD. Try to cut the costs of this by asking the radio station to allow you to use their recording studio.
- Make sure about the radio station before you put your advert on it. For example, how many people listen to it? Is it government controlled? What languages does it broadcast in?
- If the radio station broadcasts in one or more local languages, you may need to translate it. Use staff members to help you. You will also need to record the advert in these various languages.
- Ideally, you should use a voice artist to record the advert. You need someone with a good voice (not too squeaky or soft) and someone who can make the advert sound exciting. See whether there are any members of staff who have a natural talent in this area and use them if you can. (Unfortunately, very few people are good at this and it may cost you more in studio time getting it right than if you paid a professional, who will get it in one or two takes).

- Consider your community or local radio stations. They may be much cheaper to use.

b. Television

Unfortunately, television adverts are usually way beyond the reach of most NGOs, since they are very expensive to produce and cost a lot to broadcast. If you are lucky enough to get funding to produce one, make sure that it is of the highest quality you can afford. This is because most people hate adverts on television and you need to capture their attention.

Very few NGOs have the technical know-how or skills to produce a television advert and so you will need to pay someone to develop yours. One way around this is to see whether there is an advertising school near you. Visit the principal of the school or head of department and see whether or not you can convince them to set a project for their students to develop an advert for your organization. Perhaps you could even raise money for a prize for the winning entry. Then, choose the best entry and use it for your advert.

Since there are very few independent television stations, you will probably not be able to get anyone to broadcast your advert for free. However, you can save broadcast fees by asking for your advert to be screened outside of peak viewing times (when time is more expensive).

Lastly, before embarking on a project to develop a television advert, do a lot of research. Check how much it will cost you and how many people that you want to reach actually own televisions. Then compare the cost of the advert with the number of people who will see it and work out whether or not you could use your money more effectively.

c. Newspaper

Newspaper adverts are much cheaper than radio or television adverts. Even so, they are usually too expensive for NGOs to use them regularly. Instead, they are usually only used to celebrate a special day, to advertise an event or competition, or to mobilize the public around an issue.

Many NGOs have staff that are capable of designing an advert, thereby saving a large portion of the costs of producing them. If your organization does not have someone with these skills, you will need to get an agency to help you.

Other costs involved are mainly only the cost of placing the advert.

Some tips:

- The larger your advert, the more expensive. However, the smaller the advert,

the less chance anyone will notice it. Have a look at a newspaper in your area. Which adverts did you notice? Why was this so? Use this information to help you decide what your advert should look like and how big it should be.

- The bigger the circulation of the newspaper, the more expensive the advertising space will be. Before choosing a newspaper, think about who you are trying to reach. If you are advertising an event that only people in your community will be interested in attending, it will not make sense to publish it in a newspaper with a national circulation. Instead, use a local paper that will be much cheaper.
- Adverts with a headline and a graphic or photograph are generally more attractive. Again, look at the adverts in your local newspapers and see for yourself which work better.
- Use the space available to you creatively. For example, if you want to advertise a competition, make the advert a copy of your entry form.
- You can also save costs by using an existing poster as your advert.

d. Events

The term 'events' covers a wide range of things, such as:

- Music concerts;
- Football matches;
- Sports days;
- Family days;
- Art exhibitions;
- Events celebrating an important national or international human rights day (such as World Aids Day).

Events are a fun way of raising awareness and providing information. They have a limited role in education though because the main object is to entertain people. However, you can use them as a very good place to distribute your educational publications and, perhaps, to put on an educational drama for children.

All events work in the same way. The idea is to get people to attend a special day, to entertain them and to provide them with some information and awareness at the same time.

e. Drama

Many community drama groups use drama as a way of educating people. It can be a very effective method but it requires acting skills and, like comics, storytelling skills

to work properly. Its major advantage is that drama is engaging and a fun way to learn, particularly for children and youth. It can also be very cheap to produce and does not require literacy skills among the audience.

Tips:

- Keep the drama relatively short. People find it hard to concentrate on a story for much longer than an hour and a half.
- Keep costs to a minimum by using few props and costumes.
- Keep the story interesting. Humor is a very good way of doing so, but be careful with jokes you use. For example, don't tell sexist or ethnic based jokes.
- Keep the number of characters in the story to a minimum to make it easier for people to follow the story.
- Have actors play more than one character—they can show which character they are by the clothes they wear.

f. Give-aways

The idea of 'give-aways' comes from commercial advertising. The tactic is to give people something they will use that may have a simple human rights message but is more about raising awareness of your organization. The best way of doing this is to simply place your logo and name of your organization on the items listed.

Some of the items listed below are much more expensive to produce than others. Also, some last longer than others and are more visible. Decide from the list which items suit your organization's needs and target market better.

- T-shirts. Perhaps the best give-away of all, these allow you to place a message on one side and your logo and name on the other. They are relatively cheap to produce and last a long time. As an item of clothing, they have value to people who receive them. As a result, people will wear them often, thereby advertising your organization wherever they go. They work really well to commemorate special days or to give away at music concerts. As a general rule, try not to have too much information on them and try to make them look nice as well to encourage people to wear them.
- Caps. Like T-shirts, these also advertise your organization wherever they are worn. They are much cheaper than T-shirts as well.
- Peaks. These are cardboard strips with a piece of plastic to go around the head. They can be very cheap to produce, although they do not last long. They are very nice give-aways at soccer matches, music concerts and other outside, daytime events.

- Stickers. These are cheap and are fun mainly for younger people, although taxi drivers too can be encouraged to put them on their taxis. Because of their size though, they are quite difficult to see.
- Pens. It is sometimes possible to get cheap pens made with your logo on. While they only really spread your message to people who actually receive them, they are useful at workshops, conferences and to give to schoolchildren.
- Ties. These are expensive to produce and are usually given to visiting funders and other dignitaries.

COMPETITIONS

Running a competition is an effective way of getting people to think about an issue. Examples of the types of competitions you can run include:

- An arts or photography competition;
- A competition to design a poster;
- An essay or poetry competition.

To organize your competition, you need to:

- Develop a proper strategy document and action plan, showing time frames for each part of the process, as well as who is responsible for the work.
- Identify the target. Is it open to all members of the public or only a particular community? Is it open to all age groups or only school goers? Is it open to both children and adults?
- Develop an entry form. This should have basic information about the competition as well as the address where entries need to be sent or dropped off. You need to print as many of these as you can. In some cases, such as when you are targeting school-goers, you can save money by printing one entry form per school.
- Make sure your entry form says, 'The decision of the judges is final'. This will prevent any arguments at a later stage. Also, if you plan to use the works you receive at a later stage and not to return them to entrants, include a note to this effect. It might say: 'All entries become the work of Community Support NGO and, by submitting an entry, entrants agree to their work being used in the future without any payment'.
- Make sure you have a prize or prizes (see below).
- Distribute the entry forms to places that suit the target group. For example, if it is open to school-goers only, use the principal of the school to distribute it among the learners.

- Market the competition. If you have the money, produce a radio or newspaper advert. If not, produce a cheap poster and put it up in areas where your targets gather. Try to get newspapers or radio and television stations to interview you about the competition.
- Appoint independent judges. If it is an art competition, look to art teachers or lecturers, or even famous artists, to be the judges. This helps to prevent your organization from being accused of being biased.
- Make sure you have a plan for judging. If you receive thousands of entries, it may be necessary for you to go through these and to exclude those that clearly have missed the point. Otherwise, your judges may get angry with you if they have to read or look at every entry.
- Plan and hold a prize-giving ceremony.

Competitions offer an excellent opportunity to find artwork for posters and pamphlets (even calendars) or to produce books of entries (if you have the money). In this way, you can maximize the effort you put in and also publicly recognize the winners. While you should not pay for using these works, you should at least credit the people who produced them.

Case study – SAHRC school poster competition

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) runs an annual poster competition for all school goers (and adults involved in Adult Basic Training and Education programs). While this started as an 'arts competition', asking for people to illustrate their favorite right in the Bill of Rights by producing a picture, collage, poem, song or essay, it soon became apparent to the SAHRC that the process of marking all these entries took too much time. In particular, written work had to be translated into English, which, although done for free by staff members, still took enormous amounts of time, and these had to be read and evaluated.

The SAHRC then decided to make this a poster competition. Each year, a different topic is chosen (such as Child Rights, HIV/Aids, and so on). Relationships have been developed between the main sponsor (a bank, which provides prize money and pays for posters and entry forms to be printed—using their own artists and printers) and a national newspaper. This newspaper prints a copy of the poster as an advert at no cost to the SAHRC, prints copies of the entry form and carries photographs of past winners, interviews with winners and so on. Further publicity is secured through interviews on radio and television stations. Additional prizes are received from a variety of donors (such as book stores and soft drink companies) and hotels and airlines donate

accommodation and transport for winners from far away.

Judges are chosen from school art teachers or lecturers and heads of creative NGOs. A venue is secured at minimal cost (including using schools that donate their space for free).

Prizes are awarded to the following categories:

- Grades 0 – 3
- Grades 4 – 6
- Grades 7 – 9
- Grades 10 – 12
- Adults taking part in adult basic education programs
- Learners with special educational needs.

The winning entries in each category are then entered into another competition to find the overall winner. This overall winner receives the main prize and their entry is used to develop an official SAHRC poster each year.

A prize giving ceremony is held in Johannesburg and the winners and their family are invited to attend. Entertainment is provided by musicians who work for next to nothing and by school drama or dance groups. Members of the refugee community provide catering (thereby exposing South Africans to other cultures in the hope that this may reduce xenophobia).

SAHRC staff then choose their favorite entries from all of those received to develop the annual SAHRC calendar, which is sent all over the world.

Artwork is also available for use in pamphlets, postcards, booklets and so on.

Tips:

- Try to involve a local radio station or newspaper in the competition. For example, offer to print their logo on all publications relating to the competition and to invite them to your prize giving ceremony. Then, get them to advertise the competition on their radio or in their newspaper.
- Ask one of your sponsors to produce a poster for the competition themselves, using their logo and yours on the poster.

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

Recognizing the achievements of members of the community you serve in the area of human rights is an effective way of engaging the public and of ensuring that people strive to do more. Awards can be offered to:

- Individuals that have done something commendable;

- NGOs or CBOs [community-based organizations] that have achieved remarkable results;
- Journalists.

To run a human rights award program, you will need to:

- Develop a strategy document;
- Identify categories;
- Call for nominations. This can be done with an advert in the newspaper, using your website, sending invitations to others via email or regular post. Your call for nominations should state clearly what the categories and requirements are and should say how people should motivate their nomination. For example, people could be asked to send copies of the CVs of people they are nominating plus a brief note saying what they have done to qualify and why they think they should win;
- Identify independent judges;
- Plan and hold a prize-giving ceremony.

Case study – Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) Human Rights Awards

The Australian HREOC runs probably the most successful human rights award program in the world. The awards have been going since 1986 and a major ceremony is held each year on 10 December (International Human Rights Day). The budget for the awards varies depending on what sort of event they decide to have. The HREOC have a full-time organizer for at least two months before the event and part time for about three to four months prior to that. In addition, a media, website and desktop helper is appointed for the month or so before the ceremony.

The HREOC calls for nominations around August. Each year, a different set of awards is available. For example, they may be for the journalist who has done the most to promote human rights, the best NGO and so on. People from different peer groups judge the awards. So, if there is an award for journalists, then a group of journalists decide who should win.

Anyone who wants to come to the ceremony is sent an invitation. Sometimes, a formal luncheon is held and people need to buy their tickets. However, in recent years there has been less interest in huge, expensive luncheons and so, in the last couple of years they have decided not to charge for the ceremony.

A major effort is made to ensure the media attend—for example press releases are sent out, they do some advertising, and advertise on their website. The amount of

media coverage depends very largely on who wins the Human Rights Medal (the major award).

The aim of the Awards is really to keep faith with the community in recognizing good work done over the year.

For more information, visit their web site at: www.humanrights.com.au

DEBATING COMPETITIONS

A good way of encouraging school-goers to think about and understand human rights issues is to organize a school debate competition. Depending on how many schools are in your focus area, this can be a competition run in one school or an inter-school competition.

To run a debating competition, you will need to:

- Develop a proper strategy;
- Choose a topic;
- Choose which schools you will run the competition in—and whether this will be an inter-school competition;
- Find an appropriate prize;
- Choose judges (who could be from your NGO);
- Run the competition;
- Plan and hold a prize-giving ceremony.

Debating competitions can also be run with church groups, youth groups and so on.

SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS

As a human rights activist, you could be invited to make a speech or give a presentation from time to time. You could also decide to approach schools in your area to see if they will allow you to do a presentation on human rights from time to time.

PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

While not competitions, public discussions are a way of encouraging people to think about issues and then allowing them to take part in a discussion of these.

Public discussions can be held at your offices or in a community hall or school. They work best when they are held regularly (such as once a month). The basic idea is that you choose a topic for discussion—anything relevant will do. For example, if there has been an increase in complaints to your organization of sexual harassment, you could hold a discussion on the topic.

You will need to:

- Choose a venue that is big enough to hold the number of people you think will attend. Preferably, someone will donate this space to you;
- Choose a relevant topic;
- Choose speakers to discuss this. You will be looking for people who are very knowledgeable but who can speak in plain, non-legalistic language. Be sure to give your speakers enough time to prepare and to tell them that their input should be kept as simple as possible. (Many 'knowledgeable' speakers will try to cite cases and statutes and so on, which is really not helpful to anyone);
- Advertise the event—put up cheap posters, send out flyers and so on. The more frequently you hold these discussions, the less advertising you will need to do;
- Conduct the event. Preferably, you should hold the event in the evening (to increase the numbers of people able to attend) and should provide a light snack and refreshments at your own cost.

The idea is to allow your speaker (or speakers) about a half an hour to discuss the topic before opening the floor to discussion. To maximize the discussion, keep a record of it and include a summary of the discussion in your newsletter, on your web site and so on.

WEBSITES

Should your organization have a website (or should you be able to convince them to have one), use the website to distribute all sorts of materials by putting copies of them on the site that people can download or print. Also include educational materials (such as a training manual) on the site for others to use. You can also use your site to conduct debates, post a competition entry form and so on. Lastly, make sure the site has sufficient information about what your organization does, who it works with and how to contact you.

WEBSITE DISCUSSION FORUMS

If you have a website, you can use it as a place for public discussions as well. For example, you could pose a question on your home page and ask people to post their answers on your discussion forum. While you guide people to this forum by posing a controversial question, you should note that people would discuss all sorts of issues on your forum.

Note

These forums can become problematic and you will need to ask yourself the following question in advance—how much will you allow in the interests of freedom of speech. Some people use these fora to write hateful and hurtful comments, since they can do so and remain anonymous. While some discussion of these issues may be worthwhile, you may want to have a notice saying that such comments will not be permitted. You will then need to visit the site quite frequently and remove any such comments. On the other hand, you may permit them and allow other visitors to address the issues instead.

Case studies

While there is no real reason for discussion forums not to work, two attempts in South Africa have failed badly. The South African Human Rights Commission has one on its website where members of the public are asked to discuss racism in schools. In over a year, only four people have posted their views. One of these actually posted a link to a 'hate site'—a web site hosted by racists. The other asked a question about how her husband could get compensation for damage caused to his car while it was being unloaded in the USA. An exercise by an NGO (ACCORD) has also failed.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are perhaps the most effective educational tool for reaching illiterate and semi-literate people. They are also extremely useful for reaching people in areas where there are few (or no) newspapers, and where radio and television do not reach.

USING OTHER PEOPLE'S PRODUCTS

It is possible to convince people producing things that the public use frequently to print a message related to human rights on their product. Since they are already paying printing costs for their packaging, there is no extra cost to them.

Example

In Brazil, many children die because of dehydration. This happens even though there is a really easy way to prevent it, by mixing a little salt and a few spoons of sugar to a glass of water. NGOs focusing on children came together and were able to convince milk producers to include information on preventing dehydration on all milk cartons in the country.

Some common articles that could be used:

- Cold drink tins;

- Maize meal packets;
- Match boxes;
- Sugar packets;
- Milk cartons;
- Candle packets.

While a little harder to achieve, it is possible to convince some governments to print stamps with a human rights message on them. This could be a message about World Aids Day, International Day of the Child or even if you have your own human rights days.

Tips

Keep messages short. A good idea is to have one or two of your rights in your bill of rights printed at a time—in simple language of course. You can then change the message every six months or so.

SOAP OPERAS

Soap operas are television shows that usually broadcast every day. They get their name from the fact that they were used to advertise washing powder to housewives in the USA in the early days of television. They are usually broadcast in the early afternoon.

While very few NGOs could produce a soap opera, there is an interesting case study from Brazil that shows how these can be used.

Case study

Brazil is one of the biggest producers of soap operas in the world. They could be anything from a story about pirates to the lives of the families of football players.

Child rights activists in Brazil decided to get together and to approach the people who make these shows. They were able to convince the producers that child rights were extremely important and the producers agreed to introduce the issues in their soap operas. So, a story about football players would suddenly have a part of the story dealing with a child who has run away from home to be a football player and is now living on the streets. Or, a child in another show might be subjected to abuse and then find out how to discuss this with their parents.

MULTI-MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Multi-media campaigns are those that use a variety of methods at the same time. Because of this, they are extremely expensive and take a lot of work. If you are able

to raise funds for them though, they are the most effective way of reaching a large audience.

Case study – Soul City

Soul City is an NGO based in South Africa, but working throughout the continent. They have been around for about ten years and are regarded as probably the best multi-media campaigners in the world.

Soul City is really a television show based in a hospital. The show was used in the beginning to teach people about health issues. Over the years, it has dealt with issues such as domestic violence, HIV/Aids, accessing health care, how to run a small business and a whole range of topics that improve the lives of people. The TV show is the main method and has become so popular that it is broadcast in many countries in Africa.

To back up the TV show (which runs at prime time, once a week), a newspaper insert is prepared and carried in a national newspaper on the day of the show. The insert deals with the same issues covered in the show. Sometimes, a whole comic book on the issue is used as an insert.

At the same time, a radio show is broadcast using the same theme. Booklets covering the topics in the show are also produced and distributed.

A spin-off show, series of booklets and other methods has also started, called Soul Buddyz. It uses a group of children in the ten-fourteen-year-old age group and follows their daily lives. It focuses largely on sex and sexuality education and covers issues like child abuse and HIV/Aids.

Soul City is a massive project, using millions of dollars a year. Visit the Soul City website on: www.soulcity.org.za/.

A NOTE ON PRIZES

Some of the methods set out above involve competitions of some sort—and competitions require prizes. While this does not necessarily have to be money, money is unfortunately one of the best ways of getting people to take notice. Even if it is a money prize, it does not have to be a huge sum.

Other examples of prizes:

- Trophies;
- Clothes;
- Holidays;
- Posters (which could be from your own organization), books and other publications;
- CDs and tapes.

In short, prizes can be anything anyone could want. Most importantly though, never underestimate the value of prestige. Many people will take part in a competition just to be able to say they won, particularly if winning shows they are smart, understand human rights or are artistic. Many people will also participate for the publicity they will receive. For example, if you say the winning entry will be published in the local newspaper, more people will enter.

Prizes need to be relevant to your target market. For example, a novel by Chinua Achebe or a bottle of whisky may not be much of an incentive to young children.

Never make the prize the only objective of winning. Ideally, you want people to think about the issue and not about the prize. Instead, try to offer other incentives (such as publicity, using the winning entry to design a poster and so on).

Where do you get prizes? An obvious place to look would be to a funder, but funders are not generally keen on providing prizes—with one notable exception. Funders **are** prepared to provide prizes for human rights awards, particularly if these are national awards and have achieved a certain level of status. Where it is a small competition though, such as a school poster competition, you may need to look elsewhere.

You could start by approaching local businesses. For example, if there is a local bookstore, you could ask them to donate books as prizes. Next, look to businesses that regularly sponsor local football matches, beauty competitions and so on. These may be prepared to donate prizes if you offer them something in return, such as free advertising (by using their logos on entry forms or posters advertising the competition) and by inviting them to attend the prize-giving ceremony. At the ceremony, to which members of the media will be invited, allow them to hang banners and such in prominent places.

You could also approach community leaders and wealthy people within the community to donate prizes.

Tips

- When running competitions aimed at school goers, try to get prizes for the schools that winners come from as well. This will ensure principals encourage learners to participate. A good example is to provide books for the school library.
- When looking for prizes, beware of:
  - Alcohol;
  - Cigarettes;
  - Prizes from organizations that may be trying to bribe you. For example, your organization may have received a complaint about unfair labor

practices in a particular business. When looking for prizes, be wary of such businesses, since they might expect too much in return;
- Businesses with a bad human rights record in the community;
- Companies with a bad international human rights record. For example, shortly after being implicated in the death of Ken Saro–Wira (a Nigerian activist), Shell (the petrol company) sought to sponsor many human rights awards as a way of improving its image.

Endnote

1 For more information on Fahamu and its work, see www.fahamu.org