

## Introduction

**T**HE “PROMOTION” aspect of human rights work refers to a variety of programs and activities that range from explicitly human rights promotion types to those that appear to be hardly indicating any link to human rights. In many of the latter cases, human rights are “embedded” in the activities and discussed as one of the components of the problems involved.

While effective conveyance of human rights message must always be considered, explicit exposition of human rights is not necessarily the only way to attain this goal. In a number of situations, strong and open projection of human rights encounters difficulties and to some extent blunts the desired impact of the initiatives.

Within the wide field of human rights promotion, human rights education forms a very significant part.

The current volume presents a range of human rights education experiences that highlight the need and the dynamics involved in making them work on the ground. These experiences exemplify explicit exposition of human rights but also the “human-rights-embedded” approach.

The current collection of articles also covers a wide range of human rights education programs catering to judges and prosecutors, journalists, students (from basic education level to tertiary and higher levels) and also human rights workers (or people who are being trained to assume human rights-related work particularly the government officials).

These articles discuss the challenges in introducing human rights education in the formal, non-formal and informal education systems, the context of the people and institutions that should be affected, and the ways to link human rights to cultures (including religions).

### **Educating the Judges and Prosecutors**

Experiences from Nepal and the Philippines provide concrete examples on how human rights can be taught to judges and prosecutors as part of their pre- and in-service training requirements. Both experiences point to the importance of discussing human rights in relation to specific issues. The National Judicial Academy of Nepal takes up gender justice, social justice, juvenile justice, transitional justice, human trafficking, and torture as issues for its human rights-related training activities. The Philippine Judicial

Academy focuses on issues about women, children, environment, sharia law, human trafficking, and also extrajudicial killing and enforced disappearance.

Being judicial academies, they facilitate understanding of state obligations under ratified international human rights instruments, the domestic laws affecting human rights issues, jurisprudence and human rights, and the human rights implications on court procedures. Their programs provide judges and prosecutors the opportunity to see domestic laws and issues from a human rights perspective.

They also see the need for research and publication as essential components of the education programs. Judges, prosecutors and lawyers need practical materials that can guide the application of human rights in their respective areas of work, as much as in-depth discussions on human rights law and jurisprudence.

But they face the challenge of making the human rights courses become significant part of the mainstream course, instead of special activities. They also need to hold an assessment of the impact of the human rights education activities on the decisions of the judges on cases brought before them.

### **Educating the Human Rights Workers**

The Ethics and Human Rights in Counter-trafficking initiative of the United Nations Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) illustrates the need to constantly find areas where human rights education has to be undertaken. In this UNIAP initiative, the major concern is on the manner by which services are provided to address human trafficking issues. There is certainly no guarantee that people who consider themselves human rights workers or defenders would act in ways that would not be violating the very rights they uphold. Good intentions are not enough. And it cannot be assumed that existing governmental services and programs adhere to human rights principles. The UNIAP project highlights the problems encountered by measures aimed at helping human trafficking victims that cause human rights violations (such as violation of the right to privacy, freedom of movement, and more seriously the retraumatization of the human trafficking victims) instead. The initiative provides principles on human rights and ethics that should guide the development and implementation of programs and research projects.

These guiding principles constitute the core messages of the initiative, and are translated into checklists, case studies, do's and don'ts, and templates for key forms such as ethics reviews and informed consent statements. The *Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter-trafficking—Ethical Standards for Counter-Trafficking Research and Programming*, is the basic material for training government officials, members of the police, journalists, social workers and policymakers in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

The initiative implements an agreement among the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Human Trafficking (COMMIT Process). The intergovernmental agreement commits the respective governments of the countries involved to “ensure that all official actions with respect to trafficked persons protect their safety, dignity and rights.”

The initiative highlights this intergovernmental commitment along with the different relevant domestic laws.

### **Educating the Journalists**

The media has long been considered influential in promoting human rights, but also responsible for creating misconceptions about human rights and for violating them. Thus there is clear need for media people to have proper understanding of human rights and preparation to apply them in their work.

The experience of Drik Library is an example of training for journalists on how they can be guided by human rights principles in presenting people's situations and problems to the public. Drik Library wants to mobilize the journalists into exposing human rights issues and violations in the proper way. The Drik Library training provides journalists with the venue for learning human rights concepts, affected peoples or groups and their issues, and the human-rights-sensitive manner of reporting them to the general public. The training program is oriented toward practical application of human rights principles in the field of journalism.

Drik Library holds the training in line with its advocacy on the role of the media in promoting social justice in general, and “human rights journalism” in particular.

Indeed, human rights-guided journalism/media should constitute an essential pillar of the human rights structure in any country.

## Human Rights Education in Formal Education

The experience of Muhammadiyah secondary schools in Indonesia provides an important reminder about the challenges in the teaching and learning of human rights in the formal education system. It tells of the need for a clear commitment to the idea of human rights among education officials in order to integrate human rights education into the school system. The debate on the idea of human rights in relation to Islam and the development of the school curriculum to integrate human rights education in Muhammadiyah schools are not merely interesting but also very essential. Proper appreciation and implementation of any human rights education program within the school system require such internal debate to ensure its acceptance by people who make policy decisions and manage the daily operations of schools.

The Muhammadiyah schools experience is also notable for having human rights textbooks that discuss the links between human rights and Islam.

A similar process of debate and discussion must have contributed to the acceptance of a textbook on Khmer Rouge history by the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The textbook is meant to make the present young generation of Cambodians gain a better understanding of a recent past that is slowly being forgotten. The textbook is designed for classroom use, and supplemented by teacher's guidebook and students' workbook. The textbook has been used also in teacher training.

But as in any initiative introduced into the school system by institutions outside the education bureaucracy, the use of these materials inside the classroom deserves a proper monitoring as well as support. The assessment by the Documentation Center for Cambodia (DC-Cam) of its project is an example of such monitoring. The experience highlights how a project on the teaching of a particular segment of history can potentially lead to problems without such monitoring. The proponent institution (DC-Cam) has to find out how the people within and around the schools view the project. Do the education officials, school officials, teachers and parents share similar perspective about the teaching and learning of the Khmer Rouge history? Are they (school officials and teachers especially) properly prepared (trained) to undertake the task? Do teachers have the necessary teaching materials (history textbook, teacher's guidebook) for the purpose? Considering the official curricular requirements in teaching history and other relevant subjects, do teachers have the desire to incorporate the teaching of Khmer Rouge

history within their respective subjects? For some teachers who are former Khmer Rouge cadres, are they willing to discuss the Khmer Rouge atrocities and people's suffering (both human rights violations) whose veracity they can personally attest to?

Are the parents who are former Khmer Rouge cadres supportive of the idea of teaching Khmer Rouge history to their children?

Fortunately, to some extent, the DC-Cam assessment of its project reveals support for the project among education and school officials, teachers and parents in two provinces with majority population consisting of former Khmer Rouge cadres.

At higher educational level, particularly the law school level, how can human rights be taught or learned? One answer is through the establishment of a program that complements classroom teaching. Such program should facilitate students' transformation of concepts into practice. The development and implementation of this type of program is the focus of the Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Community Legal Education Initiative (BABSEA CLE). The significance of the program lies in the fact that it brings the educational institution (particularly the faculty of law or law school) to the community where it should draw knowledge from on how to apply legal (including human rights) concepts.

The promotion of clinical legal education in Southeast Asia by BABSEA CLE is important for human rights education. It addresses the component of pedagogy, particularly the one that brings learning within the context of the community. BABSEA CLE defines clinical legal education as a type of experiential problem-based learning. Such learning system is a need in human rights education, which should ensure that human rights do not remain mere ideas but put into practice in a most educative sense. Any legal education should be touching on human rights-related principles, if not the human rights laws and international instruments themselves, whenever applicable.

### **Participatory Teaching and Learning**

The experiences of the institutions featured here highlight the employment of participatory learning for all types of students as well as for adult professionals. In the same manner, these experiences show that effective teaching is almost always linked to the employment of participatory teaching.

They all value the importance and effectiveness of such type of teaching and learning in whatever form of human rights education.

Most of the experiences featured here justify the employment of participatory teaching and learning. The justification is expressed in a variety of ways:

- It is supportive of faculty program objective of developing better trained and more socially conscious lawyers;
- It is in line with teacher training on the use of K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned) chart and group discussion;
- It is the best hope for securing active longtime involvement of participants in human rights work;
- It enables educators, facilitators and presenters to deliver their sessions more effectively;
- It is part of trailblazing efforts in the training of the judges and court officials;
- It supports the view that the more participatory the learning process is the more benefit the participants obtain from the training;
- It facilitates the development of enthusiasm among students in thinking and finding solutions to problems.

There can really be many justifications for employing participatory teaching and learning, and hardly any argument against them.

### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

The need for teaching and learning materials in any form of human rights education program or activity comes out strongly in the experiences featured here.

These materials range from textbooks and lesson plans for schools to different types of materials for the general public. They include materials meant for training of particular groups of people working on specific issues as well as materials on general human rights principles and mechanisms.

Indeed, any human rights education program or activity must have the necessary materials that would provide appropriate human rights information and messages.

## About Culture and Human Rights

Equally apparent in the experiences featured here is the question of acceptability of the idea of human rights.

The survey undertaken in Bangladesh and the various studies of Timorese culture support the view that people have an understanding of human rights (though known by different names or couched as issues ordinarily faced by people) and of the means to resolve problems. But there is still a need to make such understanding much more legitimate and proper by pointing out what human rights really mean according to international standards and in relation to local systems, knowledge and cultures.

Examining cultures, local systems and history in ways that bring out the links between them and human rights is important in this regard. Human rights must be seen as legitimate part of the social, legal and cultural fabrics of society.

While there are points of conflict of ideas or concepts between the internationally-agreed definition of human rights and the local systems, knowledge and cultures, there are also points of convergence between them. It is the responsibility of the human rights educator to bring to discussion and understanding both aspects with the goal of making people continue their support for human rights while finding ways of dealing with points of conflict.

The survey of public view on human rights in Bangladesh, the literature review of studies on Timor Leste's informal local justice systems, and the review of approaches to linking cultures to human rights in Asia-Pacific context all provide concrete bases for finding positive links between human rights and the local systems, knowledge and cultures.

## Declaration on Human Rights Education

This volume includes as an appendix the recently adopted United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. This is a significant document. However, it is largely unknown to human rights education practitioners in Asia and possibly the Pacific too. Its drafting process has sadly not attracted interest among them, probably due to the way the non-governmental organization lobby during the drafting stage was done.

This document is useful in introducing the broad meaning of human rights education and in stressing the obligation of United Nations member-states to support it. It deserves to be used properly by all concerned institutions.

One note about the Declaration: the addition of the word “training” in “human rights education and training” is superfluous. Training is recognized in practice as part of “education.”

HURIGHTS OSAKA sticks to using “human rights education” unless a convincing and practical justification to lengthen it comes along.

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