Creating a Rights Respecting Society in India: The Human Rights Education Program of Amnesty International India

The HRE Team, Amnesty International India

"I WISH THIS WORKSHOP was longer. Time just flew by. At the beginning of the first day, I thought my school was human rights friendly and we were doing everything right. But after these three days, I know that we have much more to do."

These were the words of a teacher from one of the first workshops that we conducted in India on human rights education. It is this idea that we wanted to bring in - that the seeds of human rights exist in schools but our program would help it strengthen and grow.

The Human Rights Education program at Amnesty International India (AI India) began in July 2012. With the inception of the Amnesty International Office in India in 2012, human rights education was conceived as an integral part of the India program of work. It would be part of the *proactive* side of AI India's work and the "face" of the organization – building a future rights respecting society.

The AI India office was part of AI India's efforts for "Moving Closer to the Ground". The international movement decided to set up regional hubs and national offices in key locations around the world in order to increase its legitimacy, relevance and impact as a human rights movement. Thus, the vision of AI India - *With strong roots in the country, Amnesty International is a key player in a movement delivering positive changes on the burning human rights issues of contemporary India, and contributing to the long-term effort of establishing a rights-respecting society in India.*

Human rights education evolved into an important component towards building such a rights respecting society. Education is a key ingredient to bring about systemic change. Bringing education and human rights together creates conditions for both enhancing learning environments and community values and has a long-term impact in building and sustaining a rights-respecting society. Human rights education can also create the platform and

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environment to highlight critical current human rights issues in order to develop public opinion and action on protecting and promoting human rights.

Our Context

"Even if we are not allowed, I would run off and come to school." says a student from one of our pilot schools who is also part of the National Child Labour Project.

Thus, although education is seen as a means of social transformation, research[1] reveals that Indian educational institutions practice and in a way perpetuate discrimination, segregation, and disparity. This inability of the education system to address issues around discrimination has contributed to the lack of educational progress and advancement of children, especially those belonging to marginalized communities.

In August 2009, the Indian parliament passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act and incorporated the right to education in Article 21A of the Constitution. The Act entitles all children between the ages of six and fourteen to an education based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Further, India is a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has laws against child labor, protection of children, etc. However, the story on the ground is overwhelmingly a story of power, unequal access and disparity driven by class, caste and religion with gender as a cross-cutting factor.

Access to education has always been difficult for those coming from weaker socio-economic circumstances. On the one hand, public school education is often impaired by a lack of adequate resources, which invariably affects the quality of educational facilities. If universalizing education only entailed providing a physical building of some sort, India would have been successful in its endeavor. However, most of these schools are under-resourced and single teacher or contract teacher-run.

On the other hand, both in the urban and rural contexts, there is a massive shift away from government schools, with preference for private schools. Although the assumption is that private schools offer quality education, these schools often discriminate against marginalized children. The RTE stipulates a 25 percent intake of underprivileged marginalized children, but many private schools are still resisting this measure, claiming

that it will adversely affect their reputation and the quality of their learning environment.[2]

There have been limited attempts to inform the larger society of the issues and the multiple layers of discrimination that marginalized children face in schools. Teachers and educators often lack sensitivity to these issues and thus continue to perpetuate the marginalization and discrimination of socio-economically underprivileged children. The persisting lack of access of these historically disadvantaged groups to quality education severely affects their opportunity to change their socio-economic conditions. Further, these learning environments are highly stratified. And this stratification exists across all categories of schools, which creates deeper adverse conditions across the board.

For example, let us look at the situation of children from Dalit and Adivasi communities. An alarming number of them, largely girls drop out of school before they reach the age of fourteen. Even if these children remain in school, they face discrimination that often pushes them out of the education system.[3]

Civil society organizations and grassroots movements have been working in the area of child rights and human rights in India for decades. But there was a need for a new approach that looked at schools and education from a wider human rights perspective, not only from a child rights perspective. It is from this perspective that we brought in the Human Rights Education Program.

Our Context & the Global Space

AI India's initiative was developed in the context of the United Nations (UN) World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE). The global definition of human rights education was adopted by Amnesty International's program. The first phase of the WPHRE (2005-2009) emphasized integration of human rights education in primary and secondary school systems across the world. It advocated a holistic approach to human rights education, encouraging national governments to not only support schools to teach children about human rights, but also to ensure that the schools were run in a manner consistent with human rights values and principles.[4]

As part of the WPHRE, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training encourages states to promote and ensure that human rights

education and training are developed and implemented. As Article 1 of the Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education and training."

AI India uses this framework and Amnesty International's global Human Rights Friendly Schools approach to run its program in India.

What Do We Do and How Do We Do It

Our Approach – The Whole School Approach

A Human Rights Friendly School (HRFS) adopts a Whole School Approach. It is where human rights values and principles are integrated into all aspects of school life - Curriculum & Co-curricular Activities, School Relationships, School Environment and School Governance.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROGRAMME
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL INDIA

In the area of *Curriculum & Co-curricular Activities*, human rights issues and principles are integrated into the school curriculum through various methodologies and approaches that enhance teaching practices and co-curricular activities and the knowledge of human rights.

With *School Governance*, every member of a school community contributes to informed decision making. Sharing responsibilities helps create trust and respect in the environs of a school. For example, an empowered student council can effectively communicate students' grievances or suggestions and incorporate them into a school's vision and annual plan.

In the *School Environment*, when a school observes equality irrespective of gender, faith, class and caste, and the school community remain respectful of inclusiveness in the classroom, the play area and the staff room; they are on their way to becoming a human rights friendly school.

And finally, in the area of *School Relationships*, to establish interactions based on non-discrimination and respect, schools integrate activities on addressing issues like bullying and conflict resolution.

The Global Principles of Education and Training,[5] which include *non-discrimination & inclusion, participation, accountability* and *empowerment* through learning and teaching, provide the basis for what needs to be achieved in qualitative terms on the ground.

Principles of the Program

The program established a set of principles to facilitate a deeper and consistent integration of human rights education into school life. These principles bind our work, informing our actions and assessment:

1. **Create Ownership** - Ownership of the program happens when schools recognize the role of human rights education to enhance the quality of their school life.
2. **Build Relevance** - Relevance of human rights education is initiated when the school community identifies the importance of respect, dignity, non-discrimination in school life, while "good practice" in learning, teaching and overall interaction is ensured through broad-based participation and inclusion.
3. **Learning By Doing** - Human rights education is not taught as a theoretical topic. Instead, it is enabled through learning by experience and introduced through activities and fun exercises.
4. **Create Advocates** - For human rights education to contribute to broad-based impact that creates a rights respecting society, practitioners and advocates become the torch bearers of the program and work actively towards spreading human rights education in the wider community.

How Does it Work: On the Ground

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood [s]he lives in; the school or college [s]he attends; the factory, farm, or office where [s]he works… unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

—Eleanor Roosevelt, 1948, one of the principle drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We begin all our introductory workshops with this quote. It helped us break down the theoretical concept of human rights education and ensure that it becomes relevant to all.

For our **pilot phase** (end of 2012 – mid 2013), we ensured that all our "pioneer schools" went through an introductory workshop. This workshop provided a self-assessment, visioning and an action planning process. Each school self-assessed itself, came up with a vision to turn the school into a human rights friendly one and then created action plans to make this vision a reality. The schools identified key issues that they would like to work on in the areas of Curriculum & Co-curricular activities, School Environment, School Relationships and School Governance (Whole School Approach). These plans were taken forward by the newly-formed schools human rights education units. We at AI India liaised with these units to ensure that the issues and activities were being taken up in a smooth manner. Our first set

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The Student Council at Al Azhar Foundation

The Al Azhar Foundation, a non-governmental organization (NGO)-run school in Bangalore's Goripalya settlement imparts mainstream education facilities to the children from the surrounding areas. The school is one of the pilot schools under the AI India program.

The Al-Azhar Foundation has been a pioneer school in adopting the human rights education program. As part of their human rights education school plan, it suggested the establishment a student council to inform students of their role in the school's decision making process.

During elections, students were nominated, canvassed and elected as student council members through a democratic process. This exercise allowed teachers and students to explore the scope and influence of a student council.

To ensure that the student council did not just function as a token body, elected members were trained and made aware of their responsibilities to identify their role and formulate their student council plan. In their first year, they set up a suggestion box, inviting their contemporaries' solutions and concerns on the issue of bullying. These issues were regularly discussed and resolved by the student council members.

In its second year, the student council is working towards its next step: reaching out to the local community. Watch on YouTube how this process happened, www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLiXSWNtfv4.

of resource materials was developed in a "demand-drive" fashion - from the issues that were raised in these first school action plans.

It was then time to grow and expand! Next phase saw the piloting of our scale up plans (mid 2013 to end 2014). Our plan was to work with other organizations that work with schools in order to integrate human rights education into their respective agendas. This involved training their staff on human rights education so that they could take these ideas forward on their own terms. Many meetings to understand each other's work, identify the common areas and issues that could be worked on and human rights education training programs were part of this human rights education integration process. In this case, the organization would identify a person or persons with whom AI India could work with and who would keep us informed of how the program was being taken up in schools. For this phase, we also decided to work through two main approaches – deep engagement (focused work concentrated on fewer schools) and wider reach (wider dissemination to a broader set of schools). We introduced ideas such as the student council, teacher training in an intensive hands-on manner through the deep engagement approach. In the wider reach space, we chose to give out modules on the Amnesty Student Clubs and activities that teachers could initiate.

In the past couple of years, we have consolidated our work and we have sharpened our understanding as to ways in which schools tend to take up human rights education.

Scaling-up – Developing Wide Human Rights Community in Schools

Zee Learn works with a network of high-end private schools in India. The organization supports and monitors quality education in schools. The regional directors of the organization are responsible for the implementation of the program. Introductory workshops on human rights education were held in various schools involving teachers and regional school directors. Based on the plans developed in these workshops, students built an understanding on the relevance of human rights through various activities. Students linked up with organizations that worked on women's literacy and conducted an awareness campaign on the importance of women's education. They also visited the local police station and commemorated the efforts of the police towards ensuring safety in their communities. Various other activities involving the local communities have been conducted in these schools. These schools have also

marked their school calendars to celebrate global days such as International Women's Day and Amnesty's Human Rights Month.

To ensure the development of a strong public opinion on integrating human rights education in schools among the wider community, the organization plans to highlight on its social media page the importance of human rights. It is also thinking of taking the program to all its schools and systematically involving parents in this effort.

To read more on what is happening in these schools visit - www.amnesty4education. org/hre/homesee?section=see#tab1.

We have also initiated conversations with government departments to work towards integrating human rights education more systemically within the country.

The details of these approaches and what emerged from them are provided in the next section.

Our Role

Our engagement with schools begins, as touched upon earlier, with an introductory workshop. We take the schools on a journey at the end of which they come out with an Human Rights Education Plan that initiates the integration of human rights education into their school life.

Our key role is as a facilitator and a mentor:

- **As facilitator,** we engage with key stakeholders - school management, teachers, parents and students – to ensure that they adopt relevant means to integrate human rights education into their school;
- **As mentors,** we guide the implementation of activities schools have chosen in their school plan and/or support them to come up with their own activities.

Apart from this, we provide content to schools on various human rights education related issues. This content is written up in the form of human rights education modules that consist of simple stimulating activities and lesson plans to communicate the issue in an engaging manner.

At AI India, we believe in working through collaborations to make human rights education a *visible* reality. Through such collaborations (be it

civil society or the government), we create models for implementation of human rights education, based on their own objectives for school education. These stakeholders owning human rights education on their terms ensures a greater possibility for human rights education to be taken forward in a sustainable and systematic manner.

The Story So Far

The Timeline
- July 2012 – Human rights education in AI India is born
- November 2012 – Introductory Workshops with Pilot schools
- December 2012 - 1st Human Rights Day celebration with the Pilot schools

Amnesty event. (Photo: Hari Adevarekar)

- July 2013 – Twenty-seven schools in Bangalore sign-up as pioneers of the Human Rights Education Program in India composed of ten Government Schools, ten alternate schools and seven private schools. The Human Rights Education Program reached out to 26,000 students, 540 teachers and around 35,000 parents.
- September 2013 - First Student Council implemented in Al Azhar School, Bangalore, informing AI India's Student Council Module

Classroom activity.

- October 2013 – Activity on how to effectively address the issue of bullying in 20 schools, leading to the creation of a bullying module
- November-December 2013 - Human rights education goes public! Human Rights Month Celebrated with the Pilot and Partner Schools
- December 2013 – Launch of the Human Rights Education Website – www.amnesty4education.org
- August 2013 - The Human Rights Education Program establishes collaborations in seven states across India with organizations working with education and networks of schools - Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Goa and Bihar
- In 2014, AI India was invited by the National Human Rights Commission and the Vice President of India's office to give a presentation on human rights education
- August 2014 – Amnesty Club begins in *Delhi Public School* (DPS) Patna!
- December 2014 – Launch of the BullynoMore campaign with an all India competition – www.bullynomore.in.
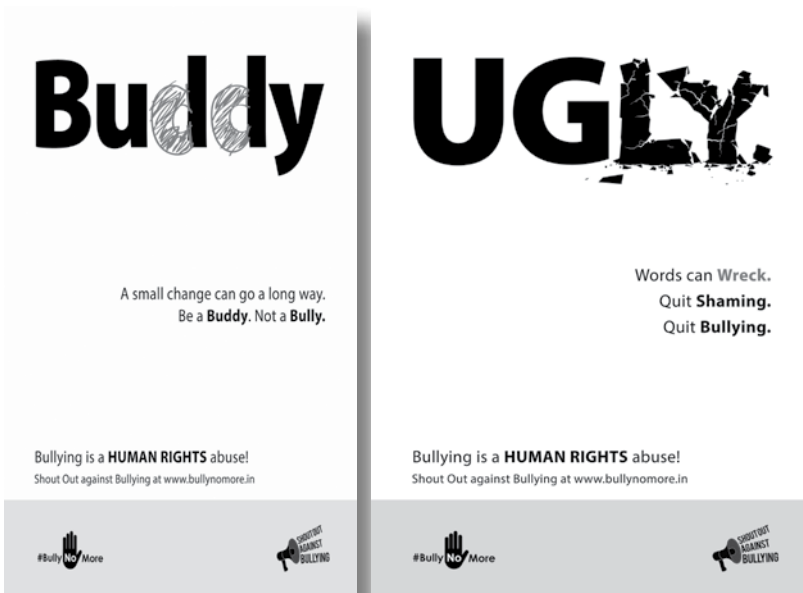
Anti-bullying posters.

- March 2015 – Launch of the Implementation Report documenting the pilot and scale up phase of the program
- September 2015 - AI India Attends national conference for India International Model United Nations (IIMUN) in Aamby Valley City, Mumbai. We had a session with the teachers introducing them to the Human Rights Education Program and the possibilities of an Amnesty Club. We ended up with thirty-three registrations for Amnesty clubs.
- November 2015 - Amnesty International's first Massive Open Online Course launched - Human Rights: The Right to Freedom of Expression. Over eight hundred people registered from India including students and teachers from our partner schools and universities.
- November 2015 - Write for Rights launched - Students from the Human Rights Education Program join the annual Global 'Write For Rights' campaign to show solidarity with Phyoe Phyoe Aung. Students were presented with the case of Phyoe Phyoe Aung

Amnesty at IIMUN.

and briefed on what the campaign was about. In response, some schools hold a peace march, while others wrote letters, held debates and gave speeches on freedom of expression. The campaign saw the participation from more than one hundred schools across India and a total of 29,000 actions were taken by students.

- December 2015 - Human Rights Week – The Human Rights Education Program celebrated Human Rights Week (1st December - 10th December) by building awareness on the issue of bullying, and helping schools in their pledge to stand up against all forms of bullying. As a result of Human Rights Day celebrations and activities, schools pledged to take action against bullying.

- December 2015- The Human Rights Education Program reaches one hundred thirty-four schools across eleven states in India through seven partners

- February 2016 – 'Equality is Gender Free' toolkit ready for dissemination to schools

- March 2016 – Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) aimed to be signed with the Government in Madhya Pradhesh, Karnataka Government and the National Institute for Open Schooling.

(Top and above): Write for Rights campaign.

Reaching Out With Diversity

We have evolved a diverse set of ways in which to expand our reach.

Our Campaign - #BullyNoMore

We discovered first through our introductory workshops that bullying is an issue all schools face. To explore the theme of bullying and build aware-

ness and action on the issue as a human rights abuse, the Human Rights Education team introduced approaches as well as tools in schools and communities. The team came up with a set of engaging and exciting ideas – ranging from classroom activities, to a special assembly plan, to ways in which schools can engage with their local communities. These ideas were put together in an activity kit. The kit was a guide to facilitating activities on the issue of bullying with students, their parents and the local community. It also gave pointers to help in drafting an anti-bullying charter with the participation of students, parents and community members that could facilitate action against bullying. We also collaborated with theater groups to showcase plays that talk about this issue and explore new ways for schools to take action. With our engagement, schools have come up with techniques of their own - such as scripting their own plays and coming up with policies to counter bullying.

Once we shared the activity kit with our collaborating organizations and schools, schools enthusiastically participated in the activities through skits, street plays, mimes, and quizzes. A website www.bullynomore.in was created for public engagement activities and as one-stop for all resources on bullying. A video explaining the problem of bullying, entitled BullyNoMore is available on YouTube - www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NJkJiOIIZE.

Platform for Human Rights Discovery – Amnesty Clubs

Currently, as part of piloting Amnesty Clubs, AI India's Human Rights Education Program has helped start thirty-five AI India clubs across the country. We share an Amnesty club starter kit with schools that are interested in initiating a club of their own. Clubs then take up issues they relate most with and plan and conduct activities. For example, one such club picked up the issue of Syrian refugees and wrote letters to them in solidarity, while another school took up the issue of women's rights.

Similarly, any new campaign created by us is shared with schools for clubs to take up.

Annual Celebration - Human Rights Month

10th of December, being Human Rights Day, is an important day for the program. In 2011, we organized on December 10th a banner making events in all our pilot schools. The following year, we decided to go big by celebrating Human Rights Month, stringing three key dates - 14th of November,
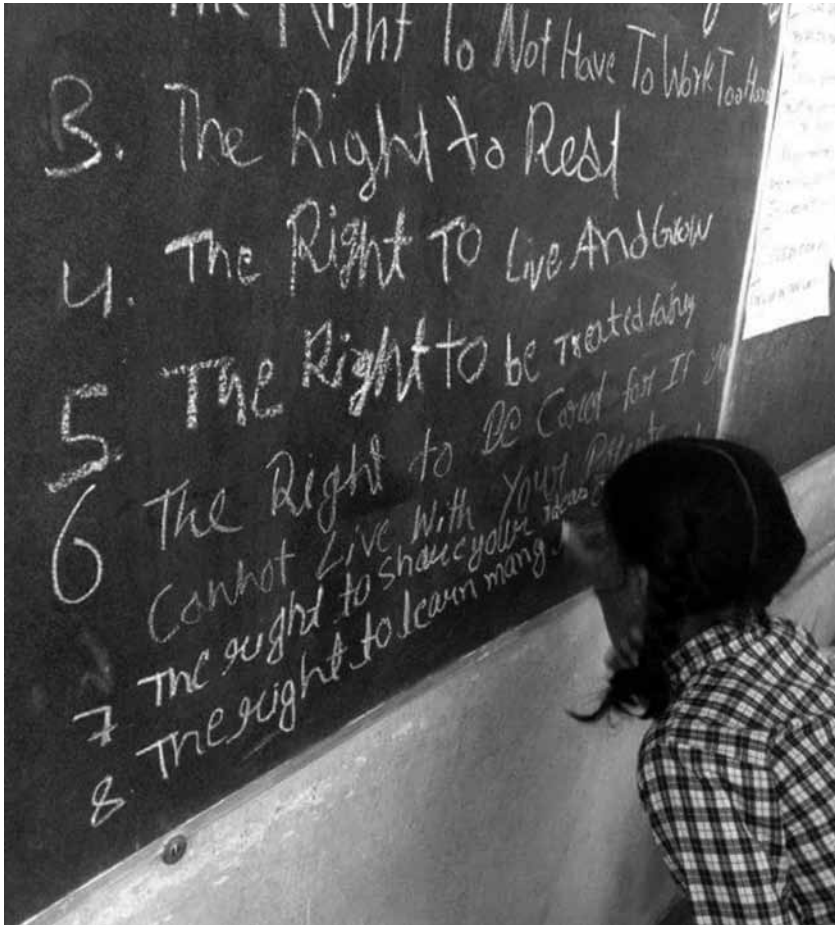
Classroom activity.

Children's Day; 20th of November, Child Rights Day, and; 10th of December, Human Rights Day. In 2013, we decided to go public and organized our first public event near a prominent metro station in Bangalore. Students put up installations on how they perceived human rights. Letters written to Prisoner of Conscience Irom Sharmila were also exhibited in this space.

By 2014, we felt it was important to have discussions around a theme so that we could bring all our schools to focus on ONE issue of importance for Human Rights Month. The theme chosen was bullying. Seventy-eight schools across the country received activity packs which consisted of fun in-

teractive games and quizzes designed to help parents, students and teachers understand why bullying is a human rights abuse and how it affects children in the long-run.

These are examples of the activities for the Human Rights Month across the years:

a.   #BullyNoMore Playing Cards: based on the card game "Taboo," team-mates guess words that relate to bullying by using the least number of cue words;

b.   Body Mapping: on a given body outline, team-mates stick notes with characteristics (both negative and positive) and discuss the impact of bullying on an individual;

c.   #BullyNoMore Contest: This contest reached out with flyers and posters to over five hundred schools across India to get students aged between ten and sixteen to suggest solutions to bullying. With over two hundred voice call entries and video entries, the contest went well;

d.   Activities in Schools on Bullying: parents were invited to be part of the activities using the Anti-Bullying Tool-kit (a set of activities and games that were specifically put together for schools) to build a collective understanding across the school community about bullying.

A Platform for Expression - Write for Rights

Phyoe Phyoe Aung.

Write for Rights (W4R) every year focuses on hundreds and thousands of people around the world by encouraging them to show solidarity for people whose rights have been violated. To show support, people write letters, e-mails, petitions, posters or banners to these prisoners of conscience. In 2015, we initiated the global Write for Rights activity in a big way. For this activity, we chose to show support for Phyoe Phyoe Aung's release.[5]

The campaign was launched in various public, private and NGO-run schools across India. We shared a presentation on Phyoe Phyoe, along with a banner and encouraged students to click a picture with it and write letters to show solidarity.

More than one hundred schools participated and approximately 29,000 actions were taken. We received pictures of students taking action via mail and whatsapp. Some schools did a peace march with the banner, while some engaged through letter writing, debates and speeches on freedom of expression. Teachers and support staff also participated in the activities.

Enabling the Spread of Human Rights Education

Engaging with the Government

The Human Rights Education Team met the Union Minister for Human Resources Development, Smriti Irani, on the issue of bullying. The Minister interacted with six students and four teachers from schools where the Human Rights Education Program is implemented, in an exclusive round table event. The objective was to raise awareness on bullying in schools and to highlight to the Ministry the work done by schools to address the issue.

A more current work involves engaging with different state and national government entities such as the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS is the largest open schooling system in the world. AI India in collaboration with NIOS proposes to implement a certificate course on human rights for the medical health workers in some districts in the State of

Meeting with Smriti Irani.

(Top and above): National Institute of Open Schooling.

Bihar. We will lead the content development for course and the examination, while the NIOS will conduct the examination and provide accredited certification to successful participants. We will also work closely with the state government department of health in ensuring that the certified health workers share the learning and information on human rights with the larger community.

Based on the pilot phase, the program will be scaled to other districts of Bihar.

With the Karnataka Government we are currently working on compiling an anthology of short stories on human rights in collaboration with other civil societies and children book writers. The Karnataka State Board plans to provide the anthology in June to students as a supplementary book that will introduce the concept of rights & responsibilities.

AI India is also a knowledge partner of Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (bgvs) and will be training approximately one hundred resource group members to set up and implement *Bal Cabinets* (Student Councils) in 1,372 government schools in two districts in Madhya Pradesh. Through democratic election and participatory functioning of student run cabinets, we aim to encourage and initiate youth awareness and activism on relevant human rights issues in the state.

Our Learnings

The Approach

The approach is and continues to be non-prescriptive and "demand-driven." Our stakeholders appreciate this and we believe this is one of the core reasons for the program being received well by schools. Over time, some principals, teachers and students have emerged as key advocates of human rights education in schools. These stakeholders understand the relevance of human rights education and the necessity for sustained human rights education in their schools. They have also begun to recognize the need to involve parents in integrating human rights education in their schools. Some of these schools have also started preparing their own human rights related campaigns. We consider this an extremely positive sign resonating *ownership* from the school, which is one of our core principles. There is also a peer community of human rights educators being formed to take forward and spread human rights education in the country.

One area which has not worked very well is involving parents and the local community to ensure the human rights friendliness of the school. This will be our core focus in the years ahead. As we further develop the program, we will continue to apply the principles of ownership, relevance, experiential learning and building a peer-to-peer community consistently.

The Content

We continue to create relevant, age appropriate content. This has been the strength and the value that we bring into the human rights space in India. Some of the issues that have been taken up in a big way by schools are awareness on human rights, bullying, internalizing rights & responsibilities, setting up and running a student council.

Once schools begin to implement their Human Rights Education Plans, students, teachers, principals and the management gradually build their understanding of human rights and its relevance to their school life – in their teaching practice, in understanding the relationship between rights and responsibilities, in their relationships. Over time, students and teachers have begun to articulate human rights issues that exist in their school. They are able to form their own campaigns and look for solutions to issues that bother them. They have also kept to the principles of experiential learning.

Going forward, the feedback loop becomes essential to ensure that we learn from the users of human rights education to keep our content relevant and accessible. We would also like to work with schools to introduce more topics on stereotypes (gender and others) and power relations into their human rights education discussions along with bringing in global human rights education issues and relating them to the local context.

The Platforms for Action

Our model for human rights education is to bring in permanent *platforms* to the school space so that there is continuity in discussion and action on human rights issues. Such platforms include the Amnesty Clubs and the Student Councils. These are platforms for student activism, for them to relate to human rights issues and explore avenues to influence. It is also the space for students to be recognized as stakeholders within the school system and to play their role in decision making in their school.

As part of these spaces, students have imbibed participatory decision making values and understand their relevance in the school. They have also gained leadership skills and use them to mobilize others on their chosen human rights campaigns.

We feel that certain platforms for human rights education, such as the student council although enabled by the school managements, need to be more driven by students. However, hierarchy among different stakeholders still seems to be a big issue that needs tackling.

The presence of such platforms is extremely useful to sustain human rights education, and they become a channel through which the program can be integrated into other areas of school life.

The scale up

The other aspect of the program that has worked well is our relationship with partners and our ***collaborative approach***. Such a model is essential in the Indian civil society space as it prevents us from reinventing the wheel and also allows us to use our resources in an efficient manner. Moreover, it is only through these kinds of partnerships that we can ensure a more sustained spread of human rights education in the country.

Collaborating with organizations was initiated to expand the program based on the approach and content developed in the pilot phase. These organizations have integrated human rights education into their organizational plans and consistently implemented the program in their schools to enable schools in turn to embed it in their context. Key staff members have emerged as advocates of the Human Rights Education Program. They have adapted the program's approach and are implementing it in their schools in a relevant manner.

Organizations choose modules in a way that creates potential human rights education advocates among some of the members of the school community, such as through student council, teacher training and Amnesty Clubs.

Human Rights Education Trainers

One area where there is a clear need for improvement is to increase the number of human rights education facilitators and trainers in the country. The reliance on AI India is increasing and thus causing bottlenecks for schools to take forward the program.

Looking ahead, the program is going to concentrate on creating a growing pool of ***Human Rights Education trainers***. These 'facilitators of Human Rights Education' can build momentum to bring this issue into the national focus while providing local solutions for specific school community needs. Such a movement will also hopefully advocate for the integration of human rights education into the education system.

Government Engagement

The reason we choose to collaborate with the government is because it is a means for accelerated scale up and spread of human rights education. There are two approaches here – national level policy influence and state level human rights education implementation. The actual implementation of human rights education at the state level is a more recent development. This will provide us with the experience to sharpen our approaches to more exponential growth. State-level human rights education implementation is a scale at which we see actual adoption of human rights education practice made possible and viable. This process has begun but needs to cover more ground in the future to make human rights education visible. National level policy influence is a more long-term goal that will need to be embedded in and informed by state-level implementation.

Our Future Possibilities

The Human Rights Education Program in AI India is currently at a stage of consolidation. We will continue to encourage and engage more young people to know their rights and claim them. Along with this, we will continue encouraging and coaxing different parts of the government system to integrate human rights education practice. We have identified two main approaches – Youth Activism and Policy Integration. We see these as two sides of a coin.

Youth activism lies at the core of Amnesty International's mandate. It is only when we have a substantial number of young people who know and can claim their rights that we can say we are a true human rights movement. It is this movement that can influence the government to take up the human rights education agenda. Working increasingly with the government directly will remain one of our priorities. Since education is both a State and Central Government subject in India, it is not enough for us to focus on any one. Hence we will seek to work with both State departments and the Central Ministry.

The opportunities are many; both externally and internally within the organization. Internally, human rights education is now a strategic goal within Amnesty International's program of work and thus has finally been given the importance it deserves. Externally, the response from different parts of the Indian government so far is positive and promising. In the com-

ing Universal Periodic Review for India, next year, lies another opportunity to highlight human rights education.

While we are witness to the nature and extent of human rights violations in the country, there is no better time to seize opportunity for human rights education. Moreover, with 45 percent of India's population being below twenty-five years old, building a rights respecting society for the future just became that much more significant.

Endnotes

1 Quality Education Survey from Educational Initiatives and Wipro Applying Thought in Schools, 2011. Survey report available at www.wiproapplyingthoughtin-schools.com/?q=qes.

2 See recent news articles such as "RTE Seats a distant dream for many," *Times of India,* http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nashik/RTE-seats-a-distant-dream-for-many/articleshow/51904458.cms; "Private schools protest 25% seats quota under RTE," *Times of India,* http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/Will-25-RTE-quota-stay-ask-worried-parents-and-schools/articleshow/50404686.cms that regularly portray the image of public schools versus private schools.

3 Ramachandran Vimala, "Can Rights go Wrong? The RTE Conundrum in India", *International Centre Quarterly,* July 2012.

4 The second phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education began in 2010 and focused on higher education, while also emphasizing the importance of continued efforts to integrate human rights education into the school system. We are currently in the third phase of the World Programme, which aims at strengthening the work done in the first two phases and providing human rights education for media professionals and journalists.

5 Phyoe Phyoe is a student activist from Myanmar, who has been imprisoned for being part of the peaceful protests against the New Education Act launched by the Myanmar government. Phyoe Phyoe has been imprisoned since March 2015 and has been subjected to physical torture and threatened with sexual abuse.

Annex
Global Principles of Education and Training