



*Editorial*

## *The Task Ahead*

In the recent past, ordinary citizens in countries that never bothered to ratify or accede to any of the international human rights instruments used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a basis of argument against repression. Its moral suasion, at least, is its strength.

Political leaders' rhetoric about having "too many rights" and "too few responsibilities" hardly created a controversy that can put UDHR in the realm of widespread public consciousness. Neither has mainstream media been of much help. It is accused of projecting human rights as meaningful only in the context of violations and hardly in its realization.

The UDHR still has a long way to go to become a real part of people's awareness. Its 50-year journey has yielded numerous human rights conventions and declarations yet its enshrined task is still to be fulfilled. The changing situation in the Asia-Pacific region may hopefully lead to some change. This ought to create meaning for UDHR in the next 50 years.

The UN Decade for Human Rights Education, now on its fourth year, has to become a greater instrument to spread the basic human rights principles embodied in UDHR. The UN Decade's major contribution is in fulfilling its call for governments to set up structures that will support the growth and development of human rights education efforts. Under this plan, the 50-year-old message of the UDHR will remain its major content.

On the way to its next 50-year existence, UDHR ought to be celebrated for the realization of its principles rather than merely noted as an historical document.

FOCUS Asia-Pacific is designed by HURIGHTS OSAKA as a means of highlighting significant issues and activities relating to human rights in the Asia-Pacific. Relevant information and articles can be sent to HURIGHTS OSAKA for inclusion in the next editions of the newsletter.

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# The UN Decade for Human Rights Education: Asia-Pacific Scenario

The idea of having a United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education started to spread in the Asia-Pacific when the campaign for a People's Decade for Human Rights Education was launched in the late 80s. A number of human rights organizations in the region supported the campaign. At that point, the prospect of having a United Nations-declared Decade was not very positive. A move to have a People's Decade was considered instead. But with the support from the 1993 Vienna conference and with the widespread NGO campaign, the UN finally approved the adoption of a UN Decade (1995-2004) in December 1994. The journey of the UN Decade thus begun on the first day of January 1995.

## Regional activities

In the 1993 Bangkok NGO Human Rights Conference, the NGOs called upon the United Nations to declare a "People's Decade for Human Rights Education and Training." The parallel governmental conference, on the otherhand, reiterated the need "to explore ways to generate international cooperation and financial support for education and training in the field of human rights at the national level and for the establishment of national infrastructures to promote and protect human rights if requested by States." The ideas of the two major human rights conferences in the region being held parallel to each other are almost similar as far as having a support system for human rights education is concerned.

In 1994, the Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC) started announcing the forthcoming adoption of the UN Decade. It convened in November of the same year a NGO regional meeting in Thailand on human rights education and endorsed the need for involvement of NGOs in the UN's "World Decade for Human Rights Education." The "World Decade" is seen as a good opportunity for human rights educators to fulfill regional and national human rights education plans.

In December 1995, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights organized an Asia-Pacific conference-workshop on human rights education and development. The conference-workshop, attended by both government and NGO representatives, had the theme "Building a Community of Partners for Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific region." The conference-workshop declared that:

"In the spirit of the Plan of Action of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), human rights education in Asia-Pacific region shall be directed to creating the broadest possible awareness and understanding of all the principles, norms and concepts enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and all other relevant international human rights instruments."

The conference-workshop recommends the governments, national human rights institutions and NGOs to:

"Pursue national plans of action on human rights including national plans for human rights education as their commitment to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in consultation with all sectors of the civil society taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable groups. Proceeding from this, the Asia-Pacific nations consider the possibility of drafting a regional plan of action for human rights education, building on the rich cultural heritage of the region in consultation with all concerned sectors."

Furthermore, the conference-workshop recommends to consider the "establishment or strengthening of institutions to coordinate national programs in human rights education and to put in place programs to strengthen linkages between grassroots communities and human rights agencies to ensure continuing awareness of the vitality of human rights principles."

In August 1996, the Diplomacy Training Program and the Australian Human Rights Information Center of the University of New South Wales Faculty of Law organized a NGO workshop on the theme "Task for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education." The workshop strongly notes the "undue emphasis on national structures" by the UN Decade Plan of Action for the coordination and implementation of human rights education. It further states that an important objective of the UN Decade is to "liberate human rights education from the clutches of international, national and professional bureaucracies." It thus emphasizes the "critical importance of people's plan of action" to promote the objectives of the UN Decade.

The workshop, emphasizing the need to take into account the human rights situation in the region, recommends that NGOs:

- a. safeguard the integrity of all human rights education activities;
- b. undertake evaluation of the impact of human rights education activities;
- c. forge solidarity alliances to address the human rights education needs in particularly different country situations;
- d. enhance the exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills in the area of human rights education; and
- e. prevent monopolization of human rights education activities by the national government and human rights commissions.

In September 1997, HURIGHTS OSAKA in cooperation with Child Rights Asianet and ARRC organized an Asian regional meeting on human rights education attended by representatives of NGOs, schools and the three national human rights institutions in Asia and discussed the need to strengthen human rights education in the formal education system. The meeting expressed the necessity of supporting the activities under the aegis of the UN Decade. Subsequent workshops organized by HURIGHTS OSAKA for Southeast and Northeast Asia respectively held in May and August 1998 mention the importance of the UN Decade in pursuing the development of human rights education programs in schools.

### **National activities**

While regional activities for the UN Decade has not yet developed a system of coordination, much less activities along this line seem to be happening at the national level. Organizations involved in human rights education are either doing their programs separately, or have no program related to the promotion of the UN Decade.

A few countries are attempting to have a coordinated effort of promoting the UN Decade. Only the Philippines and Japan have formally submitted their respective national plans of action to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Indonesia, however has a plan produced by its national human rights institution.

The Philippines' Commission on Human Rights prepared an action plan for the UN Decade as early as August 1994. It aims to achieve 100% human rights literacy, instill human rights values, educate key sectors of the Philippine society on their sectoral rights, and educate all law enforcers, prosecutors, judges, jail officers and the members of the military on the rights of those who may be affected by their official actions. It targets government personnel, members of the academe, and the media; workers; special interest groups like overseas contract workers, peasants, women and children; members of private and voluntary

organizations; and insurgents.

In February 1997, the Commission of Human Rights along with the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education and Amnesty International Pilipinas organized a national workshop called "GO-NGO-Academe National Consultation Workshop on Human Rights Education" which drafted a Philippine Human Rights Education Decade Plan. The document consists of detailed sectoral plans for women, elderly, youth and children; academe and basic education; peasant, labor, overseas contract workers and urban poor; media and professionals; indigenous cultural communities and Muslims; police, military and law enforcers; prisoners, detainees and refugees; and persons with disabilities and mentally disabled. Representatives of NGOs and various government agencies were represented in the whole process of drafting the plan starting with local consultations to the national workshop. The Human Rights Educators Association of the Philippines was formed immediately after the workshop. This body is initially tasked to assist the implementation of the national plan. A NGO initiative has also been started that complements the government-led activities. A workshop was held in December 1996 to gather NGO experiences in human rights education that were presented in the February 1997 national workshop.

In Japan, the government created an office for the promotion of the UN Decade in December 1995 to ensure close coordination and cooperation among relevant administrative agencies and to promote comprehensive and effective measures for the UN Decade. A national plan of action was issued in July 1997. The plan aims to disseminate the idea and value of human rights and thereby create a universal culture of human rights as envisaged by the UN Decade. It provides for education, training, public information, and information activities at every possible opportunity. Activities are provided by the plan for schools, adult education programs, private enterprises, general public and for certain professionals (public prosecutors, correctional facility personnel, immigration office personnel, teachers, adult educators, medical personnel, social welfare personnel, maritime safety personnel, labor administration personnel, fire department personnel, police officers, members of the military, other government personnel). Plans are also provided on issues relating to women, children, elderly, Dowa, Ainu people, foreigners, people with HIV and other infectious diseases, and people who have been released from prison.

Some 15 local governments in Japan have adopted their own plans for the UN Decade along the lines of the national action plan.

There is also a parallel NGO initiative in support of the

UN Decade. This initiative takes the form of a channel for transmitting ideas on how to implement the national action plan. The NGOs set up the "Liaison Committee for the Promotion of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education." The major supporters of this committee are the Buraku Liberation League, the Japan Teachers' Union and the National DOWA Educators Association. This committee was created before the government established its own "Headquarters for the Promotion of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education" on December 1995. This government body is formally headed by the Prime Minister.

In 1996, the first national NGO meeting on foreign migrant workers in Japan concluded that human rights education as envisaged by the UN Decade is necessary in countering discriminatory consciousness among many Japanese against foreign migrant workers.

In Indonesia, the National Human Rights Commission drew up a "Strategic Plan for Human Rights Education" in a workshop attended by government personnel, members of the military and police, members of the media, NGO workers, and members of the academe. The plan defines the meaning of human rights education, the strategic issues in promoting human rights education in the country, and the activities that can be undertaken in establishing a human rights education system (to be implemented by a national team which can design human rights education curriculum and implement human rights training). In June 1998, the Commission issued the "Indonesian National Plan of Action on Human Rights 1998-2003" which specifically provides a plan for the UN Decade consisting of:

- a. establishment of a working group to act as a focal point for the UN Decade activities;
- b. determination of priority issues relevant to the UN Decade Plan of Action;
- c. organizing of symposia at the local, national and regional levels to share experiences on the promotion of human rights education;
- d. development and dissemination of instructional materials for human rights education.

In India, while no national plan has been drawn up, the National Human Rights Commission has lent support to NGO efforts at promoting the UN Decade. There is no clear program yet in support of the UN Decade in Australia. But a coalition of NGOs has been pressuring the government to set up a National Committee for the UN Decade to be comprised of relevant federal governments and NGOs with the HREOC as the Chair. There is reportedly not much enthusiasm from the government side on this idea so far.

In Thailand, a group of NGOs has been holding workshops to determine possible activities that will promote

human rights education using the UN Decade as a basic framework. Negotiations with the Ministry of Education and the Human Rights Committee in the Thai Parliament are being held to launch multi-sectoral programming for the UN Decade activities. Thai universities (Mahidol and Chulalongkorn universities) have also become involved in implementing human rights education programs.

Many other NGOs in other countries in the region have been using the UN Decade as a rallying point to promote human rights education. But these activities are done more as individual organization activities rather than coordinated and nationwide program.

### **General trend**

Contrary to the fear that the "national structures" will dominate the national initiatives on the UN Decade, much of these initiatives have been made possible because of the cooperation between national human rights institutions or regular government agencies and the NGO and academic sectors. This is the case in Australia, Indonesia, India, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand. Initiatives to promote the UN Decade were started by the NGOs as in the case of Australia and Thailand.

From the regional perspective, the problem lies in the highly uneven interest on the UN Decade among most countries in the region. Majority of the countries do not have national plans of action for the UN Decade. There are therefore no national structures to speak of yet.

And among NGOs doing human rights education work, many are more attracted to promoting the 50th anniversary of the UDHR rather than create longer-term program for the UN Decade. Those that have taken up the UN Decade as a campaign issue have yet to make significant impact.

There is likewise not much news coming from the UN specialized agencies' regional offices about their regional programs for the UN Decade. The UNESCO regional office has not been active it seems.

### **Next steps**

Greater networking with NGOs, government institutions, and UN agencies doing human rights education work is still very much needed to facilitate a better promotion of human rights education with the UN Decade as a rallying point.

One development that the UN Decade may help bring about is closer cooperation between national, regional and international institutions in the region crossing program and issue borders.

# Guidelines for National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education

## A SUMMARY

At the United Nations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has developed the "Guidelines for National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education." This document is intended to provide a framework to assist member states in the development of national plans of action for human rights education during the UN Decade (1995-2004). The objectives are based on several resolutions adopted by both the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. This plan of action seeks to link human rights education efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels. Those sought for active participation in the planning include: governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, broad sectors of civil society, and concerned individuals. The plan of action has five specific objectives:

- 1) To provide needs assessment, and the formulation of strategies to promote human rights education.
- 2) To build and strengthen human rights education programs at the international, regional, national, and local levels.
- 3) To develop and disseminate useful human rights educational materials.
- 4) To strengthen the role of the mass media in promoting human rights education.
- 5) To promote the global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Human rights education is a concept that has been defined and articulated by the international community, including the United Nations. As such, human rights education can be defined as, "training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes." The development of human rights education is aimed at five major goals within and among nation states:

- 1) To build respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 2) To promote full development of the human personality and its sense of dignity.
- 3) To promote understanding, tolerance, gender equality, and equality and peaceful coexistence among nations, indigenous peoples and racial,

national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.

- 4) To enable every person to participate in a genuinely free society.
- 5) To further United Nations objectives regarding the promotion and maintenance of peace.

National plans of action are central to efforts to promote widespread human rights education. Widespread human rights education is, itself, central to efforts to accomplish broad goals of respect and practice of human rights at all levels of human society (e.g. international, national, local, etc.). Specifically, the goals of national plans are concerned with establishing and strengthening national and local human rights institutions. Towards these ends, the national plans are designed to promote effective national programs for the promotion and protection of human rights. Accordingly, these plans are a first step in the development of useful strategies to prevent human rights violations and their devastating effect on the lives of people in contemporary societies.



Furthermore, access to human rights education should be seen as a human right in and of itself. Governments should develop plans that incorporate this fundamental assumption. Such a plan will include the basic premise to promote respect for, and protection of, human rights through education for all members of the society. Such education will also promote the interdependence, indivisibility and universality of human rights, as such. These human rights include: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, as well as, the right to development. Women's rights should be integrated as a central feature of human rights education as a whole. A fully developed plan for human rights education will also encourage the analysis of existing and developing human rights problems and promote solutions that are consistent with human rights standards. In addition,

these plans will help to empower communities and individuals to identify their human rights needs and to ensure that they are met.

There are several steps that must be taken to bring about national plans for human rights education. There should be the establishment of a national committee for these purposes in each country. The national committee should include representatives from appropriate government agencies and non-governmental organizations with experience, or capabilities, in the area of human rights education. The national committee should, thus, be directly responsible for the development of the national plan. The plan should include the development and implementation of a baseline study.

Correspondingly, the committee should be responsible for maintaining contacts with regional and international bodies concerned with implementing the overall objectives of the UN Decade. The methods utilized by the baseline study must be "legitimate, credible and objective." The question of legitimacy must be related to the organizations commissioned to conduct the research, as well as the data collection methods themselves. Additionally, the baseline study should

The national plan should include a framework for implementing and monitoring human rights education programs. If an education program already exists, it should be critically analyzed to indicate how the programs can be strengthened, or reformulated, especially with regard to increasing local input. Some additional issues can be addressed regarding the development of the program. First, the plan should promote practical networks among individuals, groups and organizations to promote human rights education. Second, the plan should include identification, support and establishment of institutions to promote and coordinate human rights education training and materials development. Third, the plan should promote the integration of human rights education into all levels of formal education. Fourth, the plan should promote further research into, and evaluation of, human rights education programs to foster further improvement. Finally, the plan should also promote public policy and legislative reform in relation to human rights education.

Regarding the continued development and furtherance of human rights education, it is important that the plan be periodically reviewed and revised to meet the needs indicated in the baseline study. Such reviews

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# 1948-1998

identify high priority groups for human rights education, and methods for making human rights education accessible to them. Finally, this study should be made public and widely disseminated.

The findings of the baseline study should be used to establish priorities in human rights education for the short, medium and long term. The priorities for human rights education should be based on providing education for groups that are most in need of such education. These groups may include organizations that have specifically requested assistance in setting up human rights education programs. Additionally, certain organizations may be identified as generally in need of human rights education. These groups may include: justice administration officials (e.g., police, prison officials, judges and prosecutors); government officials (e.g., legislators, military personnel, immigration officials); key professional groups (e.g., lawyers, teachers, social workers, medical staff); organizations (e.g., women's organizations, minority groups, religious leaders, human rights organizations), and others (e.g., refugees, migrant workers, women, prisoners).

should include critical self-evaluation by the national committee, as well as independent evaluations of the process. There is, of course, variation among societies in their ability to plan and carry out such programs. All things being equal, methods that are based on participatory ideas are most appropriate for such follow-up efforts. National evaluations should examine, at minimum, three areas of concern: 1) the national plan of action; 2) implementation of the program, and; 3) the functioning of the national committee.

Whereas, states are obvious central players in the effort to promote human rights education, the roles of other groups and institutions needs to be more firmly established. The input of these non-state groups and institutions should be strongly promoted. Non-governmental organizations, for example, are important as monitors of governments, which are, by and large, the main violators of human rights. They have also been the key organizations promoting the debate about human rights education, and in the documenting of human rights violations. Their persistence in these institutional roles is essential if human rights education efforts are to be successful.

# Conference on Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region

## *- Towards Universal Realization of Human Rights -*

The forthcoming 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides an occasion to take stock of the state of human rights in this region of the Asia-Pacific. Coinciding with this anniversary is the ongoing UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) which calls for concrete actions at the national and regional levels to assure that human rights education plays a role in realizing human rights and preventing the occurrence of violations. In light of this, it is an opportune time to gather people from Asia-Pacific and other regions of the world working with people's organizations, non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, regional offices of the UN and its specialized agencies to have a critical review of the steps taken to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights meaningful to the people of the Asia-Pacific region through human rights education. A conference will thus be held on November 25-27, 1998 in Osaka, Japan through the joint efforts of the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism-Japan Committee, the Osaka Liaison Committee for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Osaka Prefectural and City Governments.

This conference has the following objectives:

- To promote the universal realization of human rights on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- To call on governments in the Asia-Pacific region and on the UN, in the context of the UN Decade, to give human rights education the highest priority in their human rights agenda;
- To promote liaison with the UN and its specialized agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO, WHO, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, international agencies, and NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region and other regions of the world working on the UN Decade;
- To discuss human rights education in light of such global issues relating to environment, habitation, population (including migration), internal displacement, social development and women's rights that most heavily affect minorities and oppressed people in the Asia-Pacific region;
- To build on the work done at the Workshop on Asia-Pacific Human Rights Education held on August 22-25, 1996 in Sydney, Australia and at the Sixth Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region held on February 28-March 2, 1998 in Tehran, Iran in providing significant support to the development of human rights education in the region.

The conference will be attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations, United Nations specialized agencies including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and local governments in Japan.

The conference will have plenary sessions for the presentation of the state of implementation of the UN Decade in the Asia-Pacific, and the future tasks in promoting human rights education in the region. Small discussion sessions on specific issues on human rights education will also be held. The small discussion sessions will take up the following issues:

1. "Human Rights Education Strategies to Address Problems of Globalization";
2. "Human Rights Empowerment of the Oppressed and Minorities";
3. "Innovation in Human Rights Education" with subtopics consisting of
  - HRE through Global Education
  - HRE through "Dowa" Education
  - HRE through Popular Education
  - HRE through Diversity Education
4. "Human Rights Education for Professionals and Business Leaders" with subtopics on
  - Administration of Justice (members of police, prison officers, judges and lawyers)
  - Private Corporations
  - Parliamentarians, Political Parties and Media

Additional activities consist of community dialogues and workshops on various issues such as:

- Human Rights Education at the Grassroots Level (Yao City)
- Effective Practices of Human Rights Education in the Community (Sakai City)
- Human Rights Education and Literacy Programs/Adult Education (Izumi City)
- Human Rights Education for Children (Suita City)
- Human Rights Education in Schools (Osaka City)

Those interested may apply with the conference secretariat: Secretariat of the Osaka Organizing Committee for the International Conference on Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region, c/o HURIGHTS OSAKA 1-2-1-1500 Benten Minato-ku, Osaka 552-0007, Japan Tel: +81-6-568-0930 Fax: +81-6-577-3583 E-mail: QQ4C-FJMT@asahi-net.or.jp

## Democracy in Schools – A Challenge for HRE

**H**uman rights in practice is an important element in teaching human rights in schools. The environment of schools (consisting of school rules and regulations, attitude of teachers and school administrators toward the students among others) has much to do with the effectiveness of human rights teaching. An environment that does not respect human rights will not promote an appropriate attitude towards human rights among the students.

In a workshop held for Northeast Asia, educators from south Korea, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Republic of China, and Japan agree that schools should foster respect for human rights. Schools in Korea, for example, still use corporal punishment on students who fail to follow school rules. Most schools in Northeast Asia emphasize obedience and conformist behavior that prevent students from developing their own individual opinions. Teachers are always regarded as the only source of knowledge. As a result, schools lack opportunities for dialogue between students and teachers. Students are not given the chance to express their ideas that can help improve the education system.

The situation of Northeast Asian schools is influenced by several factors. One is the dominant influence of the conservative view on Confucianism. Education officials and school administrators believe that passive learning process is effective. Students are required to faithfully follow what the teachers say. This results in a form of paternalism that gives teachers the status of experts who can provide the students all the knowledge they need. In doing so, they wield much power over the students. At the same time, students are deprived of the chance to express what they know, or raise questions on what they are told.

Highly competitive education system is another factor. Students are being prepared to pass examinations to get to the next higher level of education. They are expected to concentrate on learning only those that will be included in the examinations. This competitive and examination-oriented system in turn put so much pressure on the students. Their values are formed around the ideas of getting ahead of others, and promoting their own interest alone. Teachers, on the other hand, are required to teach only such subjects that relate to the examinations. Other matters such as human rights have low priority. This type of education system invariably promotes knowledge-centered education which neglects the

importance of cultivating proper attitudes and behavior toward others.

Another factor is the passive, if not negative, attitude toward human rights and human rights education by teachers, school administrators, and parents. They fail to appreciate the value of learning human rights as part of the school curriculum and putting human rights principles into practice within school setting. Human rights remains vague and unimportant in the children's learning process.

Generally speaking, this situation has victims. Students who see the need to develop their individual capabilities are limited to standard curriculum. Within the curriculum, students are not given the chance to engage in creative learning using new and participatory pedagogies. And those who cannot compete well through examinations are left out in the education process. Teachers who would like to innovate teaching methods and cover important issues such as human rights (as part of the formal curriculum) are restricted. They are bound to follow only what is provided for in the formal curriculum. In both cases, creativity and critical thinking on the part of the students and the teachers are given less weight.

It therefore becomes clear that if teaching human rights demands the practice of human rights, the education system has to change.

The idea of incorporating the teaching of human rights in schools comes at a time when educational reform is under way in Japan, Korea and Republic of China. The opportunity presented

by the movement to reform the educational system, occurring in the context of on-going political and economic reforms, gives enough room for human rights teaching to become part of the school curriculum.

Several initiatives in Northeast Asia illustrate attempts at reaching this goal. In Osaka, the DOWA education (a major component of human rights education in schools in Japan) is being reviewed to find ways and means of improving the curriculum. A teachers association as well as education researchers look for new teaching methods and approaches that can be incorporated in the school curriculum.

The teachers themselves took the task of forming their own association that can undertake training and research on human rights education. The output of this association is then fed to the schools to improve the curriculum. The association promotes the idea that the role of the teachers in human rights education is not simply limited to the classroom but extends to activities that support curriculum development through research and training.

The Taipei experience shows an example of how teacher



training can be used to support human rights education in schools. A group of teachers developed a program for training teachers on human rights education. Workshops are offered to those who are interested in learning new teaching perspectives and methodologies that subscribe to human rights principles. Training is also devoted to understanding human rights values and national and international human rights documents. Curriculum development, teaching material development, and school life case studies are also taken up. The organizing group always emphasizes the principle that human rights education is a value-based education that has to be reflected in the school environment.

The Hong Kong experience shows the need to examine ordinary subjects in the school curriculum and find relevant parts that actually deal with human rights. At the minimum, human rights can already be taught using existing subjects. Teachers will just have to be creative in making human rights much more clearly or explicitly discussed in the subjects. Support from teachers associations which can provide programs for learning human rights and human rights work (whether of NGOs, government institutions or United Nations agencies) is important. Likewise, institutions set up by government to support specific areas such as civic education can be vehicles for introducing change in the school curriculum.

The workshop participants likewise discussed possible programs that can support the development of human rights education programs in schools. A program on human rights education should include general understanding of the nature of human beings, the state, government, the society, and the international community, and the relationship between them; general knowledge of human rights (values, history, legal documents, institutions), the specific human rights issues, and how to respond to changing human rights situation. Process-oriented and student-centered methodologies are recommended in curricular (with human rights infused in existing subjects) and extra-curricular activities. It is emphasized that democratic methods should be employed. And new paradigm in assessing students' performance has to be developed.

The school environment should be improved by adopting systems regarding student appraisal of teachers, student participation in school management, and by emphasizing the role of parents and the local community in school affairs. Teachers' autonomy (with appropriate responsibilities) should be promoted to allow them to employ creative ways of teaching human rights. Resource centers on human rights education are also needed that can supply materials for direct use in the classroom. Support for teachers can also be provided in terms of legal directives (that require the teaching of human rights) and financial incentives.

Human rights teaching should also be included in training programs for teachers and school administrators.

To counter the negative public perception on human

rights, the media should be used to promote human rights. Community support for human rights/human rights education should be sought.

All these suggestions are based on the various experiences of the participants.

The workshop participants realized the need to do more research on the different aspects of teaching human rights in schools. Research can cover such issues as teachers' perception of human rights, teacher training systems, textbook analysis, teaching methods and evaluation, and human rights and cultural values. Exchange of information and materials between groups in different countries is also a need. Thus various activities (conferences, workshops, work camps) should be organized. More cooperation between the government and the non-governmental organizations should take place to support human rights education in schools.

The participants discussed the cultural values-human rights framework with a presentation on the Korean experience.

Several principles were cited as guide for teachers as well as students in examining their own cultural values in light of human rights. Constructive reinterpretation of culture is prescribed as a means of linking cultural values to human rights principles. Conversely, rooting human rights in their own cultures is a means of making human rights more meaningful. Human rights principles can also be fused with positive traditions and cultural values using laws as vehicles. In this case, law as an agent of social change can be strengthened by human rights principles and positive cultural values.

The workshop was organized by HURIGHTS OSAKA in cooperation with the Graduate School of Public Policy of Sogang University, Seoul on August 10-13, 1998.

The workshop was held during the week when south Korea was celebrating the 50th year of its independence. Learning from past and current experiences on systems of politics and economics, the Korean leaders are campaigning for a second nation-building that will do away with authoritarian government, negative legacies of Confucianism and self-righteous nationalism. Korea it is said must globalize its local culture, and localize the global culture.

In this context, Korea's education system "typified by standardization, rote memorization, examination-oriented study and school cronyism" that fostered "selfishness and secrecy" has to be changed. A spiritual rearmament is needed to achieve this end.

The call for a change in the way of thinking in Korea applies most appropriately in schools as they adopt human rights education. Put in another way, human rights education means change.

## **Asia-Pacific Regional Forum of National Human Rights Institutions Second Regional Workshop**

*(Editor's note- This is an excerpt of the official report on the New Delhi workshop prepared by the Forum secretariat.)*

The Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions held its second regional workshop in New Delhi (September 10-12, 1997) and discussed the concept of national institutions, developments in the region toward the establishment of national institutions, ways of strengthening national institutions and plans for cooperative action.

As stated in the official report, the workshop

- reaffirmed fundamental principles relevant to the operations of national human rights institutions, such as the universality and indivisibility of human rights and the importance of the Paris Principles;
- welcomed steps toward the establishment of national institutions of various countries;
- undertook to enhance cooperation with non-government organizations;
- resolved to increase the Forum's efforts in the field of technical assistance;
- undertook to consider ways of responding effectively to the increasing case load of complaints of human rights violations;
- decided to develop specific mechanisms in the area of regional human rights jurisprudence;
- condemned the practice of child sexual exploitation and decided to exchange information on relevant laws and practices;
- decided to work toward the production of a video program as a contribution to the commemoration of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- requested the United Nations to continue its assistance to and cooperation with national human rights institutions.

A great deal of valuable exchange of experience through informal discussions involving not only member national institutions, but also governments, UN representatives, human rights commissions of seven Indian States, and NGOs were likewise held.

### **Highlights of the discussions**

#### **a. role of national institutions**

The importance of the independence of national institutions and their ability to pursue complaints fearlessly was emphasized in the discussions. In this context, adherence to the Paris Principles was stressed as central to the work of national institutions. It was noted that the Principles were rec-

ognized by the United Nations. Governments were urged to establish national institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles or, where established already and if necessary, to bring them into accord with the Principles.

The universality of human rights principles was stressed. It was noted that this had already been addressed by the international community at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and had been endorsed in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. It was important therefore not to fight past battles. At the same time, and while endorsing universality, it was also noted that the strength of cultural relativism should not be underestimated and that cultural legitimacy would facilitate the promotion of human rights. There was a need to confront ill-informed positions. Speakers noted the importance of promoting a culture of human rights and of wider dissemination of knowledge about human rights. In this context, speakers noted that there was a wide divide between urban and rural populations and there was a need to pay attention to the needs of the latter.

International human rights instruments as benchmarks for the promotion of human rights was endorsed and noted that the mandates of national institutions invariably referred to international standards. National institutions rejected calls for revision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A need to recognize the connection between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights and to avoid the development of contending emphases in the promotion and protection of human rights is seen. A cooperative and integrated approach was to be preferred.

There was some discussion about the respective roles of national institutions and non-governmental organizations. Speakers noted the need for cooperation between national institutions and NGOs. At the same time, it was noted that their roles were different, with NGOs usually having a more specific focus, while national institutions had a broader approach. A non-government organization view was expressed that national institutions should have the power to compel governments to take action on human rights issues. However, national institutions considered that, while they should undertake inquiries fearlessly, they had to work within existing legal systems and could not act as a parallel government.

The approach of national institutions should be a practical one, particularly through a focus on grassroots work. A suggestion was made that public hearings could be useful, for example, in relation to the rights of women.

#### **b. regional cooperation**

There was some discussion about region-wide cooperation on human rights. The view was expressed that the establishment of genuinely independent national institutions and a forum facilitating their cooperation offered the most promising means to that end. One speaker noted that activity had so far been "top-down" and suggested there should also be "bottom-up" activity to assist in countries where national institutions had not been established.

The governments of Mongolia, Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea reported the preparation of draft bills on the establishment of their respective national institutions that will be considered by the parliament in early 1998.

The Philippine Commission reported that its mandate was still restricted and that it had drafted a bill that would give it prosecutorial powers. It was important that political leaders exercised the political will to facilitate the work of national human rights institutions.

The Sri Lankan Commission reported that it had been established in March 1997 after the passage of legislation in 1996. It had inherited the structures of the Human Rights Task Force but it would be some time before the Commission was fully functional.

The Government of Nepal indicated that legislation providing for the establishment of a national institution had already been promulgated. The Government was reviewing relevant laws and regulations and the institution would be established in 1998.

(A new constitution has been adopted in Thailand in late 1997. A provision on the establishment of a commission on human rights is included.)

A representative of Iran's Islamic Human Rights Commission outlined the Commission's structure and activities, including on complaint handling, publications, prison visits, the monitoring of the presidential elections and the consideration of international instruments. The representative noted, however, that the Commission's activity was within the framework of Islamic values.

The Republic of Korea said it was looking at case studies of other countries' experience with regard to the establishment of national human rights institutions. It intended to establish a Commission.

The Fiji Government said that the amended Constitution of Fiji provided for the establishment of a human rights commission and consideration was being given to the implementation of this provision. It would, however, take some time to work through the issues.

#### c. Strengthening the functioning of national institutions

##### 1) Grievance redressal mechanisms and procedures

The Indian Commission noted that the situation in India was particularly characterized by the sheer size of the country and the population. There was a need to find ways to cope with the consequent workload. Prevention was of course an important element but commissions also needed to get procedures right. High standards of management were important.

The New Zealand Commission noted that the volume of complaints could grind an organization down. The pressure of responding to complaints can prevent a commission from dealing with other important areas of their mandates, such as human rights promotion. There was a need to develop procedures to deal with backlogs.

The New Zealand, Australian and Canadian Commissions pointed to the importance of computerization of complaints handling as a way of increasing efficiency and accuracy. The Australian Commission separately made a video presentation of the computer program it uses.

It was suggested that the Forum consider the development of a paper on complaint handling, assessing comparative developments and suggesting possible means whereby national institutions could handle complaints more effectively. A further mechanism that could ease the complaints workload would be for commissions to undertake national inquiries, whereby they could look at systemic issues rather than dealing with them as individual complaints.

##### 2) Staff Training

The Canadian Human Rights Foundation informed the Forum that it was working with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights on the development of a regional training program for staff of national institutions. (A pilot training program was held in February 1998 in the Philippines.)

The Philippine Commission outlined its objective of establishing a center in each of 42,000 communities (Barangay). So far it had established 6000 Barangay Human Rights Action Centers. It said it needed to collaborate with others in meeting the challenges it faced.

The Forum Secretariat advised of a regional meeting on media training to be held within the coming months, to be funded by the New Zealand Government.

##### 3) Staff Exchanges

The New Zealand Commission reported on the staff exchange activity it had been involved in. It said that all commissions needed assistance, including that of New Zealand.

#### d. Cooperative action : Development of human rights jurisprudence

The Forum agreed in principle on the proposal for judicial advisory panel and decided that a Forum Working Group (consisting of the Indian and Australian Commissions) should consider the details and present recommendations to Forum members. The Forum asked the Secretariat to develop a mechanism for the collation and dissemination of human rights jurisprudence.

#### e. Cooperative action

##### 1). Combating sexual exploitation of children

The workshop condemned the practice of child sexual exploitation. Several noted that criminal sanctions had not been effective and underlined the value of a longer-term, preventive approach. This included addressing underlying social causes, particularly through the implementation of compulsory primary education, along with targeted measures to keep girls in school longer, as well as public awareness campaigns and initiatives to assist the communities from which the children came.

Support for the proposed Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was expressed. The forum's focus on child sexual exploitation was considered. Forum members resolved to transmit this view to their respective governments. The Forum requested the Secretariat to collate and disseminate among Forum members information on relevant laws and practices.

## 2). Observance of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Discussion focused on what the Forum and its members could do that would meaningfully contribute to the commemoration of the anniversary and would promote human rights in the region. Speakers suggested that each member should take some action. The view was expressed that commissions should not become involved in activity for its own sake.

The New Zealand Commission said it was considering sending a questionnaire to other commissions as to whether they might be interested in being involved in a video program that New Zealand intends to produce. New Zealand also suggested that an additional day should be set aside in

the 1998 Forum Workshop for a seminar on the UDHR. The South African Commission said it would have a full program of activities for the anniversary and intended to elaborate a national human rights action plan as a commemorative activity.

The Forum decided to aim to produce an appropriate video program and to give the UDHR prominence in technical cooperation and information activities.

For more information contact: Mr. Kieren Fitzpatrick, Secretariat Director, Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions c/o Australian Human Rights Commission, Level 8 Piccadilly Tower, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia, tel (612) 9284-96 44; fax (612) 9284-9825; e-mail: apf@hreoc.gov.au; website: www.apf.hreoc.gov.au

## Human Rights Education Events

1. FORUM-ASIA and the Center for Social Development Studies (Chulalongkorn University) will be holding its second annual Asian Regional Study Session on Human Rights on October 11-29, 1998 in Bangkok, Thailand. This study session aims to provide a comprehensive human rights course covering the history and development of human rights, key human rights concepts, UN human rights laws and mechanisms, strategies for human rights protection and promotion, among others. Participants are limited to human rights workers from South and Southeast Asia. For further information contact: FORUM-ASIA, 109 Suthisarnwinnichai Road, Samsennok, Huaykwang, Bangkok 10320 Thailand, tel. (662) 276-9846-7, fax 693-4939, e-mail: chalida@mozart.inet.co.th
2. HURIGHTS OSAKA will be holding the final workshop in its series of workshops on human rights education in schools on November 23-26, 1998 in Osaka, Japan. Selected participants from the three sub-regional workshops (Southeast, Northeast and South Asia) will be attending the regional workshop to pool together the results of the sub-regional workshops. On October 15-18, 1998, the South Asia workshop will be held with people involved in teaching human rights in schools from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in attendance. The National Human Rights Commission of India is the local partner.
3. A conference on the theme "The Course of Human Rights Education in Korea" will be held on October 19, 1998 in Seoul. The conference will explore and discuss the situation and problems of HRE (in both formal and non-formal education) in Korea and worldwide and emphasize its importance. Specialists in HRE are invited as guest speakers, but the conference is basically open to all in order to draw public attention to HRE and promote it in the Korean society. For further information contact: Ms. Park Mihee, e-mail: euro25@chollian.net
4. An International Conference on Human Rights Education will be held in late November or early December this year in Taipei. The conference will review the efforts of the United Nations in promoting human rights education and the situation of human rights education in Asian schools (with some emphasis on the Taiwan experience). Participants from America, Britain, France, and Philippines are being invited to the conference. For further information contact: Professor Mab Huang, e-mail: mab@mbm1.scu.edu.tw or Professor Mei-Ying Tang, e-mail: mying@tmtc760.tmtc.edu.tw

### Recently Held Human Rights Education Events

CIVITAS, an international organization of civic educators, held a regional conference in Kuala Lumpur on August 10-13, 1998. The conference according to the organizers will serve to increase awareness of work on civic education and civil society in the region and to foster increased regional cooperation in the field through the establishment of a regional network of civic educators. Human rights education was taken up as one of the topics in the conference. Participants from Australia, the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong), Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan were in attendance. For further information contact: Balazx Hidveghi, Executive Director, CIVITAS Secretariat, 8 rue des Ecrivains 67000 Strasbourg, France, tel. (33388) 247100; fax (33388) 247109; e-mail: bohidveghi@compuserve.com

## Recently Held Events

1. The 3rd annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions will be held on September 7-9, 1998 in Radisson Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia. The meeting will have several segments including a thematic session on human rights observance and the economic crisis in the Asia-Pacific region, a business session dealing with issues mandated in the New Delhi meeting held last year (jurisprudence on human rights, laws and practices related to the problem of sexual exploitation of children, national institutions' practices on receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints), regional issues session (cooperation between NGOs and national institutions, role of national institutions in addressing discrimination against women, establishment of national institutions). Plenary and small group discussion sessions will be held. Representatives of the six existing national institutions in the region plus representatives of other governments and some human rights NGOs will be attending the meeting. For further information contact: Mr. Kieren Fitzpatrick, Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, c/o Australian Human Rights Commission, Level 8 Piccadilly Tower, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia, tel. (612) 9284-96 44, fax (612) 9284-9825, e-mail: apf@hreoc.gov.au; website: www.apf.hreoc.gov.au

2. The Asia-Pacific Human Rights NGOs Facilitating Team will be holding a meeting on the occasion of the 3rd annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. The main NGO meeting will be held on September 10-11, 1998 in Jakarta, Indonesia. A consultation with human rights NGOs in the region will be held focusing on the following issues: Vienna + 5 Review, campaign on 50th anniversary of UDHR, strategy for the UN Commission on Human Rights session in 1999, Asia-Pacific Human Rights Congress 1999, etc. A planning workshop on the Campaign on National Security Laws will be held on September 12-13, 1998. 15-20 participants from various countries in the region will be joining an almost equal number of Indonesian counterparts. For more information contact: Boonthan Verawongse, APhRFT secretariat, PO box 26, Bungthonglang PO, Bangkok 10242 Thailand, tel. (662) 370-2701; 377-9357 fax

(662) 374-0464, e-mail: hrnet@mozart.inet.co.th; website: www.hr.alliance.org/aphr-ft

3. The Human Rights and Labor Forum of the Asia-Pacific Peoples' Assembly (APPA) will be held on November 10-15, 1998 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Meeting in the same month. The forum will address human rights issues which are likely to be ignored at the APEC Leaders' Meeting. Issues on women, workers, children, indigenous peoples, migrant labor, urban poor, peasants, food security, among others will be taken up in relation to the APEC economies' drive toward free trade and globalization. Seminars, fora and other activities in other countries will be held prior to the Kuala Lumpur forum. For further information contact: Mr. Yap Swee Seng or Ms. Cynthia, APPA Secretariat, 57 Lorong Kurau, 59100 Luck Gardens, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, tel. (603) 283-6245, fax (603) 283-3536, e-mail: appasec@tm.net.my, website: www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/8340

4. The 5th Triennial World Indigenous People's Conference on Education will be held in Hilo, Hawaii from August 1-7, 1999. The conference, with the theme "The Answers Lie Within Us," will discuss several issues including education programs, indigenous teacher education, rights movements/indigenous movements, sustainable communities. For more information contact: 1999 WIPCE Hawaii, P.O. Box 6159, Hilo, Hawaii, HI 96720-8923 USA, (ph) (808) 934-7722, (f) (808) 969-7932, e-mail: wipc@hawaii.edu

5. The Tsao Foundation is organizing an international conference on women's health on July 5-7, 1999 in Singapore. This conference will have a special focus on older women in Asia. For further information contact: Ken-Air Destination Management Company, 257 Selegie Road, #03-275 Selegie Complex, Singapore 188350, (ph) (65) 336-8855, (f) (65) 336-3613, e-mail: kaicpdmc@pacific.net.sg

## Announcement

### Children's Art Contest

The Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC) is launching the Asia-Pacific Children's Visual Art Contest with human rights as the theme. The contest entitled "My Drawing, My Rights" is open to all children age 6 to 15 years. The contest aims to spread awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; facilitate discussions on this issue with the help of participating organizations, advocates and institutions in the local communities; collect artworks that can be used as materials for campaigns on the rights of the child; and establish a network with the media for the campaign. The project is in support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Entries should be received by ARRC by November 10, 1998 through the national committees. Any materials can be used in making the drawing with a size that ranges from 35 x 50 cm to 53 x 76 cm. Cash prizes plus trophies await the winners.

For more information contact: Ms. Theresa Limpin, Coordinator, Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC), 494, Soi 11, Lardprao 101 Klongchan, Bangkok, Bangkok 10240 Thailand or P.O. Box. 26, Bungthonglang P.O. Bangkok 10242 Thailand; tel. (662) 370-2701; 731-2216; 3779357; fax (662) 731-2216; 3740464; e-mail: arrc@ksc.th.com

## The Human Rights Workers' Institute

The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) has redesigned its Annual Training Course. This is the result of a review of data from survey and evaluation feedback of the DTP alumni. The review strongly recommended a more advanced and focused course content. The following themes are the core subjects of the redesigned training curriculum: Various Frameworks of Analysis of Human Rights Issues - this includes review of International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights instruments and mechanisms, and current debates in human rights movements, Peace-Building and Resolution of Conflict and other Strategies in Human Rights Work, Socio-Economic Crisis and Strengthening Peoples' Movement for Social Change, Skills in Peoples' Diplomacy and Tools of Human Rights Education. Field visits will be undertaken in the third week.

The redesigned course is called the "Human Rights Workers' Institute".

The DTP's approach is interactive. Training participants must prepare and bring with them case studies of their human rights work. Data and analysis from case studies will be discussed in small workshop groups, plenary sessions, role plays and simulation activities.

Resource persons will include workers and activists from various people's organizations and mass movements, academics committed to human rights, experts from the UN and other international institutions.

Candidates who successfully complete the training will receive a certificate from the University of New South Wales.

The "10th Annual Training in Peoples' Diplomacy and Human Rights" (Human Rights Workers' Institute) will be held on January 10 - 31, 1999 in Manila, Philippines.

Applications are called from human rights workers, advocates and activists affiliated with human rights organizations. In the selection of candidates, preference will be given to women, trade union members and individuals belonging to indigenous peoples' organizations.

Applications should be sent before 15 October 1998 to:

Jane Corpuz-Brock, Director

Diplomacy Training Program, Faculty of Law, The University of New South Wales, Sydney 2052, Australia

Any further inquiries can be directed to Tel: (61 2) 9313 6563, Fax: (61 2) 9385 11 75 or

E-mail: dtp@unsw.edu.au.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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Readings on Pro-Poor Planning Through Social Mobilisation in South Asia  
(Editors: Poona Wignaraja and Susil Sirivardana)

by Dr. Dharam Ghai  
Director-UNRISD

South Asia is a region of contrasts and paradoxes. The birthplace of two major religions of the world Hinduism and Buddhism, it also houses the world's largest concentration of followers of Islam and contains a significant Christian minority. Over millennia, it has successfully absorbed foreign ideas and culture and woven them into a tapestry of many designs and colors. It has strong traditions of tolerance and pluralism and of local autonomy and diversity. From ancient times it has made major contributions to world civilization in all fields of human endeavor. Yet it is also a land of deep social and religious cleavages and of most blatant forms of prejudice and discrimination. A region which sent the world a message of compassion and non-violence is torn asunder by seemingly endless episodes of bloody conflicts. Despite its vast markets, and impressive tradition of learning and technological innovation and outstanding entrepreneurial and professional talents, it remains an economically backward region with the world's largest

concentration of poverty, hunger, ill-health and illiteracy.

Its development experience since independence has some distinctive features. Its growth rate over the past five decades has been respectable but by no means spectacular. It has lagged behind the sterling performance of Northeast and Southeast Asian countries but has also avoided the economic catastrophe of Africa. Its economic growth over the period may have been less impressive than several Latin American countries but it has also been spared their profound inequalities and the great crisis of the lost decade of the 1980s. South Asia has made some progress in recent decades in poverty reduction measured in income or consumption terms. But in terms of human development - literacy, schooling, child mortality, life expectancy, malnutrition and gender inequalities, its record is deplorable the worst in the world despite the outstanding performance of Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Kerala.

South Asia, with more than 1.1 billion people, accounts for more than one-fifth of the world population. In terms of numbers, it has the highest concentration in the world of hunger, malnutrition, child mortality and illiteracy. Thus its socio-economic experience is of profound importance from the point of view of the welfare of humanity. In this regard, two aspects of the recent development experience of the

South Asian countries are of special interest.

Firstly, the region is in the midst of wide-ranging changes in economic organization and policy. With the exception of Sri Lanka, the other countries have only recently launched economic reforms that have swept most part of the world. As elsewhere, these reforms comprise trade and foreign exchange liberalization, reduction of government budgetary deficits, lifting of administrative controls on domestic economic activity and encouragement of foreign investment resulting in a greater role for markets and the private sector in the economy. If fully implemented, it is highly likely that the reforms will contribute to a significant acceleration in the growth rate in the short to medium term. But as experience elsewhere indicates, they are also likely to result in an accentuation of economic inequalities. Furthermore, unless the process of economic expansion is broad-based, there is no inherent reason to believe that it will necessarily lead to reduction in poverty and improvement of human development indicators. It is, therefore, profoundly important that economic growth be rooted in strong employment expansion, asset creation and redistribution for poor communities and increase and restructuring of government expenditure on mass literacy and universal basic education and primary health care. A special effort will have to be mounted to ensure the access of these services to girls and women and underprivileged castes, tribes and communities.

The second distinctive aspect of the South Asian experience relates to social movements and grassroots and micro initiatives. Of all the developing regions of the world, South Asia has generated the most impressive and diverse range of civil society initiatives spanning such themes as women's subordination, discrimination against girl child, caste and tribal oppression, environmental destruction, violations of human rights, communal violence and struggle against poverty, ill-health, illiteracy and ignorance. Some of these initiatives have become world famous and have inspired private and public development agencies around the world. Many of them have been recognized to be extremely effective in poverty reduction and promotion of human development. The key to their success is the building up of participatory organizations of homogenous groups and their strengthening through awareness raising, education, learning by doing and capacity building.

These elements of the South Asian experience raise some important issues concerning the pace and pattern of development in the region in the coming years and decades. What are the possibilities of a huge expansion of the successful micro initiatives to mount a massive assault against hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, ill-health, ignorance and gender inequalities? While some of the best known examples of such initiatives have been able to scale up to cover hundreds of thousands and in rare cases a few million families, the overwhelming majority remain tiny and fragile. Taken together, while their contribution has been significant, it has fallen far short of the needs of the population. The question thus arises whether the lessons from their experiences can be incorporated in the development activities of the State. Most of the problems being addressed by civil society initiatives are the responsibilities of agencies of the State. There can be few such simple and effective policies to eradicate poverty and

promote human development that the systematic incorporation in the State development agencies of the central principles and procedures responsible for the brilliant achievements of the leading private initiatives based on people's organizations becomes imperative.

Another major issue concerns the impact of economic reform on poverty eradication. As indicated above, if these reforms are to be meaningful in terms of human welfare, they will need to sustain a growth pattern creating new economic and social opportunities for the poorer masses. This has implications for the entire spectrum of economic and social policies. But it also raises the vital issue of the relationship between the policies of economic reform and the performance of the civil society initiatives. A grand strategy of development must address the theme of how the potential of the forces of economic reform and civil society can be harnessed to advance the objectives of poverty eradication, human development and environmental improvement.

The importance of this book is that it addresses these strategic issues. The present volume is the latest in a series of books sponsored by groups of South Asian scholars under the leadership of Ponna Wignaraja who has devoted his entire professional life to promoting thought and action for participatory and people-centered development. In addition to drawing upon earlier volume on the theory and practice of social movements in South Asia, this book contains important material from the Independent Poverty Commission established under the aegis of SAARC. The report of the Commission, which seeks complementarities between measures of economic reforms and people-centered initiatives for poverty eradication, has been endorsed by the SAARC Summit. The report of the Poverty Commission and efforts to promote implementation of its recommendations must be seen as contributing to the realization of the Programs of Action adopted by the series of world conferences in the 1990s and, most especially, the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995.

For more information contact: SAPNA Regional Center, 75 Kynsey Road, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka, tel (941) 695-625, fax (941) 688-676.

## New Publication

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The Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute (formerly Buraku Liberation Research Institute) has published in one collection the August 1989-January 1998 issues of Buraku Liberation News (issue numbers 51-100). This is the second volume of the collection. The Buraku Liberation News, published bi-monthly since 1981, covers reports on the Buraku liberation movement, government policies and measures, cases of discrimination, literary work of elderly and young Buraku people, and a question and answer section on the Buraku problem. The newsletter is disseminated to human rights organizations, activists and researchers in Japan and many other countries. For further information contact: Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, 1-6-12 Kuboyoshi, Naniwa-ku, Osaka 556-0028 Japan, tel. (816) 568-0905; fax (816) 568-0714; e-mail: blri-2f@dd.ij4u.or.jp

## HURIGHTS OSAKA ACTIVITIES

HURIGHTS OSAKA is now preparing for publication the fifth issue of its booklet series on human rights. The forthcoming booklet focuses on the rights of the child in the context of Japan. Several authors espousing different perspectives wrote articles for this publication. This booklet, in Japanese language, is due to come out in November 1998.



**PRINTED MATTER**

**AIR MAIL**

May be opened for inspection by the postal service.

HURIGHTS OSAKA, inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally opened in December 1994. It has the following goals: 1) to promote human rights in the Asia-Pacific region; 2) to convey Asia-Pacific perspectives on human rights to the international community; 3) to ensure inclusion of human rights principles in Japanese international cooperative activities; and 4) to raise human rights awareness among the people in Japan to meet its growing internationalization. In order to achieve these goals, HURIGHTS OSAKA has activities such as Information Handling, Research and Study, Education and Training, Publications, and Consultancy Services.



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