



Editorial

Learning from the Field

In the current discussions on the follow-up to the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), several ideas are proposed. One is the adoption of a second Decade that will, among other objectives, continue the unfinished tasks under the current Decade. Another is the creation of a voluntary fund for human rights education, which can help implement human rights education programs the world over. And third is the adoption of a convention on human rights education. It would be ideal to have them all, a second Decade with a voluntary funding support that will end (2014) with a Convention on Human Rights Education.

All these proposed international plans are geared toward one goal: making human rights education happen on the ground. Thus it is worth examining how international programs adopted by Member-States of the UN are translated into national programs. What is the system of coordination between people in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their counterparts in other Ministries (such as the Ministry of Education) about international programs on human rights education? How do local and national institutions access support from these international programs? Since UN agencies and other institutions are willing (and waiting) to have technical cooperation with governments in the development of national human rights education programs, how many governments have used this scheme? And for those that have such agreements, how was their implementation? There are many experiences from the field on this regard. They tell us what need be done.

FOCUS Asia-Pacific is designed to highlight 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 Practical Aspects of Learning Human Rights

Full support for human rights education in schools means making changes in many components of the formal education system. There is a need for an explicit support for human rights education in education laws and policies. This legal and policy support in turn paves the way for

- * Changes in the school curriculum to incorporate human rights in various subjects or as a separate human rights subject,
- * Critical review of school textbooks based on human rights standards, and development of textbooks on human rights,
- * Development of human rights lesson plans and other teaching materials, and
- * Review of school rules and regulations to revise provisions that run counter to human rights principles.

Pre- and in-service teacher training curriculums will have to include human rights and human rights teaching as major subjects. Parents and even the local communities have to take part also in the school programs. Relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are tapped for support.

So far, no government in the region has completely undertaken all the needed supporting components for human rights education in schools. But there are experiences that show how human rights education in schools programs are being implemented along these lines.

Two issues that have caught the attention of educators are about textbooks and the school system. There are studies that examined textbooks and the school system in relation to human rights principles.

Textbook analysis

Regardless of absence of educational policy supporting human rights education, the need to expunge the textbooks of statements and illustrations (or photographs) that depict bias and prejudice against anyone (because of sex, race, age, social or economic status, religion, or political opinion) cannot be denied.

The current problems of violence in the streets and inside the home are linked to the perpetration of thinking and practices that promote bias, prejudice and bigotry.

A research done by the Equal Opportunity Commission in Hong Kong in 2001 confirms the existence of biased or discriminatory thinking in textbooks. Among the guidelines to improve textbooks suggested by the research report, here are some:¹

Cultural/Ethnic/Social groups:

- * are presented with respect for themselves and their customs, beliefs and activities
- * are well represented in proportion to their numbers in the community
- * are seen as active in a range of professions and occupations in the community
- * are recognized for their contributions to the community

Old persons:

- * are presented with respect in a range of activities and occupations in the community
- * are presented in a range of ages (not just young and old)
- * are shown enjoying an active and productive social life in the community

Children:

- * are shown as having the ability to make decisions, offer advice, solve problems
- * are encouraged to engage with issues concerning social stereotypes
- * are involved in exploring and evaluating social and personal themes and content

Persons with disabilities:

- * are presented with respect in a range of activities and occupations in the community
- * are celebrated in terms of their contributions to the community
- * are presented in the same kinds of activities as persons without disabilities.

These guidelines can be further developed to suit situations in other countries in the region. Other

textbook analysis projects echo the guidelines. An examination of Pakistani textbooks, for example, resulted in the following suggestions:²

Language-use [in English textbooks]

Some examples of changes that need to be introduced in routine language-use:

1. Substitute the universal 'he' for the more specific 'he' or 'she' depending on the context.
2. 'Humankind' for the universal 'mankind' as the latter tends to subsume the feminine category and render it invisible. Similarly, 'Chairperson' for 'Chairman' and Ms. for Mrs. as the former signifies an adult woman regardless of whether she is married or not. It is the equivalent of Mr. which also signifies an adult man regardless of whether he is married or not.

Representation

The ways in which women are represented also need to be changed. Instead of constantly seeing them referentially or with reference to nurturing and caring activities, they could be seen in their other roles viz. doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc. This would not only redress the gender bias found in textbooks it would also present a more realistic view of our society.

There is also a need to emphasise women's economically productive role in society as opposed to their reproductive role. Beginning with the unpaid and unrecognised labour that sustains household economies viz. cooking, washing, housekeeping, looking after domestic animals, milking, making *ghee*,³ stitching clothes etc. and going on to include the different categories of work in the informal sector, it would be necessary to stress the fact that paid work in the public field is enabled by the unpaid work in the domestic enclosure.

School environment

An important project that addresses the need to have the proper school environment for learning human rights is UNICEF's child friendly school system (CFSS). For a number of years now, UNICEF has been giving support to the adoption of CFSS by schools in various countries in the region. Under its Country Program for Children, UNICEF promotes CFSS in Philippine schools. In addition to helping realize child rights, the program links with the Gender and Development Program (GAD) of the Philippine government which is being mainstreamed

into the education system.

A CFSS-recognized school is defined as⁴

one which recognises and respects children's rights and responsibilities, provides the enabling environment to realize children's rights in school, and helps ensure such an environment in the community and households, is child-friendly. The CFSS promotes a new appreciation of and approach to basic education in that the school, to become truly child-friendly, needs to be where students, teachers, parents and the community work together in support of children's education and development. It also puts forward the notion that the school must take responsibility for the education of children who are unenrolled.

CFSS is promoted as an idea that is practical and feasible. A system of assessing how child-friendly a school is emphasizes practical ways of fulfilling child rights. According to an assessment guide developed in the Philippines, a child-friendly school has 5 traits:

- a. Inclusive, gender-sensitive and non-discriminating;
- b. Effective with children;
- c. Healthy for children;
- d. Caring and protective of all children;
- e. Involves children's families and the community.

A checklist on the meaning of one of these school traits states:⁵

- A child-friendly school is effective with children when it
- is child-centered
 - has the best interest of the child in mind in all its learning activities
 - has a curriculum that addresses the child's learning needs as well as those of the community and society
 - employs teaching methods that are suited to the child's age, abilities and ways of learning
 - encourages children to think and decide for themselves, ask questions and express their opinions.
 - encourages children to participate in school and community activities
 - encourages children to work together to solve problems and to achieve what they aim to do
 - encourages children to express their feelings through arts - music, drama and other forms.

The employment of the child-friendly school concept is a practical step that allows school administrators

and teachers to see human rights education in concrete form.

One CFSS-related project in Thailand encourages more student activities with the support of the local community. In one seminar, parents and teachers suggested that the school should help organize student clubs that make use of resource persons or instructors from the local community. These people are seen as instrumental in:

- * Organizing activities involving the students
- * Creating awareness among the teachers and community that these activities do not need money
- * Assessing student learning needs and interests
- * Creating a list of local resource persons
- * Encouraging the development of activities that promote the students' self-esteem and self-confidence.

The project also provided the opportunity for the parents to clarify certain rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One issue discussed was the concept of corporal punishment in schools. The parents learned that it is not desired that there be no punishment at all. The main issue is to ban all physical punishments. It was asked: why is it that if an adult hit another adult it would be considered illegal, but not when children are hit? The World Health Organization asserts that a child-friendly school must not employ corporal punishment. Research shows that physical punishment does not only have immediate effect but causes aggressive behavior later on. Corporal punishment is still used because schools are unable to find a better way to solve the problem.⁶

In a study of the impact of CFSS in some Philippine schools, issues about teachers were pointed out:⁷

a. Teachers' behavior

Undoubtedly, there had been an infusion of concepts and values related to women's and children's rights into the setting of the CFSS schools covered by the study. However, even within an environment that could be relatively controlled by the school heads and teachers, gender biases continue to be brought in through the materials used and the often unconscious and spontaneous remarks and behavior of the teachers themselves. In difficult subjects, such as the teaching of a second language and of science, evidences of gender stereotypes tend to be more pronounced than in subjects that are taught in Pilipino and that relate to less difficult topics.

d. Capacity and morale of teachers

Finally, a way to boost the capacity and morale of teachers at the local level for the promotion of both women's and children's rights is to assist them in building institutional linkages with both [government] and NGO [non-governmental organization] advocates. No amount of training will do any good if the trained persons are unable to re-generate their selves and find support from more accessible people and co-advocates.

Government program

The support of the government is crucial in any human rights education in schools program. Though many NGOs work independently from governments in their school-based programs, governmental support is essential in order to have a sustainable program on human rights education in schools.

Many governments in Asia-Pacific have launched a number of initiatives supporting human rights education in schools. Japan has a law on human rights education but the programs seem to be mainly done by local governments, without complementing national programs. Pakistan and a few other countries have adopted national plans of action on human rights education.

National human rights commissions have on their own developed materials on human rights. Some of these materials are meant for teachers and students.

An older national government program is from the Philippines. The Philippine (Ministry) Department of Education implements in-service training and material development on human rights education (in partnership with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights), GAD, and CFSS programs. In 2003, a series of workshops was held in various parts of the country to⁸

- a. Collate and analyze the data results from the survey [on teachers' awareness of human rights],
- b. Outline the matrix of HRE [human rights education] core competencies/skills of a human rights teacher,
- c. Design a competency-based training for teachers with reference to the skill and contents requirements of the [relevant subject in the curriculum],
- d. Develop training packages including facilitators manual (with field testing component),
- e. Finalize the facilitators manual based on field-

testing results.

Because of its recently revised human rights teaching exemplars, the Department started in February 2004 the training of trainers and teachers to equip them with "relevant content, skills and attitude to effectively integrate human rights values in their respective learning areas."⁹

The Department's GAD program, which is meant to implement a law on women, aims to "eliminate gender stereotyping in textbooks and instructional materials, ... [and] raise gender awareness among the participants enabling them to be more committed and responsive to gender equality."¹⁰ Training workshops are being held under this program. Under the CFSS program, a training kit was produced which contains among others the following:¹¹

- a. *Effective Teaching-Learning in Child-Friendly Schools: A Training Manual*
- b. *Protective and Inclusive Child Friendly Schools: A Training Manual*
- c. *Gender Sensitivity Training Facilitator's Manual*
- d. *Storybooks on Children's Rights*
- e. *Is Your School Child-Friendly? A Self-Assessment Guide.*

The Philippine experience shows concrete steps that promote human rights education in schools. It also shows that collaboration between the Ministry/Department of Education, and other institutions (such as national human rights commission and international institution like UNICEF) are essential in implementing programs.

Indeed, there are valuable practical experiences from some countries in the Asia-Pacific that should be models for other countries interested in human rights education in schools to follow.

Endnotes

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Pakistan, a report of the project "A Civil Society Initiative in Curricula and Textbooks Reform," Sustainable Development Policy Institute (Islamabad, 2003), available at www.sdpi.org

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4. Miriam College - Women and Gender Institute, *Gender and Socialization in Child Friendly Schools - An Exploratory Study*, (Quezon City: 2001) page 7.
5. Department of Education and UNICEF Manila Office, *Is Your School Child-Friendly? A Self-Assessment Guide*, (Manila: undated)
6. Kreangkrai Chaimaungdee, "*Child Rights In School Participatory Learning Processes for School and Community*," The Life Skills Development Foundation (Chiangmai: 2003).
7. Miriam College Women and Gender Institute, *op. cit.*, page 58.
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9. Department of Education Memorandum 16, series of 2004, *Training of Trainers and Teachers on Human Rights Education (HRE)*, 13 January 2004.
10. Department of Education Memorandum 19, series of 2004, *Gender and Development (GAD) Programs*, 15 January 2004.
11. Department of Education Memorandum 19, series of 2004, *Child-Friendly School System Trainer's Kit*, 21 March 2003.

Workshop on Human Rights Education in Schools in the Gulf Region

Jefferson R. Plantilla

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Qatar and the Qatar National Committee for Education, Culture and Science jointly organized the Sub-regional Workshop on Human Rights Education in Gulf States' School Systems in Doha, Qatar on 15-19 February 2004.

The Workshop is an implementation of the Conclusions of the Eleventh Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region held in Islamabad, Pakistan from 25-27 February 2003. The Conclusions state that the participants

75. Invite all States in the Asia-Pacific region to host inter-sessional sub-regional workshops within the Framework for Cooperation and welcome the offer made by the Government of Qatar to host the upcoming sub-regional workshop on human rights education in schools for the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and in cooperation with the GCC.

The Workshop is likewise based on Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/82 entitled "Regional cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asian and Pacific region" and General Assembly resolution 49/184 of 23 December 1994 proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

The Workshop

Education officials and university professors from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates attended the Workshop. Education officials from Yemen were also in attendance. There were representatives of several

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), namely, Arab Human Rights Institute, Arab Council for Childhood and Development, Bahrain Society for Human Rights, Cairo Institute of Human Rights, Human Rights and Information Training Centre (Yemen), The Ford Foundation Cairo office and Amnesty International Beirut regional office.

There were resource persons from Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, HURIGHTS OSAKA, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN CEDAW¹ Committee, and the University of Delhi (India).

The Workshop aimed to:

- Develop a common understanding of human rights education in schools,
- Discuss strategies, based on lessons learned from other countries, towards the effective incorporation of human rights education in the school system,
- Identify key components and sub-regional and national priorities for human rights education programs in schools,
- Facilitate sub-regional cooperation in the area of human rights education among relevant partners (Governments, national institutions, educational institutes and NGOs),
- Develop national and sub-regional plans for human rights education in schools.

There were presentations on the concept of human rights education in schools, experiences in developing and implementing human rights education in schools programs in other Arab countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan) and in Asia-Pacific in general, human rights education guidelines based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Country delegations presented their respective experiences on

human rights education in their school systems.

The plenary presentations and reports were followed by Working Group discussions focusing on three issues: 1) policy, 2) curriculum/textbooks/school environment, and 3) training for teachers and other education personnel. The Working Groups spent a whole day discussing their respective issues. Their discussions were later on reported at the plenary session.

There were also presentations, toward the end of the Workshop, on the human rights education work of the main organizers - OHCHR and UNESCO. No one from UNICEF was present at this time to make a presentation on its program.

The Workshop ended with the adoption, after some discussions, of a set of recommendations.

National experiences in the GCC region

The national experiences of the countries represented in the Workshop provide an important context for the development of human rights education in their school systems. There are several positive elements cited by the participants that support human rights education, such as the

- Constitutions that have provisions about rights
- Government actions for the integration of human rights into the curriculum (such as the formation of committee on human rights curriculum)
- Acceptance of the idea of incorporation of human rights concepts in the subject on religion (linking human rights concepts such as equality, freedom

- and justice to Islamic principles)
- Activities on the rights of the child.

The participants likewise presented what they consider to be general obstacles to the development of human rights education in schools program:

- * The absence of national plans in the field of human rights education that can be binding to all institutions concerned with human rights education issues;
- * Lack of proper awareness of human rights culture and human rights education in the concerned societies;
- * Weak participation of the civil society in human rights education;
- * Lack of human, material and technological resources that would help integrate and train human rights in the curricula of some countries.²

The plenary discussions point out the need to emphasize basic human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality, indivisibility and inter-relatedness of rights; link between human rights and culture (specifically relating to Islamic culture); human rights education as means to change behavior (and thus the importance of school environment and human rights practice in the school and the community); and the need for training of teachers.

Workshop recommendations

The participants adopted a statement saying that they examined the realities of human rights education in their region and the prospect of further developing the human rights curriculum; considered the experiences of several Arab countries on human rights education in schools; considered the international human rights standards and programs on human rights education; recognized the lack of awareness of human rights and international human rights instruments in the region, and the lack of financial, technical and human resources in their countries that support human rights education.

In view of these considerations, they recommended several measures such as the following:³

- a. Encouraging the concerned bodies in the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to ratify

and study the international and Arab conventions and treaties related to human rights in order to identify the necessary material and human facilities required for their implementation, and to conform their educational policies to the provisions of these conventions;

b. Motivating the concerned bodies in the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to develop national strategies and plans in the field of human rights education provided that they should include the disabled. Such plans and strategies should be supported by awareness and educating campaigns based on specific standards in addition to the financial support required for implementation;

c. Motivating the concerned bodies in the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to expand with regard to introducing human rights education principles and goals in the educational and regulations in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in general and with comment No. 1 adopted by Child Rights Commission - Article 29 - in particular;

d. Calling upon the Arab Bureau of Education for the Arab Gulf States to develop a set of standards for measuring and assessing the performance of the educational institutions with respect to the achievement of the goals of human rights education;

e. Calling upon the concerned bodies to develop a curriculum for human rights education, and prepare the conceptual maps, scale matrix and sequence necessary for integrating these concepts in school curricula;

f. Calling upon the necessity of developing (reference) manuals and teaching aids for teachers of human rights education;

g. Calling upon the concerned bodies to build up data base for human rights education, and secure its documentation according to specific educational system channels;

h. Calling upon the Arab Bureau of Education for the Arab Gulf States to include human rights education in the joint plan for curricula development;

i. Calling for a survey on the text books and curricula of the Member States in order to promote the concepts related to human rights education;

j. Adopting the integrative approach for the concepts of human rights education in the school curricula;

k. Rendering (in-service) training on the principles of human rights education with respect to the development of the innovative mind, skills, behavior and the building up of a personality based upon the values of equity, dignity and justice;

l. Exchange of expertise and information in the field of

specialized training within the framework of the concerned educational institutions, centers and organizations specialized in training.

Regional context of the Workshop

The Workshop is the first-ever activity of such kind in the Gulf Region. Its report adds to the increasing number of inter-governmental regional documents that support human rights education in the Arab region.

In 1999, UNESCO organized the Arab regional conference on human rights education in Rabat, Morocco. Representatives of Ministries of Education in the region attended it. The conference document, known as Rabat Declaration "For an Arab Strategy on Human Rights Education,"⁴ provides that human rights education is a collective responsibility of States, peoples, individuals and components of the civil society. It calls for the promotion of human rights education in the region through the "reinforcement of cooperation, the exchange of experiences and perseverance of efforts aimed at setting operational plans" that will support the attainment of the objective.

In 2003, the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science drafted human rights education standards and guidelines. The guidelines are meant to implement the provisions of the Rabat Declaration.

Draft amendments to the Arab Charter on Human Rights are on the agenda for adoption during the 2004 Arab Summit held in Tunisia. The changes in the charter, which amend the original 1994 charter,⁵ provide for the integration of human rights education in all forms of education.

In light of these regional activities, the Workshop comes out as another step towards more concrete plan for human rights education in the Gulf states school systems.

Significance of the Workshop

Compared to the 1999 Northeast Asia workshop on human rights education organized also by OHCHR,

the Workshop has a better result for a number of reasons:

a. Educators from the Ministries of Education, universities (faculty of education), and NGOs in the Gulf States, and UN institutions attended it. The Northeast Asia workshop, on the other hand, has a mix of diplomats and educators (from governments, schools and NGOs). The type of participants defines the discussions in any activity. The Workshop has much clearer education-oriented discussions. There was repeated mention in the Workshop of a need for scope and sequence matrix for human rights, reference materials on human rights, curriculum development, school environment, human rights as practice not as mere knowledge, etc. which reflect the educational concerns in the region.

b. The Gulf region has a political structure through which Gulf regional plans can be supported. The participants frequently cited the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a vehicle to continue pursuing a regional effort on human rights education in schools. No such structure exists so far in Northeast Asia. GCC's counterpart can be found, on the other hand, in Southeast and South Asia subregions.

c. There are good experiences as well as institutions in the larger Arab region that provide concrete examples on how human rights education in schools programs can be developed. Moroccan, Tunisian and Jordanian experiences provide ideas for the Gulf States. There are also institutions mainly non-governmental that have programs supporting human rights education in schools.

d. There is no language barrier in the Gulf region that will hinder exchange of experiences and ideas among the countries involved, and development of common approach or strategies in developing human rights education in schools programs. There is also similarity of cultural background in terms of religion. Northeast Asian countries have many common cultural and social elements and yet still divided by language, political system and historical experience.

In sum, there is a good potential for the Gulf States to develop their joint as well as national human rights education programs by benefiting from their own collaboration, and the support from the UN and other institutions in the Arab and Asia-Pacific

regions.

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Endnotes

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
2. Final Report-Regional Workshop on Human Rights Education in Gulf States' School Systems, Doha, Qatar on 15-19 February 2004, pages 2-3.
3. Report, *ibid.* pages 2-5.
4. Adopted during the Regional Conference on Human Rights Education in the Arab Region held in Rabat, Morocco on 17-20 February 1999. The Ministry of Education of Morocco, UNESCO and UNDP jointly organized it.
5. Adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 15 September 1994.

Regional Workshop on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

Nobuki Fujimoto

The 12th Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region, held on 2-4 March 2004 in Doha, Qatar, was attended by representatives from 35 countries and the Palestine Authority, 2 inter-governmental organizations, 16 national human rights institutions and the Asia Pacific Forum, and 7 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including 2 organizations in Qatar.

The Twelfth Asia-Pacific Workshop reviewed the progress achieved since the Islamabad Workshop (February 2003) under the four priority pillars of action for technical co-operation for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region (Tehran Framework). Activities relating to national human rights action plans, national human rights institutions, human rights education, and the right to development and economic, social and cultural rights were presented.

The major initiatives included the Sub-Regional Workshop on Human Rights Education in the Gulf States School System (Doha, Qatar, February 2004), the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (Kathmandu, Nepal, February 2004), and the sub-regional workshop for judges and lawyers on the justiciability of economic, social, cultural rights in the North-East Asia (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, January 2004).

The 12th Workshop also aimed to review the current initiatives for the development of regional and sub-regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region, in addition to discussing and identifying the next steps in the context of the Regional Framework for Technical Co-operation, with particular focus on a forward looking dialogue on the reformulation of the four areas under the Tehran Framework.

Consultation Meeting among Non-Government Actors and OHCHR

Prior to the Workshop, the OHCHR again organized the "Consultation of Non-Government Actors" on 1 March 2004. Representatives of national human rights institutions and NGOs attended the meeting with representatives of OHCHR.

Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn gave some remarks. He expressed his concern about 'globalization' and 'terrorism'. He stressed the importance of dealing with anti-terrorism measures in a balanced manner to ensure that human rights are protected. While he pointed out the significance of the four pillars of the Tehran Framework, he suggested that it would be necessary for the workshop to focus on certain issues.

Regarding the absence of human rights protection system in the Asia-Pacific region, Professor Muntarbhorn cited the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) initiatives. Two treaties having a bearing on human rights were adopted by SAARC in 2002 - the Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Prostitution, and on the Regional Arrangement for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia.

The initiative by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish a subregional human rights mechanism has not gone far since 1993. The civil society initiative (the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism), on the other hand, has been lobbying for it. At the Bangkok seminar in 2003 attended by government and NGO representatives, a roadmap on the establishment of an ASEAN Human Rights Commission was adopted.

He also lamented the fact that out of seven major international human rights treaties, only the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by all the countries in the entire Asia-Pacific region.

The participants were divided into four working groups and separately discussed the four issues of

the Tehran Framework. More participants joined the groups for the national human rights plans of action and national human rights institutions issues.

The group on human rights education discussed the initiatives taken in the Gulf region, Australia, Philippines, and Japan. The group recognized the importance of further promoting human rights education, particularly for school children and groups which play a particular role in the development and maintenance of society, such as legislators, judges, members of the military and police, etc. As a conclusion, the group agreed to support the proposed second UN Decade for Human Rights Education, with a prior review of the achievement of the present UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

The results of the working group discussions were reported in the plenary session of the Workshop. At the same time, several proposals from the groups, such as a revision of the *Handbook on National Human Rights Action Plans* produced by OHCHR to include updated material from country experiences and more detailed technical methodology and protocols, and the support for the second UNDecade for Human Rights Education were presented in the Workshop as recommendations from the non-governmental actors.

Regional Workshop

H.E. Ahmed Al Mahmoud, Minister for Foreign Affairs Qatar, opened the Workshop. In his inaugural speech, the Foreign Minister stressed that human rights are indispensable for human beings, lacking them they will not be able to optimally carry out their mission as thinkers or workers, and, hence, producers and innovators.

Addressing the opening session, Mr. Bertrand Ramcharan, Acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, mentioned that the Asia-Pacific region has made great stride in the four-priority pillars for human rights action identified during the 1998 Tehran Annual Workshop. However, he added, "Despite the great achievements, we are now faced with the great challenges in upholding human rights. There exists an engulfing gap between human rights in law and those in practice. This is not an exception to the Asia-Pacific region." He cited several challenges to be tackled, including human rights

protection, prevention of human rights violation, poverty, rights of children, justice and empowerment for women, democracy and rule of law, new threats, such as terrorism and bio-technology.

The workshop went on to discuss the four issues under the Tehran Framework.

Presentations on issues

In the first session on national human rights action plans (NHRAPs), Ms. Wan-Hea- Lee, International Human Rights Adviser, UNDP-Mongolia, made a presentation as a resource person. She reported that out of 17 countries where NHRAPs were adopted around the world, 5 countries from Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand) adopted them so far. Work on the preparation for NHRAPs began in Nepal, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Palestine Authority. She recognized the skepticism of some sectors about NHRAPs on the ground that some were forgotten after adoption or some were not included in the national budgeting processes and national development strategies. However, she stressed that the preparation of NHRAPs can be an important process as long as civil society is involved.

In response, some government representatives mentioned that they have national plans that are equivalent to NHRAPs even though they are named differently.

While the drafting of NHRAPs did not gain much support in the Asia-Pacific region, establishment of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) gained such support. Dr. Purification V. Quisumbing, Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, discussed this 'growing industry' in

the region. New NHRIs were established during the last two years such as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Palestine Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights. They became members of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions during its Eighth Annual Meeting held in Kathmandu in February 2003.

Chair Quisumbing mentioned that NHRIs should act as bridge between the government and the civil society in promoting human rights. She noted that NHRIs could be a vehicle in supporting and moving the other three pillars.

Dr. Sev Antoni Ozdowski, Human Rights Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of Australia, pointed out that NHRIs should also be granted independent consultative status with ECOSOC, just like the NGOs.

Explaining the background of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) since the Vienna Conference, Chair Quisumbing stressed in her presentation the importance of reviewing the Decade. There should be a review on what have been done, what activities in each country have been undertaken, and what is the positive side of the Decade. She mentioned that we can find a great potential for a second Decade by taking a look at the experience of the first Decade. The NGOs presented their support for the proposed second Decade.

As far as national plan of action for human rights education is concerned, only Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and India have such plans.

While representatives of NHRIs from Australia and New Zealand supported Chair Quisumbing's opinion on the second Decade, no government representatives expressed support for the proposal. This might have led to the toning down of the final text of the workshop conclusions on the second Decade.

From a human rights perspective, many government representatives addressed the importance of rights-based approach to development. They were concerned about the adverse impact of globalization, especially on vulnerable people. Some touched on the coincidence of the workshop being held in Doha where the fourth World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting (Doha Round) was held in 2001.

They also recognized the significance of realizing the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Conclusions and 2004-2006 Programme of Action

On 4 March 2003, final day of the Workshop, the Conclusions of the Twelfth Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region, and 2004-2006 Programme of Action for the Asia-Pacific Framework on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection on Human Rights were adopted by government representatives. The final document came out after 5-hour closed meeting of government representatives.

The Conclusions document consists of 51 paragraphs, while the 2004-2006 Programme of Action is divided into four pillars. Paragraph 20 of the Conclusions, touching on human rights education, states that the participants "(R)ecognize the contribution of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) in raising awareness about the promotion and protection of human rights, look forward to the forthcoming report of OHCHR and UNESCO on the status of human rights education at the local, national, regional, and international levels and acknowledge the ongoing consultations towards consideration of the second Decade for Human Rights Education."

In his remarks on the next step for the Workshop, Professor Muntarbhorn gave several suggestions on adding value to the Tehran Framework. He suggested, for example, the involvement of parliamentarians and people from the media in the Workshop. He stressed that adjustments are required and an active step-by-step approach is needed to ensure that "building blocks" become even more concrete stepping stones to the future.

The United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized the workshop in cooperation with the Government of Qatar. For the full Conclusions document, please visit : www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/dohaconclusions.doc

Nobuki Fujimoto is a staff member of HURIGHTS OSAKA.

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (the Forum) held its 8th Annual Meeting on 16-18 February 2004 in Kathmandu. The meeting (consisting of closed meeting among member-institutions, and the open meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations, governments, and international organizations) discussed several issues such as the application of the Paris Principles, anti-terrorism and human rights, the rights of the disabled people, death penalty, child pornography on the internet, and trafficking.

The Forum noted the successful implementation of the Advisory Council of Jurists's (ACJ) recommendations on death penalty, child pornography on the internet and trafficking. The Forum also discussed new international human instruments such the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment (CAT), and the discussions at the United Nations of the new international convention on the rights of people with disabilities. The Forum recommended that governments sign and ratify both the CAT and its Optional Protocol. The NGO representatives also expressed the same recommendation.¹

On death penalty, the NGO representatives pointed out that

While some of the countries like New Zealand, Australia and Fiji have worked towards fulfilling the ACJ's recommendations, other countries like Nepal and India have done little to nothing, and have continually ignored the work of their respective National Human Rights Commissions. The situation in the Philippines is particularly disturbing, where the death penalty has been re-imposed, and in Sri Lanka, where concerns have been expressed over a similar re-introduction of the death penalty. Almost all of the above countries have yet to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.²

On the situation of people with disability, the NGO representatives stressed that "rights of people with

disabilities in the Asia Pacific are not being effectively promoted or protected by most governments in the region. National human rights institutions in the Asia Pacific, too, have much room for improvement in this area."³

The Forum expressed grave concern "about the violations of human rights in Nepal and appreciate(d) the efforts of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal to promote the signing of the Human Rights Accord between the conflicting parties with a view to promoting peace." ⁴

The Forum discussed the need to strengthen the independence and institutional capacity of national (human rights) institutions to enable them to carry out their mandates more effectively. In particular, national institutions should be provided with a wide and unrestricted mandate to conduct investigations of human rights violations. Governments should also give serious consideration to the determinations and recommendations of national human rights institutions and ensure their effective implementation.⁵

During the closed meeting among member-institutions, they⁶

[R]eaffirmed that the structure and responsibilities of national institutions should be consistent with the Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 48/134) commonly referred to as the 'Paris Principles.' On this basis it reaffirmed the full membership of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and admitted the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens Rights as associate members of the Forum. This increased the Forum's overall membership to 14 institutions. The Forum will assist the new associate members, where possible, to become fully compliant with the Paris Principles.

The governments of the Maldives, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste are reported to have decided to

establish their respective national human rights institutions in full compliance with the Paris Principles. The Forum is willing to extend assistance in this process.

The NGO representatives recommended to the Forum to lobby governments to give their respective national human rights institutions quasi-judicial power.⁷

The Forum reaffirmed the importance of undertaking joint practical collaborative activities with non-governmental organizations for the protection and promotion of human rights and welcomed their continued participation in its annual meetings.

The NGO representatives, however, lamented the problems being faced by human rights defenders (who mainly belong to NGOs). An NGO report states that

[I]n the majority of countries profiled, even those with national human rights institutions, individuals and organisations promoting respect for human rights are systematically subjected by State agencies to a range of oppressive measures, from intimidation to prolonged detention.⁸

Aside from the representatives of 14 member-institutions, there were members of the ACJ and the representatives, as observers, from the ILO, UNDP and UNESCO, the governments of Australia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom and the United States of America, the human rights institutions of Iran, Jordan and the Maldives, the regional Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas, and thirty eight international, regional and national NGOs attending the meeting.

The 14 members of APF are the National Human Rights Commissions of Afghanistan, Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The members of ACJ held a separate meeting on 16-17 February 2004. The representatives of NGOs also held a separate meeting on 15 February 2004.

For further information, please contact: Forum Secretariat, Level 8, Piccadilly Tower, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia; ph (612) 9284 9845; fax (612) 9284 9825; e-mail: apf@asiapacificforum.net; www.asiapacificforum.net

Endnotes

1. Asia Pacific Human Rights Network, *The Prevention of Torture* (February 2004).
2. Asia Pacific Human Rights Network, *Towards Abolition of the Death Penalty* (February 2004).
3. Asia Pacific Human Rights Network, *The Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (February 2004).
4. Conclusions of the 8th Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (16-18 February, Kathmandu).
5. Conclusions, *ibid*.
6. Conclusions, *ibid*.
7. Asia Pacific Human Rights Network, *Establishing a Regional Human Rights Mechanism for the Asia-Pacific Region* (February 2004).
8. Asia Pacific Human Rights Network, *Human Rights Defenders - Background Paper* (February 2004).

Events

Recently Held Events

The Centre for Feminist Legal Research (CFLR) organized the International Seminar on Cross Border Movements and Human Rights in New Delhi on 9-10 January 2004. The seminar was a gathering of international experts, scholars and advocates known for their long-standing experience on issues of migration, trafficking, terrorism and human rights.

For further information, please contact: Centre for Feminist Legal Research, Flat No. 5, 45 Friends Colony (East), New Delhi - 110 065, India; ph (9111) 26320499/26327303/51628118; fax (9111) 51629569; e-mail: cflr_45@yahoo.com, contact@cflr.org; www.cflr.org

The Alternative Asia Pacific Community Forum was held on 12-14 January 2004 in Bangkok. The Community Forum provides a critical platform for grassroots communities to network, to share community issues and concerns and to build and strengthen their skills and capacities. Participants mainly comprised of community representatives working in various sectors such as care and treatment, harm reduction, sex work, migration, gender and sexuality, youth, human rights and GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS in South Asia). This meeting is in preparation for the next International World AIDS Conference XV to be held in Bangkok in June 2004.

For further information, please contact: apcaso@pd.jaring.my; www.plwha.org

The second Training on Human Rights Investigation and Fact-Finding Techniques was held on 19-21 February, 2004 in New Delhi. The three-day training workshop aimed at imparting better orientation for investigation technique and also skills and capacity to conduct fact-finding studies systematically.

For further information, please contact: Somen Chakraborty, Coordinator, Human Rights Unit, Indian Social Institute, 10 Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110 003, India, ph (9111) 24622379/ 24625015; fax (9111) 24690660; e-mail: somen@unv.ernet.in, hru@unv.ernet.in; www.isidelhi.org

The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) held the first session of Making Governance Gender Responsive training program on 26-28 February 2004. The training program was designed for local governments, elected officials, and staff of legislative and executive offices, political parties, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups with programs on governance, and training institutes for good governance.

For further information please contact: CAPWIP Secretariat, 4227-4229 Tomas Claudio Street, Baclaran, Parañaque City 1700 Philippines; ph (632) 832-2112; 832-0680; 853-0226; fax (632)

832-2263; www.capwip.org ; www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org

The Second Asian Indigenous Women's Conference was held in Baguio City, Philippines on 4-8 March 2004. The participants shared information on the local and national situations of indigenous women in Asian countries, especially the effects on them of economic globalization, conflict situations, militarization, and fundamentalism; the initiatives and strategies that Asian indigenous women and communities have taken in response to these developments and including regional and international campaigns, and how to expand and strengthen the Asian Indigenous Women's Network (AIWN).

For more information, please contact: AIWN Secretariat, #1 Roman Ayson Road, Campo Filipino, 2600 Baguio City, Philippines; ph (6374) 444-7703; ph/fax (6374) 443-9459; e-mail: aiwn@skyinet.net, tebtetba@skyinet.net

A "People's Tribunal on the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) and Other Central Security Legislation in India" was held on 13-14 March 2004 in New Delhi. The Tribunal heard depositions from victims and their families, and also expert depositions by eminent lawyers, jurists, academics and activists.

For more information on the Tribunal: please contact Conference Secretariat c/o Preeti Verma 65, Masjid Road Jungpura, New Delhi 110 014; ph (9122) 24324501; e-mail: hrlndel@vsnl.net

Events to be Held

A series of South Asian Workshops on Minorities will be held on 15-25 May 2004 in Kathmandu, 2005 in Lahore, and 2006 in New Delhi. The project aims at raising awareness among minority and indigenous people's communities and leaders on the use of autonomous arrangements as a means of reaching peaceful coexistence among groups within the framework of the existing state. The workshop will focus on representatives of minorities and indigenous people, self-determination movements, people from autonomous regions, relevant scholars, jurists and NGOs from the South Asian sub-region including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

For further information, please contact: South Asia Forum for Human Rights, 3/23, Shree Durbar Tole, Patan Dhoka Lalitpur, Nepal, G. P. O Box 12855, Kathmandu, Nepal, ph (9771) 5541026; fax (9771) 5527852; e-mail: south@safhr.org; www.safhr.org

HURIGHTS OSAKA ACTIVITIES

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, HURIGHTS OSAKA is giving an "International Human Rights Education Award" this July 2004. Entries should come from any institution or individual in the Asia-Pacific and can be in any form such as text materials (e.g., textbooks); visual aids (e.g., photographs, videos, CDs, DVDs); computer-based materials (e.g., games, programs on powerpoint, websites); theatre performances (e.g., skits, pantomimes); training programs (e.g., workshop activities). Entries with application form should be submitted to HURIGHTS OSAKA on or before April 30, 2004.



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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 in meeting 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.



HURIGHTS OSAKA

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