

## **Human Rights Education in Mongolian Schools**

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The 1992 Constitution and relevant laws brought by Mongolia's transition to a democratic nation-state identify education as a key component in its development.

The new educational policy is supported by several laws and resolutions passed by the State Great Hural (Parliament of Mongolia) in 1995 including the State Education Policy, the Education Law, the Higher Education Law, and the Primary and Secondary Education Law. These laws introduced the policy of democracy and openness in educational administrative structures, decentralized the administration and financing of all public schools, transferred the management of schools to local governments in the *aimags* (provinces), increased the autonomy of colleges and universities, and enabled the establishment of private educational institutions.

### **Educational Policy Environment and Human Rights Education**

The State Education Policy defines education as a priority sector of society, as well as an important source of support for rapid growth in scientific, technical, economic and social development fields.<sup>1</sup> In the policy, education in Mongolia has the mission "to create the environment and conditions favorable for the citizens of Mongolia to choose and obtain the knowledge, capacity, technology and cultural values needed for their life and work in a democratic society showing their full

capacity." This mission statement is a significant step in changing the previous theoretical and conceptual framework of Mongolian education.

In accordance with Paragraph 7, Article 16 of the 1992 Constitution of Mongolia, the state provides free general education for all. Paragraph 2.3, Article 39 of the Law on Education provides that a child shall be provided with free, compulsory basic education up to seventeen years of age, and his or her interest and desire to learn should not be hindered. On the basis of this provision, Paragraph 1, Article 6 of the Law on Protection of Child Rights (1996) states that the State shall support free general education, study of native language, literacy, and development of each person's abilities. The Education Law and the State policy provide for the basic principles of education such as a free general education for all, creation of all conditions for children's education, equality and non-discrimination in education.

Another feature of Mongolia's development is the country's adherence to human rights standards. Mongolia has ratified over thirty major human rights treaties and protocols. Thus, fundamental human rights principles have also been incorporated in Mongolian laws. Mongolia has made progress in submitting regular reports required as part of the State parties' obligations.

At the national level, a number of national policies and programs in relation to human

rights education have been adopted such as the National Action Plan for Human Rights (2003), the Master Plan for Education (2006-2011)<sup>2</sup> and a set of policies on National Development Strategy based on the Millennium Development Goals (2007).<sup>3</sup> The State Great Hural, in defining its Millennium Development Goals (MDG), added the 9th goal of “Guaranteeing Human Rights and Strengthening Democratic Governance.” Also, it approved the inclusion of human rights in the “MDGs of Mongolia and their indicators” through Resolution #25 (2005).

### **National Human Rights Action Programme** <sup>4</sup>

The State Great Hural adopted the National Human Rights Action Programme (NHRAP) in October 2003. The NHRAP sets out the direction and methods of 1) broadening and making efficient the participation of state organizations, civil society, (particularly, local self-governing organizations, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], and the mass media) and the private sector in strengthening state efforts to guarantee human rights and freedoms. It also encourages citizen’s initiatives on this task; and creates mechanisms to ensure human rights protection, prevent violations, and provide remedies when rights are infringed. In conformity with the nature of democracy and market relations, the main objectives of the NHRAP are to reform social, cultural and intellectual relations in support of human rights and freedoms, including through social and state institutions, and local administrative systems; and to broaden state coordination and legal guarantees and create appropriate human rights mechanisms.

The NHRAP justification and goal include “reform [of] the system, content and methodology of education, and [the teaching of] skills necessary to enjoy and protect one’s

rights by promoting public awareness on human rights and legal protection.”<sup>5</sup>

It also states that, on the basis of the research on the current state of human rights education in the country, the formal and non-formal education systems for Government Cabinet officials, leaders, and students at all levels shall develop human rights education programs. It further states that a sub-program on training national trainers and educators to support and encourage advocacy through the mass media shall be developed and implemented. Knowledge of human rights shall be used as a criterion in selecting officers in public services (e.g., administrative and special professionals like teachers and social workers).<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the Sub-Programme on Human Rights Education has not yet been developed.

The NHRAP has provisions on the role of the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM) and NGOs in human rights education, and on specific human rights education and training activities.<sup>7</sup>

There is therefore a clear legal mandate for rights-based education and education about and for human rights. On the right to education, NHRAP provides that:

- The form, content, and delivery of education shall be continually reformed to meet modern requirements. A legal environment and the necessary implementing actions shall be established to meet the national objective of providing free and compulsory primary education for all children.
- Policies shall be developed to eliminate the disparities in access to education between rural and urban areas. Informal and distance learning courses tailored to various age and gender groups shall be developed to eradicate illiteracy.
- Steps will be taken to improve the consumer value of secondary education

and to enable graduates to explore their professional interests. Schools shall begin to offer vocational training.

- The educational and cultural rights of minorities shall be guaranteed through practical measures to preserve the heritage of native languages and scripts, customs, history and cultural traditions.
- Special attention shall be paid to stabilizing the supply of rural teachers and facilitating their work. Steps shall be taken to ensure that all mandatory classes designated as such by the central public administration are taught, including if necessary during non-scheduled hours. School officials shall be held accountable if mandatory classes were not held.
- Public and non-governmental organizations and community groups shall be encouraged to provide educational opportunities, collaborate through common information networks, continually monitor and analyze the situation and offer solutions.
- Step-by-step actions shall be taken to broaden the economic and financial basis of education services and to strengthen their capacity.

**National Programme of Action for the Development and Protection of Children (2002-2010)**<sup>8</sup>

The National Programme of Action for the Development and Protection of Children is an important document covering a wide range of issues such as child health, nutrition, development, education, social participation and protection of their rights and their living environment. The objective of the program is to build a legal environment to protect the rights of children in Mongolia, and to develop children themselves, allowing them to obtain good quality education and profession, and to improve their livelihood. The program is part of the state policy on population and is

being implemented stage-by-stage as part of the development of the national social and economic potentials.

**Master Plan of Education in Mongolia - 2006–2015**<sup>9</sup>

The Government of Mongolia has adopted a *Master Plan of Education in Mongolia - 2006-2015* that defines an overall framework for the development of the education sector and aspires to be more responsive to the demonstrated needs of children and youth by:

- Promoting the development of a learner-friendly environment
- Shifting to a competence-based curriculum
- Strengthening planning and monitoring mechanisms.

The plan is considered to be the first in Mongolia to be developed utilizing a sector-wide approach. It builds on an earlier work to develop an Education for All (EFA) Action Plan. The Master Plan places high priority on the expansion of the school system, and seeks to bring it in line with global practices. This objective drove the shift to the newly implemented twelve-year educational system and the launch of a new curriculum with output-based learning objectives for the 2008-2009 academic years. The strategy will incorporate more frequent renewal of education content, textbooks, curriculums, and standards for school environments.

Finally, the Master Plan reveals a sound understanding about a range of issues that have relevance to education about and for human rights: vulnerable groups, enrolment, school retention, issues relating to herder children, dormitories, the school environment, gender, disability, inequality, access to information and communication technology (ICT), health and hygiene.<sup>10</sup> It also provides for mid-term issues and targets relating to early childhood education,

primary and secondary education, non-formal and adult education, technical education and vocational training (TVET), and higher education.<sup>11</sup> The section on primary and secondary education defines the program, program content and outputs under Access, Quality and Management components.<sup>12</sup> Strategies to improve access and equity include training teachers, the introduction of new learning methods and appraisal systems, development of special programs, and the development of educational resources.

### **Policy Framework for Child Friendly Schools Promotion**<sup>13</sup>

The “child-friendly school” (CFS) concept, now spreading throughout the world since its introduction in 1997 in Thailand, refers to providing learning, working and living environments that are healthy, safe, and protected. A child-friendly school must respect child rights and ensure equal access to education by all children regardless of nationality, race, physical disability, and social background.

The CFS framework consists of the following five dimensions:

1. Proactively inclusive, seeking out and enabling participation of all children and especially those who are different ethnically, culturally, linguistically, socio-economically, and in terms of ability;
2. Academically effective and relevant to children’s needs for life and livelihood knowledge and skills;
3. Healthy and safe for, and protective of, children’s emotional, psychological, and physical well-being;
4. Gender-responsive in creating environments and capacities fostering equality; and
5. Actively engaged with and enabled student, family and community participation in all aspects of school

policy, management and support to children.

In principle, all programs recognize these five dimensions as necessary and mutually reinforcing conditions of CFS success. A school is child-friendly where all of the elements are addressed, and the ability to be child-friendly on each dimension is enhanced by action on the others.

In Mongolia, the “child-friendly school” project started in 1999. Since that time, UNICEF, the Government of Mongolia, and other stakeholders have been active partners in implementing this initiative. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science developed a policy document entitled “Policy Framework for Promotion of Child Friendly Schools” in 2004 to promote child rights in every school.<sup>14</sup> This policy document includes basic principles, framework of activities, implementing strategies and administration support, assessment and its indicators. In order to achieve this goal, the policy document provides the following objectives:

- To provide equal access to education and equal opportunities to participate in all school activities for all children
- To promote healthy, safe, protective, addict-free school environment
- To promote gender equality
- To enhance community participation and partnership
- To provide quality learning environment that addresses each child’s learning needs as well as effectiveness.

### **Structure of the Mongolian Education System**

The central education authority in Mongolia is the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS). It defines policies with regard to education, science and culture and it is responsible for the implementation of these policies. In addition, MECS publishes

and approves textbooks and curriculums and provides support for the supervision of local educational centers and national universities. Each of Mongolia's twenty-one *aimags* (provincial centers) has an Aimag Education and Culture Department within the local government, which serves as the local educational authority. This Department is responsible for the administration and management of government services relating to formal and non-formal education.

The Mongolian education system includes pre-school education (kindergarten) and general secondary schools (primary, lower and upper secondary). Schools for the primary, lower and upper secondary levels generally do not exist separately. The Mongolian Law on Education (2002) mandates that every Mongolian regardless of "ethnicity, language, race, gender, socio-economic status, wealth, employment, position, religion and personal values" has a right to receive education in his/her native language (Article 5.1.4) and must attend basic education (Article 6.3) provided by the state free of charge as required by the Constitution of Mongolia (Article 6.2).<sup>15</sup>

Pre-school education (kindergarten) is not compulsory and caters to children aged three to six years. According to the latest education reform plan, Mongolia will shift to a twelve-year education system (6+3+3) from 2008-2009 academic years. Primary education covers a period of six years for pupils aged six to eleven years and is compulsory. Lower secondary education is the final stage of compulsory schooling and lasts three years (age group 12-14, grades 7-9), when certification of non-complete secondary education is granted. Upper secondary school consists of grades 10 and 12 for sixteen to eighteen year-old students. Upper secondary education is not compulsory; however, it is a prerequisite for college admission. The school year consists of thirty-four working weeks at the primary level, thirty-five weeks at the lower secondary level, and thirty-six weeks at the

upper secondary level. Graduates from Grade 9 can join technical and vocational training schools. Higher education in Mongolia is provided by universities, colleges and institutes for mostly four to five academic years.

The education system is centralized and the MECS and its implementation units, such as local education departments, have the primary responsibility for educational policy, curriculum design and practice at the local level.

According to educational statistics, in the 2009-2010 academic year 142,065 children are enrolled at eight hundred fourteen kindergartens (preschool institutions), 522,100 students at seven hundred fifty-five public and private secondary schools, 44,600 students at sixty-three vocational training institutions and 164,700 students at the one hundred forty-six public and private universities and colleges.<sup>16</sup> The accumulated number of learners comprise almost thirty percent of the total population. High level of enrolment at formal educational institutions presents certain advantages in providing human rights education in the primary and secondary schools.

### **Human Rights Environment at Mongolian Schools**

The implementation of various education programs over the last decade has had substantial effects in meeting the children's rights to education and access to educational services. The government, since 2000, has fully subsidized expenses in school dormitories and took measures to repair all school buildings. Public funding for school dormitories has had a positive impact on the school enrolment rates since 2000.

Nowadays, the literacy rate and educational levels of the population of Mongolia has approached that in developed countries. This is a result of the attention the government has given towards the

involvement of everyone in education, providing education of appropriate level to all students and preventing them from possible dropouts by creating a relevant legal environment closely related to the specific features of the phases of the social and economic development of the nation and by taking organizational measures for implementing those laws and legislations.

### *Gender in educational settings*

Unlike in many developing countries, girls in Mongolia have equal access to education. Mongolia has achieved impressive results regarding girl's education. In primary, secondary and tertiary schools 50.1 percent of the students are girls. The children are not discriminated on the basis of gender, but the disparity in school enrollment grows between girls and boys as the age increases. School enrolment indicates an unusual "reverse gender gap," with more girls enrolled than boys – in every province across the country. This is particularly noticeable at the higher levels of education where typically girls greatly outnumber boys. In secondary education, gross enrolment rates of girls are 20 percent higher than boys, while in tertiary education women now account for 70 percent of all students.<sup>17</sup>

### *Violence in schools*

According to a 2007 study,<sup>18</sup> violence is high and institutionalized in the Mongolian education sector. At least one-third of children at the kindergarten through upper secondary level reported having experienced some form of violence (economic, emotional, physical or sexual) while at school. The perpetrators were, in order of frequency, peers, older children and teachers. Girls more frequently reported emotional violence, humiliation and intimidation, but also reported physical abuse by male peers. Boys more frequently reported economic and physical abuse such as the extortion of money by peers or older students and bullying. Across the board, children reported

"economic" violence by teachers in the form of imposing informal payments. Rural students more frequently reported physical violence including corporal punishment.

### *Health in schools*

The government took strides towards improving the physical health of students by providing free school snacks and lunches for children in grades 1-5. The measure is considered to have had a positive impact nationwide on primary school enrolment, which reached 273,966 children in the 2009-2010 academic years.

The National Standards on Health Education for primary and secondary schools were adopted in 1998, and at that time lessons on sexual and reproductive health were integrated into the compulsory Health Education Curriculum for secondary schools. The training of health education teachers is now institutionalized through the University of Education and teacher colleges, and each secondary school has at least one trained health teacher. However, schools face high turn-over rates and shortages of health teachers. A needs assessment survey among health education teachers in 2008 found that more than 50 percent of health education teachers at primary and secondary schools have limited skills in participatory teaching methodology and the majority of them did not specialize in health education. About 21.5 percent of them reported that health education resource materials are inadequate. Non-formal education programs also incorporate health education curriculum. Unfortunately, TVET institutions do not yet offer health and sex education classes.

### *Water and sanitation at schools*

Water and sanitation facilities are either non-existent or extremely unsatisfactory in most rural and some peri-urban schools. On top of this, monitoring progress is especially difficult because data on water and sanitation are not integrated in the current education

management information system. In 2007, a study on school dormitories conducted by the MECS and the UNICEF showed that residents at 73.9 percent of five hundred two operating dormitories must bring water from outside water sources such as kiosks and wells. In 45.7 percent of the dormitories, water did not meet hygienic standards. Only 21.7 percent of the surveyed dormitories had indoor latrines and the remaining 78.3 percent depended on mostly unsafe and unhygienic outdoor latrines. Data on bath and shower facilities at dormitories is unavailable as well as water and sanitation facilities inside classroom buildings.

Water and sanitation significantly impact on the quality of students' lives and their educational achievements. According to the above mentioned study, students perform higher when residing in a dormitory with a central water supply system. The study looked at students from grades four, six and nine, and found that those with access to a water supply system and indoor latrines performed higher than students with no such access. Specifically, students with central water performed better in mathematics by nine points and in Mongolian language by 7.4 points.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Rural versus urban.*

Rural to urban migration in Mongolia has brought new challenges to the Mongolian education sector. For example, schools in urban centers have seen a substantial increase in the demand for services, while some rural schools are now operating below capacity. In the late 1990s, many small primary schools in remote *bagh* schools (village level schools) were shut down because of the scarcity of students, most of whom had immigrated to urban areas. In contrast, by the end of the 1990s almost all urban schools began offering two shifts of classes each day because of overcrowding, and a few offered classes in three shifts. The students suffered from a chronic shortage of classrooms and dormitory space, which

could not accommodate the influx of migrants from rural areas.

#### *Children with disabilities*

Children with disabilities enrolled at ordinary schools would not be provided with special training modules, textbooks and manuals and other needed tools. Another factor affecting the right to education by children with disabilities is lack of psychological preparedness and support. Most of the children with disabilities grew up at home without effective skills for communication. On the other hand, a culture of acceptance and respect for special needs of the children with disabilities is not nurtured in the school environment. Another concern is lack of appropriate evaluation standards. Evaluation of children with disabilities using assessment systems designed for children without disabilities leads superficially to overall under performance of the school which is avoided by the school administration, hence explains to some extent the resistance to enroll children with disabilities.

#### *Ethnic and linguistic minorities*

Mongolia has twenty ethnic groups, mostly living in rural areas. The majority in Mongolia consists of the *Kbalkh* (85 percent), followed by the *Kazakhs* (7 percent, who mostly live in Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*). Bayan-Ulgii, with a *Kazakh*-majority, has some of the country's lowest education indicators: the highest dropout rates, the lowest pre-school enrolment rates, as well as an illiteracy rate of 6.8 percent, which is higher than the national average of 4.6 percent. The government has recently taken initial steps towards mitigating the disparity between the majority *Kbalkh* people and the many ethnic minority communities by providing bilingual education to *Kazakh*, *Turva* and other groups.

## **Human Rights Education and the School Curriculum**

Human rights education is becoming an important component of the formal education policy in Mongolia. Under the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the government significantly and comprehensively revised the legal education curriculum of secondary schools. The revision was implemented through the “Street Law” program of the Mongolian Foundation for Open Society during 1998-2003 period. The program attached great importance to the human rights education for Mongolian youth and children: curriculum development for each grade contains human rights components and in the 6th grade students study human rights as a separate subject. The human rights course taught since 2003 under the revised legal education curriculum aimed to improve human rights knowledge of the students, develop their abilities to become aware of prevention mechanisms, and build an attitude in them respectful of the rights and freedoms of others. Certainly, these competencies cannot be developed solely through teaching methodology. Thus application of child-friendly school policy, rules and environment is very important.

The comprehensive revision of the national educational standards in 2004 is another significant action taken by the government, which includes a complete revision of all curriculum areas for primary and secondary schools. With the complete change in the national educational standard of History and Social Studies for primary and secondary levels, human rights and citizenship are studied both directly and indirectly from the primary schools up to upper secondary education levels. The Educational Standard of History and Social Studies approved by MECS incorporates an independent “Human Rights Domain” throughout the key learning areas of social science and citizenship classes at all stages of schooling. The standard consists of four basic content domains such

as Rule and law, Rights and responsibilities, Government, and Applied law. “Content domain” refers to a core knowledge system, which develops from simple to complex throughout primary and secondary levels.

An analysis of international curriculums indicates that knowledge, skills and values about and for human rights are included across all stages of schooling and in most subject areas. The area of the curriculum where there is a special emphasis on human rights is in the subject area of Citizenship. Given the importance of human rights and child rights in Mongolia, a study recommends that they be made a significant part of the revised Civics and Citizenship curriculum.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the current educational policy, the Educational Standard of History and Social Studies at primary and secondary levels cover three main subjects: history, citizenship and social studies. At the primary level, history, citizenship and social studies are integrated into one subject entitled “People and Society.” Starting from secondary level, there are independent classes like History, and Citizenship. Accordingly, human rights topics are taught from 1st to 11th grade in relation to age and psychological development of students. This is an important step forward.

The subjects and total hours of the curriculum for social studies are presented in Table 1.<sup>21</sup>

It is important that human rights topics are incorporated into the standard curriculum of the school system. The primary vehicle for teaching and learning about human rights is incorporated within the Civics stream of the Social Sciences learning area.

Citizenship studies, as an independent subject in Grades 6-9 at the secondary level, includes general knowledge of human rights, freedom, equality, principles of democracy, the Constitution, crime, the judiciary, the economic system and civil responsibilities.

Table 1: Core Curriculum for Social Sciences and Citizenship in Primary and Secondary Schools

Level	Grade	Subject	Hour	Total Hours
Primary Education	Grade 1	People and Environment	34	211
	Grade 2	People and Environment	34	
	Grade 3	People and Environment	34	
	Grade 4	People and Society	36	
	Grade 5	People and Society	36	
	Grade 6	Citizenship-I	37	
Lower Secondary Education	Grade 7	Citizenship-I	37	111
	Grade 8	Citizenship-II	37	
	Grade 9	Citizenship-II	37	
Upper Secondary Education	Grade 10	Social Studies-I	57	171
	Grade 11	Social Studies-I	114	
	Grade 12	n/a	-	

Knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical thinking acquired at the secondary level are a foundation for civic empowerment.

Following are the different components of the Citizenship Studies subject:

**Objectives and outcomes:** Citizenship Studies subject aims to develop learning competencies that include knowledge, skills, and attitudes for citizens. The goal of such education is empowerment, that is, giving students the knowledge and skills to take control of their own lives and participate in decisions that affect them.

**Contents:** As above mentioned, the Social studies classes consist of four domains: Rule and law, Rights and responsibilities, Government, and Applied law. For citizenship classes, the competencies are the

following: K<sub>1</sub> - construct knowledge on the subject, K<sub>2</sub> - take action using this knowledge, K<sub>3</sub> - learn life skills, and K<sub>4</sub> - learn citizenship and social values.

**Methodology:** New objectives, principles, and content are required to change methodologies for all classes. The new standard suggests that teachers combine a variety of interactive and participatory techniques for their classes. It encourages the critical analysis of real life situations, taking appropriate action to protect human rights and various participation methods in decisions that affect them.

**Evaluation:** The former education standard on student assessment concentrated only on knowledge. Now, student assessment is based on the competencies acquired by the students during their studies.

Human rights education is incorporated into Citizenship and Social Sciences education at all levels of schooling. However, the 'scope,' or what is taught, in Citizenship and Social sciences can be defined differently by the different curriculums. If human rights education is primarily located within the Citizenship area at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools, then it needs to occupy a clear and significant place within those curriculums to meet national goals, priorities and obligations relating to human rights.

Following the 2006 amendments to the Law on Primary and Secondary Education, the secondary education school system was converted from an eleven-year to a twelve-year schooling system starting at the 2008-2009 academic year onwards. As a result of this transition, major reforms are taking place in the education sector, including revision of the primary and secondary education standards and curriculums with the following goals:

- Bring the content of primary and secondary education in line with the internationally accepted levels
- Ensure applicability of educational curriculum to Mongolian context
- Increase students' life-skills, knowledge and capacity to encounter new and emerging challenges.

This fundamental change in the educational standard has been bringing innovations in subject content, curriculums, teaching methodologies and textbooks for teachers and students. Since the curriculums are changing from being highly standardized to a more flexible and locally relevant ones under the Education Law of 1995, schools and teachers can use a certain part of the curriculums for teaching whatever they see fit. This provides an excellent opportunity for willing teachers to teach citizenship, human rights and democracy. Also, there is a big opportunity to appropriately incorporate

teaching and learning about human rights into other subjects like History, Arts, Mongolian and foreign language and literature and other curriculums.

Within this change, besides teaching human rights, the secondary schools must:

- Ensure that all other subjects studied in secondary schools are based on human rights-based approaches;
- Everyone, including the school management and other staff should be accountable for creating the human rights environment in their schools;
- Provision of human rights education is not only contingent on classroom activities but also on the environment outside the classroom. An important objective of human rights education is to create human rights culture at the schools and communities.
- On the other hand, human rights education cannot be attained fully where there is no human rights atmosphere. Human rights environment is a vital condition for children to learn about their human rights. Therefore, everything in the school starting from the rules and regulations should be based on human rights.
- The school management should take into consideration the principles of human rights for evaluation of the work of teachers, equality of opportunity among students, accountability and discipline mechanisms that ensure respect for human dignity and reputation. Democratic school environment is the most favorable condition for the advancement of human rights education.

### **Teacher Training Curriculum**

Teaching human rights in schools has generally taken two approaches: integration into existing curricular subjects, or as separate subject. Teaching of human rights

should be a fundamental organizing principle for professional practice, so that all prospective teachers come to see themselves as human rights educators and advocates.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the most important task of teachers would be the integration of human rights education within their subjects. A second approach in order to expand human rights education in schools is to train teachers in order to enhance their awareness of human rights and improve their teaching skills in active and participatory learning. Thus, teachers should explore human rights, freedoms and justice issues in their personal and professional lives.

The United Nations World Programme on Human Rights Education declares that

introducing human rights education in primary and secondary education implies that the school becomes a model of human rights learning and practice. Within the school community, teachers, as the main depositories of the curriculum, play a key role in reaching this aim.

Thus, the role of the teacher training institution is of particular importance in enhancing the quality of teaching methodologies and strategy in the area of human rights education and for the creation and best use of learning materials.

The Human Rights Education Center (HREC) was established in May 2006 at the Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE), the largest teacher training institution for all educational and science sectors of Mongolia, within the framework of the joint project on child-friendly school between MECS and UNICEF. Branches of the HREC were established at teacher colleges in Arkhangai, Bayan-Ulgii and Dornod provinces. In line with its goals, the HREC undertakes the following activities for the pre-service and in-service teacher training programs:

- Conduct needs assessments and studies on human rights education and convert

findings into instructional content of the teacher education programs

- Develop theoretical and methodological teaching aids on human rights education and rights-based approaches to education
- Conduct trainings and workshops on human rights education for pre-service and in-service teachers, trainers and education professionals
- Conduct independent reviews and studies on human rights education, children's rights issues and other aspects.

One substantial input of the Center is the introduction of new academic course on "Children's Rights Education" at the MSUE. The course is a one-semester compulsory course for pre-service teacher-students, those majoring in teaching social studies and history. The course is designed to develop the knowledge, skills attitudes of undergraduate students with regard to human rights education at secondary school level. The teacher-students will be able to teach and disseminate child rights issues and tools to their students, the other members of the school community, and the whole society. The course has sixteen lecture and thirty-two seminar hours. Each seminar begins with a short introduction to the topic under consideration and its key issues and problems. During the seminar sessions, students use a variety of resource materials related to child rights issues such as violence in school, child labor, school environment and children's meaningful participation. Through the course, students can learn many interactive and participatory methods and group discussion, presentations, etc. All teacher-students are expected to present at least one course paper during the classes.

Although HREC is a newly-established organization, the following activities have already been implemented:

- Over nine hundred sixty students from MSUE were involved in pre-service

teacher training on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in education during four-year period (2007—2010)

- *Children's Rights Education* (manual for pre-service teachers), *Human Rights Passport* (students workbook), *Violence-free School* (module for in-service teachers) and other teaching aids were developed as part of CFS initiatives,
- Pre-service teacher-students have been encouraged to write their key assignments including diploma thesis and course papers on child rights education.

As a result of these activities, human rights education courses are bringing new approaches to teaching and learning human rights in the teacher training system. In these circumstances, the child rights education course is a starting point that incorporates human rights education into teacher training curriculums and promotion of child-friendly approaches in Mongolia.

These actions are intended to provide a base upon which to build a human rights literate society, specifically by integrating human rights education into Mongolia's formal education system at all levels. To achieve a human rights literate society, the HREC is making efforts to introduce human rights education to pre-service and in-service teachers, thereby creating a systematic human rights framework in the Mongolian education system.

### **Human Rights Education at Law Schools**

Human rights have been studied in law schools since 1997 following a joint Decree #230/200 (1997) by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Enlightenment, through independent course with thirty-six hours per semester. However, very few law schools offered human rights as a mandatory course whereas majority offered it as an optional

course. In most of the law schools, human rights topics are taught only within the Constitutional Law courses with no link between human rights and specific professional courses. Also, university officials tend to undermine the importance of teaching human rights as a separate subject and try to squeeze human rights into other courses of legal education.<sup>23</sup>

In 2008, the legal education curriculum of law schools was reviewed with the support of the World Bank. The review clearly showed lack of direct link between human rights education and law courses. The project stakeholders undertook hard efforts to develop a human rights course as a mandatory course for law schools. The pilot curriculum includes forty-hour course on Human Rights Law and forty-eight-hour optional course on the Rights of the Child for their specialization.

### **Non-Formal Education System**

While human rights education is implemented in numerous ways through the formal education systems, it is also an inherent part of non-formal education (NFE) programs for the citizens. The State Education Policy, mentioned above, recognized for the first time in 1995 the importance of non-formal continuing education-for-all. The aim of non-formal education is to give a wide variety of opportunities to citizens to acquire required knowledge and skills by forms and ways of training appropriate for them. This is meant to deliberately make a tremendous contribution to the process of upgrading their education level on a continuous basis.

At the national level, the non-formal education is managed by the MECS and through its agency, the National Non-Formal and Distance Education Center (NNFDEC). The functioning Non-Formal Education (NFE) learning centers at local levels nationwide, called *Gegeerel* (Enlightenment) centers, play a crucial role in providing

educational services and retraining for the youth, as well as adults on life-skills, health, ecology education and so on. At present, more than a hundred training modules have been developed by the NFE learning centers. Some of the modules cover the topic on social relationship, civic participation, democracy as well as human rights education.

### **The National Human Rights Commission**

The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM) has been contributing in the effort to integrate human rights education into the formal education system. The NHRCM is an independent institution mandated with the promotion and protection of human rights and charged with monitoring the implementation of the provisions on human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of Mongolia, laws and international treaties to which Mongolia is a party. According to its law, the NHRCM is also mandated to promote human rights education and training.<sup>24</sup> Since its establishment, the NHRCM has been taking many efforts in human rights education, training and information activities.

In 2004, NHRCM implemented a project called “Human Rights Education for Law schools” that aimed to integrate human rights courses in law school curriculums. Within this framework, NHRCM developed a model human rights curriculum and piloted it in three law schools (National University of Mongolia, Shikhikhutag and Bileg Law Schools).

The NHRCM has been implementing the project “Human Rights Education in Secondary School” with the support of UNESCO since 2005. The objective of this project is to evaluate how human rights education is taught in secondary schools, develop proposals and recommendations to the relevant authorities, and develop

minimum qualification standards for the teachers of human rights. The main findings from the evaluation showed that human rights education is still unsatisfactory at the national level. Recommendations for future action based on lessons learned throughout the study were developed and disseminated to the relevant stakeholders, government authorities and the public.

Within the framework of the work, NHRCM developed the minimum qualification standard for teachers who teach human rights. The Teachers Standard has two independent sections. The first section is based on pedagogical competencies for teachers. It includes basic knowledge on human rights, and the ability to teach and adapt them to students. It means that all teachers who are teaching human rights must acquire basic pedagogical abilities, which will lead to preparation, teaching, and assessment for students. The second section concentrates on human rights principles and aims to create a rights-based approaches for school environment. This part consists of basic human rights principles, such as universality, inalienability, non-discrimination, etc.

The Teachers Standard establishes criteria to assess their performance on rights-based learning. It is a useful tool to develop and implement professional development programs and to create a monitoring mechanism to measure the performance of human rights education at the school level. Also, it can be used by education administrators to provide financial incentives (bonuses) to teachers based on performance results, and to improve the quality of the teachers’ instruction. The Teachers Standard together with the Recommendations on Human Right Education were disseminated to the relevant authorities for future action. Unfortunately, the MECS lacks ownership and use of these tools to integrate human rights education into the formal education system.

## Civil Society

Over the past two decades, the Mongolian civil society organizations have begun to replace the government as the main provider of education. Civil society especially plays a crucial role in providing education on democracy, civic and human rights in all spheres of society. Their main goals are to inform, educate citizens and disseminate democratic values and human rights. In this regard, a number of NGOs implement short- and long-term projects that promote human rights knowledge and values.

For example, the Open Society Forum, Academy of Political Education, Centre for Civic Education, Centre for Democracy Education, Centre for Voter's Education, Globe International, Amnesty International Mongolia and Zorig Foundation conduct training activities and academic events for both relevant professional groups such as teachers, government officials, decisionmakers and the public. Their public education programs cover the topics of democracy, rule of law, human rights, gender equality, reproductive health, gender-based violence, civic and voter education, child rights, citizen participation, legal reform, international treaties and many other subjects. Most of them have developed extracurricular programs and produced manuals and training materials in collaboration with other supporting actors.

The Amnesty International Mongolia (AIM) is one of the leading institutions working for the development of human rights education program at the national level. The human rights education program is one of the main strategic direction of the AIM. It holds various training, advocacy and campaign activities for various social groups and institutions. The human rights education program is one of the main components of its current Strategic Paper and several initiatives have been implemented under this component. Within the framework of its 2008-2009 activities, the AIM has been

working on the following objectives on human rights education:

1. Incorporate international human rights norms into the Mongolian social life
2. Promote human rights education as effective tool for social transformation
3. Introduce new approaches and teaching methodologies in the human rights education program trainings and activities
4. Promote schools to become human rights-friendly spaces.

Within these objectives, the AIM has held a number of initiatives, like independent projects, advocacy, campaigns such as human rights-friendly school, training of trainers, human rights parade, festivals, "Belinda" human rights education scholarship program, and many other events.

In order to implement the United Nations World Programme on Human Rights Education, the AIM has been working for the incorporation of human rights education into existing educational curriculums at the secondary school level. In this regard, the AIM implemented an independent project entitled "Human rights education for secondary school teachers" supported by the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID) and UNDP. This project started with a training of trainers (ToT) for education experts, professors at teacher training institutions, and in-service teachers in 2008. In order to develop a sub-program on human rights education, under the National Human Rights Action Programme, the AIM organized a number of lobby actions together with the MECS and NHRCM. Following these actions, MECS has established a Working Group on the development of a sub-program on human rights education for formal education, comprising of staff members from NHRCM, Ministry of Justice, MECS, AIM, academia and other stakeholders.

The AIM translated Amnesty International's *Teachers' Book for the Dissemination of Human Rights* and distributed copies to seventy-one institutions, including public libraries, schools, NGOs and human rights organizations. Afterward, a series of ToT seminars were organized on "Teaching about human rights and responsibilities at primary schools" and a total of one hundred thirty-eight teachers attended these sessions. The AIM reported that "the successful distribution of the book means that there is a need to conduct more seminars and workshops throughout the countryside." Interview with the AIM staff member reported that many teachers expressed a desire for follow-up activities and further collaboration on the delivery of the integrated human rights curriculum.

In January 2010, the AIM announced the contest on "Good Practices on Integrating Human Rights subjects" throughout the country. A number of teachers were motivated to develop model lesson plans that integrate human rights issues. In just one school, twelve model lesson plans were developed by the teachers and selected as inputs for the compilation of good practices on teaching human rights. AIM is currently planning to complete the compilation that will be distributed to schools. The compilation of lesson plans on human rights education will be a useful human rights teaching aid for Mongolian teachers in local context.

### **Good Initiatives on Human Rights Education**

Schools are widely believed to socialize younger generations, preparing learners to become active and democratic citizens of society. Promoting human rights-friendly educational environments is crucial to ensuring a universal culture of human rights. Schools fulfill that responsibility through both direct and indirect education programs from the beginning of the schooling years and through the entire educational process.

International experience has also shown that in introducing educational innovation there is an advantage in treating the innovation as a cross-curriculum study, catering to teachers and students in a number of key learning areas. Such an approach allows particular schools to emphasize human rights within their curriculum. This approach to human rights education which goes beyond the classroom and into all aspects of school life is commonly called a 'whole-school approach,' or 'holistic approach.' These terms indicate the involvement of all members of the school community in building an environment where human rights are learned, taught, practiced, respected, defended and promoted. Here are two existing good examples of making schools human rights friendly spaces in the Mongolian context.

### **A Human Rights Friendly School**

Starting from 2009, the Mongolian-Indian joint school (a secondary school) is making efforts to become a model for "Human Rights-Friendly School" in Mongolia. This is a part of the first global human rights education project for schools of Amnesty International (AI) and the initial pilot phase includes secondary schools from fourteen countries: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark, Ghana, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Paraguay, Poland, Senegal and the United Kingdom.

The "Human rights-Friendly School" project aims to promote a culture of human rights in schools through supporting school communities to integrate human rights values and principles into key areas of school life, and to demonstrate an impact of human rights-friendly schools approach. In short, a Human Rights-Friendly School ensures that equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation are at the heart of the learning experience and present in all major areas of school life; it is a school that is friendly to human rights.

The pilot phase of the project is a two-year process running until August 2011. During this time, AI national offices provide support to their partner schools in implementing the project. These schools have to integrate human rights values and principles across four key areas of school life: school participation and governance; community relations; curriculum; extra-curricular domain and school environment.

AI sees the “Human Rights-Friendly Schools” project as an opportunity to support countries in making human rights an integral part of their national education systems. Schools that work towards becoming human rights-friendly will act as examples that can demonstrate that such a culture is achievable, and the tools and processes used to become human rights-friendly school can be readily adapted to various contexts at modest expense. A Human Rights-Friendly School has the following characteristics:

- An overall school-wide atmosphere of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation

- A fully democratic, participatory approach to school governance where all members of the school community are involved in the decisions that affects them
- Empowerment of students, teachers and staff to meaningfully and equally participate in the creation and implementation of school policies
- Student involvement in debates about change
- An increased sense of inclusivity and interconnectedness that fosters mutual responsibility and local and global solidarity
- Rich learning experiences about human rights inside and outside of the classroom.

The table below shows the activities in four key areas of school life for “Human Rights Friendly School” under the Mongolian-Indian joint school project.

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
<b>Key area 1 – School participation and governance</b>		
Develop a new vision statement in partnership with all school stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school organized trainings and awareness raising activities among teachers and students in partnership with AI Mongolia</li> <li>- In order to support staff and students to develop better relationships, the school held two training sessions for teachers focusing on education law amendments that prohibit corporal punishment and all forms of discrimination in schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students were encouraged to participate actively in the consultation</li> <li>- These activities influenced them to follow and reflect class/school rules in school surroundings</li> </ul> <p>A total of twenty-nine teachers were involved. All teaching staff received training manuals for teachers developed by Save the Children in Mongolia.</p>

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
<p>Conduct an internal audit of current school policies in relation to human rights and develop an action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to set up a school policy in relation to human rights principles, each class discussed its classroom rules and enabled active participation of every student in this process.</li> <li>- Each class discussed the aim for the academic year.</li> <li>- The School Council adopted new Code of Conduct, developed by a working group comprised of students and teachers.</li> <li>- Classroom rules and school discipline regulations have been displayed on the information board in each classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The analysis of the school policies based on human rights principles and discussion of the new rules by the teachers and students were successful. They have started implementing them.</li> <li>- Ensuring student participation in the discussion on the classroom rules and school policies contributed to the deepening of the students' understanding on their rights and responsibilities and the importance of their participation.</li> </ul>
<p>Support teachers and students for representing their interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Student's Council held <b><i>Taking the Human Rights Temperature in Our School</i></b> activity in all classrooms among the students.</li> <li>- All classroom elections held for class leaders.</li> <li>- All Student Council members have been trained as human rights activists inside their respective classrooms and the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A total of four hundred sixty three students, thirty four staffs and one hundred eighty three parents participated in this assessment of the human rights climate in the school. The first survey (June 2009) had 67 percent score out of the 100 percent human rights friendly environment. The second stage of the survey had 71.4 percent result.</li> <li>- The student council has a total of thirty two member-students, including twelve class leaders, elected in a democratic way to represent their classmates' interests.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Successfully organized a <b>"Student Day"</b> in the school on 5 February 2010. On that day thirty four students experienced teaching by peer-teaching, replacing their teachers for some time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After the lessons all teacher-students discussed the positive and negative points on the peer-teaching process and they also shared their opinions on being a teacher.</li> </ul>

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
<b>Key area 2 – Community Relations</b>		
Support students to develop necessary skills for working together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to provide support for managing conflict and communication skills, class teachers developed their own training agenda on new subjects like                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- communication skills</li> <li>- managing conflict</li> <li>- decision making.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conflicts between students started to be discussed and dealt with by the children themselves first in some classes under the facilitation of the classroom teacher.</li> <li>- Also, teachers facilitated students' group in the classroom to help students solve their problems. These activities enabled students to develop their skills on managing conflict and understanding each other.</li> </ul>
Facilitate the involvement of parents and school communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized trainings among parents on the topic of "Understanding and Supporting Your Child," "How to Help Your Child Succeed."</li> <li>- Class teachers organized their parents meeting with more innovative approaches and developed their plan on involvement to school-based activities.</li> <li>- Parents' groups initiated a number of life-skill training activities including one-day field trip <b>to Astronomy Research Center</b> at the "Khurel Togoot."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The change of methods of holding the parents meeting in each classroom has been effective in increasing the participation of parents. The number and the quality of activities initiated and coordinated by parents increased dramatically.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, students groups held a Human Right Tour to human rights NGOs including Save the Children, Center for Child Rights and Amnesty International Mongolia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased the cooperation with public and non-governmental organizations, such as Police Departments, Center for Child Rights and Save the Children Japan – Mongolia, Amnesty International Mongolia in organizing training and activities among students and teachers.</li> </ul>

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
<b>Key area 3 – Curriculum Innovation</b>		
In-service teacher training on human rights	Organized trainings for all teachers on HRFS and teaching strategies to support participatory training methodology and human rights issues such as child rights, gender sensitivity, relationship between poverty and human rights.	Training sessions are highly beneficial to support teachers in teaching human rights-based approaches and designed to motivate teachers in teaching human rights issues through their respective subjects.
	Held three training sessions involving all teaching staff on the following topics: “Human rights friendly teaching strategies”, “Child rights in a curriculum,” “Integrating human rights in the curriculum,” “Child rights in school environment,” “Non-discrimination and education law amendments,” “Positive discipline.”	All trainings strived to develop an awareness of the human rights issues and standards among teachers and contributed to developing their sensitivity to and capability to deal with human rights issues in daily life, especially in the school setting.
Review of existing school curriculums	<p>At the beginning of the 2009 school academic year, three school departments audited their respective teaching curriculums to identify where human rights could be integrated and discussed how they could be taught.</p> <p>In October 2009, the departments organized demonstration lessons on some subjects with integration of human rights principles. After that, in December 2009 the school organized a demonstration lesson contest with the support of AI Mongolia. A total of seventeen teachers attended the contest named “Integrating human rights in a school subject.”</p>	<p>The review of school curriculums and the contest enabled teachers to share their existing knowledge and ideas about teaching human rights and feedback to all teaching staff for further discussion.</p> <p>After practice teaching on human rights issues, teachers agreed that teaching basic human rights concepts, indicators and real cases are a useful method, which met practical requirements and students’ needs. It also empowered students to monitor human rights’ implementation and to get the capacity to effectively handle any problems with human rights sensitivity.</p>
	A team of mathematics teachers organized the monthly <b>“Human Rights through Mathematics”</b> presentations.	The activity enabled the students to deepen their existing knowledge and skills on how mathematics can clearly show basic indicators and modeling for poverty level, climate change, environmental pollution, school drop out and their relevance to human rights.

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
	<p>The Technology Department organized in February 2010 the exhibition on students' creative works named "<b>Creating Human Rights Friendly Art Works</b>" in relation with the HRFS Project,. There was a wide range of creative art works on display and multimedia presentations for students, parents and teachers.</p>	<p>This activity was a very significant contribution to realize in a practical way the child right to development. There were specialized subjects for the creative works, such as fashion designing, computer graphics designing, interior designing, hair dressing styles, electronics and computer software subjects.</p>
	<p>Started a human rights library with the help from AI Mongolia. To provide access to teaching materials to all teachers, the school built a human rights education library and received a number of books from other organizations, such us Save the Children Japan in Mongolia, National Child Rights Centre, UNICEF in Mongolia, and AI Mongolia.</p>	<p>Now the school has a Human Rights Education Library with nearly two hundred sixteen books and HRFS toolkits and increased teachers' use of books and materials on human rights.</p>
<p><b>Key area 4 – Extra curricular domain and school environment</b></p>		
<p>Partnership with international and national human rights community</p>	<p>In 2009 on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, the school organized the <b>Human Rights Week</b> (7–19 December) consisting of the follow main activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wall charts competition on human rights</li> <li>- A human rights visual arts exhibition</li> <li>- Signing for human rights</li> <li>- Public speech on "Poverty and Human Rights"</li> <li>- Mini United Nations (UN) activity</li> <li>- Essay contest on "Human Rights and Environment"</li> </ul>	<p>During these extracurricular activities, students were highly encouraged to participate in various competitions, campaigns and awareness-raising activities and expressed their voices and solutions to their peers, teachers and other school community members.</p> <p>Some highlights of the activities are presented with more detailed information below.</p>

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
	<p><b>Signing for Human Rights activity:</b> By the initiative of 11th grade students, a campaign on “Signing for human rights” conducted with the combination of fundraising strategy under the slogan “A human life” “One signature” “A hundred tugruks”- to help end human rights abuses.</p>	<p>During this activity a total of two hundred eighty signatures had been collected and 18,540 <i>tugruks</i> (around thirteen U.S. dollars) were collected in the charity box. These activities focused on making students become aware of how they could help end human rights abuses globally and nationally.</p>
	<p>Mini UN is a project-based learning activity. Students demonstrated “World Peace Flags” and depicted their understanding of the UN mandate and missions. Also, they took the Quiz “Know Your Rights,” to examine their knowledge and understanding on human rights issues.</p>	<p>The Mini UN activity offered the opportunity to develop important leadership skills such as public speaking, team and consensus building, negotiation and research. Students demonstrated the ability to exchange information, questions and ideas while recognizing the perspective of others.</p>
	<p><b>Study Tour to Human Rights Organizations:</b> On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, some teachers organized a study tour to human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Save the Children, The Center for Child Rights and Amnesty International Mongolia. The purpose of the tour was to be acquainted with vision, mission, goal, and activities of these organizations and bring them closer to the students.</p>	<p>As main results, a total of four hundred ninety-five students became more knowledgeable on civil society work for human rights issues at global and national levels. Also, ten students out of sixteen, who visited AI Mongolia joined it as young members.</p>
	<p>A group of three students and two teachers attended the International Students Conference organized by Villiers High School in London (United Kingdom) in October 2009 for their experience sharing and external relationships.</p>	<p>The conference was beneficial among the school community members in showing examples of raising a voice at the international level. This practice demonstrated that the school could work effectively by developing wider relationship with the school community.</p>

Main objectives:	Implemented activities:	Reflections:
	<p>Moreover there were a number of activities held among the students in partnership with the local community. These activities were mainly information session by professionals on topics like;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "The harmful effects of drugs"</li> <li>- "Safe Traffic Rules"</li> <li>- "Crime prevention of Juveniles"</li> <li>- "How to choose a career"</li> </ul>	

Based on the experience of implementing these activities, the school obtained a number of advantages compared with non-target schools. The students' involvement in the discussion of the school policy, mission and rules and procedures built trust and a friendly environment between teachers and students and motivated students to implement their rules that they approved themselves. Majority of school staff and teachers are now well aware about the importance of participation of all members of the school community and democratic election for class leaders, student council members and others. The school also celebrated World Teachers Day in 5 October 2009 under the global slogan "Invest on the teachers now." During the event, teachers expressed that participating in the Human Rights Friendly School Project is a one of the great investments for the teachers' professional development on rights-based education, one of the main goals of education reform of Mongolia.

Responding to the imperatives of the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education, the project seeks to promote a holistic approach to the integration of human rights education into school systems. The principles of human rights can give schools a shared language of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation that is crucial to the goal

of achieving a more harmonized and peaceful society. At the end, AI Mongolia sees the Human Rights Friendly Schools project as an opportunity to make human rights education an integral part of Mongolian education systems. A project monitoring and evaluation plan will be implemented with the stakeholders to ensure that project successes, challenges, lessons learned and human rights impact are collated and disseminated.

***A Child-friendly School (CFS)***

The child-friendly schools (CFS) program in Mongolia is designed to address the country's challenges in basic and secondary education. The first step of the "Child-friendly school" initiative in Mongolia was UNICEF's project titled "Primary Education and Community Participation" which was implemented during the 1999-2002 period. Thirty-five schools from fifteen provinces were involved in this project. The activities under this project mainly focused on enhancing teachers and parents' knowledge and attitude on human rights education and promote equal opportunities at school activities. Also, the pilot schools had school self-assessment and implemented their respective school development plans for child-friendly schools.

With technical assistance from UNICEF, the MECS is currently implementing the CFS approach in two pilot schools in Ulaanbaatar city. These pilot schools are "Bolovsrol" complex school at Baganuur District, and School #13 at Bayangol district. These pilot schools follow participatory teaching methodologies and train teachers on using them effectively. Priority is given to building the lifeskills of students, promoting child rights through classroom dynamics and children's participation, and addressing issues of school safety and protective environments for children. According to the national policy on CFS, these pilot schools should establish child-friendly management based on the following steps:

1. Conduct school self-assessment
2. Develop a mid-term or yearly-basis development plan for the school based on the assessment
3. Implement the plan of action based on meaningful participation by students and school community members
4. Emphasize the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in school management activities by the Management Team.

According to one educator, a rights-based approach to schooling aspires to:

- Recognize the rights of every child
- Promote quality learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to think critically, ask questions, express their opinions, and master basic skills
- Promote student rights and responsibilities within the school environment as well as activism within their community at large
- Enhance teacher capacity, morale, commitment and status by ensuring that the teachers have sufficient training, recognition and compensation
- Focus on the family by school administrators by attempting to work

with and strengthen families, helping children, parents and teachers to establish collaborative partnerships.<sup>25</sup>

Most of these characteristics have been incorporated as core principles of CFS pilot schools in their management and daily life.

The CFS project was reviewed in November 2008 covering the two pilot schools Bolovsrol complex school and School 13 in Ulaanbaatar city and non-pilot schools in Zavkhan, Bayan-ulgii, Dundgovi, Dornod, and Sukhbaatar provinces. A total of one hundred seventy students, one hundred thirty three parents and ninety six teachers participated in this comparative study. This review concluded that the CFS program in pilot schools significantly enhanced teacher skills. Teacher performance was also monitored and evaluated with tools that meet CFS evaluation and school assessment. In addition, trust and mutual understanding between teachers and children led to improved overall performance.

The review has mainly positive results in the CFS pilot schools. Students have the chance to get information from a wide range of sources and have opportunities to develop their social competencies. The schools support parents' participation in decisionmaking on school policies and activities, encourage them to take an active interest in school management, and ask them to take part in the learning experience of their children. For example, parents have been informed of extracurricular activities. They have also expressed great satisfaction with the CFS approach, noting the increased interest of their children in learning.

Interviews held under the review show the change in the behavior and attitudes of various school community members on the three main areas of child-friendly schools.

*Interview with a school principal:*

School management	All stakeholders should participate in school evaluation and identify weak or non-child-friendly points in their schools. The main outcomes of the self-assessment should be the basis of a school development plan. All stakeholders should make efforts to implement the plan. School regulations and rules should be developed based on human rights principles.
Student discipline	Students should have the attitude that “our school misses me.” Teachers do not punish students who are late. Instead of punishment, teachers should know the reasons why they are late.
Teaching practice	Teachers do not present themselves as very powerful persons. If they do so, they may forget their students. Putting equipments inside the classrooms is intended to provide direct services for their learning and development.

School administrators pay attention to providing healthy and safe school environment. The school community helps renovate the school facilities (classrooms and laboratories) and establish centers for teacher and student development with financial support from parents, local donors, and professional organizations. Drinking water facilities are placed in the hallways of the school. Recreational and sport area created and equipped in the school yard. Student registration and information system is created and student privacy is protected.

*Interview with representatives of teachers:*

School management	School should provide adequate condition for student organizations to conduct their activities.
Student discipline	Students should help each other at the school.
Teaching practice	Teachers should communicate with students in a friendly manner and guide their activities.

Teachers and school administrators’ attitudes toward students, school management, and teaching and learning changed positively in the following ways: They agree that school and teacher evaluation should consider the students’ voices and participation. They agree that student involvement in any evaluation process should be a routine school activity.

*Interview with representatives of students:*

School management	School environment should be improved based on what the students want.
Student discipline	Students should help and support each other. It is important for students to be friendly with each other.
Teaching practice	Teachers should facilitate students’ activities and they should talk freely with students.

The students’ attitudes also changed positively. They respect and support each other. Their communication with the school community has become friendly and polite. Students have opportunities to develop their abilities by participating in activities of child-led organizations and clubs. They can

express their opinion freely and spend time with their teachers. Finally, the involvement of parents in decisionmaking and school activities has improved and they are motivated to support their children's learning as well as school activities.

One of the distinctive features of the Mongolian child-friendly pilot schools is the existence of student-led activities supported by the school principal and teacher-facilitators. "A child-friendly school recognizes the importance of children's ideas and feedbacks and encourages them to contribute to their own learning processes and school environment," says Ms. D. Erdenechimeg, a Principal of a CFS in Mongolia. In other words, the key to the child friendly school's management is genuine and meaningful participation of student-led organizations in the school management. There are over ten student-led organizations that are currently very active at the schools. The child-led organizations conduct their activities at the Student Development Center that the school management established.

The review concluded that as a result of the CFS project, the MECS and the general public have a better understanding of the child-friendly school concept. There is a continued need to extend the coverage of the policy implementation and scale up child-friendly schools nationwide. In this regard, the review provided the following recommendations at the national, local, and school levels for further improvement of CFS initiative:

At the national level:

- Revise the CFS assessment indicators and questionnaires and provide guidelines for conducting assessment using the revised indicators and questionnaires
- Establish a mechanism to support local initiatives on child-friendly schools

- Develop guidelines/recommendations on distinctive features of child-friendly schools and dormitories that show their advantages compared to regular schools and dormitories
- Develop alternative funding modalities for student-led organizations to implement their activities.

At the local level:

- Strengthen the implementation of the CFS policy at the local level by disseminating the best practices of child-friendly pilot schools
- Develop and implement a local level policy and action plan on the development of CFS and establish an assessment system for their implementation.

At the school level:

- Support the increasing involvement of the community in the implementation of CFS initiatives
- Establish a database for analyzing school self-assessment findings to reflect them in further school development plans.

Based on the positive results of the evaluation, the CFS coverage will be expanded to cover roughly 10 percent of the schools in the country. In order to disseminate child-friendly school initiatives, UNICEF and MECS have jointly developed nine CFS training modules, which are designed to support CFS activities, school administrators, teachers and students. The training modules are used for training activities for CFS participants:

- Module 1: School self-assessment tools
- Module 2: Designing a school development plan
- Module 3: CFS management information system
- Module 4: Promoting socio-psychological school environment

- Module 5: Child-centered teaching methods
- Module 6: Partnership development among school, parents, and community
- Module 7: Livelihood knowledge and life skills
- Module 8: Inclusive education
- Module 9: Violence free school.

Also, the stakeholders collaborate with media partners and other NGOs. The Open School newspaper and *Tsokh* children's newspaper actively organized CFS-related activities such as promoting child participation in the development of CFS, supporting initiatives of student organizations, and clarifying students' duties and responsibilities at the school.

*Youth initiative: "Erkhuulei" as a human rights defender and super-hero for children.*

The "Hands Up 4 Your Rights!" is a youth movement that is very active in the human rights education field in Mongolia. It was initiated and led by the "Let's Develop" Youth Club and Youth Group of AI Mongolia and supported by MONFEMNET (Mongolian Women's NGOs Network). The "Hands Up 4 Your Rights!" youth campaign is intended as a fun, dynamic and participatory mechanism to support young people's empowerment and activism for human rights, gender justice and democracy in Mongolia. The campaign strategy is the marketing of human rights in a fun, accessible, creative and positive fashion, focusing specifically on youth, using peer training and fun public activities as well as media.



In 2008, the youth movement organized a Freedom Parade, Human Rights Festival and a Human Poster Walk-About to spread awareness of human rights and freedoms, especially freedom of expression, and gender-based violence among the public. All activities were highly visual including face-painting, fun decorations (including a big paper cake for the 60th anniversary of the Universal Human Rights Declaration), self-decorated T-shirts with human rights messages, self-made banners and posters. Events featured popular singers and artists, dance competitions, quiz contests and other activities. These campaign activities allowed an opportunity for young people and others to express themselves freely and creatively and enjoy their right to free expression boldly and creatively.

One of the good features of the campaign is the creation of a "national hero" (role model) of human rights named *Erkhuulei* by the youths. *Erkhuulei* is a national super-hero who has super powers to develop each child's and each adult's ability to understand, respect and defend human rights and freedoms of oneself and others. This non-gender-specific perpetual child with super abilities was created to popularize the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote human rights education of children.



The name *Erkhuulei* comes from the Mongolian word  $\text{ЭРХ}$  (*erkh* is the Mongolian word for right) and  $\text{ЭРХ ЧӨЛІӨӨ}$  (*erkh chuluu* is the Mongolian word for freedom).

*Erkhuulei's* character was born at the first Training of Trainers (TOT) of the "Hands Up 4 Your Rights!" campaign. Participants of the

campaign developed a simple human rights lesson plan, content and methodology for primary and secondary school students. Sixty young people were trained to be “*Erkhuulei* trainers” and they conducted *Erkhuulei*’s lessons at twenty-nine secondary schools of Ulaanbaatar, reaching out to over one thousand students in 2008. In March 2009, two *Erkhuulei* trainers (two law school students) traveled to Dundgovi and Umnugovi *aimags* and taught about human rights to over one thousand secondary school students. Again, “Hands Up 4 Your Rights!” campaign participants created a comic book to introduce *Erkhuulei* to their peers and friends. The talent and dedication of a young artist (Ts. Delgerjargal) helped breathe life into *Erkhuulei*. The comic books were widely distributed during *Erkhuulei*’s human rights lessons at various schools in Ulaanbaatar and Dundgovi and Umnugovi *aimags* as well as through informal networks.

“Hands Up 4 Your Rights!” TOT (one and half to two days) and peer training (one day) workshops are important components of the campaign. The training programs include sections on human rights, civics, gender equality and the nature of patriarchy, and creative campaigning for social change. All sections are highly interactive and include roleplay and group work and incorporate collective analyses. In 2008, the campaign trained over a hundred young people and, under the support from the Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID), held four TOT workshops and twelve peer training workshops in 2009. Fun activities such as drawing and creating one’s own campaign T-shirt are included in these workshops. As they participate in the development of the training content and methodology, the youth develop skills on research, analysis, teamwork, facilitation, coordination, and training as well as skills on listening, speaking, and problem-solving. In addition, they learn to hold press-conferences, plan public events, and street actions to focus public and media attention

on specific human rights and gender equality issues.

### Challenges

A number of factors have contributed to the ongoing problems of human rights education in Mongolian educational settings. These difficulties can be categorized into different areas:

#### *a. Lack of teaching practices and supportive teachers’ attitude*

The main findings of evaluations and studies on the Mongolian educational quality and achievements show that schools at present pay more attention to the improvement of their physical environment and upgrading of the qualifications of their teachers and staff. However, in reality, some negative phenomenons are still observed such as discrimination against children based on their academic performance, failure to provide equal access to each and every child, and lack of human rights-friendly or supportive atmosphere inside classrooms and schools. The evaluation of human rights education in secondary schools (2006, NHRCM) identified the following weaknesses:

- Significant difference in teaching human rights as a compulsory and an optional course
- Failure of training managers to maintain regular supervision over the education standards and plans
- No significant professional support to teachers in terms of content and methodology on human rights education
- Lack of teachers and high turn over of teachers who are specialized in social sciences and citizenship.

It is important to understand the importance of teaching human rights as an independent subject and to integrate it into existing school curriculums. But teaching

human rights and citizenship at the primary and secondary levels is still teacher-centered and characterized by passive and rote learning. There are also lack of experienced teachers and managers who are able to use rights-based approach to education in terms of teaching methodology and pedagogy. These studies reported that the main causes of the negative approaches are poor human rights education practices and lack of teaching skills to promote mutual understanding, respectful and safe environment inside their classrooms.

*b. Lack of teaching materials and supportive school environment.*

Many Mongolian schools do not have “learning-friendly” environments. “Learning-friendly” environments are often misunderstood to refer only to the physical environment.<sup>26</sup> Students still experience bullying, and corporal punishment from their teachers.<sup>27</sup> An enabling learning environment can be achieved by building self-awareness, developing artistic capacities and creative thinking, strengthening ethics, and instilling social and aesthetic values. Such development should be provided to all children, including those with disabilities and from minority groups.

Due to the lack of resources, the physical environment of schools cannot meet the rights of children to study in healthy and safe environment, and to access adequate training materials and teachers. Curriculums and teaching methods are often not relevant to the life-skill and basic issues challenging the students. Sometimes, the human rights education curriculum itself does not conform to the realities and needs of different communities. Most of the teaching materials are translated from other languages and cultures. Therefore, the lack of books and instructional materials on human rights and civic education written in Mongolian language and context provides difficulty for teachers.

*c. Lack of coordination between stakeholders and systematic support from government.*

One of the major challenges is the lack of collaboration and networking of relevant stakeholders in the human rights education field. For example, in accordance with Article 1.1.26 of the NHRAP, the Sub-Programme on Human Rights Education aims to create a national mechanism to support human rights education and promotion and training of trainers in all sectors. Unfortunately, this ambiguous goal has not been implemented up to date. In this context, partnership and collaboration are also still lacking between the relevant stakeholders.

Mongolia still has no stand-alone human rights education policy or conceptual framework. The failure to develop the Sub-Programme on Human Rights Education shows that there is a strong need to create a national human rights education and training system and its monitoring and evaluation mechanism. And for the rest, there is a lack of well-thought, planned policy or systematic interventions, which will promote social relationships, mutual understanding and high respect between teachers-students-parents-public, and make schools supportive and child-friendly spaces for children’s learning, development and participation.

*d. The lack of opportunity to network between schools and educational partners*

Another major problem related to the current educational structure is the need to develop more horizontal and multidirectional channels of communication across the country. At present, there is no system of direct communication between the schools (especially in rural areas) and other educational partners. It is likely that many of NGOs do not reach into rural areas and could not create networks in *aimag* or *soum* (rural district) levels. Therefore, large-scale human rights education campaigns in rural areas are not yet possible.

## Evaluation and Review of Human Rights Education

Currently, there is no specific research or study that look into the incorporation of human-rights based approaches into the Mongolian educational system or even into the human rights environment in schools. An international evaluation of the best practices in rights-based education<sup>28</sup> provides the needed analysis of the situation in Mongolia. This external evaluation covered Mongolia's UNICEF country program and the implementation of the Government Education Master Plan. It has the following specific objectives:

1. Review the existing 'Children's Rights Education Syllabus' for fourth-year pre-service education students, developed by staff at the Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE) and to make recommendations on how the course could become more complex, comprehensive and accurate.
2. Conduct training of the members of the MSUE curriculum development team on international principles of child rights education in primary and secondary schools.
3. Develop a report and recommendations about rights-based education and education about and for human rights programs; and, that this advice would cover curriculum content, education resources and implementation.

Based on the review of the policy and curriculum documents, the external evaluation recommended that education for and about human rights should be a priority for all parts of the Mongolian Education System (Pre-school, Primary and Secondary, Non-formal and adult, TVET, and Higher Education). Following are the specific recommendations offered:<sup>29</sup>

1. Establish a Project Reference Group (for the CFS project) that includes representative stakeholders interested

in progressing and coordinating education about and for human rights.

2. Develop, approve and publish a clear, precise vision statement for rights-based education and education about and for human rights. This vision statement should describe the essential elements of the initiative.
3. Because of the need to meet national goals, guarantee teaching and learning about rights and responsibilities for at least one quarter of the course at all levels, and about priorities and obligations relating to human rights in the Civics and Citizenship course within the Mongolian school curriculum.
4. Make an audit or curriculum mapping of the Civics and Citizenship course during the Third Education Development Project period in order to identify the extent (hours by grade) and focuses of the human rights component (knowledge, skills, attitudes).
5. Make an audit or curriculum mapping of education about and for human rights across learning areas and stages of schooling during the Third Education Development Project period. This audit should identify the core knowledge, skills, values and participatory aspects of education about and for human rights.
6. Undertake an audit of the Non-Formal and Adult Education programs to identify training about lifeskills related to human rights. If there is insufficient training related to the development of these skills, these should be developed.
7. Develop with input from key stakeholders in Mongolia a detailed cross-curriculum 'Statement' about education about and for human rights, and have it published and distributed.
8. Make a range of stakeholders accept the responsibility of adapting, developing and providing educational resources

- about and for human rights for children and young people.
9. MECS should advise stakeholders of those areas and topics within the curriculum relating to human rights that require support through the development of educational resources.
  10. Identify and agree through consensus the key human rights and child rights issues. Develop educational resources that sensitively and appropriately explore these issues for children and young people in Mongolian schools. Feature in these resources the connections between local, national and international aspects of these issues.
  11. House at MECS or at the NHRCM and make available to resource developers as models a repository of internationally-developed, exemplary educational resources about and for human rights.
  12. Identify, coordinate and promote existing and planned training by stakeholders of education about and for human rights or child rights. Develop new professional learning to support education about and for human rights both within the formal curriculum and also with a cross-curriculum emphasis.
  13. Revise the current 'Children's Rights Education Syllabus' developed by the MSUE and make it a model that can be used at other universities, colleges and teacher-training institutions.
  14. Establish a website with sections for teachers and students, including age-appropriate information and advice about and for human rights. This website may be part of an existing website. The website must be easily discoverable by Mongolian students and teachers.
  15. Such website should provide opportunities for educators to connect with their peers across Mongolia, and to exchange ideas and practices that best support education about and for human rights/child rights.

16. MECS should investigate the potential of online student global projects to connect Mongolian students with their peers in other countries.

## Conclusion

The current emphasis in international educational policies and cooperation on institutionalization of human rights education in the school system of Mongolia would have strategic significance in the national development policy. Mongolia has many initiatives in the formal and non-formal education system that can be seen as good examples of human rights education.

National research findings on human rights and democracy clearly indicate that human rights education would be a valuable component of general education for the public. All these findings indicate the need for more effective and integrated human rights education programs. To solve the above-mentioned problems, the Mongolian education system needs to develop complex educational programs on human rights education. Therefore, it is recommended that a comprehensive Conceptual Framework be developed that will provide a theoretical and practical framework for the teaching of human rights at Mongolian schools. This conceptual framework would provide an educational rationale, the aims of the innovation, recommended learning emphases or themes; and advice about appropriate teaching and learning, curriculum resources, professional learning, how to engage parents and the community, and pre-service education.

In order to improve the quality of human rights education in secondary schools, it is important to re-train the teachers, improve the training facilities, upgrade training management and create the human rights environment in schools. Assistance of the UN and other international donor organizations is highly needed for the integration of human rights education into

the Mongolian formal education system considering the lack of resources faced by the country.

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Recommendations For Primary And  
Secondary School Teacher Training For  
Human Rights Education  
[www.hrusa.org/workshops/  
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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The State Great Hural (Parliament of Mongolia). *The State Education Policy* Ulaanbaatar, 1995.
- <sup>2</sup> *Master Plan for Education (2006-2011)* was endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences in 2006.
- <sup>3</sup> *The National Development Strategy based on the Millennium Development Goals (2007)* was endorsed by the Parliament of Mongolia in 2007.
- <sup>4</sup> Annex to Resolution number 41, 2003 of the State Great Hural.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, paragraph 11.
- <sup>6</sup> Article 1, NHRAP.
- <sup>7</sup> Articles 1 and 2, NHRAP.
- <sup>8</sup> *National Programme of Action for Development and Protection of Children*, (2002) was endorsed by the Parliament of Mongolia in 2002.
- <sup>9</sup> *Masterplan to Develop Education of Mongolia*, (2006) was endorsed by Minister of Education, Culture and Science.
- <sup>10</sup> *Master Plan of Education in Mongolia - 2006-2015*, pages xx-xxiii.
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- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Policy Framework for Promotion of Child Friendly Schools (2004)* was approved by the Minister of Education, Culture and Sciences.
- <sup>14</sup> Decree 190 of the Education Minister, May 2004.
- <sup>15</sup> Amgaabazar, Gerelmaa. 2005. *World Bank Draft Policy Brief on the Mongolian Drop Out Rate* (unpublished)
- <sup>16</sup> *Statistics Bulletin of the Education Sector*, 2009-2010 Academic year. Ulaanbaatar, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2010.
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- <sup>18</sup> MECS & UNICEF, *Research report on violence against children at schools and kindergartens*, Mongolia, 2007.
- <sup>19</sup> MECS & UNICEF, *Study on school dormitories*, Mongolia, 2007.
- <sup>20</sup> Robert Baker, *Report on Rights-based Education and Education About and For Human Rights in Mongolia* (unpublished), page 16.
- <sup>21</sup> This table is taken from *National Education Standard of History and Social Studies: Primary and Secondary Education, 2005* - Decree #164 of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, 20 May 2005.
- <sup>22</sup> Flowers. N. & Shiman. D., page 162.
- <sup>23</sup> Human Rights Education in Formal Education, Speech by Ms. Khishigsaikhan B., Director of the NHRM, Presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Forum of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, August, 2005, Ulaanbaatar Mongolia.
- <sup>24</sup> The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia Act, Chapter 4, Article 13.
- <sup>25</sup> Felisa Tibbits distinguishes between "school-based approach to human rights education" and "human rights-based approach to schooling". See her article "School-based approach to Human Rights Education" in *Journal of Article 26*, October, 2005 Amnesty International U.S.A., page 2.
- <sup>26</sup> The amendments to the Education Law of 2006 stipulate that a "learning environment" refers not only to the physical environment but also to teaching and learning interactions and processes.
- <sup>27</sup> There is much literature indicating the lack of enabling, child friendly environments in Mongolia, such as Mongolian Education Alliance, *The Mongolian Drop Out Study* (Ulaanbaatar, 2005); Save the Children UK, *Children on the Move: Rural-urban Migration and Access to Education, Children's Views on Their Experiences in Kindergartens, Schools and Child Care Institutions* (Ulaanbaatar, 2005).
- <sup>28</sup> The UNICEF Office of Mongolia requested an international consultant (Mr. Robert Baker of CC International, Australia) in 2007 to advise the MECS and MSUE about international best practices in rights-based education, particularly related to the rights of the child.
- <sup>29</sup> These recommendations are based on the set of recommendations included in the report of Robert Baker, op. cit., pages 8-10.