South Asia Training Workshop on Human Rights Education in Schools

HURIGHTS OSAKA held the South Asia Training Workshop on Human Rights Education in Schools in Bangkok on 23-26 June 2000, as a follow-up activity agreed upon at the South Asian Workshop, also organized by HURIGHTS OSAKA, in 1998.

The workshop had the following objectives:
- Help participants better understand the South Asian human rights situation and human rights education experiences.
- Discuss concepts and issues related to human rights in light of international developments.
- Develop a shared understanding of developing curriculum for human rights education.
- Develop plans for the creation of national and regional networks for human rights education in schools.

Curriculum developers, teachers, teacher trainers, and education ministry officials from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka attended the workshop. This mix of participants is deemed important to keep discussions away from the technical aspects of curriculum development and to focus instead on the substance of the curriculum.

The workshop was divided into five sessions spread over three-and-a-half days. The first session reviewed the situation of both human rights and human rights education in schools. The second discussed the challenges in institutionalizing human rights education in schools. The third discussed how to develop a human rights curriculum. The fourth developed a sample curriculum.

During the plenary sessions, participants and resource persons raised a number of issues needing further clarification:

- concepts of human rights and human rights education;
- problems of incorporating human rights in the formal school curriculum; and
- translating the curriculum for the classroom setting.

Three small group discussion sessions covered
- institutionalization of human rights education in school programs,
- guidelines for developing human rights curriculums, and
- developing sample curriculum.

The workshop's main agenda was the institutionalization of human rights education in schools as the only way by which human rights can be understood by students. Temporary or ad hoc activities have less impact in the long run. Human rights curriculum development is thus an important area to work on.

Defining the School Curriculum

The curriculum is the sum total of the students' learning experience in the school. It is not limited to the formal curriculum but extends to the so-called hidden curriculum. The behavior, attitude, and language of the teachers and school administrators, and the whole school environment form the unwritten or hidden curriculum from which the students learn as much as, if not more than, from the formal

curriculum. If human rights education, for example, deals with the idea of nondiscrimination, the teachers and school administrators should treat every student equally regardless of personal background or circumstances.

The understanding of human rights cannot be limited to a specific area of study or level of education. It must be a continuing process that covers the whole period of school education and not just a few years.

The two approaches in human rights education in schools—integration and separation—may be applied sequentially. The primary-level curriculum may adopt integration while the secondary level may have specific subjects on human rights. Primary-level students may have to learn values related to human rights rather than human rights concepts, which may be taught at the secondary level.

One way of integrating human rights into the curriculum is to teach subjects where human rights can be discussed, as shown by the experience of People's Watch Tamil Nadu.

There is a need for a pragmatic approach to institutionalizing human rights education.

Total education reform that can incorporate human rights education in the curriculum is not possible, at least in the short term. In the meantime, existing spaces in the current curriculum can be used for human rights education. Related curricular subjects can cover human rights without curriculum change. Extracurricular subjects can also be used as they have been by some groups in the region.

The role of culture was linked to the need to examine local cultures in promoting human rights. National or local programs complemented various intergovernmental, nongovernmental organization (NGO), and UN specialized-agency activities.

Institutionalizing Human Rights Education

The discussion on factors that support or inhibit the institutionalization of human rights education programs in schools is divided into two parts. The first deals with factors seen from the perspective of each country. The second deals with factors related to four themes—policy, structure, culture, and networking.

Country	Inhibiting factors	Supporting factors	Feasible measures
Bangladesh	• Structural problems (slow and lengthy bureaucratic process) • Role of religious leaders; resistance by fundamentalists • Social backwardness (patriarchal family system) • Institutional incapability or unwillingness • Economic restraints, natural disasters	• Governmental policy • People's motivation in general • Role of intellectuals • Progressive forces of society	• Creating pressure on the bureaucracy through media and other means • Balancing the religious leaders through counterpropaganda • Removing backwardness through literacy programs • Creating awareness through motivational activities • Solving economic problems
India	• National policy on education • State policy on education • Educational system • Curriculum development involving policymakers, curriculum planners, textbook developers • Prevailing values	• Support from various institutions — National Human Rights Commission, University Grants Commission, National Council on Educational Research and Training, National Council on Teacher Education, National	• Creating linkages between the Ministry of Human Resource Development and other national and State-level organizations and institutions • Sensitizing policymakers by advocacy *(Continued on next page)*

Country	Inhibiting factors	Supporting factors	Feasible measures
	• Supplementary resource materials • Attitude of teachers, parents, and school administrators	Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, State Council on Educational Research and Training, District Institutes of Educational Training • Involvement of NGOs	• Empowering State human rights commission • Campaigning for respect for the mandate of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights • Introducing human rights education in aided and private schools • Implementing awareness programs at the grass-roots level—village education committee, block resource center, cluster resource center, *panchayat*
Nepal	• Lack of resources • Culture • Attitude of political parties • School headmasters' negative attitudes	• Law and government • Constitution • Democracy • Human rights commission • Law/school management committee	• Providing funds and training teachers for human rights education • Implementing awareness programs • Encouraging human rights organizations • Giving control over human rights education to the District Education Office

Pakistan	• Prevailing State system
	• Cultural, traditional, and religious factors
	• Ineffective educational system
	• Attitude of parents and teachers
	• Attitude of the community at large
		• Necessity of change in middle/lower-middle classes
		• Urge for quality of life
		• International pressure through Western organizations and NGOs
		• Folk sensibility parallel to State ideology
			• Short term
			  • Preparation of materials on attitudes in support of human rights education
			• Long term
			  • Education reform
			  • Direct contact with people through video/print materials
			  • Education for administrators of the education system (de-indoctrination)

Sri Lanka	• Insufficient support from school authorities • Inadequate understanding of human rights by school staff • Examination-oriented school environment • Gap between implemented curriculum and attended curriculum	• Enthusiasm of devoted teachers • Willingness of staff members to learn and share human rights knowledge • Willingness of parents to have human rights program in school • Readiness of teachers to be flexible	• Convincing the authorities of the need for school policy on human rights education • Conducting seminars (at staff meetings, for example) • Introducing classroom-based assessment • Revising and evaluating the curriculum

Theme	Inhibiting factors	Supporting factors	Feasible measures
Culture	• Discrimination against girls and women • Feudalism • Patriarchy (with many manifestations such as bias in favor of boys) • Caste system • Religious fundamentalism	• Folklore, rich culture, cultural pluralism • Strong sense of community • Religious ethics, spirituality • Importance of education • Mass media • Positive aspects of globalization (facilitation of exchange of information)	• Strengthening awareness of legal/constitutional/human rights • Recruiting support from pressure groups • Highlighting positive essence of religions and their similarities with each other • Using mass media to spread human rights concepts
Structure	• Hierarchical and bureaucratic system • Inaccessibility of resources, education, political power • Language barrier • Teaching methods, school system • Brain drain	• Prevalence of democracy • Constitutionalism • Spirit of freedom • Freedom of the press, speech • Strength of the educated middle class	• Strengthening democratic values (constitution) • Using media, professionalization • Getting support from the middle class • Preventing brain drain • Implementing grass-roots-level awareness and involvement programs
Policy	• Centralization • Decentralization without coordination • Social and economic backwardness • Political interference in policymaking • Lack of adequate networking	• Decentralization • Availability of expertise at national and State levels • Availability of capacity through technology	• Using a participatory approach • Involving all interest groups
Networking	• Lack of adequate networking • One-way networking	• Availability of capacity through technology • Existence of structure; willingness to work	• Networking within and outside the education system • Two-way coordination

The feasible measures suggested in these reports reflect a strong desire for change in the education system and corresponded to the views expressed in previous HURIGHTS OSAKA workshops.

Developing Curriculum

The two group reports have similarities as well as differences. The most obvious difference is in the subject modules. While Group 1 proposes specific rights to be discussed, Group 2 suggests "human rights" values. To reconcile the two suggestions, Group 2's approach was used. Human rights values can be learned at the primary or elementary level while specific human rights issues can be learned at the secondary level. It is difficult to put an exact year coverage for primary/elementary and secondary levels due to the differences in the school systems of South Asian countries. For purposes of the last group's work, however, it

Group	Group 1	Group 2
Perspectives	• Understanding human life • Living life fully	
Approach		• Integrating on the basis of class/grade/learning level
Objectives	• Protecting and promoting human rights culture	• Developing skill, knowledge, attitude awareness

Subject modules	• Child rights, women's rights, minority rights, right to nondiscrimination, etc.	• Human rights values:
		  • Nondiscrimination
		  • Human dignity
		  • Respect for others without discrimination
		  • Tolerance
		  • Patience
		  • Justice
		  • Sharing
		  • Empathy
		  • Questioning
		  • Dialogue
		  • Communication
		  • Freedom of speech and expression
		  • Freedom of religious belief
		  • Respect for life
		  • Respect for other religions
		  • Cooperation
		  • Preservation of culture
		  • Spiritualism
		  • Protection of environment
		  • Respect for others
		  • Honesty
		  • Openness
		  • Physical integrity
		  • Conservation of natural resources
		  • Rational thinking
		  • Curiosity
		  • Solidarity
		  • Self-esteem

Pedagogy	• Participatory method • Classroom exercise • Home exercise, writing project, discussion, chart making, picture posting, news cutting, and card demonstration	• Activity based • Joyful learning
Type of materials		• Stories • Songs • Street plays, drama • Audio/video program • Materials for teachers, parents, community leaders, school administrators, etc.
Other needs		• Detailed analysis of existing textbooks • Sensitization of teachers, school heads, government administrators, all stakeholders

Impact assessment	• Assessment of impact on
	  • teachers, students, guardians, family, and school authorities
	  • campus
	  by preparing a checklist of impact indicators	

was agreed that the elementary level would cover 5- or 6-year-old to 14-year-old students, while the secondary level would cover those 15 to 16 years old.

Before participants were divided into two groups for the exercise on curriculum development, they agreed on the following:

- The objectives of the curriculum on human rights are the following:
  - Promote knowledge and understanding about human rights.
  - Foster positive attitudes.
  - Develop skills for making human rights practice a way of life.
- The curriculum focuses on the following themes:
  - equality;
  - freedom (of choice, speech);
  - dignity;
  - solidarity;
  - right to life;
  - dialogue;
  - integrity (physical, cultural, moral);
  - honesty; and
  - justice.

Time constraints, however, limited the development of sample curriculum to the themes on equality and cooperation. Below are the results of the group work.

Group 2 – Elementary Level

The members of this group decided to list down the learning competencies corresponding to each of the human rights values listed during the plenary session.

Group 1—Secondary Level

Objective	Concepts	Contents	Activities

Understand the meaning of human equality	• Equality before the law
	• Common humanity
		• Equality before the law
		  • Brief history of the law
		    • Law of the jungle
		    • Law in society
		  • Order in society
		    • Weak vs. strong
		    • Equal relationships
		  • Antidiscrimination law
		  • Commonalities of laws
		
		• Common humanity
		  • Common heritage
		    • Evolution
		    • Diversity
		    • Capacity for self-actualization (scientific evidence, education)
		  • Socioeconomic inequality
		  • Discrimination based on gender, caste, class, etc.
			• Case studies
			  • Simulation
			  • Inference
			  • Remedies
			
			• Projects
			  • Visit to jails, police stations, etc.
			  • Interview of members of police, activists, victims, ex-convicts

Core values	Competencies
1. Equality	• Cooperation • Mutual sharing • Respecting • Human relations
2. Dignity	• Self-esteem • Self-respect • Empathy • Understanding • Tolerance
3. Freedom	• Problem solving • Questioning • Expression (creative) • Self-confidence • Rational thinking • Listening • Decision making

Core values	Competencies
4. Solidarity/unity	• Unity • Participation • Adaptability • Acceptability • Respect for others • Understanding • Dialogue • Flexibility
5. Justice	• Equity • Nondiscrimination • Rationalization • Kindness
6. Truth	• Courage • Unwillingness to compromise

The group also suggested adopting the integration approach for the elementary level. Subjects such as language, environmental studies, and mathematics can be infused with human rights values. Activities such as role play, drama, debates, exhibition, use of charts, posters, drawings and sketches, and cartoons are recommended.

In order to provide a specific sample curriculum, the following was presented:

Core Value—Cooperation

Content	Material	Indicators for assessment	Method of assessment

• Conducting activities in small groups:
  • choosing the activity collectively;
  • doing the activity collectively;
  • emphasizing the human rights core value through discussion after the activity.
	• Students decide on materials with teacher's assistance	• Process indicators:
		  • expressing of ideas of individual students;
		  • collective decision;
		  • active participation;
		  • creation of an attractive item with a good finish.
		
		• Impact indicator:
		  • expressing ideas about collective effort.
			• Observation
			• Questioning and listening

• Composing an improvised musical individually and singing a song collectively:
  • deciding on a particular song collectively;
  • deciding on necessary instruments collectively;
	• Students decide on material with teacher's assistance (depending on type of instrument).	• Process indicators same as above, with one additional indicator:
		  • attractive, harmonious singing.
		
		• Impact indicator same as above
			• Same as above
			
			(Continued on next page)

Content	Material	Indicators for assessment	Method of assessment
• making instruments individually; • playing instruments and singing collectively; • emphasizing core value through discussion after the song.			

• Choosing a game for winning collectively:
  • preparing playing area by group;
  • playing the game;
  • emphasizing core value through discussion after game.
	• Students decide on materials depending on the game (with teacher's assistance).	• Process indicators:
		  • playing as a team;
		  • winning/losing collectively with tolerance (facial expressions);
		  • friendly dismissal after game is over.
		
		• Impact indicator same as above
			• Same as above

Several comments were raised on the reports. One referred to the use of the phrase "law of the jungle," which seemed to discriminate against indigenous systems. It was pointed out that the supposed civilized European laws permitted the colonization of peoples in various parts of the globe, which subsequently caused death to many and destruction not only of property but of social systems. Another referred to the need to train teachers to be able to make use of a human rights curriculum, emphasizing that teacher training alone would not guarantee the actual use of the curriculum. Training sessions may be successful but not the employment of the ideas learned. In other words, there are other factors to consider in introducing and effectively using human rights curriculum.

The workshop ended with statements of support for networking among the participants, some of whom were willing to undertake joint projects for the South Asian region through their respective institutional programs.