

A Survey on Human Rights Awareness in Cambodia

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The Cambodian Association for Human Rights and Development (ADHOC) conducted a survey in August 1999 to assess human rights awareness of a selected sample of people in order to draw lessons for the country's ongoing human rights education and awareness programs. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the survey will undoubtedly enhance and strengthen human rights education programs in the country.

Objectives

A carefully conducted survey of this kind can easily and empirically assess several important areas in relation to human rights education, including

- awareness,
- knowledge,
- values/attitudes, and
- behavior.

These areas are related to various objectives of human rights education. The survey, however, assessed mainly the first objective of human rights education: raising the level of human rights awareness.

What is human rights awareness? It is people's perception that they have rights and that they have them because they are human beings irrespective of any social or other distinction. It also means the peoples' ability to easily distinguish various aspects of human rights—to life, security, religion, expression, education, etc.—and that they understand the importance of these aspects in relation to human survival and dignity. The survey questions were formulated in order to ascertain the above dimensions of basic human rights awareness,

and the results proved promising, judging from the intended objectives.

Positive Results

The survey revealed, among other matters, that a critical mass of the Cambodian people has moved beyond a basic awareness and understanding of human rights. Given 43 quantifiable questions related to several fields of human rights awareness and understanding, 80% of the sample answered correctly.

Some interpret the results to mean that ordinary Cambodians have an inherent understanding of basic human rights—the right to life, basic economic needs, human freedom, and even certain aspects of equality. However, the basic dilemma of human rights education in Cambodia and elsewhere is not the lack of natural understanding but its application in practical terms.

How do people perceive obstacles to their natural and inherent rights? What kind of knowledge and education do they require to overcome them? What type of social action is necessary to reform the structures—political and social—that impinge on and obstruct the realization of human rights? These are some

problems that need to be addressed by human rights education programs.

The survey was the first of its kind in Cambodia. Its purpose was mainly to ascertain whether or not people were equipped with “a basic threshold of human rights understanding.” While it appears that this awareness already exists, the answers also reveal that people are becoming able to express their awareness in universally accepted human rights terms, thanks to the human rights education programs conducted by national and international organizations.

The results speak positively of the programs conducted by NGOs, including ADHOC, since the UN intervention in 1993 and even before. The programs have undoubtedly sharpened the country’s human rights awareness and understanding.

The survey also reveals the lacunae in human rights understanding and the problems that need to be addressed by education programs. While the average rate of understanding was as high as 80% for all categories, it was low at the grass-roots level, standing at 71%, with a deviation of 9%—a fact that human rights educators should note. As our analysis also reveals, awareness of women’s and children’s rights, nondiscrimination, multiculturalism, and economic and social rights is particularly low.

Sample

During this study, 46 trained interviewers supervised by five group leaders, one for each region, surveyed a random sample of 1,418 persons. The interviewers, mainly selected from among sociology undergraduates of Phnom Penh University, were trained in July 1999, and reached 98 communes and several other urban towns and educational institutions in August 1999.

The sample was selected using the Software Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). In the sample, the country was divided into five re-

gions. Districts were selected from different regions depending on the population size. From these districts, a number of communes and then villages were randomly identified. From selected villages, the final sample was selected, composed of two policemen, two soldiers, two local authorities, one monk, and four grass-roots people. In urban towns and the central provinces, professors, teachers, and students were also selected.

Of the final sample, 77% were male, 23% female. Most were from poor (67%) and lower middle-class (29%) groups. (See Table 1 for the occupational breakdown of the sample.)

TABLE 1. Composition of the Sample

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Grass-roots people	372	26.2
Local authorities	194	13.7
Local police	186	13.1
Soldiers	186	13.1
Monks	103	7.3
Teachers/Professionals	189	13.3
Students	188	13.3
TOTAL	1,418	100.0

Background to the Study

For several decades, Cambodia was notorious for gross human rights violations. Only since the 1993 UN intervention that ended the civil war and instituted democratic structures has the situation improved.

A former French colony, along with Vietnam and Laos, Cambodia became independent in 1953 after an arduous nationalist struggle. Since then, nationalism has been the major political ideological strand in the country. Unlike some other colonial countries, Cambodia was not left with stable democratic structures at the time of independence. French rule was indirect, retaining the monarchy and without developing democratic institutions. As a very poor peasant economy, Cambodia inherited fierce social conflicts. As a result, commu-

nism, along with nationalism, was an attractive ideology to the poor.

Need for Liberalism

What has been lacking in Cambodia until recently is the liberal influence. Modern liberalism, with its emphasis on social and economic issues, is important to sustain a value system that includes the sanctity of human rights. Whatever liberal values existed by independence were soon overwhelmed by other ideologies. Only now are there concerted efforts to resurrect liberal values and to sustain them with Buddhist and other cultural traditions.

Cambodia was also a victim of the Indo-chinese war, which began in 1960, and suffered enormous loss of life, economic destruction, and displacement of its population. Internal conflict, civil war, and human misery followed. The saddest period of Cambodia's history was undoubtedly the Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot, from 1975 to 1979, which was obsessed with creating "puritan communism," and to that end sacrificed all norms of civilization and human rights.

Around 2 million people died during that period due to direct killing and starvation. It is a wrong impression that all went without any resistance from the people. Of course there was helplessness and desperation and no international help, but people dissented and resisted the regime as far as was humanly possible. Most of the inmates at the Toul Sleng prison (now a museum) were such people.

Initial Changes

The situation changed slightly after the Vietnamese invasion and the installation of a new regime in 1979-1980. However, the people were discontented, as the regime appeared to be a "colonial" one. National independence is as sacred to Cambodians as life itself. The Khmer Rouge as well as other opposition

groups thus retained a considerable mass support base. The result was continuous civil war.

During this period, the brutality eased but violations continued. The regime did not hold elections and was therefore not accountable to the people. Government accountability is a major condition for the maintenance of human rights. The governmental structures supported the "dictatorship of the ruling party." Civil and political rights were grossly disregarded and violated. A steady stream of refugees left the country. However, the regime did stabilize socioeconomic conditions.

The first turning point was after Vietnam decided to withdraw its troops as a response to the changing international relations between the East and the West. The regime had to end the civil war if it was to be stable. Most crucial, however, was the international intervention both before and after the Paris Peace Accord in 1991. Cambodia was opened up not only to the UN but also to various international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Changes After the UN Intervention

The next turning point was the 1993 UN-supervised democratic elections. The civil war continued due to Khmer Rouge resistance. However, the establishment of an elected government and the adoption of a new constitution were the main contributions of the peace process. The UN intervention in itself was educational. Cambodia became signatory to almost all important international conventions on human rights.

The UN intervention was particularly successful in resettling thousands of Cambodian returning refugees, most of whom had been exposed to the outside world and human rights norms. They contributed greatly to building a new democratic society.

The survey was conducted at a time when the country's sociopolitical development was becoming increasingly favorable to human

rights activities and development. The most important juncture was the installation of a constitutional system with fundamental rights after the 1993 elections. A major part of this system is the free, multiparty system. The country has adopted the free market and open economy, which have benefited not only the country's development but also its interaction with the rest of the world. Unlike in the past, there is an emerging differentiation between the State and civil society. The spread of voluntary organizations, the mass media, and social-welfare activism are all indications of this emergence of civil society.

Civil Society and Human Rights

The most important element in a vibrant civil society undoubtedly is the people's understanding of their natural and inherent rights. While it is inherent in many ways, it is through human rights education and activities that people will be able to better articulate and pursue their rights. This has been an important concern of ADHOC and the other organizations that initiated and supported the survey. The survey, therefore, tried to gauge and analyze not only the way people perceive their rights but also the obstacles and difficulties that they encounter in realizing and protecting them.

The survey results are analyzed under different themes:

- awareness of human rights principles;
- rights necessary for democratic governance;
- rights of women and children; and
- awareness of human rights protection.

Awareness of Human Rights Principles

The survey asked 13 questions to ascertain general awareness of basic human rights principles. The questions touched on topics ranging from the right to life and the right to security to the freedom of religion and discrimina-

tion. The following comments are given on the basis of the tabulated data. However, the comments are not merely given as part of the report on survey results but as bases of future human rights education programs.

Right to life

This issue was important given the number of lives lost during the political turmoil. Sometimes ordinary people lost their sense of the sanctity of life as killing became almost "normal." There are still incidents of violence and killing. However, the respondents' answers were encouraging.

92% reaffirmed that life is of paramount importance. They not only maintained that "the law must protect everyone's life" but also that "mutual killings," whether due to "political struggles or private conflicts,... must be effectively prohibited."

However, there was a challenge to the human rights educators. Among the grass-roots respondents, 15% either maintained that "life on this earth is impermanent" and "therefore, there is nothing much one can do about killing" or justified killing as "justice," not only for killing but also for theft. Among the soldiers, 10% still justified killing as a way of crime control. Almost 100% of the most educated considered life to be an absolute right.

The survey clearly shows that the right to life should be central to human rights education.

Right to security

A major requirement of the right to life is personal security. The survey attempted to assess how much people are aware of the question of security. There is widespread insecurity in society when the rule of law does not prevail and crime is not properly controlled or punished. One legacy of the weak rule of law in Cambodia is exactly that: the widespread lack of personal security.

The purpose of the survey was to judge whether or not people consider the enforcement of personal security as an obligation of the State.

The results reveal that 80% of the respondents believe that the “State must enforce the law to prohibit and stop looting, robbery, and abduction for ransom.” However, 20% thought “looting, robbery, and abduction for ransom exist in every society and therefore the State cannot be blamed for these incidents.”

Significantly, a high percentage of negative replies came from soldiers (25%) and local authorities (22%). The monks and the educated insisted that the State should be responsible for maintaining law and order and curtailing crime, which impinges on personal security. The responses of the police (80%) could be considered favorable to ensuring personal security. However, whether they have the complete determination or the institutional capacity to do so was beyond the scope of the survey to judge. It is clear that the perception of personal security needs to be enhanced as a part of human rights education. Personal security is a concern not only of the middle class, but also of the poor. It is important to note that awareness dropped from 92% to 80% when the survey moved from the question on the right to life to the question on the right to security.

Right to food

For some reason, the respondents did not widely or properly understand the right to food, which is problematic given Cambodia’s poverty. Only 75% thought that every human being has a right to have “sufficient food to eat and clean water to drink.” The rest thought it is up to the people to “grow or obtain their own food.” Strangely, this misconception was high among the grass-roots respondents (32%). It was the educated (85%) and the monks (78%) who upheld the right to food.

Economic rights

The purpose of the relevant question, although not formulated correctly, was to ascertain whether or not the respondents knew the purpose of economic rights: 85% understood it to mean “all citizens have the right to *make their own* living based on their qualifications, skills, and experience.” However, 15% thought it meant “*making money* by all means for expenses or otherwise.”

There is a major difference between the right to “make money” and the right to “make a living.” In future human rights education programs, this difference needs to be further pursued and emphasized. While the educated gave a higher percentage of correct responses (93%), there was considerable confusion among the grass-roots respondents (26%). Several aspects of economic rights are particularly relevant at the grass-roots level. These need to be incorporated into future educational programs.

Right to education

Given three propositions concerning the right to education, only 84% of the respondents agreed that “every child and adult should be able to obtain basic education (primary) free of charge.”

The highest correct response came from teachers/professors (96%). The responses from students (88%), the police (88%), soldiers (86%), and monks (85%) were fairly close compared to grass-roots respondents (76%). Future human rights educators should focus on the right to education as a key area.

Right to health

91% of the respondents upheld the right to health care, opining that “every citizen should have adequate health care.” Only 9% thought that even the poor should pay for health and medical services.

Again, the educated (95%) and monks (96%) upheld this right, but the grass-roots respondents were ambiguous (15%) as were the local authorities (11%). It is possible that the poor were not sure whether they had this right or not and that the local authorities were not sure whether they had to deliver this right or not.

Freedom of religion

Nearly a third of the respondents (32%) did not favor religious freedom in its fullest sense. The questions asked were, “Do all citizens have the right to choose their own religion?” and “Is anyone free to propagate religion and convert others to his or her religion without using force?” Perhaps the questions were ambiguous.

In Cambodia, and many other countries for that matter, people do not choose their religion but inherit it from their parents. It is possible, therefore, that the proposition put forward by the survey was not readily agreeable to some. It is also possible that those who agreed with the first proposition did not agree with the second.

Religious freedom is not a major issue in Cambodia although resentment is growing over the missionary activities of the Christians and the influence of the Muslims. However, 68% of all respondents agreed that religious freedom should be protected. The grass-roots respondents had the highest rate of disagreement (50%); the educated, the lowest (18%). 60% of the Buddhist monks agreed. Some who disagreed believed that “all citizens in Cambodia must be Buddhist.” Others thought, “Anyone is free to select his or her religion. But only Buddhists can propagate religion to others.”

Voluntary marriage

Except during Khmer Rouge rule, the right to marry and found a family had been customary rights. However, the freedom to choose a

partner was not readily accepted. Parents or guardians intervened in marriage decisions, especially of the bride. There have been other social taboos. Cross-religious or cross-ethnic marriages are not readily accepted. The survey aimed to ascertain how far people agree with the concept of modern voluntary marriage and to what extent they are still confined to tradition.

80% of the total sample agreed, “men and women of the age of majority have the right to marry whom they love, and no one should interfere in this right.” However, 20% maintained the traditional concept that “they should marry only partners arranged by their parents.” 32% of grass-roots respondents and 27% of monks held the traditional view. 87% of students and 89% of teachers and professors maintained the modern view. The results indicate an ongoing modernizing process in human-rights-related social issues such as marriage.

Minority rights

The rights of minorities are a central issue in human rights education because of the discrimination against the Vietnamese and the Cham Muslims. There is also recent resentment against the Chinese. The question was, “Should the Vietnamese, the Chinese, and the Christians, who have been living in Cambodia for so many centuries, have equal rights and protection?”

Of the total sample, 65% agreed with nondiscrimination; 35% were reluctant or disagreed. The responses were similar to those regarding religious freedom. Of the grass-roots respondents and monks, 52% were against equality. 82% of teachers and professors agreed with nondiscrimination; 78% of students favored nondiscrimination and equality; 41% of the soldiers did not favor nondiscrimination.

Nondiscrimination and minority rights are obviously areas that future human rights education programs need to emphasize.

Rights and responsibilities

The respondents had a strong tendency to emphasize a link between rights and responsibilities. 95% thought that “every human being has certain responsibilities and he or she should follow laws and ethical codes.” Only 5% thought that “freedom has no limits,” “everyone should be able to do whatever she or he wants to do,” and/or “we do not need to worry about others.”

The emphasis on responsibility was higher among teachers and professors (98%) and local authorities (98%). Among the grass-roots respondents, it was 92%. It is fair to say that, like many other Asians, Cambodians in general appear to see a close link between rights and responsibilities.

Respect for human rights

Three multiple-choice questions were asked in order to judge what the respondents meant by “respect for human rights.” 94% answered correctly, agreeing that it means “treating everyone equally irrespective of their color, sex, race, religion, or nationality.” While they linked rights with responsibilities, they also considered respect for others’ rights to be highly important.

Students had the highest score (97%), which is encouraging. The variations among the other categories were not very great: the police and local authorities with 96%; teachers and professors, 95%; soldiers, 94%; monks, 93%; and the grass-roots respondents, 90%.

Right to asylum

This right is not something that everyone is expected to know instinctively. However, it is relevant to the understanding of international human rights, particularly in a country like Cambodia, where the political situation is often uncertain. The question was, “Under what circumstances should the right to asylum apply?”

Only 54% thought that it applies “when a person is persecuted because of his or her ethnicity/religion or politics.” 46% incorrectly thought, “Asylum can be sought when one is poor or implicated in criminality.” Awareness was higher among teachers and professors (68%) and lower among grass-roots respondents (45%).

Right to culture

The purpose of the question was to determine whether the respondents had a notion of cultural rights and respect for multiculturalism in the context of increasing cultural diversity. 68% accepted that cultural rights should include the “preservation and promotion of cultural diversity of different ethnic groups.” However, 32% thought that Cambodia should be a monoculture and that “cultural diversity should be eliminated, promoting a common Cambodian culture.”

The acceptance of cultural diversity was high among teachers and professors (86%) and students (79%) but low among grass-roots respondents (57%), monks (60%), and soldiers (63%).

Summary

Table 2 shows the respondents’ level of awareness of human rights principles in descending order. What might be important for future human rights education planning are not only the absolute but also the comparative percentages revealed by the survey.

As Asians, Cambodians give as much or more emphasis to responsibilities as to rights, perhaps as an outcome of the nature of human rights education programs. Awareness of the right to asylum is the lowest, which is not, however, alarming. But what human rights educators should note is the lower ratings for minority rights, religious tolerance, and multiculturalism, on the one hand, and the right to education and food, on the other.

TABLE 2. Awareness of Human Rights Principles

<i>Rights/Themes</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Responsibilities	95	1
Respect for rights	94	2
Life	92	3
Health	91	4
Economic rights	85	5
Education	84	6
Security	80	7
Marriage	80	8
Food	75	9
Culture	68	10
Religion	68	10
Minority rights	65	12
Asylum	54	13
AVERAGE	79	

Also intriguing is the lower rating given to the right to life compared to responsibilities. The awareness of the right to life is satisfactory on the average, but not among grass-roots respondents. As Chart 1 shows, when people move from their basic understanding of the right to life toward its vari-

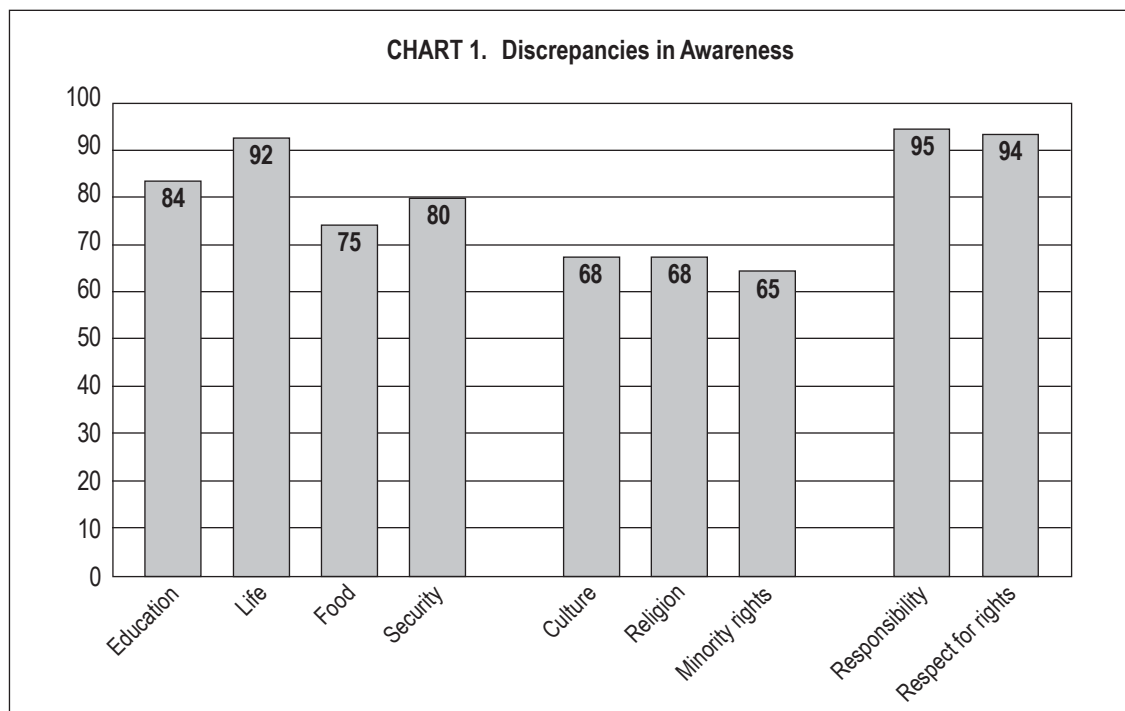
ous necessities and details—e.g., security, food, education, and economic rights—awareness clearly diminishes.

Rights Necessary for Democratic Governance

The most important precondition for the preservation of human rights is democracy. Eleven questions were asked in order to ascertain the people's commitment or acceptance of democratic principles and interconnected rights. The answers are analyzed below.

Political participation

Since the UN intervention, Cambodians have participated in two general elections, in 1993 and 1998. The purpose of the question was to ascertain whether or not the respondents fully realize the meaning of such participation. 80% agreed, "all citizens are entitled to participate in politics not only by voting but also by running for office or by any other political activity of their choice, including expressing their concerns over existing problems."



However, it was difficult to say whether or not they fully realize that they need to actively participate in politics.

20% thought either that “politics is the prerogative of the upper classes (the rich and the leaders)” or “ordinary citizens have political rights only to vote at elections.” As in many other underdeveloped countries, there is a strong patron-client relationship in politics in Cambodia. Some consider voting to be a duty rather than a right, a modern way of gratifying their patrons for looking after them. The variations among the answers of local authorities (82%), the police (83%), soldiers (81%), or monks (80%) were not significant. Awareness rates were highest among teachers and professors (93%) and students (89%), but lowest among grass-roots respondents (66%).

The meaning and different ways of political participation that are necessary for democracy must be tackled by human rights education.

Freedom of expression

The purpose of the question was to ascertain whether or not people understand freedom of expression correctly. A choice of three answers was offered. 85% believed that “every citizen has the right to think and express his or her own ideas without threat or intimidation from authorities.” This view was highest among students (95%), then among teachers and professors (94%). The views of monks (87%), the police (87%), local authorities (85%), and soldiers (81%) did not differ very much. However, the awareness of the grass-roots respondents was significantly low (77%).

Extent of freedom of expression

The purpose of the question was mainly to judge how the respondents perceived the level of freedom of expression in Cambodia. Only 11% thought, “We have enough freedom of expression.” 82% thought, “We have some freedom of expression.” They were ob-

viously not satisfied with the situation. Only 7% considered freedom of expression to be “dangerous.”

It was mainly soldiers (13%) and grass-roots respondents (11%) who thought freedom of expression to be dangerous, unlike the professors and teachers, local authorities, and monks. The monks considered it most favorably (82%).

Freedom of the press

While the respondents were for “full freedom” of expression, they were not necessarily satisfied with the press. This dichotomy needs to be investigated further. Only 33% agreed, “newspapers and journalists should be free as far as they do not violate other people’s rights” or “freedom of the press should prevail, with limitations.” The others thought that the newspapers “criticize the government and Cambodian traditions too much” and, therefore, their “freedom should be limited and controlled.”

All categories had a negative view of the press, with students (72%) and the grass-roots respondents (69%) being the most critical.

Right to assembly

The right to assembly was correctly understood by 89%, who maintained, “The citizens have the right to peaceful assembly and peaceful demonstration.” Only 10% thought it either culturally unacceptable or something that the government could easily deny or curtail. It appeared that even the local authorities and police understood this right correctly. The most supportive of this right were teachers and professors (96%), students (95%), and monks (93%). Grass-roots respondents (18%) and soldiers (16%) had the most unfavorable attitude or greatest lack of awareness.

Right of association

The right of association was equally or more favored by the respondents. 91% correctly an-

swered, “The citizens have the right to form associations and organizations without being suppressed by the authorities.” They agreed that the commune chief should not turn down a request, for example, to form a farmers’ association. Only 9% thought that the government should have the authority to dissolve associations at will.

The educated—teachers and professors (98%) and students (97%)—favored the right more than any other sector.

Only 85% of the grass-roots respondents understood the concept of the right of association. The local authorities, police, and soldiers understood the concept, but the survey did not reveal whether they favored it or not.

Purpose of elections

95% of the respondents understood the “purpose of elections to be to elect representatives who reflect the will of the people.” Only 5% identified elections with political competition or said that the “purpose is to elect the strongest party.” This confusion was considerable among local authorities (6%) and grass-roots respondents (5%).

Free elections

96% of the respondents answered correctly that “a vote is a personal choice and one should vote on the basis of one’s own free will.” Although Cambodians have recently experienced only two elections, they did not believe that “a vote is a family choice” or that “people should vote according to what the village chief or the group leader says.” Perhaps the high incidence of the “correct perception” of elections is a product of the UN-supervised elections in 1993 and the educational campaigns, which were continued by NGOs thereafter.

Even most grass-roots respondents (94%) understood the concept of free elections—almost as much as teachers and professors (96%).

The local authorities, police, and soldiers also understood the notion.

Fair elections

97% of the respondents correctly understood that in fair elections “one is free from intimidation, threat, or abuse.” Only 3% thought that it might be “OK to vote for the person or party that gives cash or kind.” Most of the local authorities (99%), police (99%), and soldiers (97%) understood the principle correctly. Grass-roots respondents (94%) were slightly less aware.

Secret ballot

93% correctly understood that “elections should be by secret ballot and nobody should know who votes for whom.” This view was highest among the police (98%) and teachers and professors (96%), then among students (94%), monks (93%), soldiers (93%), local authorities (91%), and grass-roots respondents (89%). The last group was highly aware of the secret ballot.

Accountability

A complex question was asked in order to judge respondents’ perceptions of the link between the voter and the voted after an election—i.e., accountability of the elected representatives. 83% correctly thought that the “representative should keep his or her election promises” and the “voters should make sure that they keep pressuring the representative” to fulfill these promises and address other economic and social issues. However, 17% thought that the matter ended after an election or that the representatives had a mandate to do whatever they wished.

Even among teachers and professors, the issue of accountability was not very clear. Only 90% responded correctly. Awareness was parti-

cularly low among the grass-roots respondents (73%).

Summary

The principles of democracy are an important topic in human rights education. The purpose of the questions was to measure peoples’ awareness of the subject and related rights. Table 3 represents the ratings and order of awareness. The rating for freedom of the press was excluded as it shows an aberration as explained earlier.

The average rating for rights necessary for democratic governance is 89%, or 10% higher than the awareness of (general) human rights principles (79%), perhaps due to higher awareness of election-related rights. The average rating for four questions directly related to elections is 95%; for other democratic rights (association, assembly, expression, accountability, and participation), 85%.

<i>Rights/Themes</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Fair elections	97	1
Free elections	96	2
Purpose of elections	95	3
Secret ballot	93	4
Association	91	5
Assembly	89	6
Expression	85	7
Accountability	83	8
Extent of expression	82	9
Participation	80	10
AVERAGE	89	

The results of the survey also show a common pattern. Outside some general premises of human rights, the respondents’ awareness on concrete issues drops considerably (Chart 2), which should be noted by human rights educators. A comprehensive approach to democracy education, and not just teaching the right to vote, might be what is most necessary

in future education. There is considerable confusion as to the freedom of the press or the nature of the mass media.

Rights of Women and Children

The questionnaire contained 10 questions on the rights of women and children. The answers were analyzed under relevant themes and rights. It might be useful to keep in mind that 77% of the respondents were men.

Domestic violence

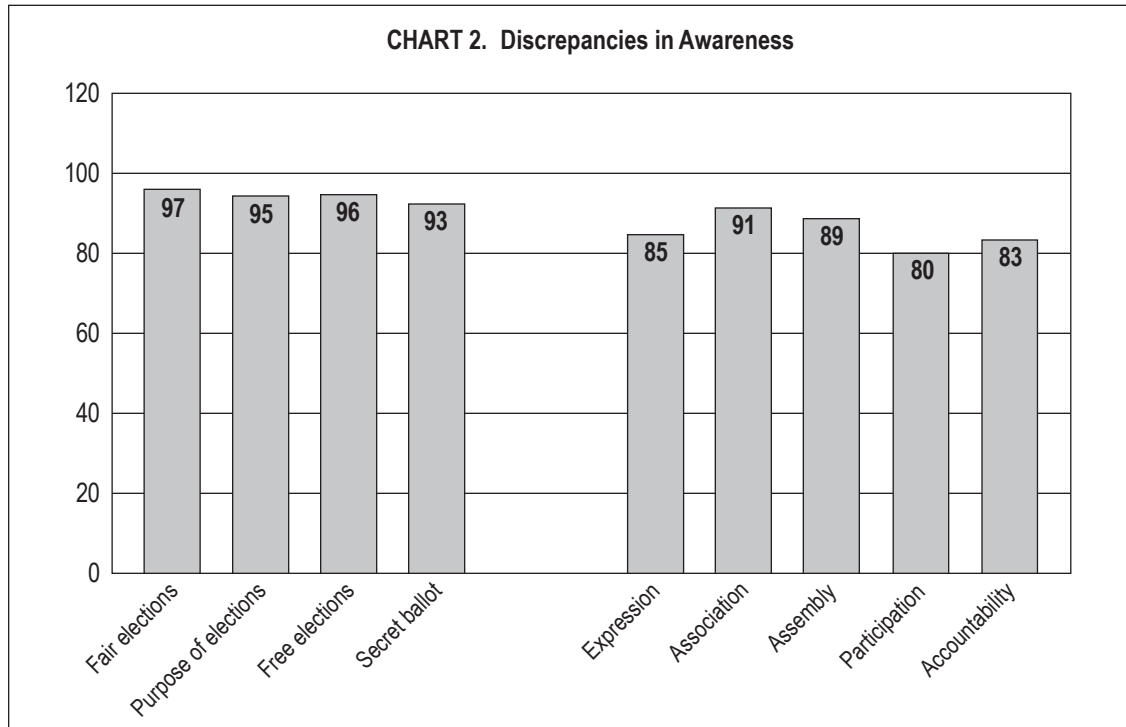
The survey asked respondents if they accepted battering of women and children as a human rights violation. Only 77% did so. Domestic violence is undoubtedly an area for future human rights education.

The correct answer was comparatively high among teachers and professors (88%) and students (87%). It was fair among local authorities (80%) and monks (79%). It was low among the grass-roots respondents (67%), police (72%), and soldiers (73%).

Battered women and children

The survey also asked whether or not men batter women and children at home. 35% answered, “Men do not batter women or children at all.” In other words, only 65% admitted that men do batter women and children. Opinion against battering was highest among students (85%) and teachers and professors (72%). However, 46% of the police, 43% of soldiers, 37% of the local authorities, and 37% of grass-roots respondents were reluctant to admit the existence of battered women and children.

The survey also asked under what circumstances men batter women or children. 71% answered that it happens during family disputes; 29% highlighted other circumstances. These other circumstances were not spelled out. The survey revealed the existence of a high



level of domestic violence. It was also clear that it was mainly due to family disputes. Domestic violence and battering of women and children are areas that human rights education should focus on more.

Family decision making

The survey asked who in the family should decide to buy or sell property—husband, wife, or both. 97% agreed that both should make the decision. There were no major differences among the categories of the sample; 99% of the students agreed with equality as did 95% of the grass-roots respondents.

Having a child

The survey also asked who should decide to have a child. 97% said that both wife and husband should decide. The students scored the highest (98%), the grass-roots respondents the lowest (94%). However, there were no major differences among the other categories. People

are generally aware of the human rights principle of gender equality. However, how far this principle is put into practice was not clear.

Equality with respect to property

Although there was a general acceptance of equality between men and women in family decision making, respondents' opinions diverged on the question of property. When asked how property should be divided in case of a divorce, only 66% agreed that it should be on the basis of equality. Among other things, most respondents believed that property belonged to the male. A third opinion was that at least two thirds of the property should go to the woman, given her social vulnerability.

The highest rate of acceptance of equal property rights was by students (71%) and monks (71%), the lowest by the grass-roots respondents (61%). The opinion of teachers and professors (68%), local authorities (67%), soldiers (67%), and police (63%) did not vary much.

Children's right to education

The question on the right to education was asked in order to measure the acceptance of child rights. Participants were asked to select from three answers. Some had misconceptions such as, "Educating children is a responsibility of their parents." This is undoubtedly correct as a responsibility, but not as a right. Others thought, "Only talented and capable children should be given free education."

Only 72% of the sample considered the right to education to mean, "Every child in Cambodia has the right to free primary and secondary education." It appears that the meaning of the right to education is not well established among Cambodians. Most alarming was that only 59% of the grass-roots respondents understood this right correctly. As expected, the understanding among professors and teachers was higher (93%). However, it was low even among students (82%).

Rights of the girl child

Unfavorable opinion was high with respect to the rights of the girl child. The purpose of the question was to see whether or not the respondents considered girls and boys to have equal rights to education. How did the respondents think girls and boys should be treated when resources were scarce? Only 75% thought they should be treated equally. 87% of the monks upheld equality, followed by teachers and professors (81%), and then students (80%). The most reluctant to accept this principle were the grass-roots respondents (36%).

Equal pay for men and women

86% of the respondents agreed with the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women. Teachers and professors were the most positive (91%), followed by students (91%), monks (89%), soldiers (88%), local authorities

(87%), and police (85%). Notably, the response of the grass-roots respondents was sharply lower (77%).

Acceptance of women

There were several questions about employment and politics. Not all the answers could be tabulated satisfactorily. Those who answered the questions did not have much opposition to accepting women in their workplace. However, it was a negative acceptance. 83% answered, "I do not mind whether my boss is a man or a woman." This indifference was highest among teachers and professors (93%) and lowest among the grass-roots respondents (74%).

However, only 11% agreed to "have a woman as my boss." Interestingly, agreement was high among the grass-roots respondents (15%) and low among teachers and professors (7%).

Women in politics

The most unfavorable opinion about women surfaced in response to questions about politics. Only 41% wanted to see a woman as prime minister. 16% agreed to have a woman as commune president. The rest either did not approve of any political position for women or were reluctant to answer the question directly.

The acceptance rate of women in national politics was comparatively higher among teachers and professors (50%) and students (48%). It was average among the monks (43%), local authorities (43%), and police (42%). It was low among the grass-roots respondents (33%) and soldiers (37%).

Summary

As Table 4 shows, the lowest average rating (74%) was recorded for the rights of women and children. With respect to ordinary family decision making and equal pay for equal work, the respondents were ready to accept some

form of equality between men and women, but not with respect to property and politics. With respect to the rights of the girl child, education of children, and domestic violence, the awareness or acceptance levels cannot be considered satisfactory. (Table 4 combines similar issues into common themes by averaging the relevant ratings.)

Themes/Rights	Rating	Rank
Decision making	97	1
Equal pay	86	2
Employment	83	3
Girl child	75	4
Domestic violence	72	5
Education	72	5
Property	66	7
Politics	41	8
AVERAGE	74	

Chart 3 also indicates that lack of awareness on the rights of women and children is an area of major weakness. While there is a general ac-

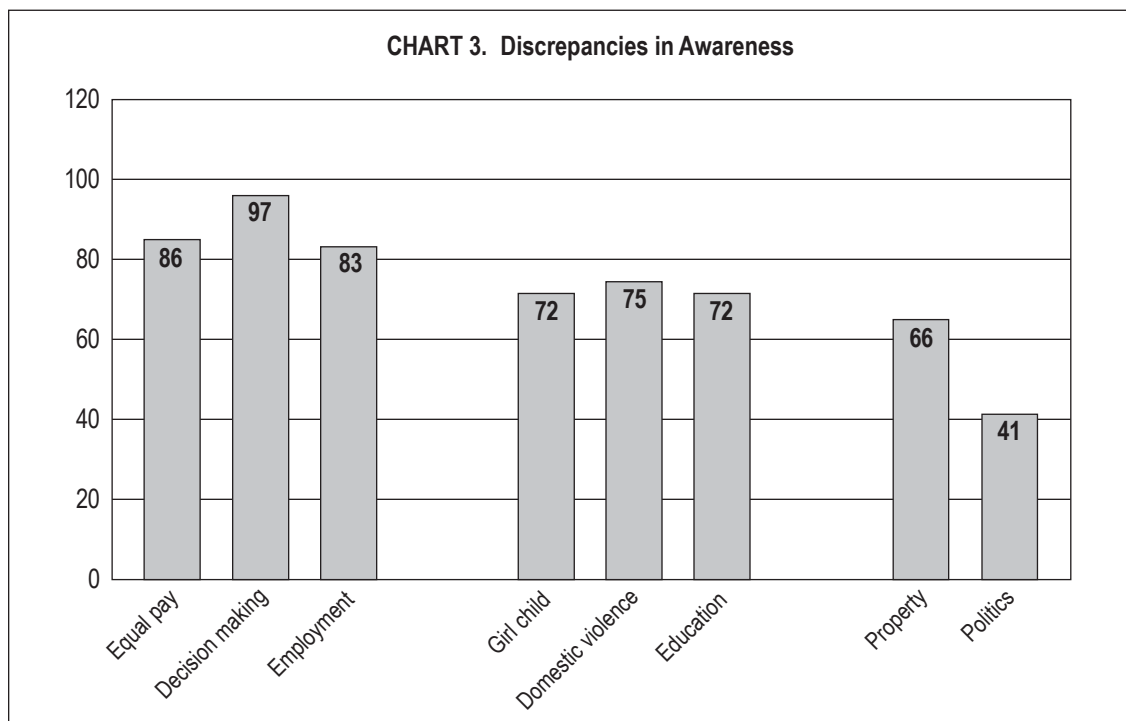
ceptance of rights in relation to decision making, employment, and pay, there is considerable reluctance to accept equal rights in relation to the girl child, property, education, and politics. The survey reveals that human rights education must focus on domestic violence, children's education, property rights, and women's participation in politics.

Awareness of Human Rights Protection

Nine questions were asked in order to ascertain the respondents' awareness of available international, official, and NGO remedies for human rights violations and to determine their readiness to act against various violations. The answers are analyzed below. Cross tabulations for occupational categories were not available for several questions when this report was completed.

Universal Declaration on Human Rights

Several questions were asked in order to ascertain the general awareness of the availabil-



ity of international protection for human rights. One was on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. 79% identified the Declaration as a “document that sets out human rights principles applicable to all countries.” Only 31% thought it to be a document relevant mainly to Western and “democratic” countries.

Familiarity with the Declaration was high among teachers and professors (88%), students (86%), local authorities (84%), and police (83%). Awareness was relatively low among monks (79%) and soldiers (74%). The grass-roots respondents were again at the bottom of the pile, with only 69% offering correct answers. Overall, however, awareness was high.

Rights in the Constitution

In contrast, only 57% correctly stated that citizens’ rights are guaranteed in the 1993 Constitution. 43% thought either that human rights have existed since “time immemorial” or that “human rights are something to do with the land law.”

The correct answer was high among teachers and professors (81%) but lower among students (73%). Awareness was low among monks (52%), soldiers (52%), and local authorities (53%). It was extremely low among the grass-roots respondents (40%). These findings indicate that constitutional rights could be a priority area for human rights education.

International obligations

91% thought that the “Cambodian Government has an obligation to respect international human rights” since it has ratified several international instruments to this effect. Only a small minority (9%) thought that the “Government has no obligation since Cambodia is an independent country.”

The positive view was very strong among teachers and professors (97%) and students (91%). The local authorities (95%), police (94%), and soldiers (93%) also knew about this

obligation. Monks (88%) and grass-roots respondents were also well aware of this obligation. Few thought that Cambodia had no international obligation since it was an independent country.

Violation of rights

In order to determine whether or not the respondents understood what a basic human rights violation is, the survey presented them with three propositions and asked them to identify the correct one. Only 78% answered correctly.

It appears that some consider any inconvenience as a human rights violation, even the “compulsion to perform a duty.” These misconceptions, which need to be considered in planning human rights education, are low among the educated (14%) but high among grass-roots respondents (28%) and local authorities (26%).

Past action

15% of the respondents have experienced some kind of human rights violation since 1993. Asked what they did in response, 39% said they kept silent, mainly because they did not have faith in the justice system. Only 13% complained to the courts, and 5% to the police. 14% sought assistance from human rights organizations, 4% from the UN office. Others employed different remedies such as fleeing the area or the country. Some had tried to peacefully negotiate with the perpetrator to settle minor violations. Overall, it appears that the action rate is not satisfactory (36%).

Future action

The respondents were also asked what they would do if their rights were violated in the future. Of the 99% who answered the question, 34% thought they would go to the courts directly—a 21% increase over the past action

rate. But some clearly stated that they would do so “only if the judicial system were reformed.”

39% would like to take action through human rights organizations—a significant 25% increase. However, some qualified the statement, adding “if these organizations are approachable in the area.” 24% were not clear as to what action they would take. Some thought they would “report the matter to the press.” Although the people were determined to take action against violations, it clearly appears that they are uncertain as to what action to take. However, the stated future action rate can be calculated as 80%—a considerable improvement over the past action rate of 36%.

Protection from authorities

The respondents were asked if they thought the authorities sufficiently protected human rights. 78% claimed that protection was insufficient. We consider this as the rate of awareness of the actual situation. Awareness was high among the educated (85%), low among the grass-roots respondents (69%).

Protection by NGOs

The purpose of the question, “Do human rights organizations protect the violators or victims?” was to check whether or not the respondents have a correct or positive perception of human rights organizations. 63% correctly answered that they protect the victims. 32% also stated that they protect everyone. The positive perception of NGOs was, therefore, 95%.

However, it should be noted that the second answer was ambiguous, and this fact may have to be taken into consideration in the future work of NGOs. Also of note is that 6% of the respondents said, “NGOs protect bad people.”

What can NGOs do?

Respondents’ expectations of NGOs were high. When asked, “In what ways can human rights organizations help you protect your human rights?” 38% of the respondents said, “They can help investigate human rights violation cases.” Another 35% said, “They can intervene with the authorities.” Only 2% said, “They can do nothing.”

Summary

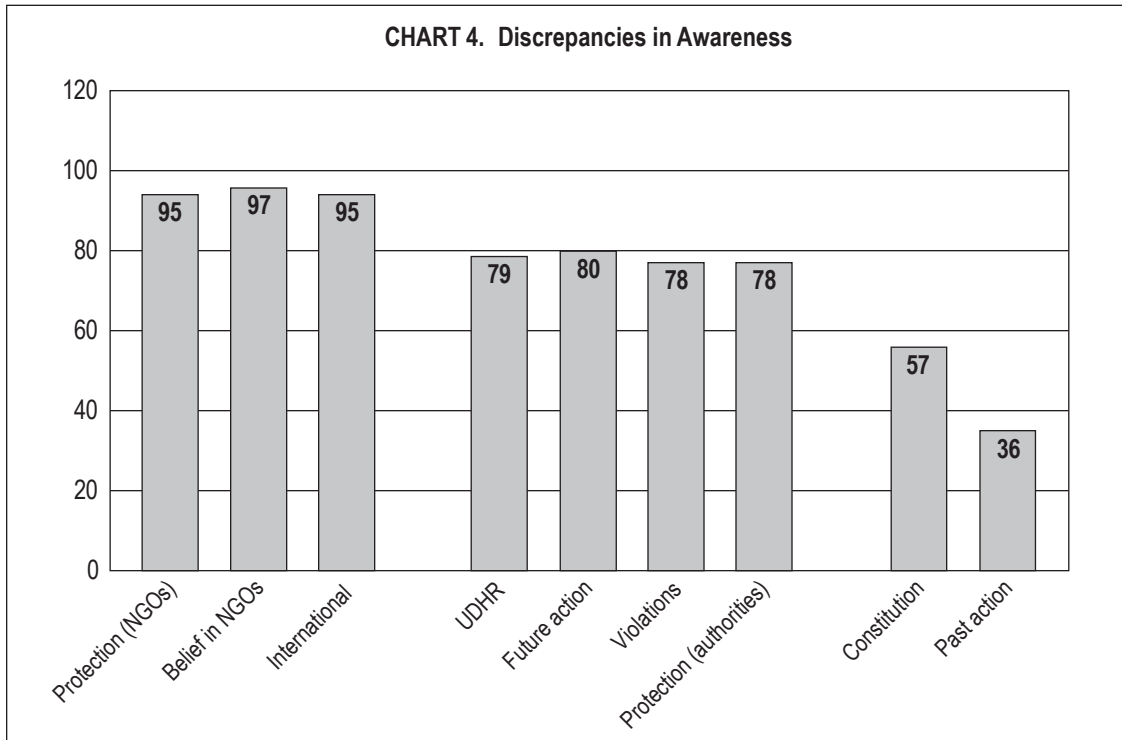
Table 5 gives a general picture of awareness under different themes on protection.

The respondents have more faith in or awareness of NGOs and international organizations than in official governmental remedies. Only 57% knew of constitutional remedies, while 91% were aware of the international system. However, only 77% correctly identified a violation. 80% identified appropriate remedies or future action. The discrepancies of awareness are highlighted in Chart 4.

It is abundantly clear that human rights education in the country needs to focus on teaching people how to counter human rights violations.

TABLE 5. Awareness of Human Rights Protection

<i>Themes/Rights</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Responsibilities	95	1
Respect for rights	94	2
Life	92	3
Belief in NGOs	97	1
Protection (NGOs)	95	2
International	92	3
Future action	80	4
The Declaration	79	5
Violations	78	6
Protection (Authorities)	78	6
Constitution	57	8
Past action	36	9
AVERAGE	77	



Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the statistical data and other information acquired through the survey and further discussions held with ADHOC and other organizations involved in the survey and human rights education.

The survey was the first of its kind. The opinions of organizations were sought from the beginning in an attempt to strike a balance between the “participatory nature of the operation” and the “scientific character” of the survey.

The survey had to be conducted rapidly. After the questionnaire was formulated, interviewers were trained. A pilot survey was conducted immediately. There was no possibility, however, of revising the questionnaire based on the results of the pilot survey. Immediately after the pilot survey, the survey had to proceed. All these matters had an impact on its final results.

Important landmark

Whatever its weaknesses, the survey was an important landmark in the search for ways and means of promoting and protecting human rights in Cambodia. Similar collective efforts have been seen in few other countries.

The survey categorically shows that a critical mass of the Cambodian people have moved beyond a basic threshold of human rights awareness and understanding. The statistical data reveal an overall general awareness rate of 80%.

The central question, however, is whether or not this rate accurately reflects the position of the country as a whole. For example, 92% of the participants were literate, with 60% of them having gone through secondary or higher education. Given the country’s higher illiteracy rates and lower educational rates, our optimistic conclusion may be too hasty. Such caution is justified, considering that grass-roots respondents made up only 26% of the sample.

In other words, while the results of the survey speak favorably of existing educational and awareness programs, the fact remains that they have the enormous task of promoting and deepening human rights education. Areas needing improvement and the problems to be addressed are indicated below.

Awareness rates

It is important to highlight the differences in rates of awareness of different areas of human rights. As Chart 5 shows, the highest awareness rate (89%) is in the area of rights necessary for democratic governance, as a result largely of the high rate of awareness of election-related rights. Future human rights education programs should focus on substantial issues of democracy such as accountability, transparency, party democracy, and political participation.

The second highest rate (79%) is for awareness of human rights principles. While this indicates the good progress that the country has made, it is important to point out again that people's understanding of economic, social, cultural, and minority rights is poor com-

pared to their awareness of civil and political rights.

Although the rate of awareness of human rights protection (77%) can be considered reasonable, the same cannot be said of awareness of the rights of women and children (74%), which is the lowest among the fields of investigation. Special efforts are required in this area. While the respondents may have expressed their determination to safeguard and protect their rights, it does not mean that they are aware of the appropriate remedies. Future educational programs should emphasize this area.

Occupational categories

Table 6 gives the average summary ratings for different occupational categories as well as for different fields of human rights awareness.

The average awareness rate of the local authorities (80%) and police (80%) is equivalent to the average awareness of the overall survey (80%), perhaps as the result of various awareness campaigns conducted among them.

However, the awareness rates of soldiers (76%) and grass-roots respondents (71%) are below the average, as shown in Chart 6.

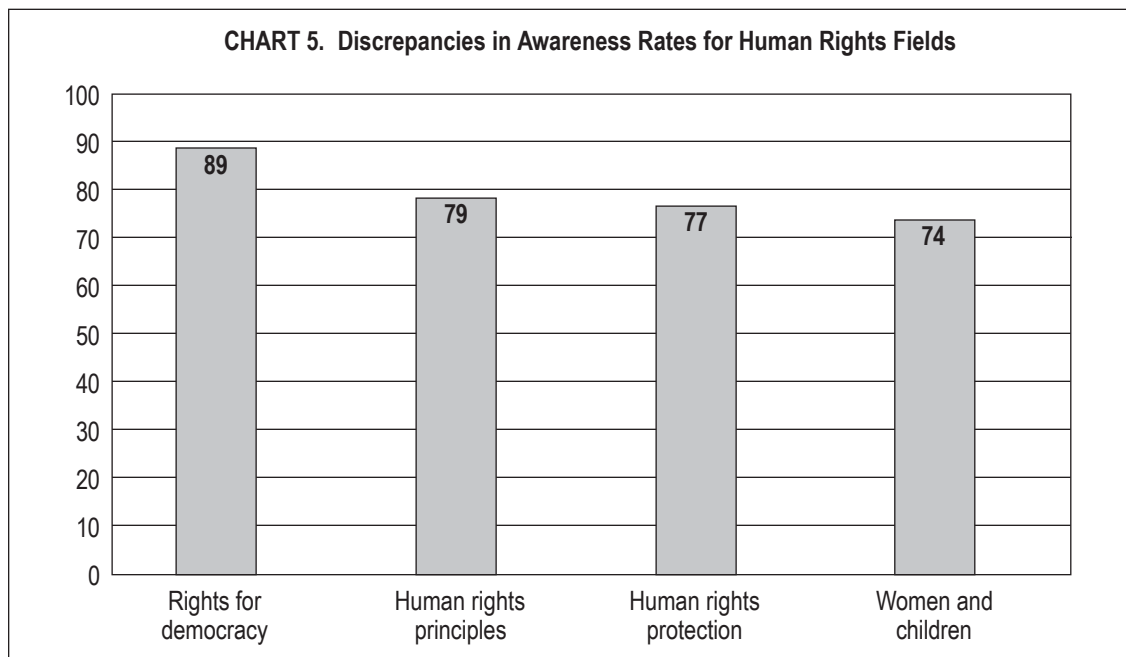
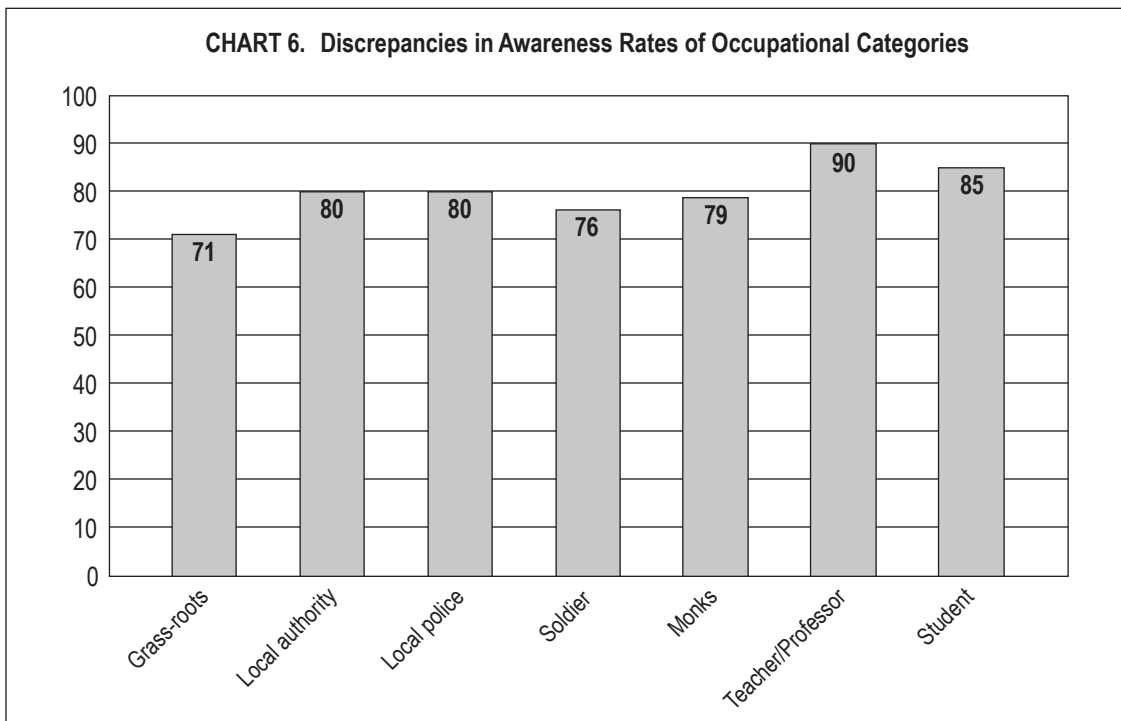


TABLE 6. Summary Awareness Ratings Occupations and Different Human Rights Fields

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Awareness of human rights principles</i>	<i>Rights necessary for democracy</i>	<i>Rights of women and children</i>	<i>Awareness of human rights protection</i>	<i>Total</i>
Grass-roots respondents	70	82	66	67	71
Local authorities	80	90	74	76	80
Local police	82	91	72	75	80
Soldiers	76	86	72	71	76
Monks	77	90	76	76	79
Teachers/professors	89	95	81	96	90
Students	85	93	80	83	85
TOTAL	79	89	74	77	80

CHART 6. Discrepancies in Awareness Rates of Occupational Categories



It is possible that monks have not been a target group of human rights education. This may also be true for soldiers; or perhaps awareness campaigns among them have not been successful. The lowest awareness rate is, unfortunately, among the grass-roots respondents. Since they are a large and diverse group, education among them may require diverse and innovative methods and measures.

Further comments

Additional comments are warranted in light of some of the verbal responses received during the survey. The respondents felt strongly that existing institutions and procedures were insufficient to protect human rights. To the question “Do you think the authorities sufficiently protect the people’s rights?” 78% were

quick to answer no. They clearly felt that violations were on the rise and that the government should do more to protect the people's rights. They saw the need for greater security and social order.

While they insisted that the government should cooperate with human rights NGOs, they also emphasized that NGOs should expand their activities and make their services available to the greater public. Those interviewed thought that NGOs should do more not only in human rights education but also in human rights protection.

Recommendations

1. Since a critical mass of people appears to have advanced beyond a basic threshold of human rights awareness, advanced human rights education programs should be offered while present programs are continued, updated, and revised for grass-roots communities. For this purpose, an in-depth review and evaluation of the existing curriculums, teaching material, and teaching methods are recommended.
2. Human rights education programs should focus attention on some areas of weakness:
 - a. economic and social rights, with special emphasis on the right to education; the right to food, housing, and health services; trade union rights, etc.;
 - b. the rights of women and children, with emphasis on the rights of the girl child, the right to education, equal rights for property, political participation of women, etc.;
 - c. the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups, with special emphasis on multiculturalism, religious freedom, equal opportunities, affirmative action, etc.;
 - d. democratic governance, with special emphasis on accountability, separation of powers, the role of civil society, in-

- dependence of the judiciary, impartiality of the bureaucracy, etc.; and
 - e. education on human rights protection, with special emphasis on available remedies under the Constitution, judicial system, and NGO networks, and on how to use them.
3. All human rights education programs should be conducted in a culturally appropriate manner, taking inspiration and lessons from historical and religious traditions of the country.
 4. Educational programs should be specialized, focusing on particular target groups, clear objectives, and continuity. They can be designed for parliamentarians, the police, members of the judiciary, government officials, workers, the military, teachers, students, women, children, minorities, grass-roots communities, etc.
 5. Human rights education programs should try to make people aware of the obstacles to realizing their natural and inherent rights and equip them with the knowledge and education they need to overcome them. Education should impart the knowledge necessary to reform the political and social structures that impinge on and obstruct the realization of human rights.
 6. The survey should be considered as a baseline survey. The next one will evaluate the progress in two years and continue thereafter every two or three years. More focused surveys or evaluations should be conducted to continuously evaluate educational programs.

Acknowledgements

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