

Changing the Mindset: Fazaldad Human Rights Institute

FAZALDAD HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE

The Fazaldad Human Rights Institute (FHRI) was founded in 2000 to counter the growing violation of people's rights in Pakistani society. It was established in memory of Dr. Fazaldad Wahla, a Pakistani dentist who interjected in an attempted honor killing of a young girl and ended up losing his own life to save her.

FHRI is founded on the belief that prevention is the best approach to combat violence and extremism and utilizes the education system as a tool to alter the society's mindset at an early childhood stage.

In 2005, FHRI was awarded Special Consultative Status with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of only seven Pakistani non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be awarded this status in the past fifty-eight years. The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy has also officially recognized FHRI as an institution working for public service.

FHRI's effort towards spreading moderation and tolerance along with human rights has been acclaimed as a unique and effective tool to counter extremism and terrorism in the Muslim world. Developed countries have been countering international terrorism by hunting down terrorists, cutting off their funding, confronting states that harbor terrorists, and strengthening democracy. But the only certain, long-term and effective way to counter such intolerance and terrorism is to change the mindset. This can best be achieved by inculcating respect for moderation, enlightenment, peace, tolerance and human rights through a sustained program

directed towards the twenty million teachers and students in the country's education system.

The institute

FHRI is a non-political, non-profit organization working very closely with the government of Pakistan and with the civil society to eliminate human rights abuse by spreading human rights awareness through educational institutions, the media, and individuals throughout the country. FHRI is mainly concerned with the training of teachers, trainers, school principals, school headmasters, District Education Officers (EDOs), District Officers, police officers, lawyers, judicial officers, and bureaucrats who can effectively propagate the message. All these individuals require training, as they have no previous formal education on human rights.

FHRI has taken upon itself the challenge of creating mass awareness on human rights through educational institutions, media and individuals throughout the country. The main objectives aimed at are:

- To reach out and convey to as many people as possible the importance of protection of individual and collective human rights

which are an essential part of a sustained democratic order;

- To promote human rights, rule of law, constitutional reforms;
- To impart human rights training to teachers, trainers, school principals, school headmasters, educationists, police officers, judges and bureaucrats to enable them to introduce the subject in schools, colleges, and training institutions;
- To change the mindset of the people to counter human rights abuses and extremism in society;
- To develop clarity, depth and understanding of human rights for teachers, who will then be able to effectively teach the subject of human rights, which has recently been introduced in the curriculum of schools from Class 1 to Class 10. No similar program for training teachers at the national level exists in the country;
- To empower Pakistani women, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or socio-economic status;
- To make women become aware of their full potential in all spheres of life, specially social, economic, personal and political;
- To enable women to participate in the decision-making process that affects their lives and their families;
- To remove inequities and imbalances in all sectors of socio-economic development and to ensure women's equal access to all development benefits and social services;
- To safeguard the rights of children and minorities;
- To make people become aware that human rights are an integral part of Islam, which is a religion of peace and tolerance;
- To make women understand their rights and responsibilities as members of society;
- To develop values of tolerance, understanding, acceptance of differences in opinion;
- To develop the values of sacrifice and selflessness so as to show big-heartedness and open-mindedness;
- To develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills;
- To counter extremism by promoting understanding of tolerance, peace and human rights and to help bring in positive societal changes by modifying attitudes and promoting responsible behavioral patterns at grassroots level;
- To develop a society that is tolerant, liberal, and protects and respects the rights of all citizens.

Many NGOs have excellent programs on assisting the oppressed and the victims of abuse. The program of FHRI is unique in that it concentrates exclusively on changing the mindset in society so that such abuse or victimization does not occur in the first place. It is based on the conviction that concentrating on the promotion of moderation and tolerance and condemning extremism and violence will make people more tolerant and far less inclined to engage in or endorse extremist activities. It is “preventive” rather than “corrective” program.

Activities

FHRI has been involved in a number of activities involving human rights and human rights education organized either by it or by the government and other institutions. These activities are the following:

- Pakistan Convention on Human Rights and Human Dignity (2000)
- Amendment of curriculum for all schools in Pakistan to include human rights education in all classes up to secondary level
- Training programs on human rights for master trainers in diploma courses and for teachers in one-day workshops
- Special courses for religious teachers and the media
- Human rights days in schools
- Confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan including Incidents at

Sea (INCSEA) Treaty, Sir Creek dispute, care and release of arrested fisherfolk of both countries and other related maritime issues.

Government-Civil Society Cooperation

FHRI is working closely with the government of Pakistan and with the civil society to introduce sustainable formal human rights education in the country. Government-civil society cooperation in human rights started during the 21-22 April 2000 Pakistan Convention on Human Rights and Human Dignity. This was FHRI's first public involvement, with the FHRI's Chairperson, Mr. Naeem Sarfraz, as one of the convention organizers. Six hundred persons, including the President of Pakistan, senior civil and government representatives, diplomats, civil society representatives, NGOs and other stakeholders participated in the convention.

FHRI is also working very closely with the Curriculum Wing, Federal Ministry of Education; Bureau of Curriculum Extension Wing Sindh, Jamshoro; Provincial Institute of Teachers Education, Sindh; Directorate of Curriculum Research and Development, Azad Kashmir; Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education, North West Frontier Province (NWFP); and Punjab Textbook Board. FHRI's Chairperson, Mr. Naeem Sarfraz, also acted as the convener of the government's civil society committee, headed by the two Federal Ministers charged with introducing human rights education in the country. An Implementation Committee for human rights awareness was also formed, in which one federal minister and one federal secretary were chairpersons and Mr. Sarfraz was the convener.

Human rights curriculum

The first and most significant step in human rights education is its integration into the school

curriculum from Class 1 to secondary level to allow twenty million Pakistani students to get regular, formal education on moderation and tolerance throughout their academic careers.

The Chairperson of FHRI was involved in the meetings held between the Curriculum Wings of the Federal Government and the Provincial Governments regarding the school curriculum and human rights education. These meetings came up with a number of suggestions on how to integrate human rights education into the school curriculum. The suggestions were subsequently incorporated in the national curriculum through the National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education that was adopted by the Curriculum Wing, Federal Ministry of Education in 2001.¹ FHRI has also been leading in the nationwide implementation of the national action plan through its training programs.

The work on changing the school curriculum to integrate human rights education took three years. The revised school curriculum was introduced in the country during the 2003-2004 period. It then became necessary to teach the teachers, who were untrained on human rights education. The government sponsored teacher training in human rights, but with a very slow pace of implementation. With this situation, the government would take several years to train a sufficient number of teachers, while the need for trained teachers was immediate. Meanwhile, FHRI has already established a wide network of resource persons - from the government and civil society - that undertake this work in a more efficient and effective manner.

Training courses

One-week Diploma Courses

From 2001 to date, FHRI has conducted twenty-six diploma courses. In these courses, about seven hundred eighty administrators, professors, school principals, school headmasters,

lawyers, judges, police officers and senior officers were trained to help them introduce human rights education effectively in their respective jurisdictions. These participants were expected to act as the nucleus in spreading the human rights knowledge acquired to their fellow staff members, students and teachers. The multiplier effect of this method is enormous.

Each course has an average of thirty participants. They hail from the four provinces of the country, the capital, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Azad Kashmir. They include teachers from teacher-training colleges, school principals and school headmasters from government colleges and schools, and teachers from federal government training bodies like the National Institute of Public Administration, Pakistan Administrative Staff College, Civil Services Academy, Judicial Academy, Police Academy and the Secretariat Training Institute. During the weeklong sessions, participants are intensively familiarized with, and sensitized on, basic human rights topics focusing on the three most vulnerable groups (women, children and minorities).

Upon returning to their jobs, the participants are expected to train teachers and/or their fellow staff members who, in turn, can impart the same knowledge to students in their respective institutions. These master trainers thus act as a nucleus in disseminating the knowledge they have acquired in the courses to others in their community.

The diploma courses have the following key topics:

- Concepts of Human Rights in the 21st Century
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- Child Rights
- Women's Empowerment, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), etc.
- Minorities Rights
- Human Rights in Islam

- Human Rights & the Judiciary
- Sexual Harassment at the Work Place
- Violence Against Women and the Role of Police
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Peace & Conflict Resolution
- Human Rights & Discipline
- What Teachers Can Do Towards Human Rights Education
- Teaching Methodologies, Classroom Management, Lesson Planning.

One-Day Workshops

Besides the diploma courses, FHRI holds one-day familiarization workshops for teachers in district headquarters throughout Pakistan. The FHRI's resource persons, with the help of local partners, conduct comprehensive one-day programs for groups of 200-250 teachers at a time. Similarly, teams go out to schools to help them conduct one-day human rights awareness workshops for their fellow teachers and the students.

More than sixty districts have been covered so far and about 26,000 teachers have been enabled to teach human rights to students. They leave the workshops in far stronger position to convey the essence of human rights to others. In addition to teachers, local community leaders, lawyers, administrators and religious teachers from madrassas (religious schools often blamed for training terrorists) also participate in the one-day workshops.

The one-day workshops have the following key topics:

- Concepts of Human Rights in the 21st Century
- Women's Rights
- Human Rights in Islam
- Child Rights
- What can Teachers Do Towards Human Rights Education?

Research Projects

During the diploma courses, participants carry out research through fieldwork. The research focuses on the three vulnerable groups, i.e. women, children and minorities. Research topics include child labor, harassment faced by women at the workplace, domestic violence, and the plight of minorities. The detailed reports submitted by participants contribute to FHRI's vast bank of research papers.

Special Courses

Special workshops for religious leaders and Jamia's Khateebis (Muslim clerics) have been held. Students of institutes like Da'wah Academy, Islamic Women University and Al Huda Foundation have also participated in these special workshops.

Media Workshops

FHRI, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), has organized workshops for print and electronic media personnel in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. The main objective of these workshops was to create and strengthen knowledge about ideas and values of human rights among media personnel, the importance of which has become critical due to the prevailing situation in the country. Enabling media people to participate in the process of awareness-creation on pressing human rights issues is imperative. These activities have proven to have great impact, as seen in the newspaper articles and television broadcasts of the people who have attended the FHRI courses. The number of articles on human rights issues has increased tremendously since 2002, when the first workshop was conducted. Following the media workshops, most of the participants have followed up by highlighting abuses of human

rights in reports on domestic violence, discrimination against women, minorities' rights, child abuse, bonded labor and honor killings. The print media is making considerable contribution through special posters on human rights for display in police stations and district offices.

Teaching materials

FHRI found out during visits to many Pakistani schools the lack of literature that can guide teachers in understanding and teaching human rights concepts. It thus developed human rights literatures emphasizing the rights of the vulnerable in society (women, children and minorities) and distributed them to participants in its workshops and training courses. The human rights publications of FHRI are listed below:

1. Human Rights for Teachers and Administrators – a book containing fundamental human rights documents including:

- i) Pakistan's human rights education curriculum for primary and secondary schools;
- ii) Farewell Hajj address of the Prophet Mohammad;
- iii) The Constitution of Pakistan (Articles 7 to 40);
- iv) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- v) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- vi) The Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC);
- vii) The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights.

This booklet is distributed to teachers and participants who attend programs organized by FHRI. It also published the same book in the regional languages (Urdu, Pashto, Balochi, Dari, Brahwi and Sindhi).

2. *Our Children's Concept of Human Rights*

FHRI published *Our Children's Concept of Human Rights* that contains children's illustrations about their concept of human rights. These illustrations were produced during the 'Human Rights Day' celebration in different schools. During this celebration, students make posters on various issues like peace, fundamental rights, child labor, child rights, poverty and unemployment, women's rights, and environment and pollution.

3. *Newsletters and booklets*

After every few months, FHRI publishes a brief newsletter that describes in detail its activities and on-going programs.

It also makes booklets on human rights in English, Urdu (the national language), as well as Pushto and Sindhi (regional languages) versions. It is imperative that these materials are in appropriate regional languages to facilitate effective teaching of human rights in the formal education system of Pakistan. Copies of the literature are given to participants attending one-day workshops, one-week diploma courses, and human rights media workshops, and to all the local institutions. Lecture handouts of the resource persons and trainers are also given to participants as additional reference materials.

School Human Rights Days

FHRI organizes Human Rights Days in schools nationwide. Students spend a couple of weeks preparing different activities including debates, speech competitions, poster competitions, dramas, tableaux and lectures on specific human rights subjects by FHRI staff and resource persons. These activities are proven effective ways of instilling human rights awareness among the students. The number of

participating young students and their enthusiasm for such activities indicate the sensitivity of Pakistani youth towards combating violations of human rights. About 28,000 students have been sensitized through these activities.

For speech competitions, the students may choose any of the following topics:

- Concepts of Human Rights in 21st Century
- Vulnerable Groups in Society
- Women's Rights in Pakistan
- Child Rights
- Rights of Minorities in Pakistan
- All Human Beings are Equal
- Human Rights and Islam
- Peace & Tolerance in the Classroom
- Treatment of Women in Jails
- Education of Women
- Forced Marriages
- Child Labor in Pakistan
- Bonded Labor in Pakistan
- Street Children
- Educate Every Child
- Freedom of Expression
- Freedom of Association
- Education as an Investment
- Child Marriages are Evil
- Gender Equality Must Be Ensured
- Domestic Violence Must Stop
- The Evil of Honor Killings.

The students' performances in speech competitions are so outstanding that often difficulty arises in judging the first, second and third place winners. Students of Class III to Class IX participate in poster competitions. The posters reflect violence against human lives and dignity and demand for peace and honor. Students participate in different tableaux and dramas in which human rights aspects like rights of women, children and minorities are highlighted. Students also read poems and sing national songs.

Resource persons from FHRI give lectures on the topic "The Importance of Human

Rights in Students' Practical Lives" in every Human Rights Day program. These lectures enable students to understand their rights and responsibilities as members of society. They also highlight Islam as a religion of peace and the need for Muslims to adopt values of tolerance, understanding and acceptance of differences in opinion.

Main obstacles to change

Human rights education is vital in sensitizing the younger generation so that a more tolerant and non-violent society develops. With globalization, extremists in society have linked up with others around the world, leading to growing cases of international violence and terrorism often being traced to Pakistan. The deeply disturbing influence of religious extremists can only be curbed by enhanced emphasis on human rights awareness. Therefore teachers have to be trained to help end this era of inquisition and bring about a rapid renaissance in society. The main obstacle that FHRI normally faces in some conservative areas is opposition of extremists, which is being overcome through enlightenment and by urging them towards moderation. With strong local contacts and scholars as well as with the employment of techniques that FHRI trainers normally use in their training methodologies, the efforts toward enlightenment and moderation were quite successful.

Positive feedback from participants

FHRI has trained more than 780 senior educationists and about 26,000 teachers throughout the country. The feedback from them is very positive. Judging from the critiques given at the end of each workshop, participants have been highly agreeable to the subject matter of the programs. They are very confident about what they gain from the workshops. Many of

the participants are so motivated that they want to give their services voluntarily for future work with FHRI. There are numerous letters from different districts and rural areas fully endorsing FHRI's work. These letters also indicate interest of the letter senders to get further involved with FHRI as resource persons in future programs.

The work of FHRI is very successful and widely acclaimed. No other organization with proven track record, experience and ability to conduct such programs as effectively on a nationwide basis exists in Pakistan. Resource persons and educationists, particularly from rural areas have requested many more such workshops, as indeed have government education authorities from all the provinces.

Conclusion

Many countries today face the problem of growing intolerance and violence against women. FHRI's initiative on "changing the mindset" is seen as unique in addressing this problem. Representatives of governments and civil society from several countries have expressed interest on this initiative and strong desire to introduce similar initiatives in their own countries.

While changing the moral axioms of an entire nation, and indeed of many nations, is a monumental task that will take generations to accomplish, FHRI has taken the first step towards sustained women's protection in Pakistan through tangible, long-term, preventive programs.

Endnote

ⁱ This national action plan was developed in collaboration with UNESCO Islamabad office.