



Human Rights Friendly Schools

NEWS October-November 2012

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the October-November 2012 edition of Human Rights Friendly Schools News! This newsletter aims to share information, ideas and experiences across the International Human Rights Friendly Schools Network.

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Time to hear school members' voice! We would like to hear and share what members of Human Rights Friendly Schools around the world think about the project. To introduce us to a student, teacher, staff member or parent for next month's interview, please contact us at HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org

Learn online and connect with others! www.respectmyrights.org

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RESPECT _____
MY RIGHTS

Recent developments in the International Human Rights Friendly Schools Network!

INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH with...

Deborah Abbey, Accra High School in Ghana



Deborah Abbey, student of Accra High School, debating death penalty at an interschool meeting, Ghana, 2012 © Amnesty International

“My name is Deborah Abbey, I am a student of Accra High School. I am 16 years old, in my third year. When I started in Accra high School in 2010, I was introduced to the AI club of the school and wanted to get involved. When I joined I heard of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project. I believed in its goals and started taking part in its activities. I have enjoyed everything so far, and I want carry on working for human rights. I made sure I got involved in every activity, for example the interschool debate. I also joined Amnesty International Campaigns against the death penalty or on forced evictions. Now, to ensure the project carries on after we graduate, I also helped introduce the project to year 1 and year 2 students of the school so that they can take responsibility of the project.”

“The Human Rights Friendly Schools project has changed my view of the world, I believe that everybody must be respected and their dignity preserved. I know more about my rights as an individual and I know more of those of my parents and siblings, so I respect their rights and they are also learning about their rights and responsibilities. The first time I heard about the project, I explained its objectives to my mother. She did not understand it at first, so I explained to her the importance of respecting individual rights in the school and of participation. She is very happy I joined the club and that I participate in the project. She supports me and came to see me at the interschool debate on the death penalty.”

“ The project has changed my view of the world, I believe that everybody must be respected and their dignity preserved.

”

“I am officially a member of Amnesty International and will be so even after I graduate. Once I graduate from high school, I do want to continue with the project and help Amnesty introduce the project to new schools and encourage more people to join.”

“To people who are thinking about getting involved in the project I would say that the project is very important and has taught me many things on the personal level. They can learn useful skills, and learn about themselves. Thanks to the project I know I want to become a human rights lawyer. I want to be able to educate people of my family, in my country and outside of my country about human rights.”

What has changed in your school since the project started?

The first change we are able to see as a result of the project is in the **school governance and participation**. The project was able to change the election system and make it more democratic. Also, Amnesty International trained us and taught us skills, for example the Student Prefects have learned communication skills to talk to the administration and the student body.

In terms of **relationships**, the student-student and student-staff relationships have improved. Now we treat each other with respect and as equals. Between the school and the parents too, the parents are invited to meetings and are able to talk freely to the teachers and the administration. The project also brought students together, we know each other's rights; Christian and Muslim students are together and respect each other.

Finally, the **Human Rights Garden** is there for everybody to visualise human rights, they can talk freely there and discuss human rights in an open space.

AI Bermuda and Warwick Academy launch the project

In October 2012, Warwick Academy the Human Rights Friendly School in Bermuda entered into a partnership with Amnesty International Bermuda to become the first “Human Rights Friendly School” on the Island. Warwick Academy will be piloting this project for three years and will serve as a model for other interested schools in Bermuda.



From left to right: Suzanne Wilson AI Bermuda Director, Nelleke Hollis, AI Bermuda Chairperson, Margaret McCorkell, Warwick Academy, Headmistress, Françoise Wolffe, Human Rights Friendly Schools, Coordinator for AI Bermuda, Courtney Clay, AI Bermuda Youth, Coordinator and Y13 student at Warwick Academy, October 2012.

© Nolwenn Pugi

Warwick Academy was selected to pilot the project in Bermuda because it presented many characteristics of a typical “Human Rights Friendly School”. “The school culture already embraced some of the key values promoted by Amnesty International, thus providing a solid foundation for the project. Additionally, we considered that the diversity of the Warwick Academy student body would be an asset to the program” observed Françoise Wolffe, AI Bermuda Human Rights Education Coordinator.

A working group comprising representatives from all sections of the school, including students and parents, was recently set up at Warwick Academy. Its role is to lead the implementation of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project and encourage the participation of all members of the school community. Two teachers representing the Primary and Senior Schools were also appointed to focus more specifically on curriculum development.

Mrs. McCorkell, Warwick Academy Headmistress, is equally pleased that Warwick Academy is now a Human Rights Friendly School, explaining:

“[The Human Rights Friendly Schools project] ties in not only with my personal focus but also mirrors our school’s mission and vision as well as our strategic plan.”

More information: Françoise Palau-Wolffe
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Visit Warwick Academy Website:
<https://www.warwickacad.bm/Home.aspx>

BE INSPIRED!

KENYA— Schools discuss the right to housing

On 6 October 2012, State House Girls High School, one of the three Human Rights Friendly Schools in Kenya, welcomed 145 students and 15 teachers for an exchange forum on housing rights. The students and teachers were members of human rights clubs at ten schools in the four major slums of Nairobi (Kibera, Mathare, Korogocho And Mukuru).

The forum was a unique opportunity for students living in different communities to meet each other and share knowledge, experiences and ideas. It allowed them to positively, responsibly and productively engage with human rights issues within the school and the wider society.



Students perform a human rights choral verse at the slum-based school human rights club exchange visit to Statehouse Girls School, in October 2012. © Amnesty International Kenya

The theme of the day was “**respecting my housing right is respecting my human dignity**”. Each school prepared a performance such as a skit, poem, group discussions or debate in relation to housing rights and human dignity. Students outlined issues of self-worth, respect, honor and dignity. They offered further commentary on forced evictions, rape, gender based violence, discrimination, killings (including those that occurred during post-election violence in Kenya in 2008), excess force by the police, misuse of power, and violations of other human rights.

Members of the human rights clubs shared thoughts on how human dignity could be achieved. Ideas included having positive attitudes, strengthening peer groups, encouraging mutual respect throughout society, and building human rights awareness.



Students participated in a human rights debate during the exchange visit between the Human Rights Friendly School, Statehouse Girls School, and slum-based schools in October 2012. © Amnesty International Kenya

HUNGARY– Tackling discrimination against Roma

Dr. Ámbédkár School is a second chance school, offering students of nearby marginalised settlements the possibility to pursue their high school education. Indeed, most students at Dr. Ámbédkár belong to the Roma community, some of whom left primary education, or quit school at an early age to go into trade.



Students from Dr Ambedkar school working together at a human rights workshop, 2012.
© Amnesty International Hungary

The Roma community in Hungary constitutes a minority which suffers from discrimination and social exclusion. The Human Rights Friendly Schools project is a channel to empower members of this community; through teacher training, human rights camps for the student council and integration of human rights in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Students and the school community learn about their rights and how to exercise them in their everyday life.

In addition, collaboration with NGOs and other organisations proved useful in tackling discrimination against the Roma community. Dr Ámbédkár School works with TASZ (the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union), a non-profit human rights NGO, to educate citizens about their basic human rights and advocate against undue interference and misuse of power by the authorities.

TASZ assists the school community with legal aid and support. In February 2012, unlawful police conduct was observed in the school building against four students. With the help of TASZ, the school lobbied the Hungarian National Police Headquarters (ORFK), the Independent Police Complaints Board and the Ombudsman. As a result, it was concluded that students' rights were violated by the police on this occasion. A TASZ hotline is also available in the school to provide school members with counselling and legal advice and services.

Through the partnership with organizations, the school community is able to access legal advice and counselling when they feel their basic rights and freedoms are being abused. This empowers them to defend their individual human rights, and those of the Roma community as a whole.

IRELAND –A teacher's peer-education initiative

Teachers in Ireland have been working with AI Ireland to develop their peer-education skills. Through the 'White Sparks' initiative, they will deliver peer-training to teachers in their school or to other schools within their community, using the skills they have learned through the Human Rights Friendly Schools project and their work with Amnesty International. The objective is for each teacher to deliver five human rights education trainings to other teachers within the school year. AI Ireland will facilitate connection between teachers through previously established contacts.

GET IN PAIRS, LEARN AND SHARE ONLINE!

Students in Bermuda and Kenya connect

The Warwick Academy Youth Group selected the theme of “**Poverty as a source of human rights violations**” as the focus of their work for the year and participated in the www.respectmyrights.com digital platform.



On this occasion they learned about the right to housing and focused on the issue of forced evictions of Romani people in Europe.

In order to “bring the issue back home”, a screening of the movie “Poverty in Paradise: the Price We Pay” was organized, followed by a Question and Answer session where students had the opportunity to ask questions about poverty in Bermuda.

Both the movie and the video of the Question and Answer session will be shared with Human Rights Friendly Schools in Kenya who have paired with Warwick Academy in the context of learning about human rights through the Respect My Rights platform.

Students from the Human Rights Friendly Schools youth group in Warwick Academy in a session using www.respectmyrights.org online platform, October 2012. From left to right Alex, Théo, Corrie, Jacy © Amnesty International Bermuda

Connect with others online!

RESPECT MY RIGHTS



Schools can use Respect My Rights to engage young people to learn and take actions in order to...

- ... learn about human rights abuses that drive poverty
- ... share stories and opinion with others around the world
- ... take action on the Letter Writing Marathon in or outside the classroom
- ... learn what other schools are doing

Respect My Rights online platform is live!

This new interactive website aims to engage and inspire young people between the ages of 16-22 to **learn about** and **take action** against the **human rights abuses that deepen and drive poverty**.

Young people around the world can undertake **challenges** to reflect on what they have learnt about other people’s experiences, reconsider their choices and assumptions, take action, and share their stories and opinions with each other via photos, videos and blogs on a **digital scrapbook**. Two new challenges for young people have been developed based on featured individual cases. The website is available in six languages: English, French, Spanish, Polish, Slovenian and Italian.

Enjoy the Human Rights learning journey on www.respectmyrights.org!

Take Action

Join the Letter Writing Marathon 2012!

7-16 December 2012

Write for Rights
Make a difference

Join hundreds of thousands of people around the world and take action for people facing human rights violations



Every year, thousands of people around the world take part in Amnesty International's *Write for Rights* Letter Writing Marathon to demand that the rights of individuals are upheld. Last year people in more than 80 countries took part in what was the world's largest human rights event, resulting in the delivery of more than 1.3 million actions.

Since 2009, Human Rights Friendly Schools around the world have taken part to this international event by raising the visibility of human rights issues related to individual cases in schools and classrooms. School communities have organised events to discuss human rights violations and highlight individual cases they felt were of particular concern or invited former prisoners of conscience to share their story with the school community as well as the wider community.

Example from the 2011 Letter Writing Marathon in Morocco

Ibn Youssef High School organised an open day to inform the public about human rights violations and abuses, and to invite people to take action by signing petitions for victims.

Antoinette Chahine, a former Lebanese prisoner, was invited to speak at the event. As a prisoner, she had been handed the death penalty, however following a global action by AI members, she was later freed.

After her visit to the school, students felt driven to increase peoples' knowledge of the issues and visited a Marrakech University in order to raise awareness and collect signatures. These actions received **media coverage** in Morocco and worked also to promote the Human Rights Friendly Schools project.



With the Letter Writing Marathon, schools can...

- ... take action to promote and defend human rights
- ... learn about individual cases and related global issues
- ... involve the wider community in human rights activities
- ... connect with other schools and youth around the world through www.respectmyrights.org

Useful Resources

A leaflet introducing the Letter Writing Marathon is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic at <http://bit.ly/QXkzGp>.

AI Australia developed materials for teachers <http://bit.ly/ZWLDLk> and lesson plans <http://bit.ly/UKeHRV>

AI UK created a resource specifically designed for young people age 11-16 <http://bit.ly/SRbmjW>

AI Canada French speaking designed a resource for primary schools <http://bit.ly/Q5nqB7>

Videos on each individual case are now available here: <http://bit.ly/SJxiBo> and promotional video here <http://bit.ly/SJxiBo>

Breaking News!

Human Rights Friendly Schools in the news!

Becoming a Human Rights Friendly School: A guide for schools around the world was launched in different media including Human Rights Education Associates, Reliefweb and various Amnesty International magazines such as the Mawared (in Arabic).

The project was highlighted on Amnesty International news features: <http://bit.ly/TG2nkD>.

We have received various expression of interest from organisations in new countries.

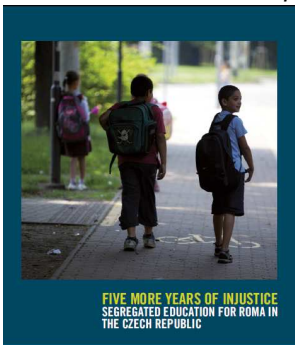
To inform people interested about the project, we invite you to visit the new project page on www.amnesty.org:

<http://bit.ly/TG2exy>

Watch out for the January-February 2013 issue of the Wire (Amnesty International Magazine for members), which includes an interview from Ayoub, a student from Ibn Youssef High School in Marrakech (Morocco), who will be sharing his experience of the project and the impact it has had on his life since its implementation in 2009!

Materials of the Month

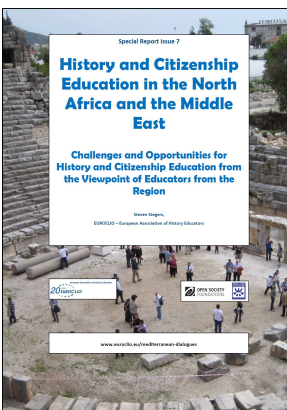
Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre Report_ *Five more years of injustice segregated education for Roma in the Czech Republic_ English, Romani*



In 2007, the European Court of Human Rights found that the Czech Republic had violated the right of Romani children to an education free from discrimination, by placing them in “special schools”, which offered lower quality education. Five years on, very little progress has been made to guarantee equal access to education. Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are calling on the Czech government to take all necessary measures to end this injustice in order to avoid yet another generation being trapped in the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

To access the report, click on the link <http://bit.ly/SrCXaW>

Euroclio Special Report _ *History and Citizenship Education in the North Africa and the Middle East _ English, French, Spanish*



History and citizenship educators have to react to the socio-political changes which are taking place in the Arab World. The transition poses new questions and challenges to them, such as ‘How to teach about the former political leadership?’, ‘How to teach history in a way that helps build democratic societies?’, ‘What does citizenship mean in the new context?’, ‘How to prevent the instrumentalisation of history education by new groups in power?’. This report provides information, describes challenges, and offers ways forward for history and heritage education in North Africa and the Middle East, as identified by a group of history and citizenship education professionals.

To access the report, click on the link <http://bit.ly/ZzcheH>

If you would like to **share your experiences** of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project or **news from your section** related to the project, please contact the IS HRE team (HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org) no later than **20 January 2013**, if you wish your entry to be published in the next edition of the Human Rights Friendly Schools News.