

AMNESTY
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HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

A GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

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WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL (HRFS)?

A HRFS is a community that practises and promotes human rights values in all aspects of school life and beyond.

HRFS make a commitment to teaching:

ABOUT human rights so that the school community understands what they are and why they are important

THROUGH human rights so that the school becomes a model of excellence in human rights practice

FOR human rights so that all members of the school community know their rights and learn to protect the rights of others

Inclusion, tolerance and respect for diversity are core principles of human rights. When these principles start to direct the thoughts and actions of the school community, little room is left for bullying and discrimination: we relate to one another, not as rich or poor, dark or fair, passed or failed, but as human beings made equal by the rights we share. Members of HRFS communities act, speak out and stand-up for their rights. They recognize and live up to their responsibilities by respecting the rights of others.

HRFS take a whole-school approach. This means that human rights principles are applied to all aspects of school life, understood in terms of four key areas: governance, relationships, curriculum and environment.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HRFS?

HRFS cultivate the skills needed by the leaders of today and tomorrow. When a school decides to become human rights friendly, it takes an important step towards improving the lives of children and communities.

Amnesty International's experience has shown that the HRFS approach benefits schools by:

- Creating more inclusive and engaging educational environments
- Improving student attitudes toward learning
- Reducing discrimination and harassment
- Enhancing relationships between students, teachers and other staff
- Fostering mutual respect and acceptance between members of the school community
- Teaching students how to recognize their own human rights and responsibilities

The HRFS approach also benefits schools by providing opportunities for capacity-building and skill development for each and every person in school communities and beyond. An external evaluation found that the HRFS approach fosters critical thinking and leadership skills among students. For example, student councils and other participatory forums give students practical experience of influencing community decision making process and resolving conflict.

In other words, HRFS lead the way in preparing students to become responsible leaders in their communities who are able to stand-up for their own and others' human rights.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY SCHOOL TO BECOME HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY?

HRFS need strong support and leadership from their administrators to thrive.

You can help by:

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE APPROACH

Start with the HRFS Toolkit, available online – see back cover.

MAKING SPACE FOR TEACHER TRAINING

HRFS require teachers to think carefully about how to integrate human rights into the classroom and curriculum. Training in human rights principles and practice is essential. As we all know, however, teachers are very busy people – administrative support for in-service training allows teachers to manage their workload.

DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT

Take action on the whole-school approach in a way that makes your commitment visible to the school community. Some ways of doing this include building human rights into school policies, putting human rights on the agenda of school meetings, and creating a permanent space (such as a bulletin board or garden) for public dialogue about becoming human rights friendly.

CONNECTING WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Your nearest Amnesty International office can provide you with more information about available networks and teaching resources.

If you have any ideas about how your school can take action to become more human rights friendly, please share them with us. See back cover for contact details.



...preparing
students to become
responsible leaders
in their communities

Image: Human rights debate at
the Statehouse Girls School
© Amnesty International Kenya

Cover Image:
HRFS repackaging meeting Nairobi
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INDIA: THEATRICAL ROLE-PLAY TO TACKLE BULLYING

When Kala and Priya, two 13 year old pupils at the Delhi Public School of North Bangalore, decided to create a study group on a social media platform, they knew little about the dramatic consequences this could have. But soon the group became the target of Rajan, the school's bully, and their online platform transformed into a virtual playground, where repetitive insults and abuses multiplied ...

These situations are not rare at school and social media created new spaces where bullying can take place. Fortunately Kala and Priya are fictional names and their story – despite its reality – is an imagined scenario. It is a theatrical role-play created by a team of 13 year old students. The teenagers wrote the script and built a performance around cyber bullying to encourage their audiences to reflect on real life experiences.

Arpita Mohapatra, English teacher at the school, supervised the play. Arpita has received training through the human rights education program of Amnesty International India, and recreating real life situations through theatrical performance is one of the methods implemented by her school to talk about bullying. Arpita explains that engaging pupils in activities such as debates and the creation of an anti-bullying slogan has also encouraged them to talk more freely. “We noticed that children who commit those acts or who are spectators are now more likely to come to us, saying those acts are wrong.” The campaign has met with great enthusiasm among students. “I now see children admitting their mistakes and grateful for learning that it is wrong”, she says.

Using the whole-school approach, teachers, students and parents can work together to develop anti-bullying policies and structures. “If schools only use the traditional way of dealing with bullying through punishment... it doesn't root out the problem.” says Inka Dama of Amnesty International India, “On the other hand, if children learn about relationships, the school environment being a bully-free zone, they will begin to understand that this is against someone's rights. The school is where children spend their day, where they learn, see and experience. This becomes part of their personality and – eventually – of who they will be.”

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

Contact your school, or your nearest Amnesty International office:

You can find your local **Amnesty International office** by searching for your country here:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/>

Regional Office contacts are here:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/about-us/contact/>

See also: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>