

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER : Issue 7, July 2001

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HRE is produced by the Human Rights Education team at the headquarters of Amnesty International
AI Index: POL 32/001/2001

HRE in Argentina

Jimena Marquez, a journalist, is the voluntary HRE Coordinator at AI Argentina. In 1999 she was elected as a member of the HRE International Coordinating Committee at the first HRE International Forum Meeting in Cincinnati, USA. The HRE team at the IS caught up with her in April to find out about the work she is doing in Argentina. Here's what she told us.

Why is HRE important for AI in Argentina?

It is an important tool for reaching out to people at different levels in society. It provides a vital focus for our work because it helps people understand what AI is and what we stand for. It helps to make us relevant as we can work on human rights violations that are directly related to our people's lives.

What are the main human rights problems facing Argentina at present?

Impunity is a major issue for us, especially with regard to the people who were responsible for genocide, torture and disappearances. Two laws have recently been passed by our government that can make the military accountable for human rights abuses. HRE programs can make sure that people understand these laws. There are also social and economic violations that cause many problems for people in our communities.

Who are the key target groups you work with?

Our main target groups are teachers from the formal education sector and informal human rights educators who work with community groups. These groups include trade unions and women's and youth organizations, because people from these sectors of society suffer from many violations. AI Argentina works with these groups by supporting their education programs with skills in HRE and information about human rights.

What has the government done to include human rights in the school curriculum?

Human rights is not a specific part of the formal curriculum but there are lessons that cover human rights issues as part of teaching on citizenship and tolerance. Teachers vary in their attitude towards this as a curriculum subject. Some are interested and make an effort to include human rights, others do not think it is important. Teachers who are committed to human rights make good use of the materials that AI Argentina has developed over the last few years.

How do you combine your HRE work with the work of other NGOs?

There are a number of NGOs working in the area of human rights but they mostly concentrate on awareness-raising and promotion rather than HRE programs. None have long-term strategies for HRE and this is where AI Argentina can support them with materials and provide capacity-building where appropriate.

We do not have a structured NGO network in Argentina but recently AI participated in the first meeting of NGOs to discuss setting up a national HRE network. Within the region, the section belongs to the Latin American Network for Peace and Human Rights.

What new activities have you been involved in?

Our most exciting activity is a two-year project started in 1999 involving the Toba people, an indigenous group from the northeast of Argentina. They have been displaced to the cities, leaving behind their lands and homes. Their goal is to keep their culture alive even though they are now thousands of miles from their original homeland.

In a province of Buenos Aires, 33 families have settled on donated land and constructed homes with only a little help from the government and NGOs. They survive by making and selling artefacts of their culture. They also produce a publication describing the culture, history and current situation of the Toba people.

The aim of the project is to create a space within the settlement for children to play. This has involved creating a "square" where the Toba children and their families can play creatively and plant trees. The project began as an initiative of one member of the AI section HRE team who had met some Toba families. The project was developed through discussion with the families who were at all times directly involved in planning and implementation.

During the course of the project it became evident to the AI members that the community's rights were being violated because they were denied access to many amenities that they needed to have a decent standard of living. As a result of this the project took on an educational element as it began to involve teaching the children and the families about the rights of the child, beginning with their right to have a space for play. Most of the day-to-day work has finished but AI retains ongoing contact with the community.

Another recent initiative has been with Peace Child International (PCI), an organization whose members are children and teenagers. It involves organizing and conducting workshops in various provinces in Argentina on a number of ecological and environmental issues.

What are the main obstacles to your HRE work?

Definitely a lack of finances and resources. We need to have at least one full-time person for our HRE work. At the moment we rely on volunteers as we only have two full-time staff at the section office and they are busy with regular AI work. HRE is a major part of our work and it is often too much for volunteers to do. Argentina is a large country and travel is difficult, making it impossible to reach out to all areas.

What lessons have you learnt that you would like to share with others?

It is important to have a formal HRE network both within AI and between AI and other NGOs. AI structures should work towards self-reliance in funding. We have learnt how to cope without having a great deal of financial resources but it is also important to use funds wisely when you do have them.

How can the HRE team at the IS help you in your work?

It can certainly help facilitate good communication with other sections, and be a central resource for materials, especially those developed and used by other sections. The internet would be useful in this context. Also, the HRE team could be a link to other NGOs. A good example of this is when the IS put us in contact with PCI.

AI Israel brings theatre into HRE

Article written by Sharon Harel, HRE Coordinator, AI Israel

AI Israel has found an exciting new direction for its HRE work in the informal education sector with the development of a theatre program.

The work targets young people in schools and aims to create a better understanding of the rights of the child through culture and art. It encourages young people to take action to stop and prevent violations against children and raises awareness in the general community about children's rights.

The theatre program successfully combines the principles of HRE work – it is planned over a period of time with carefully selected issues and involves young people learning through interactive methodology. There is a cooperative approach to the use of resources which enables the program to be sustainable, and the programs are followed up by children and teachers in the form of action-related activities.

The program

The program centres around a play with a suitable theme written and performed by the National Theater for Children and Youth in Israel. The theatre group, which was established 30 years ago by the famous actress Orna Porat with the Ministry of Education and Culture, has a long history of bringing real-life issues to young people throughout Israel through innovative theatre. Its primary goal is to acquaint children in Israel with the art of theatre, and impart aesthetic, national and universal values through first-hand contact with drama.

Once the theatre group has created the play, AI Israel's HRE team develops a workshop to accompany it. AI then uses its contacts in schools to encourage them to sign up to the program. Schools that do are visited by AI and the theatre group four times a year to give all pupils the chance to see the play and attend the workshop.

Working together has brought a new dimension to the work of AI Israel and the National Theater for Children and Youth in Israel. The cooperative approach ensures both organizations benefit culturally and financially from the arrangement.

The play – *Born Free*

For the first year of the program the Theatre Group created a production called *Born Free* which explores the subject of child labour.

The play is based on the true story of Iqbal, a Pakistani boy who was sold into forced labour as a carpet weaver at the age of four. In 1991, after working for six years, Iqbal escaped and joined a group working against child slavery. He helped to free thousands of child slaves and close down the carpet factories that employ them. As a result, Iqbal received death threats. At the age of 12 he was invited to speak about child labour at the UN Assembly. Shortly after returning to his village in Pakistan, he was tragically killed while riding his bicycle.

The play describes vividly the difficult and deprived life of a poor child in Pakistan. The set, costumes and music bring to life the traditions, culture and daily challenges of children in countries like Pakistan.

The inspiration behind the play was the following story, which was told to the Theatre Group's playwright, Talma Elyagon, by a Pakistani Professor of Economics.

One stormy night as the thunder hit, the lightning flashed and the rain flooded the whole country, a nightingale found himself stuck in a tree, unable to leave. He didn't know how he would find his way home in such awful rain. Then a firefly appeared and asked the nightingale, "What is the problem? Why are you so miserable?" The nightingale cried and said, "I want to go home, it's cold here, but I'm afraid of the dark and I can't see anything." The firefly answered, "I'll help you." She moved in front of him, glowing and showing the way until they reached the nightingale's house. The nightingale thanked the firefly and asked her, "Tell me, why did you help me?" The firefly replied, "Because God gave me the gift of being able to light up like a torch and my parents told me that those who help others who are suffering are the best."

“This story is the core of the play,” Elyagon explains, “we are all fireflies and we can light the way... and if we could light up the darkness for one minute, even for one child only, maybe this is the beginning of a better future.”

The workshop

Before each performance AI Israel conducts a participatory workshop around the rights of the child, using the characters from the play as examples. Their aim is to make sure that the story has real meaning for the children. The HRE team at the section has trained members as “human rights educators” and developed a program that includes games and information about the different types of abuses experienced by child labourers and explores why some children are protected from abuses and some are not. Excerpts from short documentaries are used as triggers for discussion and the children are encouraged to participate, ask questions and express ideas.

One exercise uses a large colourful clock made from card. The educator turns the hands of the clock to 6am and asks the children what they are doing at that time of the day. They usually respond that they are either asleep or eating breakfast. The educator then explains that Iqbal would already be working at this time, usually without having eaten any breakfast. The children are taken through different times of the day and compare what they would normally be doing with what Iqbal would be doing.

After the play

As a result of more than 100 workshops and performances of Born Free, over 12,000 children have participated in AI activities. Many have created and implemented actions to raise awareness in their school and community of the issues raised by the program. They have decorated their classrooms with articles and posters, designed postcards and set up petitions against the torture of children. They have organized special events for Rights of the Child Day, made their school a torture-free zone and created a speakers corner for children to express their feelings about human rights. Some have joined AI’s Junior Urgent Action Network.

The program has brought other benefits too. Parents who watched the play have contacted the AI Israel office and reported on child labour in Israel. Media coverage of the issue has increased, especially after the gala opening of the play that took place in a cultural centre in Tel-Aviv. In collaboration with the Theatre Group, an exhibition of the artworks created by the children as a result of attending the workshop and play was held at the same time. These included kites for Iqbal and processions of children wearing carpets, as well as drawings, letters and petitions.

Women’s Rights and Education

AI sections throughout the world are realizing the important role that HRE can play in the struggle for women’s rights and are integrating activities that deal with discrimination and violence against women into their education programs. Sections such as AI Morocco, AI Côte d’Ivoire and AI Slovenia have developed innovative and exciting approaches to this issue, working in partnership with NGOs that focus specifically on women’s rights.

The attendance of members of the International Women’s Network (IWN) at the IS Coordinators Training Seminar in London last November offered a unique opportunity to share experiences and discuss ideas for future HRE programs. The HRE team took advantage of this by organizing a workshop on women’s rights and education.

Nine coordinators (eight women and one man) attended the workshop. They came from Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, Slovenia, New Zealand, Mexico, Venezuela and the Africa Development Team at the IS. The main objectives of the workshop were to explore ways in which women’s rights could be integrated into an AI structure’s HRE program and to discuss possibilities for developing strategies and materials to educate AI members about women’s rights.

Sharing experiences

The AI structures represented at the workshop are involved in a range of HRE activities. However they pointed out that their work on women's rights was limited to human rights awareness programs. These included:

- addressing the legal aspects of violence against women with coalitions of NGOs
- training groups on defending women's rights
- internal workshops to produce materials on women's rights
- involving women in International Women's Day activities
- introducing women's rights to boys' schools in short presentations
- talking to women in market places
- holding meetings with community leaders on women's rights issues

The workshop participants explored in groups the issues involved in integrating women's rights into HRE programs and identified the following:

Benefits to Amnesty:

Women's rights:

- have a direct relevance to Amnesty's work
- include potential thematic campaign issues, such as violence against women in domestic and public areas
- are an important issue in all regions of the world

HRE can play a positive role in dealing with internal issues within AI regarding women's rights and can strengthen AI structures and campaigning work in this area.

Possible barriers to getting support:

- Negative attitudes towards gender issues and women's rights in some countries.
- Varying ideas about the issues, arising from a general lack of understanding about women's rights.
- A lack of will within AI structures to tackle the issue of women's rights.
- A lack of confidence and skills in women members to strengthen that will and ensure that adequate resources are allocated for education programs.

Approaches to adopt to overcome these barriers:

- Focusing programs on educational activities targeted at AI staff, board members and membership structures to overcome the lack of understanding about women's rights and their relevance to AI work.
- Setting up ways to share materials, ideas and programs between AI structures.
- Establishing and strengthening links with women's NGOs to gain information and experience about the issues on a local and national level and share AI's knowledge of international standards and campaigning ability (for instance in lobbying for ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).
- Working with other NGOs on joint projects and sharing resources such as training venues, equipment and materials.

Follow up

All participants agreed that the workshop should be followed up. One idea discussed by the group was to conduct a pilot workshop to develop a generic format for a series of training workshops that sections could adapt and use for the education of their own staff, board members, groups and networks.

Train-the-trainers sessions could then be conducted, based on the issues developed in the generic workshop. This would provide more human resources in sections for conducting internal and external HRE programs on women's rights.

Methodology

During the workshop, the IS HRE coordinator conducted two sessions on the value of using action methods and interactive methodology to help bring about changes in attitude. The topics were "Gender Stereotyping" and "The Role of Women in Different Cultures". The sessions demonstrated the use of action methods in providing an environment for people to change their attitudes to women's rights. The participants discussed and analyzed the effectiveness of the activities and how they could potentially be used in HRE programs.

Conclusions

Education programs on women's rights can have a number of goals and target groups, for example:

- *Governments* must be lobbied to ensure that existing national laws are consistent with international conventions and standards and that women's rights are included in relevant curricula such as police training.
- *People* who marginalize and ignore women's rights need a long-term educational approach concentrating on changing attitudes and behaviour to the role of women in all levels of society.
- *Women* need activities that will help them increase their knowledge and understanding of their rights and provide skills that can develop confidence and encourage involvement in actions that promote and defend their rights.

Most of the target groups selected for HRE programs are external to AI and can include teachers working in formal education or educators working with community groups. However there is a growing realization within structures that it is also important to offer education to AI members.

Women's rights and gender sensitivity are legitimate and important subjects for internal education programs, especially if AI is to integrate women's rights and gender sensitivity into all aspects of campaigning and organizational development.

Integrating HRE with Membership Development

The HRE program implemented by AI Philippines includes a workshop for new members to help them learn about human rights and AI. All members are expected to attend. Rocelle Magpayo sent us this interesting and innovative workshop.

Are you ready for the challenge?

A Basic Orientation Workshop about AI

The game

Integrating HRE and Membership Development.

The players

- New members of AI
- Group coordinators
- Human rights-youth action network
- Membership

The arena

The National Secretariat office or another suitable place.

The game masters

- Membership development coordinator
- Pool of trainers
- Speakers

The challenge

The workshop aims to extend the breadth and depth of the players' knowledge of human rights and test the limits of their energy. A hectic schedule is set for them over three days or more. The ultimate challenge is for them to establish their own AI groups.

The game plan

Those who are courageous enough to rise to the challenge arrive at the arena. Soon after their arrival, the players seal their fate by registering for the workshop. They are then divided into different groups and meet with the membership development coordinator. With the coordinator on stage, the ground rules are laid down... and the game starts!

The first challenge for the day is to get comfortable in the environment of the workshop.

Now the real game begins! For three consecutive days (or even more), the players undergo a barrage of workshops.

The players attend the following sessions conducted by experts in the field:

Know your rights

- respect for human dignity
- importance of human rights
- human rights actions, concerns and responsibilities

Contextualizing human rights

- illustrating human rights violations
- connecting personal experiences to the social, economic, political and cultural forces which allow human rights violations to happen

Individual human beings as proactive human rights promoters and defenders and as members of AI

- identifying the role of the individuals in respecting, protecting and promoting human rights
- designing strategies and action plans to develop and renew commitment to and perseverance for human rights advocacy

Each session is preceded by an activity and followed by an in-depth discussion and open forum. To make the points of the sessions clear, participants' rights are taken into account too.

The first night is a buzz and bonding session.

The second night is a kind of role-reversal with the players in charge of the discussions and activities. The groups put up their "stalls" in the "free market of ideas", and the others visit the stalls and "shop".

The last night is the most special. After some last-minute practice, the players are ready for Solidarity Night – a night of song, dance and camaraderie. At the end of the night, every player participates in the "webbing of yarns" and candle-lighting as a symbol of their commitment to human rights and AI.

The winners

In this game, everybody wins! For the game masters, the objectives should be met, their expectations exceeded and all their efforts felt to be worthwhile. The players go home with a wider and deeper

perspective on human rights they will nurture long after the workshop. And, of course, they are now active players in the human rights movement and AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

Latest acquisitions to the HRE Library

Author: International Human Rights Internship Program: Asian Forum for Human Rights Development

Circle of rights: economic, social and cultural rights activism: a training resource

Publication: 2000

Standard Number: S471

Shelfmark: G-EC/INT

◆ Produced to assist trainers in economic, social and cultural rights to teach a varied target groups including policy makers, media persons, academics and lawyers. The first part covers a rights-based perspective for development. The second part discusses ideas for organizing and planning training, making use of line drawings.

Author: Flowers, Nancy

Human rights education handbook : effective practices for learning, action and change

Publication: 2000

Standard Number: 0967533430

Shelfmark: G-TR/FLO

◆ Provides definitions of HRE and outlines goals, audiences and content. The introduction provides an overview of HRE and the following chapters cover facilitation, methodologies and planning presentations and evaluating programs. Includes a list of printed and electronic resources and websites. Nancy Flowers is an active member of AI USA and has made a significant contribution to HRE in AI, including writing a number of valuable HRE publications.

Author: Cuomo, Kerry, Kennedy

Speak truth to power

Publication: 2000

Standard Number: 1884167071

Shelfmark: G-HR/CUO

◆ Produced in collaboration with Karen Robinson, HRE coordinator of AI USA from the book of the same title, this educational pamphlet profiles eight human rights defenders and includes an introduction to AI and an examination of what defines human rights and HRE. Each profile contains an introduction to a human rights issue, with websites, activity questions and general discussions. It covers the death penalty, economic relations, women and the environment, sexual slavery, trafficking, police brutality in the USA, LGBT, children's rights and child labour and FGM. Includes a play based on the title of the pamphlet by Ariel Dorfman, plus a list of organizations and resources and a historical "timeline" of human rights events.

Author: Human Rights Education Associates

Human rights education resourcebook

Publication: 2000

Standard Number: S492

Shelfmark: G-HE/ELB

◆ An updated version following the South-East-North (SEN) seminar in the Netherlands in October 1995, where the need for a directory of HRE trainers, funders and organizations was identified. Includes a listing of human rights organizations, training programmes and funders, an annotated bibliography and internet resources. Contributes to the UN Decade for HRE (1995-2004) and provides a definition of HRE.

Author: Guyana Human Rights Centre

Rights in rhythms: human rights education music kit for schools

Publication: 2000

Standard Number: S472

Shelfmark: AMR-35/GUY

◆ Pamphlet and music cassette of 10 compositions reflecting human rights themes and issues aimed at children and young people and covering the family, abuse, pollution and education differences. Produced with AI funds in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The Guyana Human Rights Association voluntarily coordinated and supervised the project in conjunction with Merle Mendonca, HRE Coordinator at the Guyana Human Rights Centre. Includes music sheets, cassette and an evaluation form for the kit.

Compendium of National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education (updated version, February 2001)

This compendium will provide background information for AI sections/structures to assist in developing strategies to lobby governments to implement national HRE plans. Includes an introduction with background information on the development of national plans of action for HRE; texts of existing national plans, including relevant sections of national human rights plans; and various appendices, including relevant UN documents.

To order send an email with your full postal address to: hredatabase.hchr@unog.ch or write to Elena Ippoliti, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland, or fax to +41 22 9170213

In spite of the current conflict in the region, AI Palestine has managed to continue its HRE program and has completed a human rights teacher training guide for schools. This guide is available in Arabic from AI Palestine.

Captions:

“Hello, I’m from the Toba community and I’m exercising my right to play in my new playing space” © AI

A scene from *Born Free* – Iqbal speaking to the UN. © AI

Artwork from the children’s exhibition © AI

Members and staff of AI Morocco and participants of the Middle East and North Africa regional workshop which was held in Morocco in April 2001. The next issue of this newsletter will contain a full report of this constructive and successful meeting. © Souad Larusi

Women demonstrate in Dhaka, Bangladesh, demanding an end to “torture, cruelty and repression” against women © Reuters/Rafiqur Rahman

Are you ready for the challenge? AI Philippines’ solidarity night © AI

HRE activity, analyzing human rights and the global economy © AI

Above and below: Girls and boys of the Toba community learning about their rights with AI
Argentina, January 2001 © AI