

## HRE ISSUE 3 CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

### Countries in transition

All societies, civilizations and nations have at some point in their development changed their mode of government, property system, the division of power, political ideas, attitudes, social relations and institutions, and so on. In short, it can be said that every individual, social group or community has been and still is in transition.

One fifth of the world, a quarter of its population, is now at a point that could be called post-totalitarian transition. Such a transition involves the transformation of a system of government which was operated for more than half a century into its exact ideological, political and economic opposite. This dramatic passage from dictatorship to democracy is becoming far more difficult than it appeared in the euphoria of change in 1989.

What is the role of education in this period of change? Is the education system simply underlying the impact of political, economic and social reforms or, on the contrary, are education and training important parts of these reforms? These are the main questions to answer when we start to think of human rights education and its role in building civil society.

I would like to express some observations and generalize some experience gained during my short work in the human rights education field. Quoting the definition often used by AI human rights educators, it could be said that human rights education is composed of three equally important parts:

- education about human rights, mostly based on knowledge and content, aims to inform people about their rights through knowledge of basic documents and key concepts;
- education in human rights means education in an atmosphere which reflects a concern for the ideals and practice of human rights:  
to achieve this, people need to develop skills promoting mutual understanding;
- education for human rights encourages people to take action for the defence of human rights. Encouraging people means challenging their attitudes.

In our situation — of living in countries in transition — the common goal of education is to help people and prepare them to live in open, free and participatory democratic societies where human rights and democratic values are the pillars.

What does it mean in practice? How much could knowledge about human rights or gained skills or changing attitudes help us to reach this goal? The answer is a lot.

Knowledge of rights could prevent human rights abuses. Knowledge of human rights mechanisms could help to overcome political apathy. Skills could help people recognize prejudice and the dangers of stereotyping. Action skills (such as solving conflict in non-violent ways, participating in group decisions) could help to combat intolerance, racism, violence and terrorism. Changing attitudes could help people understand the sense of newly found individual responsibilities.

In the past five years our countries tried to define their new educational policies, throwing away the principles and objectives of communist education. This process varies according to the particular conditions of each country, but they all have things in common — democratization, decentralization, liberalization and the introduction of pluralism into the educational system.

One of the main principles is also the humanization of teaching. Education about, in and for human rights is eminently important in forming a new civic consciousness. But human rights are only enforceable if they are anchored in the constitution of a state. That is why education on constitutionalism is important for building the foundations of a new state and forming a new relationship with citizens on the basis of new positive functions.

Education in human rights is directed at civil society, the values of which are independent of the state. Education in constitutionalism, on the other hand, orients a person to the state as the optimal organizational form of this society. Therefore, education in both human rights and constitutionalism are connected and complementary.

Jana Kviecinská  
AI HRE Coordinator for Eastern/Central Europe

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New materials

The HRE Team has been working hard over the past year to produce new materials to help support the work of AI's HRE activists worldwide. Some of the publications already available include:

- \* A 12 Point Guide for Good Practice in the Training and Education for Human Rights of Government Officials (Arabic, English, French, Spanish)
- \* International Human Rights Standards and Education (English only)
- \* First Steps — A manual for starting human rights education (English and selected Eastern/Central European languages)
- \* Learning Activities for use with Young People to Explore the Issue of Discrimination (English, French)
- \* Learning Activities about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (English, Spanish)

Available soon:

- \* Conduct of Law Enforcement Officers: A Checklist of Basic Human Rights Standards (English — other languages to follow)
- \* Siniko — Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa. A manual for teaching human rights. (English, French — selected African languages to follow)

For more information or to receive copies of these publications (with the exception of First Steps), please contact Claire or Cristina in the HRE Team at the International Secretariat: (cthomas@amnesty.org)

For copies of First Steps, please contact the Europe Development Team at:  
International Secretariat,  
1 Easton Street,  
London WC1X 8DJ,  
United Kingdom.

The world's most important job  
By Education International

We are all in favour of education, but we tend to take for granted the people who provide it. If our societies care about their future, they should give teachers the support and credit they deserve. Teachers today are confronted by some of the greatest challenges they have ever had to face. They hold in their hands the future of our children, our prosperity, even of our planet itself. They will shape the attitudes and values of the 21st century.

Yet in many countries over the past decades, the status and working conditions of teachers have got worse rather than better. In 1990 the Declaration on Education for All forcefully stated that, "the terms and conditions of service of teachers and their status, which constitute a determining factor in the implementation of education for all, must be urgently improved in all countries in line with the joint ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation".

The Committee of Experts for the application of that Recommendation (CEART) regularly points out that despite the crucial role of teachers in education, their status has reached “an intolerable low point”. Today, 70 per cent of teachers live at or below the official poverty level.

According to UNESCO, classrooms without desks, chairs, blackboards, chalk and other equipment, and with more than 100 pupils, are no exception in many developing countries. In industrialized nations, teachers encounter problems such as new teaching methodologies, heavier workloads, multicultural classroom situations, and violence on school premises.

Authoritarian governments also regularly trample on teachers’ trade union rights and fundamental human rights. Worldwide, many lives of teachers and trade unionists have been wasted. In 1996 alone, 36 Colombian teachers were murdered.

#### World Congress

“Today we are already convinced that only education offers every human being the capability of designing his own future and gives everybody the capability to make his own decision based on his own reflections and thoughts. All this depends now on the political will of our leaders.” So said UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor to the 1,000 participants from 150 countries attending the Second World Congress of Education International (EI) last July in Washington D.C., USA. Created in 1993, EI now represents 23 million teachers and education workers. Tolerance, child labour and children’s rights were among the topics discussed at the triennial EI congress. Also discussed were themes such as learning throughout life, educators’ rights and responsibilities, education financing and reforms, and the status of teachers.

#### World Teachers’ Day

UNESCO launched World Teachers’ Day

(5 October) in 1994 to promote teachers and draw attention to the drastic decline in their conditions in many countries. The date commemorates the first ever Recommendation on the status of teachers drawn up by UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation and adopted on 5 October 1966 by a special inter-governmental conference in Paris, France.

UNESCO and EI work together to increase awareness of and respect for what they view to be “the world’s most important job”. World Teachers’ Day also provides an opportunity to publicize campaigns for quality public education to ensure the right to education for all. In more than 100 countries, various activities are organized each year among educators and with the community. Contact your local teachers’ organization and join the celebrations to help teachers shape the future.

More information on the Internet at: <http://www.ei-ie.org>

#### Education is a human right

Education International (EI) recently launched its 1998 Barometer on Human and Trade Union Rights in the Education Sector. The report is published every three years and contains information about the 149 countries and territories where EI has member organizations. It provides many indicators of education, such as average expectation of schooling, illiteracy rates, net level of enrolment at primary level, average number of pupils per teacher, number of students in higher education per 100,000 inhabitants, and percentage of government spending that goes on education. The report also indicates whether a country has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and certain International Labour Organisation Conventions.

The 1998 Barometer concentrates on three fundamental human rights — the right to education, the right of children to be protected from exploitation, and the right of teaching staff to form and join trade unions.

Education and human rights are inextricably linked. Quality education underpins sustainable development, democracy and the exercise of fundamental human rights. Equally, quality education for all can only develop and flourish where there is an environment of respect for human and trade union rights.

Children's rights and their well-being are closely linked to those of their families, and to those of their teachers. In many countries, teachers and education support staff are at the forefront of the struggle for basic trade union and human rights, often at great personal cost. The 1998 Barometer seeks to acknowledge their contributions and make visible their role. It also aims to inspire others by publicizing such efforts — to show that a commitment to the interests of every child, to quality education and to effective trade union organization can make a difference. The report focuses on the extent to which the right to education is available to children, to young people and adults and the extent to which educators enjoy fundamental human and trade union rights set out in the major international declarations and conventions.

By highlighting education as a fundamental human right and by showing the relationship between the right to education, child labour and a fair deal for educators, the report is intended to be a useful tool in the campaign for fundamental human and trade union rights, including the right to quality education for all.

Copies of the 1998 EI Barometer can be obtained on request from the EI Secretariat, 155 Boulevard Emile Jacqmain, B-120 Brussels, Belgium.  
e-mail: educint@ei-ie.org

#### UNESCO education report

Tight controls on education budgets in most countries are making it difficult for schools to provide the quality of education that parents and society increasingly demand, according to UNESCO's World Education Report 1998 — Teachers and teaching in a changing world.

The fourth biennial report focuses on teachers. According to UNESCO, the world's 57 million teachers need more resources and support if they are to do their job properly. In the world's poorest countries especially, poor material conditions in schools have meant that the quality of education has suffered.

The 1998 report provides a unique overview of the changing status and profile of the world's teachers, their working conditions, the pressures they face, and the challenges posed for teachers and teaching by new information and communication technologies.

The report concludes, "What society currently expects of teachers in most countries could be out of proportion to the rewards it is prepared to accord them and the difficult conditions under which many of them work."

To order a copy of the report (ISBN 92-3-103450-2), contact UNESCO publishing, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris, France. Or visit the UNESCO website at:  
<http://www.unesco.org/publications>

#### Potatoes and human rights

##### Developing alternative methods

What is the connection between potatoes and human rights education? The answer is that potatoes can be used in an exercise for introducing people to fundamental human rights principles. It is a

simple but effective exercise. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia) used this exercise in its Regional Human Rights Study Session.

#### The potato exercise

A potato is distributed to each participant. Each of them is asked to write a description of their potato. They can imagine it to be a human being and describe it. For example, they can give it a name and describe some physical and emotional characteristics. Next, each of them reads the description of their respective potato. After this everyone drops their potato into a box. Finally, participants are asked to find in the box the potato described by them. Clearly, identifying the individual potatoes has become difficult if not impossible once they have been mixed together. At this stage, participants are asked to reflect on the message of the exercise. One message is that we often ignore the individuality of a person and associate that person with the group he or she belongs to. Stereotyping is common and leads to prejudice and discrimination. The respect for the individual is essential for preventing discrimination. Discrimination (manifested often in stereotyping) is a negation of equality and human dignity. The discussion then leads on to the question of equality of everyone based on the inherent dignity of all human beings. This provides the basis for introducing human rights norms that are based on the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination.

#### Creative methods

The potato exercise is an illustration of Forum-Asia's efforts to use creative methods for strengthening the knowledge and skills of local human rights activists. Forum-Asia's human rights education programs are conducted for members of local human rights organizations. Forum-Asia also facilitates exchange of experience between local groups. For example, a series of training programs was developed on fact-finding and documentation of human rights violations. The programs were based on knowledge and expertise developed by Philippine human rights organizations, and thus helped transfer to other countries the experience of others. Forum-Asia has conducted workshops to help local groups integrate international human rights standards in their daily activities. It has also conducted workshops on fair trial standards to help lawyers and activists learn about fair trial standards and monitor their application in local courts. Similarly, Forum-Asia is involved in helping human rights organizations (often male dominated) to understand the issues and norms related to women's rights.

Human rights have achieved global salience and numerous local human rights organizations have emerged. These organizations are often immersed in pressing human rights issues. Consequently, they lack opportunities for strengthening their knowledge or skills. Therefore, it is essential that human rights educational programs are developed for helping local activists learn and apply human rights concepts and norms. International organizations often restrict their links with local groups either to receiving information or to conducting campaigns. International organizations do not systematically share their knowledge and experiences with local groups. Facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences between various levels would further strengthen the human rights movement.

This calls for an educational process that is creative and builds on the existing knowledge of activists. The human rights movement should fashion its own alternative educational process. Paulo Freire, Brazilian philosopher and educator, captures the search for an alternative educational process. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he advocates abandoning the "educational goal of deposit-making".<sup>(1)</sup> This is relevant for human rights education. Human rights education programs are too often similar to what Paulo Freire calls extension education. In providing technical information, they are no different from agricultural extension programs; we simply transfer information or knowledge about human rights. In the words of Paulo Freire, "There is in

the concept of extension an unquestionably mechanistic connotation, in as much as the term implies an action of taking, of transferring, of handing over, and of depositing something in someone".(2) This mechanistic transfer of knowledge on human rights happens in a variety of ways.

There is also a danger that knowledge of human rights terminology will itself become a source of power and domination. Human rights activism which is aimed at ensuring respect for the inherent dignity of every human being should be particularly concerned that its educational practice should not contradict core human rights values. Developing an educational practice that respects core human rights values will involve creating suitable learning and teaching materials. It is a challenge to develop creative and low cost learning and teaching materials and methods. Here lies the connection between potatoes and human rights.

(1) Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, London, 1972, p. 49.

(2) Paulo Freire, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, London, 1974, p. 97.

#### Principles for human rights education

No matter what the setting — whether a classroom, or a community education project — common principles inform the methods used to teach human rights. These principles should be communicated through every aspect of good human rights education.

- \* Include a GLOBAL DIMENSION to the human rights theme being examined (for example, how it manifests itself both at home and abroad).
- \* Avoid too much focus on human rights abuses. Emphasize human rights as a POSITIVE VALUE SYSTEM and a standard to which everyone is entitled.
- \* Affirm the belief that the INDIVIDUAL can make a difference and provide examples of individuals who have done so.
- \* Include an ACTION DIMENSION that provides participants with opportunities to act on their beliefs and understanding. These actions should address problems both at home and abroad.
- \* Where appropriate, link topics or issues to articles of the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS or other relevant human rights documents. Make this connection explicit rather than implicit.
- \*1 Be responsive to concerns related to CULTURAL DIVERSITY. Activities should reflect a variety of perspectives (for example, race, gender, religion, and cultural or national traditions).
- \* Be concerned with both CONTENT AND LEARNING PROCESS. It is difficult to engage participants in examining issues related to rights and justice if the learning environment does not demonstrate respect for justice and human dignity.
- \* Keep lecturing to a minimum. Instead, use PARTICIPATORY METHODS for learning such as role play, discussion, debates, mock trials, games and simulations.
- \* Connect people's LIVED EXPERIENCE directly to abstract concepts and legal documents.

Source: Nancy Flowers and David Shiman, Human Rights Educators' Network, AIUSA, with additions from Edward O'Brien, Street Law, Inc. (Taken from *Human Rights Here and Now*, a publication of the Human Rights Educators' Network of AIUSA, Human Rights USA and The Stanley Foundation.)

### Innovative training workshop

As part of the implementation of AI's Human Rights Education Strategy for Africa, a training workshop was organized from 5 to 7 June 1998 in Dakar, Senegal. Fifteen delegates from AI sections in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo took part in the workshop, which focused on curricula development. The objective was to train the participants to engage more effectively in curricula reform processes aimed at the incorporation of human rights. Participants worked together in plenary sessions and in smaller working groups.

The workshop was opened by Isma Daddis Sagna, President of AI Senegal, who after wishing everyone the traditional Senegalese welcome "Terranga" underlined the importance of human rights education as an integral part of the work of AI sections in the region.

As an introduction to the workshop, two prominent local activists, Moussa Sarr and Alioune Sall, debated the theme, "Human rights and their universality seen from a West African perspective". Moussa Sarr stated that the universality of human rights is unquestionable, but that there are some difficulties in applying this concept in certain countries and regions. Although he showed there was a far from brilliant situation in West Africa, he said he remained optimistic about the future of human rights in the region, given the multiplicity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to defend and promote human rights.

To compensate for the deficiencies of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Moussa Sarr made the following recommendations:

- \* implementation of mechanisms for taking sanctions against countries that violate human rights;
- \* organization of civil society as a counter-influence;
- \* creation of a network of human rights NGOs in West Africa.

Alioune Sall, having highlighted the opposition that exists to the universality of human rights, stated that current trends towards globalization make obsolete the notion of "national sovereignty". The UN, he said, has the right to intervene in the affairs of member states — universality is no longer just a fact, but is also a right.

Alioune Sall said that the question of human rights has gained a new relevance since human rights are now taken into account in the new constitutions as well as in the foreign policy of states.

During the training, delegates exchanged experiences of human rights education programs they had undertaken. Divided sometimes into country groups, sometimes into mixed groups, participants experimented alternately with role play and other participatory teaching activities using cartoons and photographs. These exercises encouraged the group to study the text of human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how to use them as educational tools. Participants also learned that human rights can be taught through all subjects in the curricula, including, for example, physical education and mathematics.

The participants — who were all teachers — greatly appreciated the efforts of the workshop facilitators, who included Dr Audrey Osler, a professor specializing in human rights at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. The facilitators used games and humour, maintained an atmosphere of cheerfulness, conviviality, camaraderie and hard work — all necessary elements in a program of human rights education.

During the final session, all the delegations expressed the need for follow-up to the workshop. The themes identified for future training events were:

- \* participatory teaching methodologies;
- \* lobbying;
- \* production of human rights education materials.

Bakary Gbane

Human Rights Education Coordinator,

## AI Côte d'Ivoire

### Guyana: An artistic approach

Over 30 teachers from across Guyana took part in a three-day music workshop in June 1998. The workshop was designed to show teachers how they can work with students using music as a means of conveying human rights themes and messages. The workshop was a joint initiative of AI and the Guyana Human Rights Association, and was sponsored by the Guyanese Ministry of Education. Later this year further workshops are planned for other arts-related areas such as drama, drawing and poster-making.

### The Rights Stuff

1998 marks the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To celebrate this, the Irish Section of AI and two local non-governmental organizations are running a series of training workshops as part of a joint human rights education project. These workshops will be based on the resource manual, *The Rights Stuff*, and will focus in particular on children's rights. The workshops are designed for youth workers, youth leaders and teachers, and aim to give the participants the skills to develop young people's understanding of the rights to which they are entitled and their responsibilities in relation to the rights of others.

*The Rights Stuff* is the result of a partnership between DEFY (Development Education for Youth), AI Ireland and Trocaire (the Roman Catholic Agency for World Development). Its aim is to explore the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to develop young people's understanding of the rights contained in the Convention and how these rights relate to their everyday lives. The activities challenge young people to imagine a more just society where human beings treat each other with dignity and respect.

Although the manual is designed primarily for use in non-formal youth work settings, it can easily be adapted for use in other settings such as schools, and community and women's groups. An introduction is followed by four sections each focusing on different categories of rights: survival rights; development rights; protection rights; and participation rights. The manual is very clearly and attractively presented. The aim of each activity is stated as well as the time needed, the target age group and what materials are required.

By dividing the Convention into four simple categories of rights, each category relating to the specific needs of the child, it is hoped that the Convention will seem less like an international legal text and more like a tool to be understood, talked about and used by young people throughout the world.

On 21 November this project will culminate in a conference, the Children's Rights Hearing, to be held in County Cork, Ireland. This hearing coincides with the end of One World Week which will involve over 250 young people, politicians and guests from all over Ireland. This conference will also be attended by a number of young people from Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America. For more information about *The Rights Stuff*, contact Joe Kelly, Human Rights Education Officer, AI Ireland.

### International HRE network

A document entitled *Inter-Sectional Human Rights Education Forum* was circulated for comment to AI section boards, chairs and human rights education coordinators on 20 July 1998.

The International Human Rights Education Strategy adopted by AI's 1995 International Council calls for the establishment of an "International HRE Forum involving the HRE Coordinators from



AI structures...’ The strategy asked for the Forum to meet for the first time in 1996, but due to the discussion on decentralizing the work of the International HRE Team and the financial shortcomings the International Secretariat (IS) has experienced, the work was not implemented. The HRE Team at the IS has now been able to begin work on this and has produced for comment the draft Terms of Reference. The aim is to have the Terms of Reference finalized by the end of November to send them for approval by the International Executive Committee in December. Sections are also being asked to look at how the Forum should be financed. If there is a section willing to act as host, the first meeting of the International HRE Network could be held in the second half of 1999.

We hope to receive a large number of responses to this document. Please ensure that your board or executive committee have discussed it and have forwarded your section’s comments to the IS. For more information about the proposed network, please contact Cristina Sganga, HRE Coordinator at the IS.

#### Captions

Pre-election posters in Central Bratislava, September 1998 © Peter Josek/Reuters

Education is a universal right, enshrined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Education International joins forces with UNESCO to promote World Teachers’ Day

An Indonesian primary-school student walks past riot police in a busy street in Jakarta, Indonesia, in September 1998 © Reuters

Participants at AI’s HRE workshop in Dakar, Senegal, June 1998

A postcard produced for AI Week, September 1997

Singing traditional songs around a camp fire during the first AI HRE Workshop for Eastern and Central Europe in Suwalki, Poland in February 1992