



Human Rights Friendly Schools

NEWS April - May 2013



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the April-May 2013 edition of Human Rights Friendly Schools News! This newsletter aims to share information, ideas and experiences across the International Human Rights Friendly Schools Network.

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project aims to empower young people and promote the active participation of all members of the school community to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of school life. Amnesty International works in partnership with secondary schools around the world, supporting their journey to becoming Human Rights Friendly. This newsletter aims to share information, ideas and experiences across the International Human Rights Friendly Schools Network.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/projects-initiatives/rfsp>

or contact us at HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org

In this issue:

Interview of the month with

Ambroise Dansou, teacher at Collège d'enseignement général Ekpè in **Benin**

Story of the month

A school's journey to become Human Rights Friendly in **India**

News

A new Human Rights Friendly School in **Italy**

Schools renewing their partnerships with Amnesty International **Benin**

Ensuring participation in school life in **Kenya**

Discussing gender violence in **Senegal**

Taking Action for Human Rights!

My Body, My Rights Campaign in schools in **South Africa** and **Morocco**

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2013

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INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH...

AMBROISE DANSOU

Teacher at Collège d'enseignement général Ekpè in Benin



“My name is Ambroise Dansou, I am project coordinator in CEG Ekpè. I first heard about Amnesty International when I was a student at University. Although I wasn't a member, I regularly attended their meetings or talks. Later on, a lady from Amnesty International would come to the school in which I was teaching to raise awareness on human rights, especially on sexual harassment in school. I took interest in it, and when the Human Rights Friendly Schools project first started in Benin, I was very keen to join.”

“For me the project is crucial for young people to learn about rights but mainly to put them in practice. As youths, they are tomorrow's citizens, and it is very important for them to know they have rights and responsibility. This is what I consider the main priority of the project: I want students, learners to understand their rights and to exercise them and enjoy them.”

I can say the Human Rights Friendly Schools project taught me how to exercise rights, mine and those of others.

“As teachers or staff, we were generally accustomed being authority figures vis-à-vis the students. Therefore it was difficult to recognise, and especially understand, that students have rights, and in what way. Personally, I knew about human rights before the project, but I didn't know how to practice them or apply them in a school setting. I can say the Human Rights Friendly Schools project taught me how to exercise rights, mine and those of others.”

“It is important for people to understand that the project affects them personally, especially students. For them to understand ‘it is you we are talking about’. I think it is important to use visuals and other materials which will trigger the students' attention. It is our responsibility to inform them as much as possible about the project. Obviously, we cannot force them to commit to it, but generally the more they hear about it the more they are keen to join and participate in activities.”

“The Human Rights Friendly Schools project certainly affected my approach to my work. As a job, teaching was mainly a means to earn my daily bread. However, using the human rights perspective and understanding education as a right added a lot more value to my work. I now put students at the centre. Also, in case there is a conflict or misunderstandings in the classroom, I now ask myself “who is right?” which changed my relationship with the students.”

What has changed in your school since the project started?

The project had a huge impact in the school community. For me the most important change is in the **relationship** between students and school authority. There is a lot more respect between staff and students, and even among students themselves.

- Generally speaking, members of the school community are a lot more **aware of their rights**, and have stronger knowledge of what it means.
- The changes in relationships were noted ever since the beginning of the project, the school administration also recognised this change as being positive for the learning environment.
- This gave us a lot more motivation and it is **encouraging** to carry on with the project to make a change in our daily lives.

For more information, please contact Olivier Kiti, Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Benin: olivier.kiti@aibenin.org



STORY OF THE MONTH

A school's journey to becoming Human Rights Friendly in India

The Government Higher Primary School in Yedyur situated in one of Bangalore's city centres, Jayanagar, is one of the 29 Human Rights Friendly Schools in India. Government Higher Primary School in Yedyur is a small school with 6 teachers and 186 students - grades 1 to 7. As a government school, its curriculum provides space for various programmes, including human rights clubs, children's courts, and clubs focussing on specific rights. However, the teachers find it difficult to conduct these activities in a sustainable manner, in addition to the everyday realities that teachers face – students who live in utmost poverty and suffer from malnutrition.

It is within this environment that the school begins its journey to becoming a Human Rights Friendly School. Despite the increased work load and the shortage of staff, the school has developed an ambitious plan for the next academic year (June 2013 to March 2014), integrating human rights in all four key areas of school life. The school community has already identified key activities such as building students' leadership through elections for the Student Council. The Human Rights Friendly Schools project will provide a platform for the school to have a self-generative process of understanding the relevance of human rights for themselves; while making their plans. This approach is quite different from the usual government programmes in India which are often top-down in nature.

Focus on sexual and reproductive rights

Government Higher Primary School is also integrating sexual and reproductive rights in the curriculum. "Why must we tell only the girls about their sexual identity in the sex education class? If we do not speak to the boys, what is the point?" questions one teacher who criticises policies of sex education only for girls. This teacher will now develop her own plan on how she would like to introduce sexual identity classes for girls *and* boys in the school. Similarly, teachers are looking at ways to address the drop-out issues by revitalising the 'Meena group', which is a government program tasked to ensure all children have access to education, especially girls.

For more information, please contact Tara Rao, Human Rights Education Manager at Amnesty International India: tara.rao@amnesty.org.in



Manjula, science teacher of Government Higher Primary School in Yedyur (on the left) and Tara Rao, Human Rights Education Manager Amnesty International India (on the right), at the induction for the Human Rights Friendly Schools project, 2012.
© Amnesty International India

At times, I feel we are doing everything and at other times, we feel like we are doing nothing.

- Manjula, science teacher of Government Higher Primary School in Yedyur, Bangalore, India

Why must we tell only the girls about their sexual identity in the sex education class? If we do not speak to the boys, what is the point?

- Teacher of Government Higher Primary School in Yedyur, Bangalore, India

NEWS

A new Human Rights Friendly School in Italy

The Liceo Orazio in Rome, Italy, has recently joined the Human Rights Friendly Schools project. Since December 2012, both students and teachers focused on changing the school's governance by improving the democratic processes and strengthening the school's framework for the promotion of human rights. This resulted in a co-responsibility agreement that highlighted mutual respect between students and teachers.

In February 2013, Students conducted a research on human rights abuses in Italy in relation with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which inspired them to suggest ideas on ways to integrate human rights in their school's life. Following this exercise, they developed an Action Plan to integrate human rights in all areas of school life.

Liceo Orazio started to implement activities to raise-awareness about human rights amongst students. Liceo Orazio held a conference on "*Censorship and Freedom of Speech and Expression in the Middle East*" in March 2013. At the Conference, Shady Hamady, an Italian-Syrian journalist and writer, described the crisis in Syria and the difficulties that Syrian students face when demonstrating and expressing their opinion in Syria. Another speaker, Christina Annunziata, the Vice President of Iranian Human Rights in Italy, explored the issue of freedom of expression in Iran. Both speakers not only highlighted the problems that students in other countries face to fully enjoy their freedom of expression, but also emphasized the importance to promote and defend human rights in order to foster change. Students then took action by writing and drawing messages of hope for people of Syria.



Students of the Human Rights Friendly School Liceo Orazio in Roma, writing messages of hope to people of Syria, 2013
© Amnesty International Italy



Students of the Human Rights Friendly School Liceo Orazio in Roma, writing messages of hope to the people of Syria, 2013
© Amnesty International Italy

This conference inspired students and confirmed the enthusiasm of Liceo Orazio members to place human rights at the heart of school life.

For more information, please contact Chiara Pacifici, Education Officer at Amnesty International Italy: c.pacifici@amnesty.it

Schools renewing their partnerships with Amnesty International Benin

In Benin, the three Human Rights Friendly School partners will continue to implement the project and have signed new Memorandum of Understanding with Amnesty International.



The Director of CEG Pahou (on the right) and the Director of Amnesty International Benin (on the left) signed the new Memorandum of Understanding to continue implementing the Human Rights Friendly Schools project, 2013 © Amnesty International Benin

CEG Pahou, Yagbe and Ekpè re-assessed their human rights friendliness through questionnaires based on the “Human Rights Temperature” activity. Following which, the school community decided to focus on two main topics in their schools over the coming year: sexual harassment and corporal punishment.

With the support of Amnesty International Benin, schools updated their Action Plans to reflect their focus and to identify new activities in order to integrate human rights in all four key areas of school life.

For more information please contact Olivier Kiti, Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Benin:

olivier.kiti@aibenin.org

Ensuring participation in school life in Kenya

In Kenya, Kiogo High School encourages participation of all school members in school life in various ways:

- One parent per class is now elected as member of the school’s Working Group, in charge of organizing events as part of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project.
- Kiogo Student Council also held elections amongst the students, thereby making democratic school processes visible to all and enhancing peer to peer relationships.
- New students were inducted to the Human Rights Friendly Schools project to ensure they are aware of school policies and practices based on child protection, equality and non-bullying.

Human Rights Clubs at Kiogo High School have been meeting every week, and have successfully held debates, school meetings, exploring topics such as: ‘What is a Human Rights Friendly School?’ or ‘The role of the government in promoting education in Kenya’.

For more information, please contact Moses Opiyo, Growth and Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Kenya: moses.opiyo@amnesty.org

Discussing gender violence in Senegal

With the support of Amnesty International Senegal and a nurse, Ibou Diallo High School in Sedhiou organized an open day focusing on gender violence. The aim was to raise awareness about the dangers of violence and to launch the slogan ‘coming together for a world without violence’. The school community explored issues related to early marriage, domestic violence, rape and teenage pregnancies. Film, screening, presentation and debates allowed the school community members to engage on these issues. The activity ended with a football match between the Ibou Diallo High School and another neighbouring high school, providing the opportunity to reach more young people.

For more information, please contact Mamadou Diop, Human Rights Education volunteer at Amnesty International Senegal: mdiop_2001@yahoo.fr

TAKING ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS!

My Body, My Rights Campaign in South Africa

Pretoria High School for Girls joined the Human Rights Friendly Schools Network in late 2011. Of the four key areas of school life (Governance, Relationships, Curriculum and Extra-curricular activities, and School environment), Pretoria High School is focusing on curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The protest art installation, named 'Cry of Iris' is a living example of what is possible when human rights education in the extra-curriculum meets the formal curriculum.



A student from Pretoria High School for Girls in South Africa plants origami flowers in the 'Cry of Iris' garden as part of the My Body, My Right Campaign, 2013
© Amnesty International South Africa

The idea was to create something beautiful and feminine from the letters and in doing so create a sense of healing.

- Jabu Tugwana, Human Rights Education Officer, Amnesty International South Africa

The inspiration for the protest art installation was the film "Never Sorry" about Chinese human rights activist artist, Ai Wei Wei. The film sparked the interest of the visual art teacher who arranged for an in-school screening for her class of seniors. On the same day a local radio station launched an anti-rape campaign that had the effect of amplifying the students' sense of activism. Deeply inspired by Ai Wei Wei and how he used art to convey a message, they decided that they too could use their talents to help create social change.

As part of the national Letter Writing Marathon, young people decided to write letters to the State highlighting their concern about the high incidence of rape and violence against women in South Africa. Visual art students came up with the idea of **covering pages with words or slogans and pictures about sexual and reproductive rights and then folding these into origami flowers.**

Inspired and aware, students embarked on the creation of a symbolic human rights garden, the "Cry of Iris", which was filled with 2000 origami flowers. Each flower had written on it a word or a slogan that reflected sexual and reproductive rights.

Pretoria High School for Girls students will be travelling to Italy in order to attend the Ai Wei Wei exhibition at the Venice Biennale, and will present a bouquet of flowers as a symbolic gesture of support for sexual and reproductive rights and call for an end to sexual violence against women in South Africa.

For more information, please contact Jabu Tugwana, Human Rights Education Officer at Amnesty International South Africa: jabu.tugwana@amnesty.org.za

Support schools to take action

- Identify a campaign relevant to the school's context
- Explain the background and the objectives of the campaign
- Suggest activities school members can choose to implement to raise awareness
- Promote dialogue and peer-education amongst students
- Offer the opportunity to school communities to take action (e.g. by signing a petition, collecting signatures, raising awareness in their local community)



My Body, My Rights Campaign in Morocco

As part of its strategy to link schools to the Amnesty International campaigns, Amnesty International Morocco invited its members as well as Human Rights Friendly Schools communities to participate in the 'My Body, My Rights' Campaign.



Workshop with students of the Human Rights Friendly School Lycée Abi Dar El Ghifari to discuss violence against women, and sexual and reproductive rights, 2013 © Amnesty International Morocco

Amnesty International provided guidance on the type of activities schools could implement in order to facilitate discussions on sexual and reproductive rights amongst students. A Facebook page was also created to focus on the 'My Body, My Rights' Campaign, providing information and inviting users to participate, by posting messages and promoting an online petition.

Amnesty International Morocco also encouraged students to take individual pictures with messages about the campaign and post them on Facebook. A newsletter that focuses on the campaign was developed by Amnesty International Morocco and distributed to the Human Rights Friendly Schools, human rights clubs, educators, and shared online.

Finally, a group of students and educators at the Human Rights Friendly School Abi Dar El Ghifari in Rabat created a video to explain and promote the campaign amongst their peers. The video is available here: <http://on.fb.me/11aJGcs>

As a result of this mobilisation, Amnesty International Morocco collected **2,100 signatures** to support this campaign.

Amnesty International's 'My Body, My Rights' Campaign provided the opportunity to open a dialogue with students about sexual and reproductive rights. Young people responded positively and actively engaged in the debate.

- Touria Bouabid, Human Rights Education Manager,



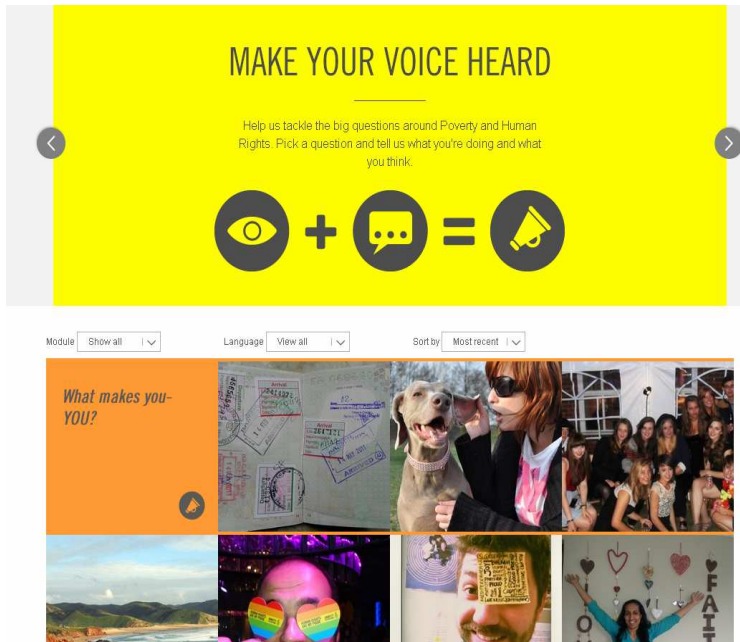
Students of the Human Rights Friendly School Lycée Ibn Youssef in Morocco taking action on Women Rights Day for the 'My Body, My Rights' Campaign, 2013 © Amnesty International Morocco

For more information about the actions of the Human Rights Friendly Schools in Morocco, please visit the Amnesty International Morocco Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AMarocEDH?ref=hl>

For more information, please contact Touria Bouabid, Human Rights Education Manager at Amnesty International Morocco: AMorocco@sections.amnesty.org

GET INVOLVED! RespectMyRights.org – needs you!

Do you want to connect with others around the world, learn and share about human rights?



We are looking for young people to build a dynamic and creative community of young people and help us promote RespectMyRights.org.

If you have the passion for human rights and social media, we would like to hear from you!

A basic understanding of English is essential, as well as access to internet and a computer. Knowledge of any of the following languages is a plus! – Polish, Italian, Spanish, Slovenian or French.

WHAT IS RespectMyRights.org?

RespectMyRights.org is an platform for youth around the world to learn about human rights in an interactive way, share their views, engage with others and take action to tackle human rights violations which drive and deepen poverty.

WHAT IT DOES

- Creates a youth-led, global conversation on issues related to poverty
- Combines learning and activism

This is an exciting opportunity for young people to share with others around the world, learn from their experience and be part of an international network of young human rights activists!

If you are interested in becoming part of the community or have any other questions, please contact Melody Ross, International Human Rights Education Advisor: melody.ross@amnesty.org or Ed Fuller, Human Rights Education intern: ed.fuller@amnesty.org.

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 Human Rights Education team HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org no later than **20 July 2013**, if you wish your entry to be published in the next edition of the Human Rights Friendly Schools News.

