

# HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

## TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

*“This is the way to go if we want whole, empathetic and tolerant human beings.”*

Anna, 4th grade, Kon Tiki School, Denmark.

### WHAT IS A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL?

In a Human Rights Friendly School, human rights and responsibilities are integrated into all parts of school life. Young people and their communities learn about human rights by putting them into practice every day. Through a “whole school” approach to human rights education, both schools and young people become powerful catalysts for change in their wider communities.

Amnesty International has helped to set up Human Rights Friendly Schools in 20 countries across the globe. These include Benin, Chile, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Paraguay, Poland, Senegal, South Africa, and the UK.

All of these schools promote respect, non-discrimination, dignity and freedom of expression through the active participation of the whole school community in four key areas:



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### GOVERNANCE

Everyone in the school community gets involved in the way the school is governed and managed, including school leadership, vision and policies.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Respect, dignity and non-discrimination are promoted among teachers, students, parents and throughout the wider community.

### CURRICULUM AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Human rights are integrated into the curriculum and extracurricular activities,

**Members of the Mongolia-India Joint Secondary School student council in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, share information about their Human Rights Friendly School during Parents' Open Day.**

ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn about human rights, and become actively involved in promoting them.

### SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

A Human Rights Friendly School is a safe, respectful environment where a human rights culture can develop and flourish.





***“Individuals are equipped with the necessary information skills and values about rights and responsibilities.”***

Frank K. Doyi, Amnesty International Ghana

## THE PROJECT IMPACT ...

### ... ON INDIVIDUALS

Teachers are trained in both human rights content and methodology. Students understand their rights and responsibilities. They develop the leadership skills they need to effectively participate in, and influence, school policies and activities. Everyone involved acquires new knowledge and skills. They then use these skills to discuss and find innovative ways of defending human rights and pushing for positive changes, locally and globally.

In Italy, teachers were trained on issues such as the right to asylum and on how to talk about human rights through theatre. In the UK, students gained leadership skills that enabled them to advise their teachers about including human rights in the curriculum. Students and teachers in Ghana, Moldova and Senegal joined forces to create youth clubs focusing on human rights change. And by transforming their school into a refugee camp over a few days, students in Denmark learned first-hand how it feels to live in a world where human rights are not a priority.

### ... ON SCHOOLS

Becoming human rights friendly transforms schools into safer and more inclusive places to learn, especially for those who are marginalized or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students at a school in Morocco gave their school buildings and corridors names reflecting human rights principles, such as “liberty” and “dignity”, transforming them into “dignified human rights areas”. And by creating a “safe space for girls”, the number of violent incidents at break time was reduced to zero. Students also claimed their rights by demanding improvements after their boarding house was damaged by a water leak.

Bullying decreased at schools in Benin, Ghana and Poland after the project was introduced. And in Ireland, students and parents embraced diversity and addressed marginalization of immigrant students by setting up a Language Learning Centre offering Albanian, Arabic, Romanian and Urdu classes.

### ... ON COMMUNITIES

Communities become involved in school life, developing and implementing school policies and activities that promote human rights. As everyone becomes more aware of human rights, young people work together with their wider community to bring about real human rights change beyond the classroom.

In school in Ireland, students and staff recognized the rights of all members of their community by inviting elderly people to weekly computer skills training sessions. A school in Denmark invites local people to human rights discussions during morning assemblies. Parents, teachers and students also repair and clean the school grounds together, physically creating an environment of dignity and respect.

### ... NATIONALLY

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project builds partnerships with local and national organizations and government authorities to find collective ways of taking action for human rights.

A school in Morocco now works in partnership with the national government, sparking discussions about making human rights education part of the national curriculum. In Mongolia, the project resulted in the Vice Minister of Justice urging the Ministry of Education to engage with NGOs. As a result, Amnesty International is now a key partner in a national coalition working towards integrating human rights education into the national curriculum.

Schools in Poland invited government officials to discuss the inclusion of human rights in the national curriculum. And a school in Ghana has created a partnership with a local NGO that now offers leadership training to students.



*From left to right:*

Students participate in a human rights event where new prefects at Accra High School, Ghana, are sworn in as student representatives.

Students at Kontiki School, Denmark, transformed their school into a refugee camp for several days and experienced first-hand living in an unequal world.

Students from Accra High School, Ghana, perform a traditional dance during an Amnesty International Demand Dignity campaign event.

## THE PROJECT CONTEXT

***“All children have the right to express their views in all matters that affect them.”***

Article 12, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project emerged in the context of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, proclaimed by the UN in December 2004. This global programme promotes a holistic, rights-based approach to education. The approach received international recognition in the 2011 UN Declaration on human rights education and training, which requires all member states to provide education about, through and for human rights.

**Education *about* human rights** - providing knowledge and understanding of human rights

**Education *through* human rights** - learning and teaching in a way that respects human rights

**Education *for* human rights** - empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others

## ... INTERNATIONALLY

Our partners share their knowledge and experience through the International Human Rights Friendly Schools network. Through this global network, they become aware of human rights issues affecting other countries, promote their local activities and highlight activism opportunities on issues such as human rights education, non-discrimination and freedom of expression.

Schools also engage with each other through international exchanges. In 2010, teachers and students from Israel and Mongolia spent a week with their counterparts in Denmark to explore first-hand the human rights issues people face in both countries. They shared information and ideas for Human Rights Friendly activities. Students and teachers from Mongolia, Denmark and Israel also attended a conference organized by their counterpart, Villiers High School in the UK. They received training in human rights education and learned from each other's experiences.

## THE PROJECT PRINCIPLES

### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Active participation is an empowering process which enables people to claim their rights by influencing the decisions that affect their lives. A Human Rights Friendly School creates the right environment for young people and the wider school community to co-operate and make decisions together. They participate in running their school and are consulted on issues that affect them, such as the curriculum and discipline. They also discuss and take action on human rights issues that affect them, their community and the wider world. As a result, they become agents of change in their own and other people's lives.

### BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Amnesty International recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships and solidarity between its own members and others in the international human rights community. The Human Rights Friendly Schools project builds on existing links and forges new partnerships between Amnesty International, schools, NGOs and government authorities, including in countries where Amnesty International does not have a national presence.

### ACTIVISM

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project empowers and inspires schools to take action on human rights issues within their wider communities. Young people and others around them can also connect with Amnesty International campaigns. Together, we can take up the mantle of defending human rights and creating positive change – locally, nationally and globally.



In a Human Rights Friendly School in Morocco, Amnesty International provides human rights training for teachers and students.

## THE 10 GLOBAL PRINCIPLES OF A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL

### A HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL:

#### PROMOTES NON-DISCRIMINATION AND INCLUSION BY...

- Being a community where equality, non-discrimination, dignity and respect underpin all aspects of school life.
- Providing a learning environment where all human rights are respected, protected and promoted.
- Embracing inclusion in all aspects of school life.

#### PROMOTES PARTICIPATION BY...

- Encouraging all members of the school community to participate freely, actively and meaningfully in school life and in shaping school policies and practices regardless of gender, status or difference.
- Ensuring everyone in the community has the information they need to participate fully in school life.

#### ENSURES ACCOUNTABILITY BY...

- Being fair, accountable and transparent in all of its planning, processes and policies.
- Protecting all members of the school community regardless of gender, status or difference, by making safety and security a shared priority and responsibility.

#### PRIORITIZES EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TEACHING AND LEARNING BY...

- Integrating human rights into all aspects of teaching and the curriculum.

- Working to empower all students to reach their full potential through education, in particular those students who are marginalized due to their gender, status or difference.
- Empowering students and staff to become active members of a global community, sharing their knowledge, understanding and learning with others and taking action to create a world where human rights are respected, protected and promoted.

# HANDS UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS!



**HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS PROJECT**  
WWW.FRIENDLYSCHOOLS.ORG

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## TO FIND OUT MORE...

For more information about the Human Rights Friendly Schools project, please contact your local Amnesty International office. You can find their details at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

You can also contact the Amnesty International Human Rights Education Team directly on:  
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**Amnesty International** is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

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