



## HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

Empowering young people to promote human rights

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project *empowers* young people and promotes the *active participation* of all members of the school community to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of school life. Through a whole-school approach, the project allows young people to experience human rights in their day to day lives, providing them with the tools and competencies essential to prevent human rights abuses, and to establish human rights as social norms in communities.



### Amnesty International's approach to human rights education in schools

Amnesty International believes that human rights education is key to changing attitudes and behaviour, promoting respect for diversity in societies. Amnesty International supports schools and their wider communities in all regions of the world to build a global culture of human rights.

Human Rights Friendly Schools actively integrate human rights into all areas of school life. Young people and school community members develop the knowledge and skills, as well as the values, attitudes and behaviours to promote human rights. By doing so, schools become platforms for social change in their community.

#### Human Rights Friendly Schools aim 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.
- Enable young people to know their human rights and responsibilities and to become inspired to protect and defend their rights and the rights of others, based on values such as equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation.

### An approach flexible to local contexts

Schools are encouraged to innovate and to develop their own plans to implement the Human Rights Friendly Schools approach with their own particular context. Between 2009 and 2013, Amnesty International Human Rights Friendly Schools project has expanded to **92 schools, 84,000 young people** and **5,000 teachers** in **20 countries**. This expansion is a direct result of the adaptability and the replicable nature of Human Rights Friendly Schools to a wide range of local contexts.

This means that participating schools have diverse backgrounds, demographics and conceptions of what their scheme for human rights change involves. Member of each school discuss, decide and design their own journey towards integrating human rights in the life of their particular institution, and Amnesty International or a local partner facilitates this process. It is important to remember that **every school is unique, so there are as many routes to becoming human rights friendly as there are schools**.

**“The project has changed my view of the world, I believe that everybody must be respected and their dignity preserved.”**

Deborah, student at Accra High School, Ghana



# HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOLS IN PRACTICE

This is no ordinary project where human rights lessons are taught and children listen. By adopting a rights-based approach, members of Human Rights Friendly Schools place human rights at the heart of the learning experience and make human rights an integral part of everyday school life.

A Human Rights Friendly School is a school that embraces human rights as core operating and organizing principles. It is a school community where human rights are learned, taught, practiced, respected, protected and promoted. A Human Rights Friendly School ensures that **equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation** are at the heart of the learning experience and present in all major areas of school life.

Human Rights Friendly Schools aim to integrate human rights values into their life, following the 10 Global Principles below.

## 10 Global Principles

### Non-Discrimination and Inclusion

**1** A Human Rights Friendly School is a community where equality, non-discrimination, dignity and respect underpin all aspects of school life.

**2** A Human Rights Friendly School provides a learning environment where all human rights are respected, protected and promoted.

**3** A Human Rights Friendly School embraces inclusion in all aspects of school life.

### Participation

**4** A Human Rights Friendly School encourages all members of the school community to participate freely, actively and meaningfully in school life, including shaping school policies and practices.

**5** A Human Rights Friendly School ensures that everyone in the school community has the information and resources they need to participate fully in school life.

### Accountability

**6** A Human Rights Friendly School is fair, accountable and transparent in all of its planning, processes, policies and practices.

**7** A Human Rights Friendly School protects all members of the school community by making safety and security a shared priority and responsibility.

### Empowerment through teaching and learning

**8** A Human Rights Friendly School integrates human rights into all aspects of teaching and the curriculum.

**9** A Human Rights Friendly School works 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.

**10** A Human Rights Friendly School empowers students and staff to become active members of a global community, sharing knowledge, understanding and learning with others and taking action to create a world where human rights are respected, protected and promoted.

## Four key areas of school Life

From the way decisions are made in schools, to the way people treat each other, to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities on offer, to the surroundings in which students are taught, the school becomes an exemplary model for human rights education.

Human Rights Friendly Schools integrate human rights principles and values in four key areas of school life:

### Governance

Schools work to make their governance structures fully democratic and participatory, encouraging all members of the school community to participate freely, actively and meaningfully in school life, shaping school policies and practices.

### Relationships

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

### Curriculum and Extra-Curricular Activities

Opportunities for students to engage in learning about human rights can be offered both through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities in Human Rights Friendly Schools.

### School Environment

Learning about human rights is most effective if it takes place in an environment that is respectful of the principles being taught. Human Rights Friendly Schools are transformed into places which reflect or are an expression of human rights values.

## HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY SCHOOL'S IMPACT

**“I became more aware of my rights and responsibilities towards my surroundings and more active and present in my school”**

Ayoub, student at Lycée Ibn Youssef, Morocco

### Teachers integrate human rights in content and methodology

Teachers are trained in both human rights content and methodology, reporting greater confidence in creating a positive classroom environment, as well as improved interaction with students.



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Amnesty International India delivering teacher training on human rights, India, 2013

**“Human Rights Friendly Schools allowed me to work on a different level with the children and to share some of my personal ideas round human rights with them. It has called on me to look at subjects I teach and to investigate methodologies that would facilitate teaching human rights through those subjects.”**

Michael, teacher at Colaiste Pobail Setanta.

### Schools create a supportive and inclusive environment

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

One of Accra High School's most effective initiatives to reduce bullying and strengthen relationships between students was the creation of an open forum to promote dialogue and peer mediation.

**“Children used to be bullied a lot and teachers didn't pay much attention to that before. Now the teachers are more worried about children well being. In my opinion, it is really important for children to have a connection with their teachers as each of us should be able to rely on one adult and not everyone can do that outside of school.”**

Auygarb, student at Bayan-Undur School, Mongolia

### Youth lead the change

In a Human Rights Friendly School all members of the school community are equipped to discuss and find innovative ways of defending human rights and working for positive change. Human Rights Friendly Schools empower young people to act as catalysts of human rights change in their schools and communities.



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Students of Warwick Academy promoting human rights in their school, Bermuda, 2012

**“Because now I know, I am more interested, I understand and I can promote human rights better. [...] Now, we think twice about our actions, we are all more aware of what we are doing and there is more accountability of our actions and how it affects others. Overall, members of the school community have begun to think collectively and globally. We realised that we have rights and stand for them while respecting and being interested in others.”**

Courtney, former student at the Warwick Academy, Bermuda

## Schools engage with the wider community

As everyone becomes more aware of human rights, young people work together with their wider community to bring about real human rights change in their school and their surroundings.

“The school has changed a lot. We are invited to discuss important issues such as sexual harassment in schools. We have been more involved as parents”.

Parents’ association representative, Benin.

“In Senegal, students from the Peytavin High School mobilized youth during national elections by explaining their rights and responsibilities and encouraging them to exercise their rights to vote”.

Mamadou Diop, Amnesty International Human Rights Coordinator, Senegal.

## Schools take action for human rights

Amnesty International offers opportunities for school communities to take action to promote and defend human rights locally and globally. Schools are invited to organise public events including solidarity actions, conferences, film screenings etc. to raise-awareness on human rights issues.



Students in Poland participating in Amnesty International Letter Writing Marathon 2012

Amnesty International’s Letter Writing Marathon mobilizes people around the world to take part in a mass action, providing hope and transforming the lives of others. Activists around the globe are encouraged to support cases of individuals victims of human rights violations.

The Letter Writing Marathon is an opportunity for schools to take action for human rights through individual cases. Adam, a student of Abi Dar El Ghifari High School in Morocco, volunteered to collect signatures and sign letters of support on six individual cases, supported by Amnesty International and his school community. As Human Rights Ambassador in his school, Adam mobilized his peers to take action for human rights by raising-awareness amongst students as well as amongst professors and administrative staff during school breaks.

## Schools become models for other schools

After 5 years implementation, the Human Rights Friendly Schools approach has proven to have a positive impact on education, attracting other schools and is recognized as a model to follow by educational authorities. The Human Rights Friendly Schools approach supports **quality education**, developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of students, and strengthening their capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and promoting a culture which is infused by human rights values.

“Compared to other schools and also with what I see at University, students of Mongolia-India Joint School are more educated and they respect each other much more”.

Tim, former student at Mongolia-India Joint Secondary School, Mongolia

## Promoting the integration of Human Rights Education in educational systems

Both the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training emphasize the importance of integrating human rights education in educational systems across the world. Both instruments advocate for a holistic approach to human rights education, encouraging governments to not only support schools to teach about human rights, but also to ensure that the way schools are run is consistent with human rights values and principles.

Amnesty International’s Human Rights Friendly Schools approach promotes the integration of education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights in educational systems around the world.

### TO FIND OUT MORE

For more information about the Human Rights Friendly Schools project, please visit our webpage:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/projects-initiatives/rfsp>

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.