

# *Plan of Action*

World Programme for Human Rights Education

**First  
Phase**



United Nations



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Office of the  
United Nations  
High Commissioner  
for Human Rights

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Office of the  
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High Commissioner  
for Human Rights

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## *Foreword*

The international community is increasingly adopting intergovernmental frameworks at the global level, such as the World Programme for Human Rights Education (from 2005 onwards), which aim at encouraging the development of sustainable national strategies and programmes in human rights education. In particular, the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, which is contained in this booklet, focuses on the integration of human rights education in primary and secondary school systems.

This international trend highlights a consensus that the education system plays a vital role in fostering respect, participation, equality and non-discrimination in our societies. For the education system to play such a role, a comprehensive approach to implementing human rights education, addressing not only educational policies, processes and tools but also the environment within which education takes place, is needed.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that international programmes can only support – and not substitute for – committed, vigorous and concerted national action. Ultimately, United Nations programmes acquire real value only if national and local actors take responsibility for implementing them in their communities, and use them as mobilization and advocacy tools.

The Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme was adopted by all United Nations Member States in July 2005. It proposes a concrete strategy and practical guidance for implementing human rights education in primary and secondary schools.

This document is now in your hands. We hope it will provide ideas for developing new initiatives, expanding those already existing and enhancing cooperation and partnership at all levels. We would like to appeal to all to get involved and participate in global human rights education efforts; the realization of human rights is our common responsibility, and its achievement will depend entirely on the contribution that each and every one of us is willing to make.



Louise Arbour  
United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights



Koïchiro Matsuura  
Director-General of the United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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# The Plan of Action for 2005-2007 in brief

This section summarizes the Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. It highlights key actions to be undertaken by ministries of education and other school and civil society actors working in partnership to integrate human rights education effectively in the primary and secondary school systems. The Plan of Action was adopted by all Member States of the United Nations General Assembly on 14 July 2005.<sup>1</sup>

## I. The World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing)

### *What is human rights education?*

Human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights. A comprehensive education in human rights not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms that protect them, but also imparts the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life. Human rights education fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold human rights for all members of society.

Human rights education activities should convey fundamental human rights principles, such as equality and non-discrimination, while affirming their interdependence, indivisibility and universality. At the same time, activities should be practical - relating human rights to learners' real-life experience and enabling them to build on human rights principles found in their own cultural context. Through such activities, learners are empowered to identify and address their human rights needs and to seek solutions consistent with human rights standards. Both what is taught and the way in which it is taught should reflect human rights values, encourage participation and foster a learning environment free from want and fear.

1. General Assembly resolution 59/113 B (see annex II below).

## *Why a World Programme for Human Rights Education?*

On 10 December 2004, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors.<sup>2</sup>

Building on the foundations laid during the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), this new initiative reflects the international community's increasing recognition that human rights education produces far-reaching results. By promoting respect for human dignity and equality and participation in democratic decision-making, human rights education contributes to the long-term prevention of abuses and violent conflicts.

To help make human rights a reality in every community, the World Programme seeks to promote a common understanding of the basic principles and methodologies of human rights education, to provide a concrete framework for action and to strengthen partnerships and cooperation from the international level down to the grass roots.

## **II. A Plan of Action for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems**

Unlike the limited time frame of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the World Programme is structured around an ongoing series of phases, the first of which covers the period 2005-2007 and focuses on the primary and secondary school systems. Developed by a broad group of education and human rights practitioners from all continents, the Plan of Action for the first phase proposes a concrete strategy and practical ideas for implementing human rights education nationally. Its key elements are highlighted below.

### *A "rights-based approach" to education*

Human rights education is widely considered to be integral to every child's right to a quality education, one that not only teaches reading, writing and arithmetic,

2. General Assembly resolution 59/113 A (see annex I below).



but also strengthens the child's capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and promotes a culture which is infused by human rights values.

Human rights education promotes a holistic, rights-based approach that includes both “human rights **through** education,” ensuring that all the components and processes of education – including curricula, materials, methods and training – are conducive to the learning of human rights, and “human rights **in** education,” ensuring that the human rights of all members of the school community are respected.

Although many factors contribute to effective integration of this approach in primary and secondary schools, research and experience worldwide have identified five key components for success:

1. **Educational policies.** Understood as statements of commitment on the part of a Government, educational policies - including legislation, plans of action, curricula, training policies and so on - should explicitly promote a rights-based approach to education. These statements infuse human rights throughout the education system. Policies are developed in a participatory manner in cooperation with all stakeholders and fulfil a country's international treaty obligations to provide and promote quality education, such as those called for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. **Policy implementation.** To be effective, policies need a consistent implementation strategy, including measures such as the allocation of adequate resources and the setting-up of coordination mechanisms, that ensures coherence, monitoring and accountability. Such a strategy should take into account the multiplicity of stakeholders at both the national level (*e.g.*, ministry of education, teacher training institutions, research bodies, non-governmental organizations) and the local level (*e.g.*, local government, head teachers and their staff, parents and students), and involve them in putting educational policy into practice.
3. **The learning environment.** Human rights education strives towards an environment where human rights are practised and lived in the daily life of the whole school community. As well as cognitive learning, human rights education includes the social and emotional development of all those involved in

the learning and teaching process. A rights-based environment respects and promotes the human rights of all school actors and is characterized by mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life, and offers them appropriate opportunities for interacting with the wider community.

4. **Teaching and learning.** Introducing or improving human rights education requires a holistic approach to teaching and learning that reflects human rights values. Starting as early as possible, human rights concepts and practices are integrated into all aspects of education. For example, curriculum content and objectives are rights-based, methodologies are democratic and participatory, and all materials and textbooks are consistent with human rights values.
5. **Education and professional development of school personnel.** For the school to serve as a model of human rights learning and practice, all teachers and staff need to be able to both transmit and model human rights values. Education and professional development must foster educators' knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for human rights. Furthermore, as rights-holders themselves, school personnel need to work and learn in a context of respect for their dignity and rights.

Practical guidance on how to implement these five components in the school system is provided in the appendix to the Plan of Action.

### *Should human rights education be a national priority?*

By providing a set of guiding principles to support educational reform and helping to respond to current challenges faced by education systems worldwide, human rights education can improve the national education system's overall effectiveness, which in turn plays a fundamental role in economic, social and political development. In particular:

- By promoting child-centred and participatory teaching and learning, human rights education improves the quality of learning achievements;

- By promoting learning environments that are inclusive and that foster equal opportunities, diversity and non-discrimination, human rights education supports access to and participation in schooling;
- By supporting the social and emotional development of the child and by fostering democratic values, human rights education contributes to social cohesion and conflict prevention.

### *A concrete strategy for national action*

To encourage and support human rights education in primary and secondary school systems, the Plan of Action assumes a process of change involving simultaneous actions in several areas, especially the five key components described above. It recognizes that the situation of human rights education in school systems differs widely from country to country, from well-developed policies and actions to little or none. Whatever the status of human rights education or the situation or type of education system, the development of human rights education should be on each country's education agenda. Each country should establish realistic goals and means for action in accordance with its national context, priorities and capacity.

The Plan of Action proposes four stages for the national process of planning, implementation and evaluation of human rights education in the school system (*i.e.*, the “national implementation strategy”).

**Stage 1: *Where are we?*** - Analyse the current situation of human rights education in the school system.

This first stage calls for a national study on human rights education in the school system. With wide dissemination and discussion, this report can serve as a basis for developing a national implementation strategy for human rights education in stage 2.

**Stage 2: *Where do we want to go and how?*** - Set priorities and develop a national implementation strategy.

The strategy developed in this stage addresses the five key components (*i.e.*, educational policies, policy implementation, the learning environment, teaching and learning, education and professional development) and focuses on issues that can

have a sustainable impact. It sets realistic objectives and priorities and anticipates at least some implementation during 2005-2007.

**Stage 3: *Getting there*** - Implement and monitor activities.

In this stage, the national implementation strategy is widely disseminated and put into practice. Its progress is monitored using fixed milestones. Outcomes will vary according to national priorities, but might include legislation, new or revised learning materials and methodologies, training courses or non-discriminatory policies protecting all members of the school community.

**Stage 4: *Did we get there and with what success?*** - Evaluate.

Using evaluation as a means of both accountability and learning for the future, this stage calls for an assessment of what the implementation strategy has accomplished. It results in a report on the national implementation strategy for human rights education in schools, with recommendations for future action based on lessons learned.

During this first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, Member States are encouraged to undertake, as a minimum, stages 1 and 2 and initiate stage 3. Work in this area would then continue beyond the World Programme's first phase.

Funding for human rights education could be found among the resources allocated to the national education system in general, and in particular by optimizing funds already committed to quality education, coordinating external funds based on the actions set out in this Plan of Action and creating partnerships between the public and private sectors.

***Who should be involved?***

As ministries of education (or equivalent institutions) have the main responsibility for primary and secondary education, the implementation strategy proposed in the Plan of Action addresses their functions, such as educational policy development, programme planning, research, teacher training, development and dissemination of materials. However, others should be involved in the implementation of the Plan of Action, namely teachers training institutions, national human rights institutions, teachers' associations, non-governmental organizations, parents' and students' associations, and so on.

Other key national agencies should also be involved in all stages of planning and implementation, especially educational research institutions, teachers' unions and professional organizations, legislative bodies and national committees for inter-governmental organizations. It is also suggested that additional stakeholders, such as other ministries, youth organizations, the media, religious institutions, community leaders, minority groups and the business community, should be involved to ensure effective implementation.

### *What are the coordination mechanisms?*

The Plan of Action recommends a sequence of coordination mechanisms from the national level to the international level.

At the national level, ministries of education are invited to create or designate a unit within their structure responsible for coordinating the development and monitoring of the national implementation strategy for human rights education in the school system. This unit will also be responsible for liaising with the United Nations. Every country is also encouraged to identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating related initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events).

At the international level, the Plan of Action proposes the creation of a United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee, composed of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant international agencies. With the Office of the High Commissioner providing its secretariat, this committee will meet regularly to follow up on the implementation of the Plan of Action, mobilize resources and support actions at country level, as well as ensure United Nations system-wide support to the national implementation strategy. United Nations entities that monitor a country's compliance with its treaty obligations and other relevant United Nations mechanisms will be called upon to emphasize and report on progress in human rights education in the school system.

At the conclusion of the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, each country will evaluate its actions and report to the United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee. On the basis of these reports, the committee will prepare a final report for the General Assembly in 2008.

*What kind of support is available from the United Nations?*

The national implementation strategies of Member States can be supported by international cooperation from the United Nations system and other international and regional intergovernmental organizations, organizations of ministers of education, non-governmental organizations and financial institutions. The close collaboration of these actors is indispensable to maximize resources, avoid duplication and ensure coherence.

These bodies may assist in a variety of ways, for instance:

- In the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy, in direct contact with the ministries of education or other relevant national actors;
- By facilitating information-sharing at all levels, including through the identification, collection and dissemination of good practices as well as information about available materials, institutions and programmes;
- By encouraging the development of human rights education networks;
- By supporting training and research.



*Plan of action for  
the first phase (2005-2007)  
of the World Programme  
for Human Rights Education*

## I

# Introduction

*“The World Conference on Human Rights considers human rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace” (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Part II. D, para. 78).*

## A. *Context and definition of human rights education*

1. The international community has increasingly expressed consensus on the fundamental contribution of human rights education to the realization of human rights. Human rights education aims at developing an understanding of our common responsibility to make human rights a reality in every community and in society at large. In this sense, it contributes to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and the enhancement of people’s participation in decision-making processes within a democratic system, as stated in Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71.
2. Provisions on human rights education have been incorporated in many international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 13), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (article 10), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (article 7), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Part I, paras. 33-34 and Part II, paras. 78-82) and the Declaration



and Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001 (Declaration, paras. 95-97 and Programme of Action, paras. 129-139).

3. In accordance with these instruments, which provide elements of a definition of human rights education as agreed upon by the international community, human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:
  - (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
  - (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
  - (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
  - (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
  - (e) The building and maintenance of peace;
  - (f) The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.
  
4. Human rights education encompasses:
  - (a) Knowledge and skills — learning about human rights and mechanisms for their protection, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in daily life;
  - (b) Values, attitudes and behaviour — developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;
  - (c) Action — taking action to defend and promote human rights.
  
5. With a view to encouraging human rights education initiatives, Member States have adopted various specific international frameworks for action, such as the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights, focusing on the development and dissemination of human rights information materials,

the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004 and its Plan of Action, encouraging the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive, effective and sustainable strategies for human rights education at the national level, and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010).

6. In 2004, the Economic and Social Council, welcoming Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71, requested the General Assembly to proclaim, at its fifty-ninth session, a world programme for human rights education, to begin on 1 January 2005 and to be structured in consecutive phases, in order to further focus national human rights education efforts on specific sectors/issues periodically identified by the Commission on Human Rights.

## *B. Objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education*

7. The objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education are:
  - (a) To promote the development of a culture of human rights;
  - (b) To promote a common understanding, based on international instruments, of basic principles and methodologies for human rights education;
  - (c) To ensure a focus on human rights education at the national, regional and international levels;
  - (d) To provide a common collective framework for action by all relevant actors;
  - (e) To enhance partnership and cooperation at all levels;
  - (f) To take stock of and support existing human rights education programmes, to highlight successful practices, and to provide an incentive to continue and/or expand them and to develop new ones.

## C. *Principles for human rights education activities*<sup>1</sup>

8. Educational activities within the World Programme shall:
  - (a) Promote the interdependence, indivisibility and universality of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;
  - (b) Foster respect for and appreciation of differences, and opposition to discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, physical or mental condition, and on other bases;
  - (c) Encourage analysis of chronic and emerging human rights problems (including poverty, violent conflicts and discrimination), which would lead to solutions consistent with human rights standards;
  - (d) Empower communities and individuals to identify their human rights needs and to ensure that they are met;
  - (e) Build on the human rights principles embedded within the different cultural contexts and take into account historical and social developments in each country;
  - (f) Foster knowledge of and skills to use local, national, regional and international human rights instruments and mechanisms for the protection of human rights;
  - (g) Make use of participatory pedagogies that include knowledge, critical analysis and skills for action furthering human rights;
  - (h) Foster teaching and learning environments free from want and fear that encourage participation, enjoyment of human rights and the full development of the human personality;
  - (i) Be relevant to the daily life of the learners, engaging them in a dialogue about ways and means of transforming human rights from the expression of abstract norms to the reality of their social, economic, cultural and political conditions.

1. The section on the principles for human rights education activities is based on the guidelines for national plans of action for human rights education developed within the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004 (A/52/469/Add.1 and Corr.1).

## III

### *The first phase (2005-2007): a plan of action for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems*

*“The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms that States are duty-bound ... to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms [and that] this should be integrated in the educational policies at the national as well as international levels” (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Part I, para. 33).*

9. In accordance with resolution 2004/71 of the Commission on Human Rights, the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education will focus on the primary and secondary school systems.

#### *A. Context*

10. The plan of action draws on the principles and frameworks set by international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related guidelines adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (in particular, general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education), the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy. It also draws on international declarations and programmes on education.

11. The Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments, adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000,<sup>2</sup> the major international platform and collective commitment to the achievement of the goals and targets of Education For All (EFA), reaffirmed a vision of education supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and geared towards learning to live together. In the Dakar Framework, education is considered key “to sustainable development and peace and stability” (para. 6), by fostering social cohesion and empowering people to become active participants in social transformation. Goal 6 of the Dakar Framework is to improve all aspects of the quality of education, ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.<sup>3</sup> It provides the basis for a concept of quality education that goes beyond reading, writing and arithmetic, and which, while necessarily dynamic, is strongly rights-based and entails democratic citizenship, values and solidarity as important outcomes.
  
12. A rights-based quality education encompasses the concept of education for sustainable development as contained in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Education is seen as a process for addressing important questions such as rural development, health care, community involvement, HIV/AIDS, the environment, traditional and indigenous knowledge, and wider ethical issues such as human values and human rights. It is further stated that the success in the struggle for sustainable development requires an approach to education that strengthens “our engagement in support of other values — especially justice and fairness — and the awareness that we share a common destiny with others”.<sup>4</sup> The World Programme

2. See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000*, Paris, 2000.

3. According to general comment No. 1 (2001) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the aims of education, life skills include “the ability to make well-balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner; and to develop a healthy lifestyle, good social relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, creative talents, and other abilities which give children the tools needed to pursue their options in life” (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 41 (A/57/41)*, annex VIII, appendix, para. 9).

4. UNESCO, “Education for Sustainability: from Rio to Johannesburg: lessons learned from a decade of commitment” (Paris, 2002).

for Human Rights Education would create synergies with the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), coupling efforts to address issues of common concern.

13. One of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community on the occasion of the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 is the promotion of universal access to primary education, which is still a major challenge. Although enrolment rates have been increasing in several regions, the quality of education remains low for many. For example, gender biases, threats to the physical and emotional security of girls and gender-insensitive curricula can all conspire against the realization of the right to education (A/56/326, para. 94). This plan of action aims at contributing to the achievement of this Millennium Development Goal by promoting rights-based quality education.
14. The plan of action is also placed within the context of action of Member States and others to promote the universal right to literacy, in particular within the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), literacy being a key learning tool towards the fulfilment of the right to education.

## *B. Human rights education in the school system*

15. Human rights education is widely considered to be an integral part of the right to education. As stated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its general comment No. 1, “the education to which each child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child’s capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values” (para. 2). Such education “is for every child an indispensable tool for her or his efforts to achieve in the course of her or his life a balanced, human rights-friendly response to the challenges that accompany a period of fundamental change driven by globalization, new technologies and related phenomena” (para. 3).

16. The Convention on the Rights of the Child attaches particular importance to the process by which education is to be promoted, as underlined in the general comment: “Efforts to promote the enjoyment of other rights must not be undermined, and should be reinforced, by the values imparted in the educational process. This includes not only the content of the curriculum but also the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment within which education takes place”.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, human rights should be learned through both content transmission and experience, and should be practised at all levels of the school system.
17. In this sense, human rights education promotes a rights-based approach to education and should be understood as a process that includes:
  - (a) “Human rights through education”: ensuring that all the components and processes of learning, including curricula, materials, methods and training are conducive to the learning of human rights;
  - (b) “Human rights in education”: ensuring the respect of the human rights of all actors, and the practice of rights, within the education system.
18. Therefore, human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems includes:
  - (a) Policies — developing in a participatory way and adopting coherent educational policies, legislation and strategies that are human rights-based, including curriculum improvement and training policies for teachers and other educational personnel;
  - (b) Policy implementation — planning the implementation of the above-mentioned educational policies by taking appropriate organizational measures and by facilitating the involvement of all stakeholders;
  - (c) Learning environment — the school environment itself respects and promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms. It provides the opportunity for all school actors (students, teachers, staff and administrators and

5. In general comment No. 1, the Committee on the Rights of the Child also stated that “it should be emphasized that the type of teaching that is focused primarily on accumulation of knowledge, prompting competition and leading to an excessive burden of work on children, may seriously hamper the harmonious development of the child to the fullest potential of his or her abilities and talents” (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 41 (A/57/41)*, annex VIII, appendix, para. 12).

- parents) to practise human rights through real-life activities. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life;<sup>6</sup>
- (d) Teaching and learning — all teaching and learning processes and tools are rights-based (for instance, the content and objectives of the curriculum, participatory and democratic practices and methodologies, appropriate materials including the review and revision of existing textbooks, etc.);
  - (e) Education and professional development of teachers and other personnel — providing the teaching profession and school leadership, through pre- and in-service training, with the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies to facilitate the learning and practice of human rights in schools, as well as with appropriate working conditions and status.

A detailed description of the five components and related courses of action, to serve as a reference tool, is provided in the appendix.

**19.** By promoting a rights-based approach to education, human rights education enables the education system to fulfil its fundamental mission to secure quality education for all. Accordingly, it contributes to improving the effectiveness of the national education system as a whole, which in turn has a fundamental role in each country's economic, social and political development. It provides, among others, the following benefits:

- (a) Improved quality of learning achievements by promoting child-centred and participatory teaching and learning practices and processes, as well as a new role for the teaching profession;
- (b) Increased access to and participation in schooling by creating a rights-based learning environment that is inclusive and welcoming and fosters universal values, equal opportunities, diversity and non-discrimination;
- (c) A contribution to social cohesion and conflict prevention by supporting the social and emotional development of the child and by introducing democratic citizenship and values.

6. General comment No. 1 also states that “The participation of children in school life, the creation of school communities and student councils, peer education and peer counselling, and the involvement of children in school disciplinary proceedings should be promoted as part of the process of learning and experiencing the realization of rights” (ibid., para. 8).



20. All efforts taking place in the school system towards peace education, citizenship and values education, multicultural education, global education or education for sustainable development do include human rights principles in their content and methodologies. It is important that all of them, using this plan of action as a reference, promote a rights-based approach to education, which goes beyond teaching and learning and aims at providing a platform for systemic improvement of the school sector in the context of national education reforms.

### *C. Specific objectives of the plan of action*

21. Considering the overall objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (see sect. I above), this plan aims to achieve the following specific objectives:
  - (a) To promote the inclusion and practice of human rights in the primary and secondary school systems;
  - (b) To support the development, adoption and implementation of comprehensive, effective and sustainable national human rights education strategies in school systems, and/or the review and improvement of existing initiatives;
  - (c) To provide guidelines on key components of human rights education in the school system;
  - (d) To facilitate the provision of support to Member States by international, regional, national and local organizations;
  - (e) To support networking and cooperation among local, national, regional and international institutions.
22. This plan provides:
  - (a) A definition of human rights education in the school system based on internationally agreed principles;
  - (b) A user-friendly guide to developing and/or improving human rights education in the school system, by proposing concrete actions for implementation at the national level;
  - (c) A flexible guide which can be adapted to different contexts and situations and to different types of education systems.

# III

## *Implementation strategy at the national level*

### *A. Introduction*

23. This plan is an incentive and a means to develop and strengthen human rights education in primary and secondary school systems at the national level. Its underlying assumption is that a process of change and improvement should happen by taking several simultaneous actions in different areas (see appendix). To be effective, such a process should be organized along the lines of widely accepted stages of a development cycle. Realistic goals and means for action need to be established in accordance with a country's context, priorities and capacity, and based on previous national efforts (such as those undertaken within the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004).
24. This plan and its implementation strategy recognize that the situation of human rights education in school systems differs from country to country. For instance, human rights education may be largely missing in some countries; other countries may have national policies and programmes, but little implementation; in other cases there may be grass-roots initiatives and projects in schools, often supported by international organizations, but not necessarily part of a national policy; other countries may be very supportive of human rights education with well-developed national policies and actions. Whatever the situation and the type of education system, the development or improvement of human rights education is to be on each country's education agenda.
25. The implementation strategy addresses primarily the ministries of education, which have the main responsibility for primary and secondary education at

national level. Ministries of education are therefore the main leaders and actors. The implementation strategy also addresses other relevant institutions (see paras. 28-30 below), which should be involved in all stages of planning and implementation.

## *B. Stages of the implementation strategy*

26. This section proposes four stages to facilitate the process of planning, implementation and evaluation of human rights education in the school system. They provide guidelines to assist Member States in implementing this plan of action.

**Stage 1:** Analysis of the current situation of human rights education in the school system

### *Actions*

- Address the question: Where are we?
- Collect information on and analyse the following:
  - Current situation of the primary and secondary school system, including the situation of human rights in schools;
  - Historical and cultural backgrounds that may influence human rights education in the school system;
  - Human rights education initiatives, if any, in primary and secondary school systems;
  - Achievements and shortcomings of and obstacles to initiatives undertaken within the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004;
  - Involvement of various actors, such as governmental institutions, national human rights institutions, universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations, in human rights education in the school system;
  - Good human rights education practice existing at national and regional levels;
  - Role of similar types of education (education for sustainable development, peace education, global education, multicultural education, citizenship and values education) that may exist in the country.
- Determine which measures and components of human rights education exist already, based on the reference tool provided in the appendix. Other

elements for the analysis would be the national reports to the United Nations treaty bodies, as well as reports produced within the framework of the Decade at national and international levels.

- Identify key features and areas by analysing and determining advantages, disadvantages, as well as opportunities for and limitations to human rights education in the school system.
- Draw conclusions on the state of existence and implementation of human rights education.
- Consider how to build on advantages and lessons learned, and how to use opportunities.
- Consider changes and measures that are necessary to deal with disadvantages and limitations.

### *Outputs*

- National study on human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems.
- Wide dissemination of the results of the study at the national level through, for example, publications, a conference or public debate to elaborate orientations for the national implementation strategy for human rights education in the school system.

## **Stage 2: Setting priorities and developing a national implementation strategy**

### *Actions*

- Address the question: Where do we want to go and how?
- Define a mission statement, that is, the basic goal for implementing human rights education in the school system.
- Fix objectives using the appendix as a reference.
- Set priorities on the basis of the findings of the national study. These priorities may take into consideration the most pressing needs and/or the opportunities available.
- Focus on issues potentially leading to impact: What can we really do?
- Give priority to measures that will secure sustainable change vis-à-vis ad hoc activities.

- Set the direction of the national implementation strategy and link objectives with available resources, by identifying:
  - Inputs: allocation of available resources (human, financial, time);
  - Activities (tasks, responsibilities, time frame and milestones);
  - Outputs: concrete products (for example, new legislation, studies, capacity-building seminars, educational materials, revision of textbooks, etc.);
  - Outcomes: achieved results.

### *Output*

A national implementation strategy for human rights education in the primary and secondary school system that identifies objectives and priorities and foresees at least some implementation activities for the period 2005-2007.

## **Stage 3: Implementing and monitoring**

### *Actions*

- The guiding idea should be: getting there.
- Disseminate the national implementation strategy.
- Initiate the implementation of the planned activities within the national implementation strategy.
- Monitor the implementation using fixed milestones.

### *Output*

Depending on the priorities of the national implementation strategy, outputs can be, for instance, legislation, mechanisms for coordination of the national implementation strategy, new or revised textbooks and learning materials, training courses, participatory teaching and/or learning methodologies or non-discriminatory policies protecting all members of the school community.

## **Stage 4: Evaluating**

### *Actions*

- Address the question: Did we get there and with what success?
- Adopt evaluation as a method of accountability and a means to learn and to improve a possible next phase of activities.

- Use self-evaluation as well as independent external evaluation to review implementation.
- Check the fulfilment of the set objectives and examine the implementation process.
- Acknowledge, disseminate, and celebrate the achievement of results.

### *Outputs*

- National report on the outcomes of the national implementation strategy for human rights education in the primary and secondary school system.
- Recommendations for future action based on lessons learned throughout the implementation process.

## *C. Minimum action*

27. Member States are encouraged to undertake as minimum action during the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme the following:
- (a) An analysis of the current situation of human rights education in the school system (stage 1);
  - (b) Setting of priorities and the development of the national implementation strategy (stage 2);
  - (c) The initial implementation of planned activities.

## *D. Actors*

28. Main responsibility for the implementation of this plan of action rests with the ministries of education through their relevant agencies dealing with such concerns as:
- (a) Educational policy;
  - (b) Programme planning;
  - (c) Curriculum development;
  - (d) Teaching and learning material development;
  - (e) Pre- and in-service training of teachers and other educational personnel;
  - (f) Teaching and learning methodologies;
  - (g) Inclusive education;

- (h) Regional/provincial/local administration;
- (i) Research;
- (j) Dissemination of information.

**29.** The implementation of this plan of action needs the close collaboration of other institutions, namely:

- (a) Teachers' colleges and faculties of education of universities;
- (b) Teachers' unions, professional organizations and accrediting institutions;
- (c) National, federal, local and state legislative bodies, including education, development and human rights parliamentary committees;
- (d) National human rights institutions such as ombudsmen and human rights commissions;
- (e) National commissions for UNESCO;
- (f) National/local groups/organizations, including, for example, national committees for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other community-based organizations;
- (g) National branches of international non-governmental organizations;
- (h) Parents' associations;
- (i) Students' associations;
- (j) Education research institutes;
- (k) National and local human rights resource and training centres.

**30.** It also needs the support of other stakeholders such as:

- (a) Other relevant ministries (welfare, labour, justice, women, youth);
- (b) Youth organizations;
- (c) Media representatives;
- (d) Religious institutions;
- (e) Cultural, social and community leaders;
- (f) Indigenous peoples and minority groups;
- (g) The business community.

## *E. Funding*

31. As mentioned in section II above, human rights education in the national education system can also assist in improving the system's effectiveness. It provides a set of guiding principles to support educational reform and helps to respond to current challenges of education systems worldwide, such as access to and equal opportunities in education, the contribution of education to social inclusion and cohesion, the role and status of teachers, the relevance of education for students and the society, the improvement of students' achievements and educational governance.
  
32. Having this in mind, funding for human rights education can be made available also within the context of resources allocated to the national education system in general, and in particular by:
  - (a) Optimizing already committed national funds to quality education in order to implement this plan;
  - (b) Coordinating external funds and allocation practices based on the actions set out in this plan;
  - (c) Creating partnerships between the public and private sectors.



# IV

## *Coordination of the implementation of the plan of action*

### *A. National level*

33. Main responsibility for the implementation of the plan of action shall rest with the ministry of education in each country. The ministry should assign or strengthen a relevant department or unit responsible for coordinating the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy.
34. The coordinating department or unit would engage relevant departments within the ministry of education, other ministries and concerned national actors (see sect. III, paras. 28-30, above) in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy. In this regard, it could facilitate the establishment of a human rights education coalition of those actors.
35. The coordinating department or unit would be called upon to provide updated and detailed information on national progress made in this area to the United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee (see para. 38 below).
36. Moreover, the coordinating department or unit would work in close cooperation with relevant national agencies responsible for the elaboration of country reports to the United Nations treaty bodies, in order to ensure that progress in human rights education is included in those reports.
37. Member States are also encouraged to identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events) on human rights education at national level.

## *B. International level*

38. A United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee, composed of OHCHR, UNESCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant international agencies, including the World Bank, will be set up and be responsible for the international coordination of activities under this plan of action. The secretariat of this committee will be provided by OHCHR.
39. The committee will meet regularly to follow up on the implementation of this plan of action, mobilize resources and support actions at country level. In this regard, it may invite to its meetings, on an ad hoc basis, other relevant international and regional institutions, experts and actors, such as members of the United Nations treaty bodies, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the right to education and others.
40. The committee will be responsible for liaising with the United Nations country teams or international agencies' country presences to ensure the follow-up of the plan of action and United Nations system-wide support to the national implementation strategy, in line with the Secretary-General's reform programme, which provides for coordinated United Nations action at the country level to support national human rights protection systems (A/57/387 and Corr.1, action 2).
41. The United Nations treaty bodies, when examining reports of States parties, will be called upon to place emphasis on the obligation of States parties to implement human rights education in the school systems and to reflect that emphasis in their concluding observations.
42. Furthermore, all relevant thematic and country mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights (including the Special Rapporteurs and representatives, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, as well as working groups) will be called upon to include systematically in their reports progress in human rights education in the school system, as relevant to their mandate.

43. The committee may consider seeking assistance of regional and subregional institutions and organizations with a view to monitoring more effectively the implementation of this plan of action.

# V

## *International cooperation and support*

44. International cooperation and support towards the implementation of this plan of action will be provided by:
- The United Nations system;
  - Other international intergovernmental organizations;
  - Regional intergovernmental organizations;
  - Regional organizations of ministers of education;
  - International and regional forums of ministers of education;
  - International and regional non-governmental organizations;
  - Regional human rights resource and documentation centres;
  - International and regional financial institutions (World Bank, regional development banks, etc.), as well as bilateral funding agencies.
45. It is indispensable that those actors collaborate closely in order to maximize resources, avoid duplication and ensure coherence for the implementation of this plan of action.
46. The objective of international cooperation and support will be the strengthening of national and local capacities for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems within the framework of the national implementation strategy dealt with in section III of this plan of action.
47. The above-mentioned organizations and institutions may consider undertaking, *inter alia*, the following actions:
- Support ministries of education in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the national implementation strategy, including the development of related specialized tools;

- (b) Provide support to other national actors involved, in particular national and local non-governmental organizations, professional associations and other civil society organizations;
- (c) Facilitate information-sharing among concerned actors at the national, regional and international levels by identifying, collecting and disseminating information on good practices, as well as on available materials, institutions and programmes, through traditional and electronic means;
- (d) Support existing networks among actors in human rights education and promote the creation of new ones at the national, regional and international levels;
- (e) Support effective human rights training (including training on participatory teaching and learning methodologies) for teachers, teacher trainers, education officials and employees of non-governmental organizations;
- (f) Support research on the implementation of national human rights education in schools, including studies on practical measures for its improvement.

**48.** In order to mobilize resources to support the implementation of this plan of action, international and regional financial institutions, as well as bilateral funding agencies will be called upon to explore ways of linking their funding programmes on education to this plan of action and to human rights education in general.

# VI

## *Evaluation*

49. At the conclusion of the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, each country will undertake an evaluation of actions implemented under this plan of action. The evaluation will take into consideration progress made in a number of areas, such as legal frameworks and policies, curricula, teaching and learning processes and tools, revision of textbooks, teacher training, improvement of the school environment, etc. The Member States will be called upon to provide their final national evaluation report to the United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee.
50. To this end, international and regional organizations will provide assistance to build or strengthen national capacities for evaluation.
51. The inter-agency coordinating committee will prepare a final evaluation report based on national evaluation reports, in cooperation with relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations. The report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session (2008).

## *Appendix*

### *Components of human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems*

1. Each country's context has a considerable influence on its possibilities and strategies for promoting the inclusion and practice of human rights education in the school system. However, beyond the ensuing diversity, common trends and approaches can be identified for developing human rights education. The five components set out in the present appendix in a generic fashion are based on existing worldwide successful experiences as well as studies and research, including consultations carried out in preparation of the present plan of action and the midterm (2000) and final (2004) evaluations of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004. The components compile good practice, which the main actors of this plan of action are invited to strive towards gradually and progressively. The components are indicative and not prescriptive. They propose options and recommend possible courses of action, and should serve as a reference tool. They will need to be adapted to each context and national education system in line with the national implementation strategy of this plan of action.

#### *A. Policies*

2. Education policies are understood as clear and coherent statements of commitments. Prepared at the relevant government level, mainly national, but also regional and municipal, and in cooperation with all stakeholders, they include principles, definitions and objectives and serve as a normative reference throughout the education system and for all educational actors.
3. Human rights education, which promotes a rights-based approach to education, is to be stated explicitly in objectives of educational policy development and reform, as well as in quality standards of education.
4. The rights-based approach to education implies that the school system becomes conscious of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights

are infused and implemented in the whole education system and in all learning environments. Human rights are included both as an educational aim and as quality criteria of education within key reference texts such as the constitution, educational policy frameworks, educational legislation, and national curricula and programmes.

5. To this end, the following measures correspond to key features of policymaking for human rights education within the school system:
  - (a) Adopt a participatory approach to policy development by involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), teachers associations and unions, professional and research bodies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the preparation of educational policy texts;
  - (b) Fulfil international obligations on human rights education:<sup>1</sup>
    - (i) Promote the ratification of the international instruments concerning the right to education;
    - (ii) Include information on human rights education in the national reports to the relevant international monitoring mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
    - (iii) Cooperate with non-governmental organizations, other sectors of civil society and human rights education specialists in preparing the above-mentioned national reports;
    - (iv) Publicize and comply with the recommendations made by the international monitoring mechanisms;
  - (c) Develop policies and legislation for a rights-based approach to education and human rights education:
    - (i) Include human rights education in education laws;
    - (ii) Ensure that all legislation is aligned with the principles of human rights education and monitor inconsistency in legislation;
    - (iii) Adopt specific legislation on human rights education;

1. Such as those stemming from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Discrimination in Education.



- (iv) Ensure that policies are based on relevant research in human rights education;
- (v) Empower schools and schools' leadership to implement autonomy in decision-making and innovation;
- (vi) Ensure that policies for reporting educational performance (accountability) are in line with human rights principles and establish specific accountability policies for human rights education;
- (vii) Provide guidelines to local authorities on their roles and responsibilities in implementing and supporting human rights education;
- (d) Ensure coherence in policy development:
  - (i) Include human rights education in national sectoral plans for primary and secondary education; national plans for Education For All (EFA); and national policy frameworks as part of the Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014);
  - (ii) Include human rights education in national human rights plans, national action plans against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and national poverty reduction strategies;
  - (iii) Ensure coherence, links and synergies between the different plans and their respective sections on human rights education;
  - (iv) Relate human rights education policies and other sectoral policies (e.g. judicial, social, youth, health);
- (e) Include human rights education in the curriculum:
  - (i) Ensure that policies are based on relevant research in human rights education;
  - (ii) Acknowledge, in the overall national curriculum and educational standards, human rights values, knowledge and attitudes as basic skills and competencies, complementing literacy and numeracy skills and competencies;
  - (iii) Prepare a national curriculum specifically for human rights education, setting out concepts and goals, teaching and learning objectives and approaches;
  - (iv) Define the status of human rights education within the curriculum, according to the school level, and possibly as obligatory or optional, subject-based and/or cross-curricular (whereby human rights are included in all curriculum subjects);

- (v) Make the teaching and learning of human rights a full-fledged and explicit component particularly of citizenship education, social studies and history;
  - (vi) Make the teaching and learning of human rights a full-fledged and explicit component of the school-based curriculum (teaching and learning programmes decided by schools);
  - (vii) Include human rights education in vocational education and training;
  - (viii) Adopt guidelines for revising textbooks so that they are in line with human rights principles as well as for developing specific textbooks for human rights education;
  - (ix) Promote a human rights-based approach to school governance, management, discipline procedures, inclusion policies and other regulations and practices affecting the school culture and access to education;
  - (x) Develop appropriate procedures for the assessment of and feedback on students' achievements on human rights values, knowledge and attitudes;
- (f) Adopt a comprehensive training policy on human rights education including:
- (i) The training of trainers, the training of head teachers, pre-service and in-service training of teachers, and the training of other educational personnel;
  - (ii) Information on the rights, responsibilities and participation of students and teachers in all pre- and in-service teacher training policies and programmes;
  - (iii) Recognizing, accrediting and supporting NGOs and other sectors of civil society carrying out training activities in human rights education;
  - (iv) Considering human rights education as a criterion for the qualification, accreditation and career development of educational staff and the accreditation of training activities of non-governmental organizations.

## *B. Planning policy implementation*

6. Effective educational policy development and reform requires both explicit policy statements and a consistent implementation strategy, including clearly defined measures, mechanisms, responsibilities and resources. Such an implementation strategy is a means of ensuring coherence, monitoring and accountability of policies. It helps avoid a gap between policy and practice, rhetoric and reality, as well as situations where practices are happening, if at all, in a dispersed or inconsistent way, or on an ad hoc or voluntary basis.
7. Human rights education implies changes in the whole education system. But policy statements and commitments per se are not enough to ensure such educational change. Planning policy implementation is a key feature of effective human rights education.
8. The implementation of human rights education policies needs to be in line with current trends in educational governance towards devolution of powers, democratic governance, school autonomy, and sharing of rights and responsibilities within the education system. The responsibility for the education system cannot or should not lie with the Ministry of Education only, given the multiplicity of stakeholders such as the local government and the school district; head teachers, teachers and other educational staff, their organizations and unions; students and parents; research bodies and training institutions; non-governmental organizations, other sectors of civil society and communities.
9. The fact that both national authorities and the local/school level are responsible for education governance, improvement and innovation implies specific roles for each level: the role of central authorities is to set common policy frameworks and implementation and accountability mechanisms; the role of the local/school level is to find ways to take into account and tackle local diversity and needs and develop specific school profiles, including in human rights. In addition, the ownership of educational goals and the development

of teaching and learning practices by teachers and other educational staff, parents and students needs to be ensured.

**10.** In this context, the following aspects are indicative of good practice for the organization of policy implementation and for key implementation measures by national authorities:

- (a) Organization of policy implementation:
  - (i) Prepare a national implementation strategy in the field of human rights education including the type of measures, the division of tasks and identification of responsibilities of relevant educational institutions, the communication and cooperation procedures between these institutions, the timeline for the policy implementation with identified milestones (see also stage 2 of the national implementation strategy of this plan of action);
  - (ii) Assign or strengthen a department/unit within the Ministry of Education responsible for coordinating the national implementation strategy;
  - (iii) Ensure cooperation between the different sectors and departments related to human rights and human rights education, including those dealing with social and legal issues, youth, gender, etc.;
  - (iv) Facilitate the establishment of a human rights education coalition of all relevant actors involved in this field to ensure coherence of implementation;
- (b) Measures for policy implementation:
  - (i) Allocate sufficient resources (financial, human, time) for human rights education;
  - (ii) Establish appropriate mechanisms so that stakeholders can be fully and effectively involved in policy development and implementation;
  - (iii) Publish and disseminate the above-mentioned national implementation strategy, and ensure it is debated and endorsed by relevant actors, beneficiaries and the public at large;
  - (iv) Organize communication and cooperation between officials responsible for the different plans indicated in section A, paragraph 5 (d), above;

- (v) Consider piloting the human rights education approach in a selection of schools before mainstreaming it into the whole education system;
- (vi) Identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events) on human rights education at the national level;
- (vii) Support and promote research, for example, on the knowledge of human rights, practices of human rights education in schools, students' learning outcomes and the impact of human rights education;
- (viii) Encourage research in human rights education by academic centres specifically devoted to human rights education, as well as through cooperation between schools, research institutes and university faculties;
- (ix) Participate in international surveys and comparative studies;
- (x) Establish a rights-based quality assurance system (including school self-evaluation and development planning, school inspection, etc.) for education in general and create specific quality assurance mechanisms for human rights education;
- (xi) Involve learners and educators directly in carrying out monitoring and evaluation processes so as to promote empowerment and self-reflection.

## *C. The learning environment<sup>2</sup>*

11. Human rights education goes beyond cognitive learning and includes the social and emotional development of all those involved in the learning and teaching process. It aims at developing a culture of human rights, where human rights are practised and lived within the school community and through interaction with the wider surrounding community.
12. To this end, it is essential to ensure that human rights teaching and learning happen in a human rights-based learning environment. It is essential to en-

2. This section uses the term "Learning environment" mainly to address issues related to school governance and management. It does not include other aspects of the learning environment, such as school supplies, sanitation, health, clean water, food, etc.

sure that educational objectives, practices and the organization of the schools are consistent with human rights values and principles. Likewise, it is important that the culture and the community within and beyond the school are also embedding those principles.

13. A rights-based school is characterized by mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. It fosters equal opportunities, a sense of belonging, autonomy, dignity and self-esteem for all members of the school community. It is a school that is child-centred, relevant and meaningful, where human rights are identified, explicitly and distinctively, for everybody as learning objectives and as the school philosophy/ethos.
14. A rights-based school is the responsibility of all members of the school community, with the school leadership having the primary responsibility to create favourable and enabling conditions to reach these aims.
15. A rights-based school will ensure the existence and effectiveness of the following elements:
  - (a) Policy statements and implementation provisions for human rights in the school will be explicit and shared and will include:
    - (i) A charter on students' and teachers' rights and responsibilities based on a clear distribution of roles and tasks;
    - (ii) A code of conduct for a school free of violence, sexual abuse, harassment and corporal punishments, including procedures for resolving conflicts and dealing with violence and bullying;
    - (iii) Non-discrimination policies protecting all members of the school community including admissions, scholarships, advancement, promotion, special programmes, eligibility and opportunities;
    - (iv) The recognition and celebration of human rights achievements through festivities, awards and prizes;
  - (b) Teachers in a rights-based school will have:
    - (i) An explicit mandate from the school leadership concerning human rights education;
    - (ii) Education and ongoing professional development in human rights education content and methodology;

- (iii) Opportunities for developing and implementing new and innovative good practices in human rights education;
  - (iv) Mechanisms for sharing good practices, including networking of human rights educators at local, national and international levels;
  - (v) Policies for the recruitment, retention and promotion of teachers that reflect human rights principles;
- (c) Students in a rights-based school will have:
- (i) Opportunities for self-expression, responsibilities and participation in decision-making, in accordance with their age and evolving capacity;
  - (ii) Opportunities for organizing their own activities, for representing, mediating and advocating their interests;
- (d) Interaction will exist between the school, local government and the wider community, including:
- (i) Awareness-raising of parents and families about children's rights and key principles of human rights education;
  - (ii) Involvement of parents in human rights education initiatives and projects;
  - (iii) Participation of parents in school decision-making through parents' representative organizations;
  - (iv) Extra-curricular student projects and service in the community, particularly on human rights issues;
  - (v) Collaboration with youth groups, civil society and local government for awareness-raising and student support opportunities;
  - (vi) International exchanges.

## *D. Teaching and learning*

16. Within the school system, teaching and learning are the key processes of human rights education.
17. The legal and political basis for what these processes entail and how they are to be organized in primary and secondary education need to be provided by the human rights education policies and through the education and professional development of teachers and other educational staff.

18. Introducing or improving human rights education in the school system requires adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning, by integrating programme objectives and content, resources, methodologies, assessment and evaluation; by looking beyond the classroom; and by building partnerships between different members of the school community.
  
19. The following aspects are necessary for achieving quality human rights teaching and learning. They are addressed to policymakers at national and school levels, teachers and other school personnel:
  - (a) Concerning the teaching and learning contents and objectives:
    - (i) Define the basic human rights skills and competencies to be acquired;
    - (ii) Include human rights education in all aspects of the curriculum starting as early as possible in primary education;
    - (iii) Adapt the learning content and objectives of human rights education to the students' age and evolving capacity;
    - (iv) Give equal importance to cognitive (knowledge and skills) and social/affective (values, attitudes, behaviours) learning outcomes;
    - (v) Relate human rights teaching and learning to the daily lives and concerns of students;
  
  - (b) Concerning teaching and learning practices and methodologies:
    - (i) Adopt a teaching style that is coherent in terms of human rights, respect the dignity of each student and provide equal opportunities for them;
    - (ii) Create a child-friendly, trustful, secure and democratic atmosphere in the classroom and school community;
    - (iii) Adopt learner-centred methods and approaches that empower students and encourage their active participation, cooperative learning, and a sense of solidarity, creativity and self-esteem;
    - (iv) Adopt methods appropriate to the students' development level, abilities and learning styles;
    - (v) Adopt experience-based learning methods whereby students can learn by doing and put human rights into practice;
    - (vi) Adopt experiential teaching methods with the teacher acting as a facilitator, learning guide and adviser;



- (vii) Access good practices of relevant non-formal and informal learning activities, resources and methods available with NGOs and in the community;
- (c) Concerning teaching and learning materials:
  - (i) Make sure that human rights education materials stem from the human rights principles as embedded in the relevant cultural contexts as well as historical and social developments;
  - (ii) Encourage the collection, sharing, translation and adaptation of human rights education materials;
  - (iii) Review and revise textbooks and other educational materials of the whole curriculum to conform with human rights principles;
  - (iv) Support the development of different educational materials and resources that conform with human rights principles such as teacher guides, manuals, textbooks, comic strips, and audio-visual and creative arts support materials that encourage active participation in the above-mentioned teaching and learning approaches;
  - (v) Disseminate human rights education materials in sufficient numbers and in appropriate languages (in multilingual countries a thorough survey of the linguistic diversity in schools has to be done so that materials are developed in languages that are widely understood), and train relevant personnel in their use;
  - (vi) Ensure that these resources conform to human rights principles and relate to real-life situations by having them reviewed by a specialized national team prior to publication;
  - (vii) Allow the publication, widespread dissemination of and access to a variety of educational resources such as those produced by non-governmental organizations;
- (d) Concerning support to teaching and learning:
  - (i) Collect and disseminate examples of good practices in teaching and learning in human rights education;
  - (ii) Establish easily accessible resource centres, including libraries and databases, on teaching and learning in human rights education;
  - (iii) Facilitate the networking and exchange of human rights education practices among educators and among students;
  - (iv) Promote research into the teaching and learning of human rights education;

- (e) Concerning the use of new information technologies:
  - (i) Establish or make use of websites related to human rights education;
  - (ii) Develop distance learning programmes linked to schools;
  - (iii) Enable students and teachers to use new information technologies for human rights education;
  - (iv) Encourage online discussion groups on human rights topics with students and teachers in other schools locally, nationally and internationally;
- (f) Concerning evaluation and assessment:
  - (i) Develop indicators, identify adequate methods and design appropriate tools for reviewing, evaluating and measuring the processes, outcomes and impact of human rights education;
  - (ii) Use evaluation and assessment methods that are appropriate for human rights education such as observation and reporting by teachers and fellow students; recording students' experience, personal work and acquired skills and competencies (student portfolio); and students' self-assessment;
  - (iii) Apply human rights principles to evaluating and assessing students' achievements in the whole curriculum such as transparency (explanation of criteria and reasons for grading; information of students and parents), equality (same criteria used for all students and by all teachers), fairness (lack of abuse of assessment).

## *E. Education and professional development of teachers and other educational personnel*

20. Introducing human rights education in primary and secondary education implies that the school becomes a model of human rights learning and practice. Within the school community, teachers, as the main depositories of the curriculum, play a key role in reaching this aim.
21. For the teachers to fulfil this major responsibility effectively, a number of factors need to be considered. Firstly, teachers are themselves rights-holders. The recognition of and respect for their professional status and the upholding of their self-esteem are a prerequisite for them to promote human rights

education. The school management and leadership, on the one hand, and educational policymakers on the other must support and empower them to innovate in teaching and learning practices. Appropriate education and professional development of teachers and other educational personnel must be ensured.

22. Within the school community, opportunities for awareness-raising about human rights and for training in human rights education should not exist only for teachers, but also for head teachers and members of the school management, school inspectors, administrative staff in schools, educational officials and planners in local and national authorities, and parents.
23. The design and organization of appropriate education and professional development is shared among multiple actors owing to the complex training systems and to the different contexts: the Ministry of Education; universities through their faculties of education and other departments, including human rights institutes and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chairs for human rights education; teacher training institutions; unions and professional organizations of teachers and other personnel; national human rights institutions; non-governmental organizations; and international and regional intergovernmental organizations.
24. Policy and legal guidelines provide the framework for the implementation of training activities and, in order to reflect and foster a human rights culture, the training curriculum, the teaching and learning content and practice, and educational policies must be coherent.
25. Given the role model function of teachers, effective human rights education implies that they master and transmit relevant values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices. Education and professional development must foster their knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for human rights. Similarly, human rights principles need to be essential criteria for the professional performance and conduct of other educational personnel.
26. The training and professional development of teachers and other personnel must be tailored according to each contextual need and target group. It in-

cludes advocacy and awareness-raising of teachers and other educational professionals, training the trainers, initial/pre-service training, regular and continuous development through in-service training, training specialized teachers in human rights education, and the introduction of human rights principles into the training curriculum of all primary and secondary school teachers.

27. Policies and practices of education and professional development of teachers and other personnel should take into account the following elements and approaches:

- (a) Developing training curricula on human rights education, including the following elements:
  - (i) Knowledge about human rights, their universality, indivisibility and interdependence and about protection mechanisms;
  - (ii) Educational theories underlying human rights education, including links between formal, non-formal and informal education;<sup>3</sup>
  - (iii) Links between human rights education and other similar types of education (such as education for sustainable development, peace education, global education, multicultural education, citizenship and values education);
  - (iv) Learning objectives of human rights education, particularly human rights education skills and competencies;
  - (v) Teaching and learning methodologies for human rights education and the role of teachers in human rights education;
  - (vi) Social skills and leadership styles of teachers and other educational personnel that are democratic and coherent in terms of human rights;
  - (vii) Teachers' and students' rights and responsibilities and their participation in school life; identifying and handling human rights abuses in schools;
  - (viii) The school as a human rights-based community;
  - (ix) Relations within the classroom and between the classroom, the school and the wider community;

3. In general, "formal education" refers to school, vocational training and university education; "non-formal education" refers to adult learning and forms of education complementary to the previous one, such as community servicing and extra-curricular activities; and "informal education" refers to activities developed outside the education system, such as those carried out by non-governmental organizations.

- (x) Collaborative methods and teamwork in the classroom and in the school;
  - (xi) Evaluation and assessment of human rights education;
  - (xii) Information on existing educational materials for human rights education and the capacity to review and choose from among them as well as to develop new materials;
  - (xiii) School self-evaluation and development planning based on human rights principles;
- (b) Developing and using appropriate training methodologies:
- (i) Appropriate training methods for the adult learner, in particular learner-centred approaches, and addressing motivation, self-esteem and emotional development leading to awareness-raising on values and behaviour;<sup>4</sup>
  - (ii) Appropriate methods for training in human rights education such as using participatory, interactive, cooperative and experience and practice-based methods; linking theory to practice; testing learned techniques in the work situation, particularly the classroom;
- (c) Developing and disseminating appropriate training resources and materials:
- (i) Collection, dissemination and exchange of good practices in training in human rights education;
  - (ii) Stocktaking and dissemination of training methodologies developed by non-governmental organizations and other sectors of the civil society;
  - (iii) Development of materials as part of in-service training activities;
  - (iv) Development of online materials and resources;
- (d) Networking and cooperation among different education and training providers;
- (e) Promotion and participation in international education and training activities and exchanges;
- (f) Evaluation of training activities including self-evaluation and perceptions of trainees' on the relevance, utility and impact of training activities.

4. See the OHCHR publication *Human Rights Training* on basic methodological principles for adult training.

# Annex I

## General Assembly resolution 59/113 A of 10 December 2004, proclaiming the World Programme for Human Rights Education

### 59/113. World Programme for Human Rights Education

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights concerning the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004,

*Recalling also* its resolution 58/181 of 22 December 2003, in which it decided to dedicate a plenary meeting during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 2004, to review the achievements of the Decade and to discuss possible future activities for the enhancement of human rights education,

*Taking note* of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71 of 21 April 2004,<sup>1</sup> in which the Commission recommended that the General Assembly proclaim at its fifty-ninth session a world programme for human rights education, to begin on 1 January 2005,

*Reaffirming* the need for continued actions at the international level to support national efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,<sup>2</sup> in particular, universal access to basic education for all, by 2015,

*Convinced* that human rights education is a long-term and lifelong process by which everyone learns tolerance and respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies,

*Believing* that human rights education is essential to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributes significantly to promoting equality, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes, with a view to developing societies in which all human beings are valued and respected, without discrimination or distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 3 (E/2004/23)*, chap. II, sect. A.

<sup>2</sup> See resolution 55/2.

1. *Takes note* of the views expressed in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the achievements and shortcomings of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004, and on future United Nations activities in this area<sup>3</sup> concerning the need to continue a global framework for human rights education beyond the Decade in order to ensure a priority focus on human rights education within the international agenda;

2. *Proclaims* the World Programme for Human Rights Education, structured in consecutive phases, scheduled to begin on 1 January 2005, in order to advance the implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors;

3. *Notes with appreciation* the draft plan of action for the first phase (2005–2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, prepared jointly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as contained in the note by the Secretary-General,<sup>4</sup> and invites States to submit comments thereon to the Office of the High Commissioner, with a view to its early adoption.

*70th plenary meeting  
10 December 2004*

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<sup>3</sup> E/CN.4/2004/93.

<sup>4</sup> A/59/525.

# Annex II

## General Assembly resolution 59/113 B of 14 July 2005, adopting the revised draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

### 59/113. World Programme for Human Rights Education

B<sup>1</sup>

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights concerning the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2004,

*Convinced* that human rights education is a long-term and lifelong process through which everyone learns tolerance and respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies,

*Believing* that human rights education is essential to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributes significantly to promoting equality, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes, with a view to developing societies in which all human beings are valued and respected,

*Welcoming* the proclamation by the General Assembly on 10 December 2004 of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, structured in consecutive phases, which began on 1 January 2005,

1. *Adopts* the revised draft plan of action for the first phase (2005–2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education,<sup>2</sup> which focuses on primary and secondary school systems;
2. *Encourages* all States to develop initiatives within the World Programme and, in particular, to implement, within their capabilities, the plan of action;
3. *Requests* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in close cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to promote the national implementation of the plan of action, provide relevant technical assistance when requested and coordinate related international efforts;

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 59/113, in section I of the *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/59/49)*, vol. I, becomes resolution 59/113 A.

<sup>2</sup> A/59/525/Rev.1.



4. *Appeals* to relevant organs, bodies or agencies of the United Nations system, as well as all other international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, within their respective mandates, to promote and technically assist, when requested, the national implementation of the plan of action;

5. *Calls upon* all existing national human rights institutions to assist in the implementation of human rights education programmes consistent with the plan of action;

6. *Requests* the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to widely disseminate the plan of action among States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

*113th plenary meeting  
14 July 2005*

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