

Schooling for Justice and Rights



Human Rights Education in Indian Schools: Building a Model



SCHOOLING FOR JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS IN INDIA -A MODEL

A Study Report

A Study Sponsored by
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva

Published by
People's Watch
Madurai

2008

Schooling for Justice and Rights
Human Rights Education in Schools in India – A Model

A Study Report

First Edition: September 2008

This publication was prepared with the financial support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The opinions expressed in it are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations

Published by

People's Watch

6, Vallabhai Road, Chokkikulam,
Madurai-625 002

Ph: +91-452-2531874, 2539520

Fax: +91-452-2531874

E-Mail: info@pwtn.org

Website: www.pwtn.org

Printed by

Anto Art Crafts, Sivakasi

Contribution : Rs. 200/- (Rupees Two Hundred Only)

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Justice Shivaraj V. Patil

Former Judge
Supreme Court of India



Foreword

I am happy and delighted to write foreword to the book “Schooling for Justice and Rights” Human Rights Education in Indian Schools building a model”. This is a book based on the experiences of Human Rights Education Programme of people’s watch, Madurai, Tamil Nadu (India). Human Rights and fundamental freedoms are the focal points in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed on 10th of December, 1948. This was a remarkable day in the modern history of mankind. This declaration was not either a sudden or miraculous event. It was the effect of cumulative and continuing movement of human conscience. This declaration represents the collective wisdom of the world community to work together for a world without injustice, indignity and ignorance; a world without cruelty and hunger.

Respect for human rights is the greatest inspiration for integration of human kind, both internally and internationally. These are the days of modernization, liberalization, privatization and globalization. But, all these must have element of humanization. Humanize the globe so that human rights violations are less so as to make this world a place worth living with human dignity. “All human rights for all” should not merely remain as declaration on paper but it must be the spirit of living in daily life. Respect for human rights lies in treating others as you expect others to treat you. This is really a better way to serve the cause and purpose of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 declares – “All human being are born free and equal in rights and dignity.” If this declaration is to be translated into action all over, creating awareness about the human

rights is essential. I am of the strong view that this can be done through human rights education at all levels i.e. right through Primary to University education. The Supreme Court of India in *Mohini, J. Vs. State of Karnataka* (AIR 1902 SC 1858) held that the right to education is concomitant to fundamental rights enshrined in Part III of the Constitution. Further in *J.P. Unnikrishnan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh* (AIR 1993 SC 2178) interpreting article 21 of the Constitution, Supreme Court declared that every child under the age of 14 years has a right of basic education. I am of the opinion that the Human rights education in appropriate measure depending on the level of education should form part of curriculum, in the centers of learning at all levels. Unless one is made aware of human rights, he or she cannot be sensitive to human rights issue. A student informed of human rights will be in a position to assert and respect human rights and shall be able to contribute for the better promotion and protection of human rights. Wherever he goes and what ever profession/work he takes up he shall help in preventing violation of human rights if not totally but substantially. Hence Human rights education is vital, necessary, relevant, critical and important to develop Human Rights culture. Knowing the Human rights education programme of people's watch through Institute of Human Rights, Madurai, providing Human rights education at school levels in different parts of the country, in 13 States in India, I acknowledge their valuable contribution and congratulate them.

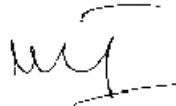
Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi, Chairperson, Institute of Human Rights Education in her introduction refers to a chance question thrown by a group of teachers at a People's Watch at Tamil Nadu, a human rights organization 10 years ago – "what can school teachers do to uphold human rights? Can human rights be brought into the Campus? Can the activists be educators? If the purpose of education is sensitise, and humanize and not merely to inform, then, who can be better educators than activists? These questions are ably and justifiably answered in this book.

The book in addition to the thoughtful and meaningful introduction deals with 8 aspects. When I read them I had deep impact and impression on me. I am sure whoever reads the book will certainly have the positive impact to appreciate and support human rights education in Indian Schools.

This book also reflects the tremendous contribution of People's Watch made through the Institute of Human Rights Education. Impressed by work done by Sri. Henry Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch and Dr. Vasanthi Devi, Chairperson, Institute of Human Rights Education with the co-operation of all the concerned I heartily congratulate them. Every one of the topic included in the Book shows in-depth study of the issues, deep concern, commitment and respect for Human Rights culture. Consistent with the goal of the Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE) of building up of Human Rights culture in society through education and training, tremendous work is done in reaching 3186 schools, 4345 teachers and 2,96,797 students in the field of Human Rights Education spread over in 13 States after crossing difficulties, encounters and challenges. With the valuable experience gained through these years, the IHRE, I am confident will be able to achieve much more substantially and meaningfully. This work is an example as to how the committed and well meaning NGO like People's Watch can do on its own. If only State Governments and Central Government and other stake holders, share and support the vision and mission of the IHRE in its endeavour to take forward Human Rights Education in Indian Schools, it will be a great success in establishing and promoting Human Rights culture all over.

Article 26(2), Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom.". Education about Human Rights is an empowering process. In the topic "Pedagogical Process" it is rightly said that Human Rights Education needs a radical Pedagogy and Human Rights Education cannot be imparted within the four walls of the class room. It has to be learnt out in the world in the midst of people particularly among victims of injustice and rights violations.

This book, in my view is of great quality and utility. I am confident that this book will benefit large number of people and stake holders greatly. My best wishes for the success of Human Rights education in Indian Schools.



Justice Shivaraj V. Patil
Former Judge
Supreme Court of India

Acknowledgement

My first mention under acknowledgement would have to be Ms. Elena Ippoliti, of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights who graciously participated in the launch of the Institute of Human Rights Education's National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools in India on November 26, 2008, at Madurai (Tamilnadu) which was instrumental in her getting us the grant for this book and for having gone through the drafts of the book patiently several times and for her line by line comments. We would like to strongly recognize her as the spirit behind the initiative that led to this book.

Our second mention of thanks has to be to Justice Shivraj Patil, Former Acting Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of India and Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India for consenting to write the foreword to this book and his generous appreciation of the program.

My sincere appreciation and thanks also go to Dr. Mahendra Rajaram, Mr. Eronimus and Mr. Shiva Shanthakumar for having carried out the field work behind this report, for conducting the focus group discussions with children and teachers and for providing us their report that has finally led to this report.

I am personally grateful to Mr. Koshy Mathew, Editing Consultant, who has provided us the final draft of this book and actively involved

himself in the whole process. Without his timely support, the report would not have taken this shape.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who were part of the human rights education program but left it earlier than this report having taken shape - namely, Mr. Vanarajan, Mr. Devaneyan, Mr. Paul Devanesan, Ms. Chitra, Ms. Thamizhazhagi, Mr. Sundararajan, Ms. Kulandai Theresa for their work in coordinating the program in the schools covered in this report at different points of time. It is their untiring work that has led to many of the positive contents that this report wrests upon. I recognize the contributions made by Mr. Bernat, State Coordinator of Tamil Nadu for organizing the field work, going through the manuscript and for selecting the case studies and photos. I would also like due credit to all the current staff members of Institute of Human Rights Education in coordinating the field work of this study that led to this book, namely, Mr. Soosai, Mr. Shiyam Sundar, Mr. Anandaramakrishnan and Ms Booma.

I need to also make a very special mention of and acknowledge all the children, teachers, Head of Schools, our own Honorary District Coordinators, other volunteers and resource persons who were part of this program from 1997 and those who participated in this study, without whom, we would never have got this experience and the report deserves our strong appreciation. Full credit goes to all those children and teachers who have been responsible for being agents of change in their own milieu - schools, families and communities - because of their engaging with human rights education in their schools, which were shared by them during the launch of National Program for HRE and which paved the way for such a study.

I am thankful to all the officials of the Directorate of Adi Dravidar Weldare (ADW) and Department of ADW of the Government of Tamilnadu, all Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church where this program was also undertaken, the state officials of the Catholic Religious of India (CRI), other managements and heads of schools

where we had implemented human rights education - for their permission, cooperation and support for the successful implementation of the program.

I express my gratitude from the depth of my heart to all the Members of the Tamilnadu State Advisory Committee for HRE in schools for their constant and continuous support, guidance and accompaniment that has enabled us to expand so much within and outside Tamil Nadu. I also wish to gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by all those resource team members and honorary Coordinators who were part of the program at various stages for their cooperation and constant encouragement and support over the years.

IHRE Core Committee members who had gone through this report and gave their comments deserve our highest appreciation. I thank Ms. Veena Shankar, Director (Finance & Administration) and her team and Mr. M. Louis, Director – Programs & HRD for their fullest support and cooperation in the successful completion of this book. I strongly convey my sincere appreciations to Ms. Sabitha for translating many parts of the book, giving suggestions and going through the manuscript.

I fully recognize the contributions made by Ms. Gayathri, of Fellow of the American India Foundation and Mr. Christopher Koetzner, from Germany who interned with us for several months for having taken up the responsibility to write some of the chapters of the book.

I greatly appreciate the efforts taken by Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi to complete the book by giving her valuable time for going through the book, for her comments and suggestions for revision, and for her constant encouragement to complete the book.

I am thankful to Dr. I. Devasahayam, our Director of the IHRE who is instrumental for the human rights education program, for his time and contributions during discussions at every stage of the book, going through the entire book and giving suggestions for the revision

of the book, and for sharing all the information and facts about the program and its origin.

I also take this opportunity to appreciate and recognize Dr. Annadurai for participating in all the discussions during the field work, for his coordination with the consultants and OHCHR, for going through the report and contributing to the book, and finalizing the book.

Last but not the least, my fullest appreciations to Mr. Anandakumar, Systems Administrator, at People's Watch and his colleague Mr. Samuel David for their neat and correct typing of the manuscript, for designing the wrapper of the book and for their cooperation in finishing the book at various stages.



HENRI TIPHAGNE

Executive Director

People's Watch

Introduction

“To break a million bondage.”

“What can school teachers do to uphold human rights? Can human rights be brought into the campus?” It was a chance question thrown by a group of teachers at People’s Watch, Tamil Nadu, a Human Rights organisation, involved in protection of human rights in the deep south of India. That was ten years ago. The challenge was intriguing and inviting. Can an organization of activists involved in the daily struggles of victims, for survival, justice, dignity, dare to enter the rarified realms of education? Can activists be educators? If the purpose of education is to sensitise and humanize, and not merely to inform, then, who can be better educators than activists?

The bane of today’s education is its alienation from the world around. Education, instead of being a force for liberation, often turns into an instrument of oppression, of manipulation and thought control in the crafty hands of oppressors. That is why Ivan Illyich called for a ‘De-schooling Society’ and Paulo Freire tried to evolve a ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’. The antidote has to be sought in an alternate education, a humanising, liberating education. If so, how do we begin to pull down the walls of alienation? How do we facilitate the community and the campus getting seamlessly woven together into a fabric of beauty?

And so began a quest ten years ago, a quest to build a programme of human rights education. The Institute of Human Rights Education was born. While the vision and the inspiration came from the field, education was a world of specialists. A different kind of educators, however, had to be found, educators aware of the class-caste-patriarchal-imperialist character of education and were eager to demystify it. The task was

entrusted to them. A whole array of issues unfolded and were collectively negotiated, with educationists and activists playing equal role in this labour of love.

Though the Institute had initially launched the Human Rights Education (HRE) programme independently, with no reference to the UN Decade of Human Rights Education, soon it opted to come under the global programme. The Institute viewed the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004) as an opportunity for concerted and collective action to promote the concept of human rights through education interventions. At the close of the Decade of Human Rights Education, the United Nations has come up with the World Program for Human Rights Education with a special focus on Primary and Secondary schools, for 2005–2009. The World Program considers that human rights education is essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. The Institute of Human Rights Education is implementing HRE in consonance with the objectives of the World Programme. The banner of the UN provides the international context, legitimacy and official acceptance to our program.

What is the curriculum for a human rights education program? We live in a world of a thousand oppressions. Millions of our people, children, women, dalits, tribals, the poor, the slum dwellers and many others are subjected to injustice, right denial, exploitation, oppression, discrimination and violence. The vision of human rights education is to change such a brutal, heartless world. The faith of human rights education is that the task of changing this world can only begin in the classroom, where the destiny of the nation and of the world is forged. The seeds of a better world, of love, friendship, compassion, beauty, creativity, freedom, equality, democracy should be sown and nurtured in the minds of children. We have to take up the monumental task of placing before the young student the world of raw reality and empower her to understand, analyse, challenge and finally to transform this world.

All education ought to be Human Rights Education in one-way or the other. Education should, directly or indirectly, serve the interest of furthering human rights, not of select or privileged sections, but of every human being, irrespective of her nationality, class, caste, gender,

race, ethnicity, religion, or mental or physical disability. The purpose of all education is to sensitise, to humanize, to take humanity to higher levels of knowledge, awareness, freedom and social responsibility.

However, education as defined above, is a distant dream. The education system today divides, discriminates, fragments. It justifies existing inequities and creates new ones. It alienates the student from the world around, from the society that gave birth to her and nurtured her. It prevents the students from relating to and understanding the denials, deprivations, the struggles of large sections of society and thereby also denies wholesome knowledge.

Human Rights Education is a different education, an alternate, radical, education. It is sensitizing, humanizing, bondage-breaking, liberating education. It celebrates humanity. It cultivates critical insights in students, equips them with tools to question, to analyse, to challenge and ultimately to change systems of injustice and oppression. It helps each child to realize her ultimate potential, not as a self-centred, aggressive individual, but as a member of a society, of a democratic nation. It is the fruition of the dreams of reformers, radicals, nation builders for a long time.

The task of curriculum framing was taken up with such daunting thoughts and the humility that work with people had given us over time. A curriculum was prepared after many consultations. It is an evolving curriculum, not one frozen in time and space. The basics alone are kept constant, while freedom is given to teachers and curriculum committees everywhere to innovate and create a contextual content, taking the classroom as closely as possible to the life of the student and the immediate community. Today, when we have moved into twelve states, the need for modifying the content to the requirements of the immense diversity of India is acutely felt.

While the specificity of human rights violations were kept in mind, the universality of rights provided the larger framework and terms of reference. Teachers and students had to be made aware of the truth that "humanity is our home." Violation of rights anywhere is unacceptable, immediately relevant, to be challenged as if it took place in our backyard and solidarity with the victim to be instinctively extended.

Next was the question of appropriate pedagogy, which posed

challenges equal to, if not greater than what was encountered in framing the curriculum and syllabus. The radical education needs a radical pedagogy. The classroom in India, as it exists today, is ill-suited to transact a humanizing education. Classroom relations are power relations, with the teacher wielding absolute authority over the students. The curriculum, evaluation methods, a fiercely competitive culture, and concepts of discipline militate against nurturing a human rights and democratic culture. Human rights education needs to be a child-centred education, respecting the child's role as constructor of knowledge rather than treating her as a passive recipient of information. It meant that "human rights in education" must be upheld as much as "human rights through education."

We have built a vast network across the immensity of India. We work in twelve states, from Tripura in North-East and West Bengal in the East to Gujarat in the West, from Rajasthan and Bihar in the North to Kerala and Tamilnadu in the South. We have encountered challenges, bewildering in their variety, throwing questions at us for which we have no answers. We have taken in our little hands a handful of seeds of immense potency and broadcast them across a sub-continent. We have moved with the faith that wherever these seeds fall they will germinate and in the chemistry of mingling with wildly varied soil, a thousand flowers will bloom.

The last ten years have brought rewards beyond our wildest hopes, exciting growth, expansion across the vast and varied landscape of India, warm welcome to our program from unexpected quarters, from insensitive bureaucracy and indifferent political leadership and more than anything else, appreciation of teachers and eager, enthusiastic response of students. We have also had a much smaller share of disappointments and set-backs, which however, pale into nothing compared to the rich rewards we have reaped. It has been an intensely learning experience through a dynamic, dialectical process, not all of which was pre-planned.

We are asked again and again, are you not spreading yourself too thin; is there not a big transmission loss? We acknowledge there is transmission loss. The passion of Madurai, (our headquarters) drawn from daily encounters with brutal violations and daily struggles on the side of victims cannot be easily transmitted to distant Rajasthan and does suffer loss in the process. But we have also seen enhancements,

in dedication, in our repertoire, in exhilarating new pedagogical methods. The main reason for it is that everywhere we move, we initiate a collective process, that rolls on, carving its own trajectory. To cite a few such instances, to the human rights stories we initially identified in Tamilnadu, Orissa has added new ones on Land Rights, Cultural Rights and Language Rights, as these are the inalienable rights the tribal communities, who constitute 28% of the state population, are being brutally denied. We initially developed the modules in the language of each state. However, in many states, large proportions of the people speak dialects, significantly different from the state language. The curriculum development committee in Orissa is planning to bring out the modules in the major tribal dialects. In Bihar the proposal is from the inception to adopt three major languages of the state as medium of learning for HRE. Tripura, too, plans to have two major languages, one a tribal language, as learning medium. Our programme is for students in classes VI – VIII and is pitched at that level. In a school in West Bengal the HRE teachers felt bad that the senior students, who would be graduating out of the school soon are denied the benefit of the rich and empowering HRE programme. So, on their own initiative, they are offering HRE to students up to class XII, with suitable adaptations.

In the mighty and magnificent task what are the major challenges we have encountered?

- Education in the formal sector is in the realm of the state. Institute of Human Rights Education is a civil society organization that is making a foray into the realm of the state. It is sometimes seen as breaching the boundary between state and civil society and our credentials to be educators are questioned and viewed with suspicion. The critique, however, softens and dies out as our Institute is headed by educationists, who have held high academic positions and our State Advisory Committees have reputed academicians and persons of national eminence as members in each state.
- State power is controlled by dominant sections in all societies. These sections are the beneficiaries of the exploitative, unequal regimes that prevail. Human Rights Education critiques, challenges and hopes ultimately to overthrow such regimes. That is why Tolstoy once said, “ True education is liberating. No

government in its senses will allow it.” How realistic is it to expect governments to extend support to a radical education? Here the contradictions between the philosophy and practice of a modern democratic state comes to our rescue. The Indian constitution is a profoundly human document and the state is expected to uphold the democratic mandate of the constitution. The rhetoric of freedom and equality prevails in the public domain and sweeps the horrors of a class-caste society under the carpet. And so Human Rights Education is accepted, perhaps, as belonging to the realm of rhetoric and will be permitted in the classroom till its radical content becomes manifest and threatens.

- Still some state govts are uncomfortable with our content. They question the need for talking to students about inequities and violations of human rights. They are worried about the radical implications of human rights education and seek to dilute it. They want us to sanitise our content, “ keep caste out, keep untouchability out”. What do we do at such moments, when we are asked to compromise? We have attempted persuasion and when it failed we chose to abandon the program in the particular state rather than compromise and corrupt the soul of human rights education.
- The age of globalization and reforms in which we are living is a dehumanizing time. The education system is designed for the needs of hegemonic corporate capital. Our children are indoctrinated with the ideology of competition, of fierce, ruthless, man-against-man competition. Children are programmed and launched into the world for global conquest. The individual fiercely alone, slogging every minute to excel is the marketed model today. And HRE deals with the beauty and might of collectivity and solidarity building. Some schools ask us ‘where is the time for HRE? Every minute is needed to coach our students to excel in exams.’ How do we change this mindset? How do we start a process of detoxification, to flush out the poison?
- And then, do we talk about state violence, which is a good part of human rights violations? The vast majority of students in our HRE program in all the states are from sections of the citizenry that bears the brunt of state violence. They are witness to the brutalisation of the state, when the police swoop down on their

poverty stricken homes and drag away the father or mother, foisting false cases. The children in tribal schools have suffered the trauma of dispossession and displacement, when their entire communities were flushed out like rats from their ancestral lands, by the guardians of law in unholy alliance with forest mafias. Should we speak about these violations in HRE classes? If we don't, are we not guilty of hypocrisy? If we do, can we hope to have the continued patronage of the state?

Such are the challenges and questions we face. We have no answers to all the questions. We move on in the hope that the millions of teachers and students of HRE will find the answers, someday.

The Impact

Today we look back and try to take stock. What have we done and what have we not done? Have we touched hearts and minds and transformed them? Did the seeds we broadcast, in love and hope, germinate? Where did they germinate? Which soil proved fertile for germination? Which soil provided nourishment and nurtured them to luxuriant growth? What fruits did they bear? Which soil killed them with its toxic animosity and indifference?

Here is an impact study, commissioned by those concerned and committed to take human rights education forward. The study, as it was commenced, threw up questions of immense relevance. How do we measure something so ethereal as transformation of the soul? Has the world of knowledge devised yardsticks to measure internalization of human of values, subtle behavioral changes, the questions and doubts that rise in young minds, the tiny ripples caused in the world around by such questions, the imperceptible change in the brutish environment?

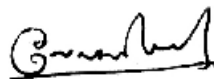
Perhaps we cannot measure them; but we can feel them, we can sense the difference, we can experience the stirrings. We have hundreds of stories of impact that initially trickled in, a few at a time. Today, there are hordes of them, each an anecdote of hope, from every corner of India, where we have taken our message. These stories of transformation of HRE teachers and students and the social impact of the HRE program have touched the hearts of all those who have come to know of them. These are stories of questions asked that were never before asked, silences broken, voices raised, a little hand of help extended, adults shamed, alcoholics transformed, a silently suffering mother surprised by her little

son confronting the drunken father, daughters of fiercely patriarchic communities daring to demand education.

A 12-year-old student of HRE in an area notorious for female infanticide, intercedes when the life of a female infant is to be snuffed out, quotes his HRE lesson, runs from pillar to post to save the life and ultimately succeeds. Where young girls are married at the age of 13 or 14, a little girl's marriage is stopped by the collective intervention of her classmates. In a place of rampant child labour, a ten year old boy being physically abused in a road-side shop is saved by the intervention of HRE teachers, keeping vigil through the night and bringing the abuser to law. Seventy five children of migrant construction workers, languishing without schooling, get a new school, when HRE students from a nearby school take up their cause with authorities.

The evidence we are marshalling is, till now, mainly anecdotal, but each anecdote is a stone thrown into the cesspool of centuries of oppression and indignity. Each of them strengthens our mission, gives us a new hope, our faith assumes evangelical passion. Meanwhile some more schools are wanting to join us, a few more states are beckoning to us. We move on.

Human rights education is a compact for creating a humane world. We have a world to challenge and change and a world to win and build. Human Rights Education is part of the struggle for human rights, "an eternal struggle, in which a final victory can never be won. But to tire in that struggle would mean the ruin of society"(Einstein).



V.Vasanthi Devi

Chairperson

Institute of Human Rights Education

1

The Universe of Human Rights

... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Preamble to the UDHR

Equity and justice are at the core of all human rights. They are unequivocally reflected in the vast corpus of human rights literature that is part of the modern civilization. The impetus for the universalization of human rights came about with the founding of the United Nations and the subsequent adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The 1945 United Nations Charter included a general commitment to respect for human rights, but it was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948) that provided the basic statement of what have become widely accepted international human rights standards.

These two milestone documents recognize the fact that human rights are a special sort of inalienable moral entitlement to be enjoyed by all persons equally, by virtue of their humanity, irrespective of race, nationality, or membership of any particular social group and specify the minimum conditions for human dignity and a tolerable life.

Human Rights as a Tenet

Human rights are those rights that belong to every individual - man or woman, girl or boy, infant or elder - simply because one is a human being. They embody the basic standards without which people cannot realize their inherent human dignity.

Human rights are both abstract and practical. They hold up the inspiring vision of a free, just and peaceful world and set minimum standards for how both individuals and institutions should treat people.

They also empower people to take action to demand and defend their rights and the rights of others.

The first generation of civil and political rights restricts what others (including the state) may do, as in the case of life, liberty, and freedom from torture. A second generation of social and economic rights requires active provision, such as by imposing an obligation on government. Some analysts call them ideals, often constrained in practice by inadequate resources. A third generation concerns such rights as peace, development, and humanitarian assistance. While many of the claims attach to individuals some belong to groups and communities.

Human rights are inherent, inalienable and universal. They are inherent, in that they belong to everyone because of their common humanity. They are inalienable, in that people cannot give them up or be deprived of them by governments. They are universal, in that they apply regardless of distinctions such as race, sex, language or religion. Human rights govern how individual human beings live in society and with each other, as well as their relationship with the State and the obligations that the State has towards them. Human rights aim to recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings whatever their status or condition in life.

Codifying Standards

The universal standards of human rights were not developed overnight. Most of the world's major philosophies, religions and cultures have recognized similar concepts in one form or another for centuries, but it took the atrocities that occurred during World War II to galvanize the international community into developing common standards and processes for the protection of human rights. During the Second World War totalitarian regimes grossly violated human rights in their own and occupied territories, and were responsible for the elimination of entire groups of people because of their race, religion or nationality. The experience of that war resulted in a widespread conviction that effective international protection of human rights was one of the essential conditions of international peace and progress. This conviction was subsequently reflected in and reinforced by the Charter of the United Nations.

The 1945 United Nations Charter is based on the precedents cited in the Nuremberg Judgment. The Charter's primary purpose was to

establish a system for ensuring global peace and security that included 'promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion' (Article 1, para. 3). Article 55 expresses a similar aim - that the UN shall promote 'universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'. Article 56 states that all members of the United Nations pledge themselves to take joint and separate action in cooperation with it to achieve the purposes set forth in Article 55. Although the Charter did not specifically refer to it, the idea of promulgating a Bill of Rights was considered inherent in the document and provided the impetus for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which extended earlier initiatives such as those of the International Labour Organization marks the beginning of the transformation of human rights from moral or philosophical imperatives into rights that are legally recognized on an international and, increasingly, national level.

The UDHR, which consists of a preamble and 30 articles, has been described as a statement of principles that provide 'a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations'. Today, many of the rights elaborated in the Declaration are regarded as having achieved the status of customary international law.

The rights in the Declaration fall roughly into two categories. The first consists of civil and political rights, such as freedom of opinion and expression and the right to justice. These are often recognized by States in Constitutions or laws such as Bills of Rights. The second comprises economic, cultural and social rights, such as the right to work, or to 'a reasonable standard of living'.

The universality, indivisibility, inalienability and inter-dependence of human rights in the quest for equality and dignity have been enshrined in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as:

... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. (Para 1)

This was reaffirmed in 1993 and recorded in the Vienna Declaration

and Program of Action as:

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis, while the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is a duty of states, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (Art. 5)

The Idea of a Human Rights-Based Approach

In 1998, when the world celebrated the golden jubilee year of the adoption of the UDHR, more than a billion people around the world had to struggle for access to clean drinking water and decent shelter, more than eight hundred million lacked healthcare and services and more than a billion were illiterate. Articles 24 and 26 of the UDHR were still a distant mirage for a vast number of people.

The right 'to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services' (Art. 24) and, 'the right to education' (Art. 26) are yet to be realized by almost half the population of India considering the fact nearly 40 per cent of the people live below poverty line and more than 50 per cent of India's children drop out of school before they reach the middle school.

Of late, the idea of a rights-based approach to developmental issues has been high on the priority list of the United Nations, several quasi-governmental and non-governmental agencies. In India too, the concept has been gathering momentum, especially after the constitution of the National Human Rights Commission in 1993.

According to a UN document, 'human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress'.*

*Source: http://ohchr.org/english/about/publications/docs/FAQ_en.pdf

The document goes on to explain that mere charity is not enough from a human rights perspective. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law. This helps to promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves, especially the most-marginalized, to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act.

Though there is general acceptance that society should respect the human dignity of every individual as well as of peoples, the UDHR also calls upon the State to protect basic human dignity. But often there arises a contradictory situation when the very institutions of the State such as that of the defence and the police are identified as violators of human rights.

Embodying the universally accepted principles of human rights are seven 'core' UN human rights Treaties and five Declarations. The treaties are:

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
5. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
7. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (MWC).
8. UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances.

The most vital international declarations on human rights are:

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948).
2. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (20 December 1993).

3. Declaration on the Right to Development (4 December 1986).
4. Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (9 December 1998).
5. United Nations Millennium Declaration (8 September 2000).

Covenants, Conventions and Treaties

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights together with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols constitute the International Bill of Human Rights. The two covenants, adopted in 1966, take forward the promotion and protection of human rights and represents

... milestone in the history of human rights, a veritable *Magna Carta* marking mankind's arrival at a vitally important phase: the conscious acquisition of human dignity and worth.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is a landmark in the efforts of the international community to promote human rights. It defends the right to life and stipulates that no individual can be subjected to torture, enslavement, forced labour and arbitrary detention or be restricted from such freedoms as movement, expression and association.

Part III of the Covenant spells out the classical civil and political rights, including the right to life, the prohibition of torture, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to freedom of movement, the right to a fair hearing, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to family life, the rights of children to special protection, the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, the over-arching right to equal treatment, and the special rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

The protocol adds legal force to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by allowing the Human Rights Commission to investigate and judge complaints of human rights violations from individuals from signatory countries.

The Human Rights Committee, constituted under the terms of the

Covenant monitors the implementation by States-parties in a variety of ways. Initial and periodic reports are examined by the plenary who formulates concluding observations with concrete recommendations. Well in advance of the examination of a report, the Committee forwards a list of issues to the State party concerned. The list is prepared by the members and takes into consideration information received from other United Nations organs and specialized agencies as well as from non-governmental organizations.

The 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna emphasized that human rights are interdependent and indivisible. For example, the right to food and the right to health; the right to dignified life and the right to education; survival rights and the right to food. Hence civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights should be given equal status and implemented and enforced in the same measure.

In the legal sense, the universality of human rights is almost undisputed. All states are bound at least by the UN Charter-based mechanism, and there is a great deal of international political consensus on the human rights concept, as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action demonstrated. But serious difficulties remain regarding universal responsibility for the implementation of human rights worldwide.

Indian Constitution and Human Rights

The Constitution of India, drafted around the same time as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), is one of the most rights-based constitutions in the world. It captures the essence of human rights in its Preamble and in the sections on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

The Constitution closely adheres to the principles that guided India's freedom struggle; it was a struggle against a colonial power that blatantly violated the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the people of India. The freedom struggle itself was informed by the many movements for social reform, against oppressive social practices like sati, child marriage, untouchability and so on.

Despite the fact that most of the human rights found clear expression in the Constitution, casteist, feudal and communal characteristics of the Indian polity, coupled with a colonial bureaucracy, weighed against, and dampened the spirit of, freedom, rights and affirmative action

enshrined in the Constitution. When the contradictions within the Indian polity and State came into the open in the late-1960s, the oppressive character of the State began to be challenged by student movements and ultra-left formations like the Naxalite movement. When the Indian State began to suppress such expressions of political dissent and mini-rebellions, the violation of human rights by the State began to command attention.

Since then, over a period of 30 years, the articulation and assertion of human rights within civil society has grown into a much richer, more diverse and relatively more powerful discourse at multiple levels.

One can discern three specific trajectories of human rights in the Indian Constitution. They are essentially enshrined in Part III (Fundamental Rights – Articles 14-32) and Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy – Articles 33–). The three trajectories are: 1. Civil and Political Rights; 2. Rights of the Marginalized (such as women, Dalits and Adivasis), and 3. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Fundamental Rights

The Fundamental Rights were included in the Constitution because they were considered essential for the development of the personality of every individual and to preserve human dignity. The framers of the Constitution regarded democracy to be of no avail if civil liberties, like freedom of speech and religion were not recognized and protected by the State. Democracy is, in essence, a government by opinion and therefore, the means of formulating public opinion should be secured to the people of a democratic nation. For this purpose, the Constitution guaranteed to all citizens of India the freedom of speech and expression and various other freedoms in the form of Fundamental Rights. This part of the Constitution guarantees six fundamental rights, namely:

1. Right to equality
2. Right to freedom
3. Right against exploitation
4. Right to freedom of religion
5. Cultural and educational rights
6. Right to constitutional remedies

Right to equality is an important right provided for in Articles 14,

15, 16, 17 and 18 of the Constitution. It is the principal foundation of all other rights and liberties, and guarantees the following:

Equality before law: Article 14 of the constitution guarantees that all citizens shall be equally protected by the laws of the country. It means that the State cannot discriminate against a citizen on the basis of caste, creed, colour, sex, religion or place of birth.

Social equality and equal access to public areas: Article 15 of the Constitution states that no person shall be discriminated on the basis of caste, colour, language etc. Every person shall have equal access to public places like public parks, museums, wells, bathing ghats and temples, etc. However, the State may make any special provision for women and children. Special provisions may be made for the advancements of any socially or educationally backward class or scheduled castes or scheduled tribes.

Equality in matters of public employment: Article 16 of the Constitution lays down that the State cannot discriminate against anyone in the matters of employment. All citizens can apply for government jobs. There are some exceptions. However, the State may also reserve posts for members of backward classes, scheduled castes or scheduled tribes which are not adequately represented in the services under the State to bring up the weaker sections of the society.

Abolition of untouchability: Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes the practice of untouchability. Practice of untouchability is an offense and anyone doing so is punishable by law. The *Untouchability Offences Act* of 1955 (renamed to *Protection of Civil Rights Act* in 1976) provided penalties for preventing a person from entering a place of worship or from taking water from a tank or well.

Right to freedom is enshrined in Articles 19, 20, 21 and 22. The right to freedom in Article 19 guarantees the following six freedoms:

Freedom of speech and expression, which enable an individual to participate in public activities. The phrase, "freedom of press" has not been used in Article 19, but freedom of expression includes freedom of press.

Freedom to assemble peacefully without arms, on which the State can impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order and the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Freedom to form associations or unions on which the State can impose reasonable restrictions on this freedom in the interest of public order, morality and the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India though reasonable restrictions can be imposed on this right in the interest of the general public, for example, restrictions may be imposed on movement and travelling, so as to control epidemics.

Freedom to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India which is also subject to reasonable restrictions by the State in the interest of the general public or for the protection of the scheduled tribes because certain safeguards as are envisaged here seem to be justified to protect indigenous and tribal peoples from exploitation and coercion.

Freedom to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business on which the State may impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of the general public.

The Constitution also guarantees the **right to life and personal liberty**, which in turn cites specific provisions in which these rights are applied and enforced:

Protection with respect to conviction for offences is guaranteed in the right to life and personal liberty. According to Article 20, no one can be awarded punishment which is more than what the law of the land prescribes at that time.

Protection of life and personal liberty is also stated under right to life and personal liberty. Article 21 declares that no citizen can be denied his life and liberty except by law. A person's life and personal liberty can only be disputed if that person has committed a crime. 'Personal liberty' includes all the freedoms which are not included in Article 19 (that is, the six freedoms). The right to travel abroad is also covered under 'personal liberty' in Article 21.

In 2002, through the 86th Amendment Act, Article 21(A) was incorporated. It made primary education as a fundamental right. It says that 'the children in the age group of six to fourteen years shall be provided free and compulsory education' by the State.

The **right against exploitation**, contained in Articles 23 and 24, makes two provisions, namely the abolition of trafficking in human

beings and forced labour, and the abolition of employment of children below the age of 14 years in dangerous jobs like factories and mines. Child labour is considered a gross violation of the spirit and provisions of the Constitution. Trafficking in humans for the purpose of slave trade or prostitution is also prohibited by law.

Right to freedom of religion, covered in Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28, provides religious freedom to all citizens of India. The objective of this right is to sustain the principle of secularism in India. According to the Constitution, all religions are equal before the State and no religion shall be given preference over the other. Citizens are free to preach, practice and propagate any religion of their choice. However, certain practices like wearing and carrying of *kirpans* in the profession of the Sikh religion, can be restricted in the interest of public order, morality and health.

Cultural and educational rights are important components of fundamental rights in a country of many languages, religions, and cultures. Articles 29 and 30 ensure this in order to protect the rights of minorities. Any community which has a language and a script of its own has the right to conserve and develop them. No citizen can be discriminated against for admission in State or State aided institutions.

All minorities, religious or linguistic, can also set up their own educational institutions in order to preserve and develop their own culture. In granting aid to institutions, the State cannot discriminate against any institution on the basis of the fact that it is administered by a minority institution. But the right to administer does not mean that the State cannot interfere in case of maladministration.

Article 32 on the **right to constitutional remedies** empowers the citizens to move a court of law in case of any denial of the fundamental rights. In this regard courts are empowered to preserve or safeguard the citizens' fundamental rights and this can be done in various ways. The courts can also issue various kinds of *writs*. These writs are *habeas corpus*, *mandamus*, *prohibition*, *quo warranto* and *certiorari*. Article 226 of the Constitution makes this explicit.

Directive Principles of State Policy

Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) aim to create social and economic conditions under which the citizens can lead a good life. They also aim to establish social and economic democracy through a

welfare state. The Directive Principles are non-justiciable rights of the people. Article 31-C, inserted by the 25th Amendment Act of 1971 seeks to upgrade the Directive Principles. If laws are made to give effect to the Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights, they shall not be invalid on the grounds that they take away the Fundamental Rights. In case of a conflict between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, if the DPSP aims at promoting larger interest of the society, the courts shall have to uphold the case in favour of the DPSP. The Directive Principles, though not justiciable, are fundamental in the governance of the country and it is the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws. Besides, all executive agencies should also be guided by these principles. Even the judiciary has to keep them in mind in deciding cases.

The directive principles ensure that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by promoting a social order in which **social, economic and political justice** is informed in all institutions of life.

Also, the directive is to work towards reducing economic inequality as well as inequalities in status and opportunities, not only among individuals, but also among groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations (Art. 38).

The State is directed to

- aim for securing **right to an adequate means of livelihood** for all citizens, both men and women as well as **equal pay for equal work for both men and women**.
- prevent concentration of wealth and means of production in a few hands, and try to ensure that ownership and control of the material resources is distributed to best serve the common good.
- **prevent child abuse** and exploitation of workers. Children should be allowed to develop in a healthy manner and should be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Art. 39).
- provide **free legal aid** to ensure that equal opportunities for securing justice is ensured to all, and is not denied by reason of economic or other disabilities (Art. 39A).
- work for the organisation of village panchayats and help enable them to function as units of self-government (Art. 41).

- provide the **right to work**, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of economic capacity (Art. 42) as well as provide for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Art. 43).
- ensure **living wage and proper working conditions for workers**, with full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural activities. Also, the promotion of cottage industries in rural areas is one of the obligations of the State (Art. 43A). The State shall take steps to promote their participation in management of industrial undertakings.
- secure a uniform civil code for all citizens (Art. 44) and provide free and compulsory education to all children till they attain the age of 14 years (Art. 45). This directive regarding education of children was added by the 86th Amendment Act, 2002.
- work for the **economic and educational upliftment of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections** of the society (Art. 46).
- commit the State to **raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living** and to improve public health, particularly by prohibiting intoxicating drinks and drugs injurious to health except for medicinal purposes (Art. 47).
- **protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wild life** of the country (Art. 48A). This directive, regarding protection of forests and wildlife was added by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976.

Finally, the directive principles, in Article 51 ensure that the State shall strive for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, just and honourable relations between nations, respect for international law and treaty obligations, as well as settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

Protection Mechanisms and Institutions/Acts

The need for devising special mechanisms and enactments to protect and further human rights in India received a definite boost with the enactment of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The process was not without its ups and downs. There was both internal and

international pressure on the Government of India to get to this point.

The Human Rights Commission Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 14 May 1992, but it languished for more than a year. On 28 September 1993 the President of India promulgated an ordinance named the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance. This ordinance was replaced by the *Protection of Human Rights Act 1993*, which was passed by both the Houses of Parliament. Following this, the National Human Rights Commission was constituted under this Act on 12 October 1993. This Act drew its inspiration mostly from international covenants like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Even in defining human rights the Act has mentioned about these covenants frequently.

The Commission is empowered to perform the following functions under Section 12 of the Act:

- a) inquire, suo-motu or on a petition presented to it by a victim or any person on his behalf, on the violation of human rights or abetment thereof and negligence by a public servant in the prevention of such violation;
- b) intervene in any proceeding involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of such court;
- c) visit, under intimation to the State Government, any jail or any other institution under the control of the State Government, where persons are detained or lodged for purposes of treatment, reformation or protection to study the living conditions of the inmates and make recommendations;
- d) review the safeguards provided by or under the Constitution or any law for the time being in force for the protection of human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation;
- e) review the factors, including acts of terrorism that inhibit the enjoyment of human rights and recommend appropriate remedial measures;
- f) study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation;
- g) undertake and promote research in the field of human rights;

- h) spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, media, seminars and other available means;
- i) encourage the efforts of non-governmental organizations and institutions working in the field of human rights;

Section 13 of the Act defines the powers of the Commission relating to inquiries. The Commission, while inquiring into complaints under this Act, has all the powers of a civil court trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and in particular in respect to:

- a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examine them on oath;
- b) discovery and production of any document;
- c) receiving evidence on affidavits
- d) requisition of any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;
- e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents

However, the NHRC is only an investigative and recommendatory body. It does not have the power of prosecution.

Easy accessibility to the Commission has made it one of the most popular organizations. Anyone can approach the NHRC through telephone, letter, application, mobile phone or even through internet. All the documents, reports, news letters, speeches, etc. of the Commission are also available on this website.

NHRC is just a beginning of a long journey that human rights have to travel in India. One of the contributions of NHRC, besides other things, has been to create awareness regarding human rights among the people at large. It would not be hyperbolic to say that NHRC is developing the much needed human rights culture in India without which no system of human rights protection and promotion can work effectively.

The Commission today has obtained its accreditation as a member of the International Coordination Committee of National Human Rights Institutions for its adherence to the Paris Principles of 1991, namely,

transparency, adequate jurisdiction and powers, accessibility, co-operation, effectiveness and accountability. At present, there are 18 States in the country which have established State Human Rights Commissions while very few States have established District Human Rights Courts.

In addition to the above, the country has the following Institutional mechanisms to deal with protection and promotion of human rights of civil society. They include the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, the National Commission for Safai Karmachari, the National Commission for Protection of Rights of the Children, the National Commission for Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, the Central Information Commission and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. At the State level there are the State Human Rights Commissions, State Commissions for Women, State Commissions for Minorities, State Information Commissions, State Commissioners for Persons with Disabilities, etc.

Role of Judiciary in Protecting Human Rights

Since the late 1970s Indian judiciary began to play an active role in promoting and protecting human rights, the genesis of which lies in the public interest litigation (PIL). Until then, only persons whose rights had been directly affected could petition a court for restitution and remedies. The rule prohibiting the filing of cases on behalf of other individuals was followed for almost three decades after Independence.

The genesis of public interest litigation was a small news item in the *Indian Express* in 1979 that described the plight of under trial prisoners in Bihar who had been languishing for periods longer than the maximum punishment prescribed. An advocate filed a petition in the Supreme Court, which entertained the petition on behalf of the prisoners and directions to provide relief were given.

Later, the Supreme Court entertained a number of representative petitions in the areas of custodial deaths, prisoners' rights, abolition of bonded labour, conditions in mental homes, workers' rights, occupational health and related issues. The rationale was that fundamental rights remained only on paper for a large number of marginalised sections of society that were not in any position to come

to court. Therefore, public-spirited persons could file petitions on behalf of the poor and exploited. Even letters describing the plight of the dispossessed were entertained and relief given.

Public Interest Litigations evolved as an innovative departure from the rules, in tune with the socio-economic condition of our society. Even in the field of environmental jurisprudence, in cases like the *Sriram Oleum* gas leak incident in 1985, in Delhi, the court evolved principles of corporate liability and awarded compensation to the injured workers and people living around the factory. This 'judicial activism' was led by socially-minded judges such as V.R. Krishna Iyer, P N Bhagwati and Chinnappa Reddy.

Gradually, however, the court began to entertain public interest petitions that were not solely on behalf of the exploited sections. Some of the petitions dealt with social ills like corruption and criminalisation of politics. Others were about the protection of ancient monuments like the Taj Mahal, the tombs of Zauq and Ghalib. River pollution, destruction of forests, waste management and environmental conservation began to constitute another huge chunk of PILs. People turned to the judiciary as a panacea for all ills.

Today, PIL is an ever-expanding universe. Any and everything, from the selection of the cricket team to the construction of a flyover, falls within its domain. Simultaneously, a large number of funded and non-funded NGOs/CSOs and human rights networks are part of the litigating constellation.

While Commissions provide for a variety of recommendatory powers, possess powers of Civil Courts and broadly function as Advisory Bodies to the Government creating awareness with reference to their respective constituencies with a complaints-handling mechanism in place, the courts, especially the High Courts and the Supreme Court ensure that human rights are safeguarded at least for those who have access to these institutions. Thus, together with the established courts in this country at the District, State and National levels, India has a comprehensive institutional network of National and State Human Rights institutions working for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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Human Rights Education: UN Decade and Indian Efforts

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).

It is important to promote a culture of human rights through education. Given the fact that Indian society is witness to numerous violations and abuses of power and that the ability of the people to fight these injustices is limited, human rights education in India is extremely important. Awareness relating to rights for empowering the people to seek policies of good governance is on top of the agenda in this.

The strategy for inculcating a culture of human rights among the people needs to be based on a number of factors - social, legal, political, judicial, and institutional.

Attempts to inculcate such a culture in India have been sporadic. It was only in the mid-1990s that NGOs began to talk of human rights in an open manner because of the mindset of officialdom that any attempt to conscientize or make people aware of their rights is a doing of some unknown 'foreign hands'. Even well-known and established international organizations, such as Amnesty International, were viewed with this lens. The two decisive moments in a change of perception are the creation of the National Human Rights Commission, with all its drawbacks acknowledged, and the declaration of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education.

Making a Case for HRE

Human rights education is vital for the universal realization of human rights. There is unanimous consensus on this in the international community. 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'. As stated in the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71, 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'.

Human rights education has been highlighted in almost all the international documents of the United Nations, beginning with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Art. 26 Para. 3)

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) devotes two articles to the right to education, articles 13 and 14. Article 13, the longest provision in the Covenant, is wide-ranging and comprehensive on the right to education in international human rights law. It reads:

The States Parties ... recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

General Comment No. 13 made in 1999 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Article 13 of the ICESCR observes:

Education is *both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights* (emphasis added). As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth. Increasingly, education is recognized as one of the best financial investments States can make. But the importance of education is not just practical: a well-educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.

Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) exhorts signatory parties to the Convention to ensure that the education of the child shall be directed to 'the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations' (Para. 2).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Article 10 explicitly calls for the elimination of discrimination against women and to ensure that women have equal rights with men in the field of education. It also calls for the 'elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education ... by the revision of textbooks and school programs and the adaptation of teaching methods.'

Likewise, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in Article 7 calls for an adoption of 'immediate and effective measures' to combat prejudices, which lead to racial discrimination, and one may read, 'caste discrimination' into the spirit of this clause, as far as India is concerned:

... agree to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnic groups, as well as to propagating the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations...

An impartial reading of the provisions in 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.

A Definitive Action

It was the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action that gave human rights education a definitive shape and content that led to it being considered by many states-parties and non-governmental organisations as an effective tool in the search for justice and equality.

In Part I of the Declaration (Para. 33), the World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the duty of the States, as stipulated in several of the international human rights instruments, 'to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms'. The Conference also emphasized 'the importance of incorporating the subject of human rights education programs' and called upon the States to do so.

Further, it called for greater efforts

... to increase considerably the resources allocated to programs aiming at the establishment and strengthening of national legislation, national institutions and related infrastructure which uphold the rule of law and democracy, electoral assistance, human rights awareness through training, teaching and education, popular participation and civil society. (Para. 34)

The provisions directly related to establishing a culture of human rights through human rights education were spelled out in Part II, paras. 78-82, quoted in full below:

D. Human rights education

78. 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.

79. States should strive to eradicate illiteracy and should direct education towards the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and

fundamental freedoms. The World Conference on Human Rights calls on all States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings.

80. Human rights education should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights.

81. Taking into account the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, adopted in March 1993 by the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and other human rights instruments, the World Conference on Human Rights recommends that States develop specific programs and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education and the dissemination of public information, taking particular account of the human rights needs of women.

82. Governments, with the assistance of intergovernmental organizations, national institutions and non-governmental organizations, should promote an increased awareness of human rights and mutual tolerance. The World Conference on Human Rights underlines the importance of strengthening the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights carried out by the United Nations. They should initiate and support education in human rights and undertake effective dissemination of public information in this field. The advisory services and technical assistance programmes of the United Nations system should be able to respond immediately to requests from States for educational and training activities in the field of human rights as well as for special education concerning standards as contained in international human rights instruments and in humanitarian law and their application to special groups such as military forces, law enforcement personnel, police and the health profession. The proclamation of a United Nations decade for human rights education in order to promote, encourage and focus these educational activities should be considered.

We can safely surmise that human rights education has been one of the priorities of the United Nations since its inception, as gleaned from these instruments.

The UN Decade for Human Rights Education

In December 1994 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1995-2004 the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. The Decade aimed at encouraging the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive, effective and sustainable national plans for human rights education, as well as the strengthening of partnership at all levels. UN evaluations¹ of progress have highlighted that the Decade has 'put human rights education on the agenda', helped to increase awareness of the need for human rights education and provided a framework for international cooperation in this area. The Decade facilitated the human rights education work of those already engaged in relevant activities and encouraged others to develop them. In some countries, it provided a platform for dialogue and cooperation among governments, national human rights institutions and NGOs.

As the Decade was approaching to an end, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a study² on possible global follow-up initiatives. The study highlighted the importance to continue a global framework for human rights education in order to provide a sense of common collective vision, goals and action and an opportunity to increase partnership at all levels, as well as provide support for programmes created during the Decade, an incentive to continue them and to start new ones building on those experiences.

In this process, the United Nations General Assembly defined human rights education as

a life-long process by which people at all levels of development
and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others
and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.

On 10 December 2004, the UN General Assembly proclaimed a World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing). Instead of a limited timeframe like a decade, the consensus of the international community gathered around the concept of an open-ended Programme structured around an ongoing series of phases; the first one covers the period 2005-2009 and focuses on the integration of human rights education into the primary and secondary school

systems. The Plan of Action³ for the first phase, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2005, proposes a strategy and practical guidance for implementing human rights education nationally. It was developed by a broad group of education and human rights practitioners and benefited also of the experience of PW's human rights education programme through the participation of PW's Executive Director Henri Tiphagne in a relevant UN expert meeting (2004).

Human Rights Education in India

Human Rights Education in India was not known by that name until the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India came into being in October 1993. There have been several attempts by non-governmental organizations to impart the elements of human rights to students and teachers and to other target groups. This was conducted more in the form of training workshops for youth, teachers, young lawyers, social activists and so on. But a systematic approach with a curriculum and the blessings of the establishment was absent. This came about with the inception of NHRC.

The NHRC soon after its inception in October 1993 set out to introduce Human Rights Education in schools, colleges, and universities. It was in pursuance of Section 12 of The Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 which reads:

The Commission shall undertake, protect, and *promote research* [emphasis added] in the field of human rights (and) spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means.

One of the key words here is 'research'. Research involves much more than a text book study of constitutional provisions, international charters and covenants like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 1 of the UDHR states, 'all are born equal and in dignity'. In the context of India, the 'divinely ordained hierarchical system' is in contradiction with this provision. What kind of a research can one do of the abominable caste system of which volumes have been written and battles have been fought. How should the young mind understand the issue of caste discrimination from an academic point of view, when, in their daily life, they live through the horrors of a second-class citizenship?

One of the worst forms of human rights violations and infringement of civil liberties is caused by the varna system, either directly or indirectly. Other widespread abuses like custodial rape, torture, and killing flow from this. How does one drive home the truth? Likewise, the Constitution of India has prohibited untouchability and its practice in any form is forbidden.

What will be the scenario in a class room where the subject is taught by educators whose concept of social justice in relation to the varna system is incompatible with what has been stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or even with the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles enshrined in our Constitution?

The recent anti-reservation stir saw the English-educated middle class and upper middle class intelligentsia in North India going berserk over the issue of social justice testifying to the fact that casteism is deeply ingrained in the Indian mind and any attempt at questioning that 'divinely ordained' hierarchy would be met with stiff resistance.

The relevance of having an academic exercise in imparting human rights education, as remotely suggested by NHRC in Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, would have been fruitless and counter-productive to the spirit in which the several international treaties, covenants and declarations have been made. At least for India, if human rights education had to make any impact in the dynamics of social transformation, it had to be an experiential one, taking into account the complexities of regional and national realities. In order to achieve this, several human rights activists, particularly Dr. R.M. Pal, former Editor of the *PUCL Bulletin*, pleaded with NHRC to enter into a dialogue with individuals and organizations that already have some experience in this direction before preparing a curriculum.

The then Secretary-General of NHRC, Mr. R.V. Pillai, responded saying:

The National Human Rights Commission is in agreement with the view that in preparing a curriculum for human rights education, there has to be involvement of not only academics but also individuals and organizations which are sensitive and committed to the issue of human rights. I am in the process of working out a list of organizations and individuals with whom the Commission could have a dialogue on the evolution of curricula at various levels. I shall be happy to receive any

suggestions that you or the PUCL may have in this regard (*PUCL Bulletin*, October 1994).

But, instead of having a dialogue with NGOs, the NHRC asked the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to prepare a course of study. The NCERT produced a Source Book containing summaries of relevant portions of the Indian Constitution, international covenants, etc. 'If respect for human rights could be cultivated through these documents, we would have attained this long ago, for our students have been reading the Constitution since the 1950s', notes Dr. Pal in one of his writings.

According to the NCERT, 'Human Rights Education is not an independent area in the school curriculum but its various aspects and discussions have been integrated in the curriculum of various school subjects and the educational materials, particularly textbooks based on them'. The NCERT has been guided by what has been stated in the National Policy on Education adopted in 1986 (revised in 1992).

Human Rights Education: Policy Perspectives

The educational policies of the country addresses the concerns reflected in the Constitution. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, modified in 1992 seeks 'to promote equality ... to provide equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success...'

It goes on to say, '[the] nation as a whole will assume the responsibility of providing resource support for implementing programs of educational transformation, reducing disparities, universalization of elementary education, adult literacy, scientific and technological research, etc.' Aware of the disparities prevailing in various sections of the Indian society and the Constitutional obligation to provide 'protective discrimination' to the weaker sections, the policy suggests various measures to bring equality through the system of education. Consequently, the NPE has devoted a complete chapter, Part IV, to 'Education for Equality' wherein the policy outline has been provided for the educational development of various weaker and disadvantaged sections of society.

This section lays emphasis on the removal of disparities by attending to the specific needs of these sections. For instance, the policy recommends redesigning the curricula, textbooks, training and

orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators to remove the segregation of SC and ST and their equalization with non-Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe population at all stages and levels of education.

Several schemes by the Government and voluntary agencies over a period of time have opened the doors of education and knowledge to these sections of society who are also provided job reservations in various sectors of employment.

Since the Indian society is highly heterogeneous, the educational interest of the minority sections of society have not been neglected and the NPE (1986) maintains,

Some minority groups are educationally deprived and backward. Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interests of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the Constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection of their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of textbooks and in all school activities, and all possible measures will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum.

Both the 1968 and 1986 Policy on Education lay stress on the combative role of education in eliminating obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition, and fatalism and promote some core values such as India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy, secularism, equality of sexes, observance of small family norms and inculcation of scientific temper, etc. All these core values are integrated in the school curriculum. But more needs to be done in a more concrete and focused manner to include human rights education in school curriculum, as envisaged in the Vienna Declaration.

Dr. Geeta Nambissan of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, observes after a field study:

... within the school it appears that Dalit students continue to experience social discrimination and this can be seen both in the official curriculum, i.e., in the approved content of education and the hidden curriculum of schooling. Scheduled Caste communities and the experience of untouchability rarely form part of school knowledge. Textbooks are silent about Dalit communities ... practices (untouchability) are rarely mentioned in school books or discussed in the class room.

Our universities, the University Grants Commission, the National Human Rights Commission, and research institutes do not appear to have given much thought to what has been observed above.

What Constitutes Human Rights Education?

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.

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the importance of education, training and public information. In response to the appeal by the World Conference, the General Assembly, in 1994, while proclaiming the period 1995-2004 as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, affirmed that 'human rights education should involve more than the provision of information and should constitute a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels in development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of other and the means of methods of ensuring that respect in all societies'.

Human rights education fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold human rights for all members of society. The Plan of Action,⁴ referred to earlier in this chapter, elaborates the content and approach to human rights education. It affirms that human rights education is directed at:

- ♦ Strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- ♦ Developing the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- ♦ Promoting understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- ♦ Enabling all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- ♦ Building and maintaining peace;
- ♦ The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.

Elements of human rights education

Taking the definition into purview and gleaning various declarations and practices, human rights education has come to encompass:

- ♦ Knowledge and skills — learning about human rights and mechanisms for their protection, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in daily life;
- ♦ Values, attitudes and behaviour — developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;
- ♦ Action — taking action to defend and promote human rights.

Human Rights Education in the School System

Human rights education is widely considered to be an integral part of the right to education. This is 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)

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.

Accordingly, human rights should be learned through both content transmission and experience, and should be practised at all levels of the school system.

In this sense, human rights education promotes a rights-based approach to education and should be understood as a process that includes:

- ♦ **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;
- ♦ **Human rights in education:** ensuring the respect of the human rights of all actors, and the practice of rights, within the education system .

Therefore, human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems involves:

- ♦ **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;
- ♦ **Policy implementation** — planning the implementation of the above-mentioned educational policies by taking appropriate organizational measures and by facilitating the involvement of all stakeholders;
- ♦ **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 parents) to practise human rights through real-life activities. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life;
- ♦ **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.);
- ♦ **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.

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.

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, 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.

National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education

There is no firm National Plan of Action as yet, but a process has been set in motion in 1997 with the constitution of a Coordination Committee under the Chairpersonship of the Home Secretary and comprising secretaries of other ministries and departments. The Coordination Committee has requested the NHRC to draft the Plan of Action of the programme of Human Rights Education.

Priority areas to be included in the Plan of Action have been identified and they include:

the introduction of human rights education at undergraduate and post-graduate levels; the inclusion of a qualification in human rights for recruitment in various categories; the preparation of training materials and organisation of training courses for professional and other groups, such as members of the security forces, doctors, lawyers, judicial officers, government officials, politicians, NGO personnel, trade unionists, members of religious organisations and village functionaries, and the organisation of debates and seminars on human rights for the general public.

The Coordination Committee has stipulated that all procedures and practices for the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the national plan should guarantee the pluralistic representation of society (including NGOs); transparency of operations; public accountability;

and democratic participation. And that all government authorities should respect the independence and autonomy of the various organisations in the implementation of the national plan.

In addition, it has identified a set of parameters for educational activities conducted under the national plan. They call for fostering

- a) Respect for and appreciation of differences and opposition to discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, gender, religion, age, social, physical or mental condition, language, sexual orientation, etc.;
- b) Non-discriminatory language and conduct;
- c) Respect for and appreciation of diversity of opinion;
- d) Participatory teaching and learning;
- e) "Translation" of human rights norms into the conduct of daily life;
- f) Professional training of trainers;
- g) Development and strengthening of national capacities and expertise for the effective implementation of the plan.

A national committee would be established comprising representatives of appropriate government agencies and non-governmental organisations with experience in human rights and human rights education.

Notes

¹ See, for instance, the report on the mid-term global evaluation of the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the Decade, 2000 (UN Doc. A/55/360), and the report on achievements and shortcomings of the Decade and on future United Nations initiatives in this area, 2004 (UN Doc. E/CN.4/2004/93).

² The study has been published as UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/101.

³ The Plan of Action is contained in UN Doc. A/59/525/Rev.1. It has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2005 by resolution 59/113 B.

⁴ Ibid.

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3

People's Watch and the Evolution of the HRE Programme

States are not moral agents, people are, and can impose moral standards on powerful institutions. ... The most effective way to restrict democracy is to transfer decision-making from the public arena to unaccountable institutions: kings and princes, priestly castes, military juntas, party dictatorships, or modern corporations.

Noam Chomsky

If the 1993 Vienna Conference can be termed as a milestone in the history of global efforts for a widespread culture of human rights through human rights education, then it can also be marked as a milestone in the efforts of a handful of dedicated human rights activists in the famous temple town of Madurai, tucked deep in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, India.

The birth of People's Watch Tamil Nadu (PWTN)* was a result of the motivation and vision that a young lawyer had gained from the Vienna Conference. It was in 1979-80 that Henri Tiphagne started civil liberties work as a student activist in People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL). Having been actively involved in the PUCL for more than a decade as Secretary of the Madurai unit, General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu unit, and as National Organizing Secretary, Henri was provided an opportunity to be in Vienna in 1993. With much skepticism and not sure if there is something that a World Conference can offer to small grassroots volunteer-lawyers, Henri bowed to the wishes of the

* Then called PWTN, but at the time of writing this, it has been rechristened PW, considering its presence in nearly 10 states of India through various projects, and would be referred to as such in the subsequent parts of this work.

friend who insisted on him attending it. To quote him on this experience,

When I went there I saw a completely different reality. For the first time, I was able to see how human rights could be put into practice. The very special learning (and I will always keep this close to my heart — I always share this with my colleagues here) was to discover that human rights organizations could, indeed, monitor the state, and hold it accountable for its faults and shortcomings. I was able to understand the mechanisms by which these organizations were able to do this and also contribute to different changes that were possible.

People's Watch

Having realized that human rights advocacy cannot be a part-time engagement and that it needs a professional response, one of the first tasks that Henri engaged in was to try and convince some organizations, which were engaged in human rights work of this perspective. The response was standard, '... a wonderful idea, but difficult to put it into practice'. Some were explicit in their fears of rubbing the State on the wrong side and having to pay a price for that, while others did not want to jeopardize the 'lovely work' they were doing for children, women, the handicapped, and so on were also mortified at the thought of all that 'coming to a halt if we were to get engaged in this process'. But some pledged support if someone else could initiate the process, and this is the most polite way of saying, 'for the moment, I cannot risk, but will wait and watch'.

There was an informal group that used to share common experiences and in that were two people, Dr. Devasahayam and Fr. Diamond Raj, who knew, in their heart and reasoned it out in their minds that all this excitement was reasonable. Friends in the human rights movement in Karnataka were also brought into the process, particularly Fr. Alosyius Irudayam of the Indian Social Institute, Bangalore, whose support and solidarity proved to be crucial in launching the first phase of the human rights education in schools in 1997. Ossie Fernandez of Human Rights Foundation, Chennai and Gnanaprakasm of LRSA, Chinglepet were the others who supported the idea of having a professional approach to monitoring the violations of the State and holding the State accountable. Monitoring and Intervention were the principal objectives of this small group. Eventually, after a period of almost one-and-a-half years the idea germinated into a forum/programme. Having volunteered to give his

time as an administrator, Fr. Diamond encouraged Henri and Dr. Devasahayam to focus on human rights monitoring and training of grassroots activists for effective intervention.

People's Watch came into being as a programme unit of SAARC, of which Fr. Diamond Raj was the Director, in December 1995, with the vision of creating 'a society free from human rights violations and discrimination by cultivating a human rights culture through the participation of a pluralistic society'. The declared mission in pursuance of this vision was, and is, 'to create a visible and measurable human rights culture in India'.

Monitoring the State to make it accountable for the violations it committed was the sole focal point around which People's Watch started. Since then, it has broadened its mandate to include human rights education, rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations and campaign against torture.

Seeds of Human Rights Education

Understanding what monitoring meant and what it entails was an early challenge that was partially addressed through training programmes. But there was a lesson that emerged out of that experience. The first training programme was in August 1996, nine months after PW was established in the hope that the training programme would recruit people and that, over a short period of time, there would be 200 or 300 people who will all do monitoring. But when the fact-finding actually were to take place everybody had a reason why they should not go to that place on that particular day! Each reason used seemed very genuine. PW discovered that no fact-finding took place, which led it to re-examine the culture of training programmes.

All the training programmes in the early days were for young lawyers, NGO staff and leaders of people's movements, aimed at recruiting people for taking the monitoring agenda forward.

But, during one of the training programmes, some women school teachers, who were participants, said, 'Please help us in our schools. There is a lot that we could do in our schools. We don't have the time to do all the things that you have shared with us in this training because from morning to evening we are in the schools with children. But if you can show us a way of how we can work within schools, then we

would be willing to do that’.

That was where and when the first seed of human rights education, as it has evolved over the last decade or so was sown.

The Board of People’s Watch was convinced that there is ample scope for such a process in schools and that it should be done in such a way that it could be replicated and up-scaled to encompass the entire state to begin with, and later, the country. While this was being thought through in Madurai by a handful of people, a bigger framework was evolving elsewhere on a global scale to introduce human rights education in schools everywhere, both parties being unaware of each other’s process, having no organic links. Eventually, it turned out to be one of the major ‘legitimizing factors’ in pushing the agenda of human rights education in schools.

Human Rights Education in Schools in Tamil Nadu – An Experiment

A pilot programme of human rights education in seven schools was held in Chennai, Tamil Nadu in 1997 and this paved the way for the expansion of the programme in a variety of schools with different backgrounds. In eight years (1997-2005) more than 0.1 million children from 916 schools have been reached and more than 2000 teachers have been trained for this purpose in Tamil Nadu.



Following the pilot programme, the first phase of human rights education programme was carried out by the IHRE in the academic year of 1997-98 in nine schools in Chennai for students in the ninth grade. Ninety teachers, ten from each of the nine schools, were trained to handle the first module, ‘An Introduction to Human Rights’. These schools were all in Chennai and run by the Church of South India.

Attempts to enlist the support of the State education department proved to be futile and hence this experimental phase produced its share of learning, which may be summarized as ‘lacking in real-life situations and not pitching to the right level of cognition of adolescent students’. A somewhat detailed analysis of the learning *vis-à-vis* curriculum appears in a subsequent chapter.

This experimental phase in nine Chennai-based schools had 1756 students of the ninth grade attending the programme delivered by 90 teachers.

Moving on to a Phase of Consolidation

The second phase was indeed a phase that helped PW consolidate its approach to human rights education, finalize the pedagogy, sharpen the course content and arrive at proper curriculum framework. This was triggered off by the mid-way evaluation or feedback



from teachers handling the first module in the first phase.

Human Rights Education in Schools in Tamil Nadu (1997 – 2007)

Phase & Period	Type of District/s schools	Schools	Class/s	No. of Students	No. of Teachers
I 1 Year (1997-1998)	Private	1	9	1,756	
II 2 Years (1998-2000)	Corporation/ State aided/Private	10	122	8, 9	21,320 315
III 3 Years (1999-2002)	Private	29	238	7, 8, 9	33,785 730
IV 3 Years (2002-2005)	SC/ST Schools of Govt of TN	29	258	6, 7, 8	25,819 492
3 Years (2002-2005)	Private	10	134	6, 7, 8	14,330 251
3 Years (2002- 2005)	Private	15	155	6, 7, 8	12,650 330
V 3 years (2005-2008)	SC/ST Schools of Govt of TN	29	355	6, 7, 8	21,057 725
3 years (2005-2008)	Private	15	154	6, 7, 8	15,000 200
VI 3 years (2007-2010)	Chennai Corporation Schools	-	181	6, 7, 8	8,000 210
	All schools of Erode District	1	750	6, 7, 8	100,000 1000
	All schools of Sivagangai District	1	420	6, 7, 8	30,000 500
	All schools of Dindigul District	1	462	6, 7, 8	30,000 566
Total		—	3238	—	2,23,717 5412

The second phase was for a period of two years, 1998-2000, and covered 21,320 students in the eighth and ninth grades and 315 teachers of 122 schools in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu.

The third phase commenced in 1999 by starting the first module in seventh grade as opposed to eighth in the previous phase and ninth in the experimental phase. It may be considered as the year when the consolidation began, by clearly identifying a three-year human rights education programme with a 'syllabus' containing 'an introduction to human rights' (first year or grade 7), 'rights of the child' (second year or grade 8) and 'discrimination' (third year or grade 9).

In this phase, the first of the three-year phases, the number of schools jumped to 238 (from 122 in the second phase) in 29 districts with 730 teachers (as opposed to 315) and 33,785 students (as opposed to 21,320). In the subsequent years, more and more students were added from different schools and, at the end of 2005, the number of students that underwent the programme crossed the 100,000-mark as indicated in the table above.



During the third phase, a number of campaigns were conducted involving the human rights education students of schools. Some of the campaigns in which they were involved were campaign against death penalty, campaign for free, compulsory and quality education, district-level conferences for free, compulsory and quality education, State conference on free, compulsory and quality education, memoranda to the Chief Minister, the Prime Minister, the UN Bodies, National Council for Education, Research, Training (NCERT), State Council for Education, Research Training (SCERT), and postcard-writing campaign on free, compulsory and quality education. Years of consistent advocacy and lobbying with Government officials have resulted in the introduction of human rights education in Government schools for the first time in the whole of South Asia.

Creation of Institute of Human Rights Education:

While the third phase of human rights education (HRE) was going



on in private schools, People's Watch has taken efforts to introduce HRE in all schools in Tamil Nadu. But People's Watch faced a peculiar problem. People's Watch, on the one hand, has been engaged in questioning

the State to ensure its accountability for all human rights violations. On the other hand, for its human rights education program in schools, People's Watch has to work with the Government. Many times, it was very tough for People's Watch to question the State and simultaneously to work with the State. In order to avoid this paradoxical situation and to ensure acceptance from the State for its human rights education program in all schools, People's Watch initiated a separate program called "Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE)" and all HRE programs in schools and trainings were brought under it.



Phase IV was the initiation of a human rights education program in 258 Adi Dravidar Welfare & Government Tribal Residential (ADW-GTR) schools run by the Department of Adi Dravidar Welfare of the Government of

Tamil Nadu. Because of learnings from phases II and II, III of the Human Rights Education IHRE planned for a three-year project. It thus became a programme for three years, commencing for students of Class VI and proceeding up to the Class VIII, covering the age group between 11 years and 14 years.

Phase V (2002-2005) was the initiation of a human rights education program in the RC Diocesan schools run by the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Trichy, Madurai, Palayamkottai and Kottar. Again, this phase was for three years, commencing with VI standard students and proceeding up to the VIII standard, covering the age group between 11 years and 14 years. About 134 schools, 15,000 students and 250 teachers have been participating in this programme.

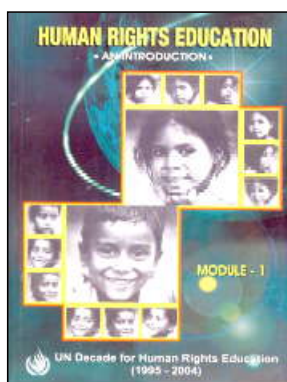
Currently (2005-2008) human rights education is imparted in 509 schools covering 32,057 pupils. The following table shows the coverage

of students and teachers in Tamil Nadu in different phases of the programme.

Since 1997, more than 193,000 students and over 4,800 teachers in more than 2,700 schools throughout the State of Tamil Nadu have benefited from the Human Rights Education programmes of the Institute of Human Rights Education.

Modules

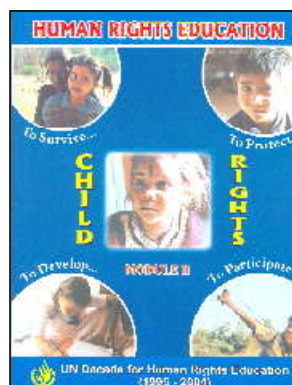
An educational syllabus gets complete only by its content which is the curriculum. A curriculum for HRE cannot be prepared just by an expert. As human rights are values which have to be nurtured, only people who are passionate about protecting these values should prepare



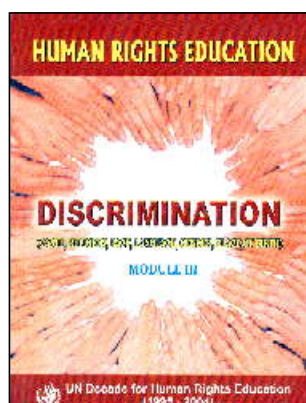
the lessons. These are not mere lessons; values assume the form of lessons. These lessons are not one-dimensional; they are multi-dimensional. They are pluralistic in nature. These are lessons that emerge from life itself. Therefore the institute was clear that the right persons to draft the curriculum would be persons who have interest in protecting human rights and have experience in defending human rights.

Initially, the task of preparing modules / text books on human rights education for children seemed Herculean. Although human rights education is not textbook-oriented, it cannot reach children who are used to textbook oriented education without textbooks.

A group of people with the desired expertise and passion spent months to prepare the modules on 'Human Rights - An Introduction', 'Child Rights', 'Women's Rights' and 'Discrimination'. They sent the materials to teachers and other peers for feedback before finalizing the text book. Human rights activists, educationists and members of the advisory board also provided feedback before their approval was sought. These are the first textbooks on human rights education for schools in India.



Since children can learn human rights only as a value, the lessons have been prepared in such a way that human rights are portrayed as fundamental human values that need to be protected. Although human rights have been written as values, care was also given to see that this should not become value education. It was also ensured that the human rights perspective was not distorted.



Lessons begin by highlighting the positive values. As lessons progress the negative facts of life are introduced along with solutions as to how they can be prevented and how human rights can be promoted and protected. The positive values and violations featured in the lessons are taken from real life situations. The lessons are structured in such a way that happenings that children are totally unaware of are not forced upon them but in such a way that the positive values that lie embedded in the children's hearts are brought out through dialogues.

It is not easy for children to comprehend values like pluralism. Making them comprehend these values too is not an easy task. Pluralism is taught to children by telling them about how we accept pluralism as a way of life right from childhood, quoting examples like the beauty of a garden that has different kinds of flowers.

The modules teach accepting diversity in a pluralistic society, respecting pluralism, the difference between diversity and discrimination and how stereotyping can deny pluralism. It is difficult to explain that protection of human rights can be possible in totality only in a democracy. Although the task is arduous it is explained that the difference between monarchy and democracy is that in democracy the people gain prominence.



It was for the first time that intricacies like interdependency of pluralism and democracy and how these are fundamental for human rights were put before children in a manner that was comprehensible for them.

The second year's module on 'Child Rights' was also prepared with the Indian milieu as context. The good values that are natural in a child are reinforced and the child is made to respect these values. Violations addressed here are related by comparing children to buds and how they wilt and how they wilt when they are abused, trafficked, orphaned, forced to become child labourers or street children.

The rights of the child are then driven home with constant reference to national laws and international conventions on the rights of children.

The module on 'Discrimination' for the third year was indeed a novel effort. A primary objective of human rights education has been to stress the principle of equality to children. Discrimination prevails wherever there is no equality. This module highlights the prevalent forms of discrimination and children are shown how people are discriminated on the basis of gender, race, religion, caste, economic status and nationality and how discrimination destroys humanity. The lesson concludes with the children drafting a charter against discrimination in an attempt to find a solution to do away with discrimination.

Teachers underwent two-day training programmes in teaching the lessons, which were amply illustrated and written in a simple and lucid style bearing in mind the cognitive levels of children coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in different parts of the State.

Teaching Methodology

Human Rights Education is education for life or 'life education' as it may be called. Lessons and methods of teaching 'life education' cannot be like that of other subjects, since it is education through experience. It is an education that gives opportunities to teachers and students to share their experiences. Conversation or discussion is at the centre of this education. Therefore, the lessons and the method of teaching them have been formulated in such a way that, through these conversations, the value of democracy is inculcated. This is not an evaluatory course nor is it a classroom-oriented subject. Lessons have been created in such a way that students do not consider them a burden and instead learn them with joy.

Every lesson is introduced to the children by way of stories, dialogues, historical references, experiences, speeches by famous people or through interviews. At the end of each lesson selected portions from the Constitution of India, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other documents related to human rights are given.

In order for the students to imbibe the essence of the lesson, classroom exercises and home exercises are also given. The exercises seek to strengthen the human rights perspective of a student. Exercises are in the form of:

1. Questions
2. Group study
3. Sharing in class
4. Drawing
5. Essay- and poem-writing
6. Letter-writing
7. Sharing of experiences of others
8. Sharing with identification – articles
9. Interviewing
10. Marking 'true' or 'false'
11. Games
12. Inspecting places
13. Submitting petition

The exercises are designed to create awareness in students about themselves and their society. They question the subjugation and discrimination that have been prevailing for ages and such questioning helps in promoting human rights values. Examples have been taken from day-to-day life and importance is given to values than law and rights. When the modules were translated for other States just the basic frame was translated and incidents and examples were adapted according to the milieu of the respective State.

District Committees' Role

The human rights education in Adi Dravida Welfare Schools and the Government Tribal Residential Schools in Tamil Nadu are jointly implemented by IHRE and the Government District Committees,



which have been mandated to monitor if the programme is being implemented in the correct manner and to ensure proper implementation so that teachers do not brush this off as the project of a service organization. In the meetings of these District Committees (convened by the District Adi-Dravida Welfare Officers), Zonal Coordinators who are in charge of the concerned District review the programme with select headmasters and some teachers. Schools where the programme is not being implemented in the proper manner are identified and corrective recommendations are offered. This is a model relationship with Government officials than can help in taking forward human rights education to other sections of the civil society.

Human Rights Education through Art Forms

Since human rights education is an education that is related to life, it cannot be text-book-oriented. A training programme on teaching human rights education using art forms was conducted jointly by teachers and students, which in itself is a novel attempt. On the final day teachers and students depicted human rights through various art forms.



Role of Advisory Boards

A service organization may have the interest to introduce human rights education in educational institutions but it may not have the expertise to translate rights into lessons. Only when educationists with expertise are involved in the process of creating lessons out of human rights and the lessons are introduced in schools will this programme gain credibility. The main reason for the credibility of this programme comes from the formation and active involvement of the high-level Advisory Board comprising educationists and human rights activists. This Board meets once in



three months to evaluate the programme, to make recommendations for improvements, and to inspect schools.

Similar to the Board that functions in Tamil Nadu, Boards have been formed in other states where HRE has been introduced on an experimental basis. These bodies take the responsibility of making plans that are suitable to the milieu of their states.

Honorary District Coordinators

In each of the districts, the programme is coordinated by an honorary district coordinator,



who is well-known to the local people. This lends the programme additional credibility apart from ensuring that, at the end of the day, the efforts for promoting a culture of

human rights will have to be led by the people themselves and that 'ownership' of the programme would ultimately vest with the people and other stakeholders at the local level. There are limits to what an NGO can do in a remote part of the country.

The coordinators participate in the training programmes and review meetings conducted for teachers and try to encourage the teachers. Their services are not paid for, which in itself is one of the strengths of the programme. The teachers and headmasters of the schools are their friends and they have accepted the overall leadership of the coordinators.

State-level Consultations



State-level consultations were an integral component of the programme to make concerned officials aware of the need for introducing human rights education in all schools of Tamil Nadu. Educationists, government officials,

representatives of human rights commissions at the national and state levels, and members of the judiciary shared forums with teachers and

students of human rights education to hear about the impact of human rights education. Students not only made oral representations of the impacts of HRE on them but also expressed them through cultural and art forms.

In one such consultation held at Chennai, Justice J.S. Verma, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission participated and also met students in a classroom to see how the curriculum is being handled. Also, students from Tamil Nadu got the opportunity to converse with students in Pakistan via video conferencing. Not only did this bring great happiness in the hearts of the children but also enabled human rights education to become a connecting link between the two nations.

First Human Rights Education Conference

A conference on human rights education was organised by IHRE



for the first time. Human Rights conferences might have taken place but not Human Rights Education conferences. It was another feather in the cap of IHRE because the request for organising such a conference came from the Secretary of

the Adi Dravida Welfare department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

This was a state-level conference and included teachers and students of human rights education, apart from educationists, government officials and other concerned citizens. During the preparatory stage of the conference, the Department Secretary visited schools in Villupuram and other neighbouring districts to learn more about human rights education programmes from the HRE teachers. At the conference held in Chennai, he was present throughout the day and heard the experiences shared by teachers and students.



This conference was one of the best forms of recognition for Human Rights Education in Tamil Nadu.

As Ambassadors of Human Rights

After Human Rights Education was announced as a national-level programme, students and teachers of HRE from Tamil Nadu took part



in the inaugural sessions of the programme in each State with a view to share the learnings they had over the years. In particular, students and teachers belonging to the SC/ST communities, which are the most backward, were the ambassadors of human rights

education. These students and teachers, who were perhaps venturing out of their villages / towns for the first time, not only get the opportunity to see the outer world but were also happy with the recognition they got.

It was the sharing of experiences of these children and their teachers that formed the driving force to introduce human rights education programme in the States concerned. The best strategy to take a programme forward is by making the beneficiaries speak of its benefits instead of approaching the programme from a 'top-down' perspective.

Volunteerism

HRE is not a project. Since its objective is to create a culture of human rights, it cannot be the work of a single institution. Neither



can it be done by an individual. This programme cannot be taken forward without the cooperation of experts in the fields of education and human rights and activists.

When People's Watch planned to take forward HRE in schools, it needed resource persons, curriculum experts, and district coordinators. For obvious reasons could not be salaried staff of People's Watch as it was not in a financial position to engage them nor did any funding agency provide funds

for HRE. So educationists, human rights activists, members of movements and others in the society who did voluntary work in the field of human rights and social emancipation were identified and a meeting was called. They were introduced to the programme and asked if they would take up responsibilities.

University professors, college lecturers, persons from various movements and women activists came forward voluntarily to support the programme. They became resource persons for the training programmes. Some of them also functioned as honorary District Coordinators. Many of the members of the Advisory Board today are persons who had functioned as District Coordinators and resource persons.

When the modules were taking shape, these people played a critical role in finalising them. They voluntarily gave their opinions and recommendations. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the smooth running of this project both in Tamil Nadu and at the national level is because of the voluntary services of such people.

Lobbying

If this programme, which began in 1997 with nine private schools, has broadened its horizons and has now reached the schools of the



Government, it is because of the lobbying efforts of IHRE. Concerned persons were appraised of HRE and informed of it through campaigns, conferences, postcards and posters.

Human Rights Education is now a world programme in the form of the UN World Programme on Human Rights Education, which the Government of India has recognised. IHRE has been engaged in various efforts to make the State realize that it has the duty to implement human rights education in educational institutions by continuous lobbying with government officials, particularly of the Department of Education.

Apart from state-level efforts, IHRE ensures that:

- ♦ Close contacts are maintained with human rights institutions like the National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commissions, Commissions for Minorities and Commissions for Women and impressing on these bodies on the need for introducing human rights education in schools
- ♦ Institutions and bodies such as the NCERT and NCTE are also in the loop and at the state level, the DIET and DTERT are active partners in training teachers.
- ♦ The Education Department and the Minister for Education are met and explained about the programme and of the need to introduce it in schools.
- ♦ Leaders of all political parties in Tamil Nadu, especially Members of the Legislative Assembly are appraised of human rights education in schools and the need to introduce HRE in schools is taken up as an agenda in the Legislative Assembly.



Zonal Coordinators

Human rights education does not stop with selecting schools for introducing human rights education, identifying teachers and training them and providing modules. In that case it would mean that the Institute of Human Rights Education does



not have the authority to monitor if the trained teachers are teaching the lessons in the right manner. In order to understand the problems encountered by school teachers and students in the implementation of this programme and to help them as far as possible, Zonal Coordinators are appointed to visit schools.

Tamil Nadu has been divided into five zones and for each zone has a Coordinator responsible for human rights education being run in

the schools. While visiting the schools, they take a questionnaire that can get details regarding the school such as infrastructural facilities, problems faced in teaching the lessons and impacts created by HRE among teachers and students. These Zonal Coordinators who maintain close contact with the schools help in observing important days like Human Rights Day, Independence Day, Republic Day and Women's Day.

The Zonal Coordinators meet once a month, conduct a review of the programme and discuss the problems confronted. They also function as resource persons during training programmes for teachers, prepare the schedule for training, select appropriate resource persons and select correct teacher-participants. The joint efforts put in by these Zonal Coordinators and the faith placed in them is a good practice for the promotion of Human Rights and its teaching in schools.

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Pedagogical Process

Our text books are ... informative; they do not make the children think. Books that do not give life education, only add to the burden of children

– Yashpal Commission Report

Democracy is not the law of the majority but the protection of the minority.

– Albert Camus

The pedagogy employed by IHRE rejects the instructive approach in favour of a dialectic approach, in which both the student and the teacher explore human rights concepts together through dialogue and discussion, both thus evolving in the process. One of the cardinal points emphasized in the training sessions for teachers is that one cannot teach human rights education the way other subjects are taught. In other words, human rights education teachers cannot simply lecture to students. Teachers, instead, have to play the role of a facilitator, and motivate the children to reflect on themselves and their society; the teachers only moderate the discussions during these reflection sessions.

The modules act as trigger for the students to understand the social issues, analyze them and critically evaluate prevailing values, many of which run counter to the basic tenets of human rights such as equality and dignity. The process begins with the child reading and absorbing the social context narrated in the text-book and relating it to his/her own life and experiences, and this, in turn, leads to analysis and introspection. The child shares his/her responses and receives feedback from other children in the classroom, who all gain feedback from the teacher. Through this process, an internal transformation begins to take place in the teacher and students.

Search for the Appropriate

Human Rights Education needs a radical pedagogy. The classroom, as it exists today, is ill-suited to transact a humanizing education. Classroom relations are power relations, with the teacher wielding absolute authority over the students within its confined space, while she herself is a low level functionary in bureaucratized, elite- driven, elite-centred education system. The curriculum, evaluation methods, a fiercely competitive culture, and concepts of discipline militate against nurturing a human rights and democratic culture. Human rights education needs to be a child-centred education, respecting the child's role as constructor of knowledge rather than treating her as a passive recipient of information. The child who comes into a class is treated as an empty vessel, into which ready- made, pre-cooked knowledge is poured. Every child brings with it to the class-room a fund of cognitive and cultural capital. This rich capital must be fully utilized in the collective process of class-room transactions.

And human rights education cannot be imparted within the four walls of the classroom. It has to be learnt, out in the world, in the midst of people, particularly among victims of injustice and rights violations. It cannot stop with acquiring information, but should lead to courageous and collective action in solidarity with victims.

The search for appropriate pedagogy is proving to be endless, constantly evolving, as IHRE delves deeper into its mission and it moves across the land of immense variety and richness.

IHRE started with small steps, departing from the rote-learning system of the Indian classroom. Every lesson is introduced by way of stories, dialogues, historical incidents, experiences, media reports of everyday violations of human dignity and so on. The emphasis has been on participatory mode of learning through sharing by students of their and others' experiences in class rooms, interactions with victims of violations of human rights, interviewing, games, inspecting places where violations have taken place, submitting petitions to authorities and so on.

The methodological process of human rights education can be described in terms of a **hermeneutic transformative** circle having **six inter-related moments**: (i) individual contextual experience, (ii) individual response, (iii) small group response, (iv) class room response,

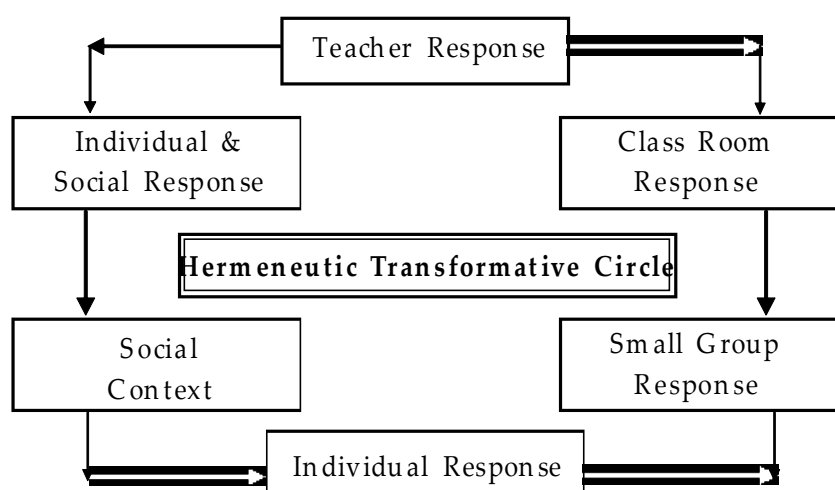
(v) teacher response, and (vi) individual and social transformative response.

Contextual Experience

This is the students' experience of social context related to human rights directly, or in some other manner. In the syllabus, this context is represented by the content in the form of texts, provisions of the Constitution and conventions, poems, verses and quotes, and activity exercises. These mediate the actual social context, and as such are expected to draw the students to the reality of life itself and not stop only with the medium.

To facilitate the students' effort to encounter the actual reality, the content presents everyday life situation at one or other level: personal life-experience of students, situation of any individual and family life, village environment, neighbourhood society, city lane surroundings, school milieu and society at large. While presenting these varied situations, neither any effort is made to provide any elaborate or exhaustive analysis of the social processes concerning human rights promotion or violation nor any explanation related to the causes and effects of such processes or any theoretical reflection on any ideals to be pursued. Besides, neither a didactic approach nor a moralistic stance is adopted as a way of teaching human rights.

A hermeneutic transformative approach consisting of a five-stage process is followed here:



- i. An encounter of the student with the actual context through the medium of the syllabus content (the first moment in the circle)
- ii. An interpretative dialogue of the student with the social context and within herself/himself on the basis of the messages and questions arising from this context and from herself/himself (the second moment in the circle),
- iii. An interpretative dialectical process of sharing, analysis and reflection of students in small groups and in the class (the third and fourth moments in the circle),
- iv. An interpretative synthesis by the teacher based on the collective contribution of the students (the fifth moment in the circle), and
- v. A transformative response which effects changes within the students and in the social context (the sixth moment in the circle).

The contextual experience refers to the first of the five in this process, wherein the students are enabled to encounter social reality through various textual forms: stories, social events and incidents, conversations, etc. These forms have certain characteristics, which make possible the hermeneutic process:

Parabolic: The imaginatively woven stories, or the paraphrased events and incidents, or the narration of certain situations draw the interest of the young students to read and discover the core message contained therein.

Evocative: They sensitize or stimulate the students to recollect their personal life experiences, similar to those portrayed in these stories and events.

Symbolic: These are pointers towards two directions – the existential reality of human dignity and rights in both life and shadow dimensions, and the future ideal towards which the student is expected to direct her/his life with dignity and worth.

Participative: In the process of being sensitized, the students are enabled to become aware that she/he is not merely an observer but part of the existing human situation, whether it be a case of violation of someone else's rights or a situation where someone's dignity and rights are upheld. She/he is also enabled to assume

responsibility, as a participant of human society, to positively work towards taking a critical stance at violations, to prevent such occurrences and to safeguard and promote humanness.

Individual Response

The encounter with the contextual experience leads one towards engaging oneself in a dialogue between oneself and the social context and within oneself. In other words, a process of self-introspection takes place, and the outcome is an interpretation of the meaning of this social context for oneself, and the meaning of one's own self for oneself in the light of the meaning emerging from the social situation

The students are helped to enter into such dialogue and interpretation, through the class room and home activity exercises, by posing a variety of questions. They are asked to identify personalities appearing in the texts, or are given opportunities to characterise these personalities, or are helped to recognise their own feelings. Sometimes they are given the space for expressing themselves and their innermost feelings through the medium of drawings, poems, letter-writing, enquiry with family members and neighbours, collection of symbolic materials, interviews, role plays, questionnaire responses and so on.

Small Group Response

Dialogue with, and interpretation of, the social context by the individual has the drawback of filtering the message in a subjective manner. So also the self-introspection process can become one-sided or self-protective. Besides, the response by the individual can become individualistic and self-enclosed. The small group response process, therefore, provides an atmosphere for collective interaction. Precisely because the group is small, the interaction can be intensive and enriching. Moreover, more space is made available for all the students to be actively involved in the sharing and reflection process.

The reference point of this collective interaction is the textual medium, the recollected memories of the individuals and the actual social context. If guided carefully, this group process has the benefit of testing the validity of the subjective perception of the messages coming from the social reality and from oneself. It has also the great advantage of building up the collective identity of the group, which is a prerequisite for collective human rights intervention in society in future. Above all, the group process reinforces the dignity and self-worth of

each participant. It is in the group process that each one's dignity and rights are affirmed, protected, nurtured and sustained. But, in this process, the task of the teacher becomes very crucial.

Class Room Response

Almost all the class and home activity exercises require the students to share their individual and group findings with all their classmates. Through this process, the scope of their collective identity becomes wider. The space for their 'we' feeling is made larger.

This sharing is done through a variety of ways: reading aloud in the class what they have written; listing their responses on the blackboard; displaying newspaper cuttings or drawings on the class notice board; placing news items, sketches, posters, etc., on the school notice board for the benefit of all the students in the school; arranging flowers, plants, pictures, household items like rice depicting basic human needs, etc. on a table in the class room. All these are done not merely as a physical activity but as interpretation of certain realities of life and as expressions of the message of human dignity, human worth and human rights. The students are, therefore, required to articulate this message through speaking, writing, drawing, etc.

Teacher Response

In the entire hermeneutic transformative process, the role of the teacher is very crucial. As one senior in age, as having had manifold experiences in life, as one who is knowledgeable in different academic subjects and as one who commands personal, moral and administrative authority and influence, the teacher has a decisive say in the personality formation of the students. For their growth and well-being, the students in turn have a great stake in the personality, role and functions of the teacher. All the more does this mutuality of relationship becomes important in the case of human rights education which deals not merely with some academic subject like Mathematics or History, but with human life itself. *The teacher, therefore, has the unenviable task of perceiving the difference between being a human rights 'formater' on the one hand, and functioning as a teacher of Geography or Chemistry on the other.* As a teacher of Physics, the teacher imparts knowledge in terms of information and ideas; but as a Human Rights teacher, the teacher shares her/his life in terms of personal experiences of life and of perceptions of the meaning of life.

This sharing is a two-way affair. Teaching Computer Science is a one-way giving of knowledge by the teacher to the students, whereas imparting human rights education is a two-way sharing. It is not the teacher alone who shares her/his life experiences of human dignity and rights. The students are also provided with opportunities to share their own life experiences. The assumption here is that the seed of human dignity and worth is innate to any human being and that, therefore, the students, too, have life experiences which can be shared with others. In essence, sharing of life experiences, and of life as such, is by nature a mutual process. It is this truth that forms the basis of the special role of a teacher involved in human rights education.

This special role is nothing but *the teacher journeying with the students as their companion in search of meaning and fulfillment in life*. As companions, the teacher and the students have a stake in each other's lives, have the experience of giving and receiving and of mutually undergoing a transformative process. *This means that the teacher has to look at herself/himself as a new way of being a person, and at her/his role as a new way of being a teacher, and at her/his functions as a new way of performing certain tasks.*

As a new way of being a person, the teacher herself/himself requires to be sensitized with humanness. This is possible only if one affirms one's own dignity and worth. Such affirmation then leads to the recognition and acceptance of the dignity and worth of others. Significantly this opens up the discussion. What are the attitudes required in a teacher which will define her/his new way of being a person? What are the skills which enable her/him to play the new special role? What are the specific tasks which actualize this new role?

An attempt is made to list below only a few of the important attitudes, skills and functions.

Attitudes

Openness: An attitude which perceives goodness in every human being no matter whether one is young or old, woman or man, fair, brown or dark, etc. Preconceived ideas and prejudices have no place here. It uncovers the different layers of appearances and doggedly pursues to discover that pulse of human life yearning for dignity and self-worth.

Enabling: Abjuring from any effort to steam roll human beings, to

do any violence to any person throbbing for life, and to even think of harming, in whatever manner, the spontaneous blossoming of someone's life, this attitude refers to a state of mind which has a profound respect for the other as a person. It even goes to the extent of positively providing a space for the other to grow as a person.

Trusting: Human relationship is not a prefabricated reality. It is to be discovered, nurtured, grown, developed and deepened. The attitude of trust is fundamental to this process. This is especially so in the case of human dignity and rights as these deal with what is most precious and valuable to every human being. Again, this is very necessary when one relates with children from the point of view of dignity and rights - of theirs as well as of others. It is in this spirit of trust that they will seek from the teachers answers to their questions concerning many aspects of human life, that they will look for guidance and accompaniment. In return for the confidence they place in the hands of the teachers, they expect understanding and total trust.

Simplicity: To be able to understand the world of a child, one can enter into that world only as a child. The adult teacher, therefore, is required to bring out from within herself/himself that quality of child like simplicity through which one perceives the children's world. understands their queries, senses their feelings, recognizes their yearnings, respects their dignity, accepts their limitations, and accompanies them in their journey of search for meaning.

Democratic: A striking feature of human society, and even Nature itself, is to be organically pluralistic at various levels: colour, caste, creed, culture, gender, race, nationality, geographical region, experiences, opinions and ideas, etc. Although the longing for human dignity and rights is basically common to all human beings, its perception and the articulation of this perception by the children may vary, and may be subjected to limitations. A democratic attitude favours and furthers the expressions of various, and even varying, view points to enable the process of search towards a converging point. In fact, democracy is founded on human rights; negation of the latter makes hollow the functioning of the former.

Firmness: This refers to the teacher's beliefs concerning certain basic realities of life: convictions about human dignity and rights in general, and in particular about gender rights, dalits' rights, democracy,

pluralism in society, etc. Conviction presupposes clarity of thinking, and knowledge of informations and ideas. The scope of firmness extends to a person's courage to take a public stand on perspectives and issues, and to her/his commitment to action regarding human dignity and rights.

Compassion: This is a fundamental attitude towards life in general, and human life in particular, especially towards those who are denied of their dignity and rights. A compassionate person will go to any extent to respect, nurture, protect and promote life - even to the point of willing to suffer within oneself when life is harmed. It generates fellow-feelings and solidarity, for compassion means "to suffer with". One is willing to suffer because one is in love with life - whether it be human life or the life of Nature.

Moral-Spiritual: Such values as justice, truth, equality and freedom give rise to our awareness of human dignity and basic rights. A teacher, committed to these values, can be a powerful source of inspiration to the students, who in their youthfulness ordinarily look for role models to pattern their life and future.

Skills

Having noted the attitudes and having honed them, what the teacher then needs is asset of skills which help in furthering the experience of learning. The list below is not exhaustive and will have to read in combination with the attitudes mentioned above and with the list that follows this section.

Observation: Ability to note violations or assertion of human rights in every day life through direct experience or media (newspapers, television, etc.) will equip (the teacher with sufficient information and with a conducive mindset to handle the classes by way of providing additional information, guiding discussions and offering reflections. Moreover, one has to be a keen observer of the students background, and of what they communicate through their experiences and reflections to be able to understand them well and guide them wisely.

Analysis: Sifting of experiential and informational data, identifying causes and effects, establishing relationship between them, differentiating the substance from appearances - these require analytical ability to enable the students to take a critical and constructive outlook on human rights events and incidents.

Synthesis: This logically flows from analysis. It is the ability to piece together ideas, information and experiences into general themes, patterns, trends and future projections. This gives a holistic picture to understanding of human rights. When viewed from the stand point of foundational values such as equality, freedom, justice, etc., synthesis offers a vision of life which is very necessary for meaningful existence.

Perception: This has to do with the realm of institution and insight. It is a product of keen and sharp observation and of a mind shaped by concentration. One who is endowed with, or is trained to have, this ability will go beyond what appears to the senses and have a grasp of the essence of reality. In a situation where students, precisely because of their many limiting conditions, are unable to articulate fully the hidden meaning beneath human rights events, a teacher with intuitive and insightful ability can discover this meaning and accordingly guide the student to identify that which they want to communicate.

Creativity: To evoke enthusiasm, to sustain interest and to motivate the students to pursue human rights formation, the teacher has to be sufficiently creative. Innovative ways are to be explored. Alternatives have to be prioritized. Depending upon the background and capacity of the students, appropriate choices of content and methods of the syllabus are necessary. The teacher, therefore, is not limited to using what is given in the lesson - whether it be the stories, events and incidents, quotes and poems, anecdotes and biographical sketches, class room and home exercises. Ample scope is available for the teacher's freedom and imaginative capacity in using the syllabus in order to get the highest output from and to make the maximum impact on the students.

Articulation: The teacher is expected to be expressive at various levels: in communicating feelings and ideas, in sharing informations and reflections, in speaking and writing, in the use of artistic skills and symbols, in conducting one's behaviour and life-style, in articulating one's vision of society and goal in life, etc. What finally matters is, **that** which one communicates through one's personality. Human dignity is at the core of every human being. Anyone who succeeds in communicating this to another through one's personality, finds joy and fulfillment in life.

Artistic: Formation of the young in human rights awareness is not simply a rational of fair. It is eminently a work of art. It is like a potter

fashioning an aesthetic piece of art, or a mother nurturing a child towards reaching girlhood/boyhood. For the potter, the mud is not mere inanimate material but a piece of earth capable of becoming alive when it is imaginatively tended and moulded. Like the sculptor who chips the marble delicately and devotedly, the mother gives form to the child with tender care in many an imaginative manner. In human rights education, the ultimate objective is to make humaneness blossom in every person. Only delicate and tender care guarantees the growth of this humaneness in a child.

Functions

Having considered the attitudes and skills required in a human rights education teacher, the task of listing the functions becomes rather easy. These functions organically flow from the combination of these attitudes and skills.

Enabler: Given the fact that human dignity is innate to every woman and man, including a child, the function of the teacher is to facilitate the students to identify it and to deepen their awareness. The enabling is done by providing, or by indicating, various opportunities: recalling their personal experiences; reading newspapers; watching television films and stories; listening to folk or film songs; narrating events, incidents, and biographical anecdotes; helping them to read their school text books with a human rights perspective; posing to them stimulation, even provoking questions; organizing interviews and exposure visits; encouraging them to produce creative works of art, etc.

Animator: In one sense this means that the teacher infuses life into the seminal awareness and understanding of human dignity and rights in the students. In another sense the teacher is expected to ensure active participation of each and every student in the class while dealing with each lesson. Any effort to get only a few students involved should be avoided at all costs.

Educator: As the meaning of the word (educate = bring out, develop from latent or potential existence) suggests, the task of the teacher as educator is to elicit or evoke the basic human rights awareness and knowledge from the students themselves. In this way they become co partners with teachers in the discovery and building up of themselves and others as persons with dignity. Also in this way they are assisted, as subjective persons in the learning process, to form clear and firm

convictions about the value of life, the worth of persons, the importance of Nature, etc.

Integrator: In this education project, the teacher is in a significant position to perform this function as integrator at different levels: (i) Following the democratic process of giving opportunities to every student to express her/his views in writing and speaking, or in art work or in any other manner, the teacher will be often required to synthesize the output and present the overall view of the subject under consideration. (ii) Also, there is the task of building a “we-feeling” among the students either in the small groups, or in the class as a whole, or in the teams which may be sent for exposure visits and external interviews. In fact, nurturing this spirit of solidarity is a fruitful exercise to drive home the point already now the value of team work in human rights responses in future; (iii) This education attempts at integrating the students with the discriminated and marginalized social groups through a greater awareness of the latter’s dignity and rights. In the long run such awareness should motivate the young to work towards integrating these social groups into the mainstream of society.

Motivator: The young age of students is best suited for motivating them with noble ideals. The humanistic perspective of human rights education presents them with such a vision of life. The teacher is in an unenviable position to impart this vision herself/himself being a role model can inspire the students. Besides, reference to important personalities in history, who lived and worked for human rights causes, can fire the imagination of the young to emulate them.

Guide: As human dignity touches the core of a person, the students will undoubtedly and actively respond to human rights concerns and issues. In an atmosphere of freedom, fearlessness and friendliness, such responses will be spontaneous and creative. As a guide, the teacher will have to ensure such an atmosphere, encourage those who are timid, and support those who are affected by human rights violations. While considering the sad human rights situation of the marginalized, the human pathos and creative energies welling up in the minds and hearts of the students will need to be channelised in the right direction. The task of guidance is not only important, but is equally challenging for the teacher.

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Empowering the Educators

Human rights education is much more than a lesson in schools or a theme for a day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity. ... let us continue to work together to develop and nurture in future generations a culture of human rights, to promote freedom, security and peace in all nations.

Kofi Annan

Monitoring human rights violations with a view to hold the State accountable for the protection of the rights of citizens was the single point agenda of People's Watch, since its formation in 1995. It never was of the view that it alone can monitor violations and create a society free of violations. PW always sought out the collaboration of voluntary service institutions, civil society organizations, lawyers and movements to sharpen the perspective, knowledge and awareness on human rights. Therefore training in human rights, specifically training for human rights intervention, was conducted for these groups so that they could intervene from their respective fields of operation when instances of human rights violations are brought to their attention.

The success of the training programmes has been to transform participants into human rights defenders through the interventions they make. At times they intervene and intimate People's Watch of the violations that happened in their area. In short, the objective of these training programmes was to create a large number of human rights defenders and thereby create a society that is free of human rights violations.

Replication and Scaling

Having realized that training cannot be confined to one state and for effective interventions to take place, People's Watch had to made

conscious efforts to reach out to national networks and other organizations that had similar objectives. In the late 1990s People's Watch lent its expertise and experience in conducting several nation-wide training programmes for Dalit Human Rights Monitoring (DHRM). These were essentially an extension of the intervention training programmes that were held at the state-level in Tamil Nadu. The training programmes that are being conducted now under the National Project on Prevention of Torture also may be construed in the same manner.



Whatever be the name of the training programme – be they Dalit human rights or prevention of torture – they are all for sharpening the skill of fact-finding and enhancing knowledge on human rights. The human rights intervention training programmes

that began at the state-level are now being conducted at the national level encompassing a larger cross-section of human rights activists and defenders spread over 14 states.

It is not just scaling up to the national level that People's Watch has consciously done. Taking cognizance of the fact that human rights can be used as armour by citizens, human rights cells have been formed at the taluk-level under the name, 'Citizens for Human



Rights Movement'. These cells have been initiated to aid people living in rural and other vulnerable areas to take up intervention measures and find solutions when human rights violations take place in their areas.

The training not only provides a general awareness on human rights violations but also imparts intervention skills and at the same time creating an attitude for intervention. Through these programmes People's Watch endeavours to transfer intervention skills it has gained over the years with a view to promote human rights intervention as a

value. The response that the helpline (set up in People's Watch office at Madurai) has been generating is a testimony to the fact that the quality of intervention has grown in people.



Training for Intervention and HRE

People's Watch conducted intervention training programs not only for interventions in times of human rights violations but also with the intention to make human rights intervention a human value in itself. These training programs were more known as 'capacity-

building' programs and used as a tool for intervention. The nomenclature 'Human Rights Education' came about much later, especially to these training programs. The UN Decade for Human Rights Education underlines the target groups for human rights education. This program addresses the imparting of the skill, knowledge and perspective of human rights to these groups as Human Rights Education. People's Watch looked upon these training programs as capacity building programs and as a tool for intervention. Although intervention training programs are a part of human rights education People's Watch distinguishes between human rights education and human rights training programs.

Human Rights Education

At one human rights training programme that was arranged by People's Watch, participants who were teachers said that it wouldn't be possible for all teachers to directly intervene in human rights violations. Only then, the thought of Human Rights Education struck People's Watch. It might be easy for a social activist, a social worker, a movement person or a lawyer to take up human rights laws as armour and make direct interventions but it is not possible for a full-time teacher, especially if he/she is a teacher paid by the Government. Human rights education came as an answer to questions on how human rights could be taken forward through teachers. It was deduced that if legal interventions could protect human rights, intervention in the field of human rights education could promote human rights. Both are basically interventions. One may give solutions for human rights

violations immediately. So its job is protection of human rights and the outcomes are visible here whereas, in human rights education, promotion of human rights is done and this is not always immediate or visible. The changes are brought about slowly but the changes will be sustainable. Basically, human rights education sees human rights as a human value. Although 'human rights' is often seen as a legal term in human rights education human rights are not seen merely from a legal perspective. It is taught as a value of life. In human rights

education, rights are not quantifiable.



The objective of human rights education is to create a culture of human rights in the whole social structure. The tools of this work are students, young minds that are

uncorrupted and like clean slates on which anyone can write anything. Therefore, the teacher who teaches human rights to students should have a deep interest in human rights. The fact that the teacher is a trained person alone will not suffice. He/she should get enraged on seeing violations and should possess a drive to do something against them. He/she should have internalized the principles of human rights and democracy as values. Here one can see the difference between the interventions that are done through teachers, students and children and those done through other sections in a legal manner. If teachers have this attitude right things can be registered in the receptive young minds.

The Institute of Human Rights Education functions in the field of human rights endeavouring to make human rights a culture by human rights training and human rights education which have the twin objectives of protecting and promoting human rights.

Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights

Human rights cannot be promoted just by teaching human rights in a classroom. Therefore efforts are taken to create an environment of human rights in and around the schools. Children are made to observe days such as the Human Rights Day, Women's Day, Republic Day and Children's Day in the perspective of human rights. On these days,



apart from the teachers and the students, Panchayat leaders, leaders of Parent-Teacher Associations, Members of the Legislative Assembly and members of voluntary service organizations are invited to participate in the proceedings. Awareness on human

rights is created among people through speeches on human rights and by cultural programs.

In many schools, children collect newspaper articles on human rights and put them up on notice boards placed in the school for others to see.



Slogans on human rights are put up on the walls of the schools in the form of posters in such a way that they are prominent and catch everybody's attention. If children are not able to comprehend the lessons in the human rights modules, the slogans in the posters accompanied by images help them to understand the concepts better.



Just like posters, cassettes containing songs on human rights were prepared and given to the schools. During events in the school the children take great pleasure in singing these songs. These songs that are set to folk music have found great appreciation among the students who are mostly from a rural background.

Schools implementing HRE were motivated to involve themselves in campaigns relating to human rights. When the campaign against death penalty was taken up in Tamil Nadu, school children were involved in the process by writing postcards against death penalty and sending them to concerned persons. Students of HRE were also involved in the campaign for elimination of child labour. A state-level campaign was taken forward by 2000 teachers and students of HRE for 'introduction of HRE in all schools of Tamil Nadu' and for 'free and quality education for all'.



During this campaign that took place in all district headquarters, schools took the responsibility of conducting district conferences. All the schools implementing HRE in the region got together for this. Students wrote slogans demanding HRE in schools and for free and quality education for all on postcards, got signatures on them from their parents, added their own signatures and sent them to members of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency under which their schools came. Thousands of postcards were mailed.

Under the coordination of the Zonal Coordinator responsible for that District, conferences were conducted by a team comprising representatives of civil society groups, NGOs, and social activists, movement leaders and local leaders. In these conferences, educationists, politicians and social workers took part. In all the events the students were entrusted with the task of delivering the welcome address, moderating the proceedings and proposing the vote of thanks. The conferences brought out the individualities, creativity and leadership qualities of children. Although IHRE was in the background for the success of these conferences it never gave itself any prominence. In the final conference that took place, leaders of many political parties took part along with 3000 students and hundreds of teachers. The major outcome of this campaign is the introduction of HRE in the Adi Dravida Welfare Schools of Tamil Nadu.



The competitions that were held in Phase III of HRE was another important effort taken in the work of promoting a culture of human rights. Many competitions including elocution and essay-writing were held but not in the usual competition format. Every school took up a particular theme related to human rights and prepared a research report on it. This was not a competition for individuals but



for groups. These reports were prepared using tools such as fact-finding and interviewing. The participating schools took part in the competitions held at various centres. Students were made to speak on their fact-finding missions in groups. Human Rights activists resident in the area where competitions were held were the judges of these competitions. These competitions encouraged team work.

Since the information they got was not from books alone and was directly from the field, the children who competed got to meet victims of human rights violations in person. The direct experience gave them an exposure that books could not provide. Since the students themselves went to collect information their self-confidence grew. These competitions helped the children learn many new aspects in the promotion of human rights.

Human Rights competitions through art forms was something new that was introduced, again deviating from the usual. Since art forms are better vehicles to take human rights to young minds than lessons in books, schools were requested to express human rights through some art form.



All schools took part with great enthusiasm. Under the guidance of the HRE teachers the students chose an art form and were trained to participate in the district-level competitions. Child labour, discrimination against women and other forms of human rights violations were depicted through art forms. Since all this was through art forms students naturally were enthusiastic. At the same time, it also created greater awareness of human rights among them. Three groups selected from the district-level competitions participated in the finals that took place in Chennai. These competitions have definitely helped in promoting a sense of human rights culture.

Teachers' Training

Human Rights Education is a new concept for our society. Human



rights education cannot be imparted merely to build skills or knowledge. Since the objective of HRE is building a culture of human rights, it becomes imperative that the training is so fashioned that to go beyond the basics of skill-building to cause a change in the

mentality of teachers. So the teachers who were to teach human rights in schools were selected on the basis of a non-negotiable set of criteria, listed below:

- ♦ The person should have social concern.
- ♦ HRE teachers should not be selected just because the headmaster likes him /her, or because he/she handles subjects such as arts or crafts where the work load is less.
- ♦ There should be one teacher for each class.
- ♦ The teacher who takes part in the first 5-day training should continue as the HRE teacher for all the three years.
- ♦ Only the teacher who has attended the five-day training programme should teach HRE and teachers who are not trained are not permitted to teach HRE.

Residential Training

The Government plans a lot of training programs for school teachers. Private schools too do this. But teachers feel that most of these programs are ritualistic in nature. A 5-day residential programme was something



unheard of for them. But for the HRE training program for teachers this was made a norm. Not being accustomed to attending such training sessions, teachers showed hesitation initially in attending them. In some sense, their hesitation was

justified. Some had responsibilities to attend to back home; some had infants to take care of, and so on.

The teachers who came hesitantly on the first day and stayed the night gradually became aware of the benefits of the residential program. By the end of the five-day program, the teachers were sad to part from their co-participants, because some kind of a bonding developed between the teachers, who were from different schools. They got an opportunity to discuss problems faced in their schools.

In the feedback sessions it was revealed that teachers cultivated the quality of adjusting when staying with others. They also had ample recreational activities together and staged cultural programs every evening, brought out their creativity. The teachers who got together for the first time built up their friendship in subsequent training programs when they got an opportunity to meet again.

Training Programme

The training programme was designed in a two-phased manner - the first three days were devoted to clarifying concepts and understanding some human rights in general while the following two days training in the syllabus was conducted. The programme was well-planned and input sessions followed one another. Care was given in ensuring that the resource person was an expert on the topic chosen and was a human rights activist.



The sessions were dialogical in nature and conducted with the complete participation of the teachers. In all the training programs teachers were divided into groups and were given responsibility of imparting training.

Sessions were fashioned to make participants internalize the concept of human rights. For example, the explanation on human rights began with a sharing by victims. From the experiences shared by victims of human rights violations, the rights that were violated were delineated and explained.

In the last two days of the training program, focus was on syllabus training where the HRE syllabus, content, teaching methodology and model classes were dealt by teachers themselves. When asked to take



model classes at the training programme teachers took them without any hesitation.

Group sessions encouraged teachers to look at the educational system critically and the need for an alternative system of education was emphasized. A recommendation that

this alternative system is human rights education was obtained from the teachers.

Only for the second and third year syllabus was training conducted for two days. In these training programs which were conducted in the beginning of the year, the introduction and the content of the lessons for that year were given. Another important feature of this training was that the module for the year was not given in print form but in draft form. Teachers were requested to give suggestions on changes to be made to the module, with the experience that they gained in the course of one year. Only after incorporating them were the modules sent for printing. Thus, teachers' participation in the process of the preparation of the modules is guaranteed.

In the review meetings that were held in the middle of the year doubts and the difficulties that arose while taking lessons in class were discussed. The new experiences that these teachers gained as teachers of human rights education were shared. Such review meetings are new to our educational system.



This novel process certainly enabled the teachers to commit themselves fully in the process and gave them a new set of skills awhile at the same time widening their horizons of thought with the grit to act on behalf of the oppressed and the weak.

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Impact of Human Rights Education: Empowered Teachers

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Paulo Friere

METHODOLOGY

The study was confined to schools of Phase-1(9 schools), Phase-2 (about 100 schools), Phase-3 (schools managed by Catholic Religious of India), Phase-4 (Adi Dravida Welfare and Government Tribal Residential schools) and Phase-5 (schools operated by RC Dioceses).

The study is microscopic in nature, when compared to the vastness of the program, where the reach out was over one lakh students, the geographical area being entire Tamil Nadu and the period being almost a decade. The study also reflected the fundamental reality that Human Rights Education is necessary in order to enjoy fundamental rights both of the individuals and the groups. The study also has collected good practices that have brought considerable change among many children. The information collected and collated would be useful to various stakeholders in realizing their objectives.

Study design

The study is concerned with the understanding of human rights education among the students, teachers and also the management. The study is designed to understand the knowledge, the attitude and

skills of the teachers and students through imparting and learning human rights education during the 3-year period under various phases, respectively. The study initiated was to understand the learning and its implication among students and the process of social change that has taken place among students, teachers and management.

The study explored the impact of HRE in the community also. Hence, the study followed a multi-pronged approach – Firstly, by collecting data from the students, teachers and heads of the schools through questionnaire, which was classified into three parts, Knowledge, Attitude and Skills. Secondly, through Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and thirdly, through compiling of information from records and reports available with People's Watch. The details of the study processes are listed below, under various stages.

- In stage one, a study questionnaire was prepared for students and teachers of phase 3, 4 & 5, consisting of 28 and 48 questions for students and teachers respectively. Yet another questionnaire was prepared for the students of Phase 1 & 2, with 12 questions, which were open ended. The questionnaires were given to students through their teachers and also at the time of focused group discussion with children. No time limit was assigned to fill the questionnaire.
- In stage – 2, data was collected through some of the teachers, who attended the seminar at Chennai, through the questionnaire and through their sharing during the seminar.
- The stage – 3 was holding focused group discussion with various stakeholders – Children/students of 8th & 9th standard at ADW/ GTR and Diocesan schools and also teachers from the above mentioned schools; Resource persons who were part of the Phase 2 program, which includes academicians from various Universities, Human Rights Activists and Legal professions. Focused Group Discussion were conducted at the schools for children and whereas for teachers it was organised at Zonal level. Resource persons (phase II) had a Focused Group Discussion at People's Watch office and resource persons from all over Tamil Nadu attended the same. During the FGD numerous good practices which had positive implications have been recorded.

- The stage - 4 of the study was to collect information from 4000 students through the schedules, specially designed for the study. A similar schedule was designed with 48 questions to collect information from 500 teachers and 50 heads of schools to understand the impact of the HRE program. The information was collected in different forms – one, through collecting important learning through the schedules and analyzing them, secondly, preparing case studies and thirdly, through the drawings and poems done by some students.

An assessment of the understanding of the concepts and issues of human rights and the impact that human rights education has had on teachers of human rights was done. The sample size was 350 teachers handling the modules in 29 districts and Pondicherry. The assessment sought to specifically understand values.

District	Sample size	Per cent
1. Chennai	21	6.0
2. Villupuram	21	6.0
3. Pondicherry	10	2.9
4. Vellore	35	10.0
5. Tiruvallur	18	5.1
6. Thiruvannamalai	15	4.3
7. Kancheepuram	28	8.0
8. Cuddalore	32	9.1
9. Dharmapuri	1	.3
10. Salem	2	.6
11. Namakkal	6	1.7
12. Perambalur	1	.3
14. Trichy	10	2.9
16. Tanjore	9	2.6
17. Tiruvarur	2	.6
19. Coimbatore	4	1.1

20. Nilgiris	4	1.1
21. Erode	2	.6
22. Dindigul	6	1.7
23. Madurai	45	12.9
24. Theni	7	2.0
26. Sivagangai	1	.3
27. Virudhunagar	9	2.6
28. Tuticorin	5	1.4
29. Tirunelveli	29	8.3
30. Kanyakumari	27	7.7
Total	350	100.0

Several indicators in the form of questions and statements to elicit the usefulness and impact of the present educational system and to assess knowledge and skills along with the impact that human rights education has made were posed to the teachers. Given below is a summation of their responses against each of these indicators. Under some of these indicators, selected suitable case studies are given in boxes that substantiates the responses.

Indicator 1: Our education system is not appropriate for the total development of the children.

About 70% of the teaching community agrees that the present form and system of education is not appropriate for overall development of the children. Whereas, 29% of them agree that present form is good. If one notes that 70% of teaching community is not in favour of present form of education, the educationists and policy makers need to re-look at the curriculum being imparted in the schools.

Earlier our education was related to understanding basic math, science or for that matter, language. Our education system does not provide life skills nor does it develop the personality of the students to address issues that are relevant to one's development.

Though the NCERT in its guidelines has mentioned Rights education should be part of school curriculum, the state's education boards (DSERT) do not seem to be inclined towards it.

If one reads the case studies shared by the students, the agerness and courage to address issues which even the adults may not wish to address shines through. This change among the students has promoted the teachers to seek better form of education.

CHANGED PERCEPTIONS

Mr. C. Marimuthu, teacher at Bomminayakkanpatti, Theni District. He is a human rights teacher, and his experience is a good example for many students of how to be a human rights activist:

Around 400 students study in our school, and they come from various religious backgrounds and caste affiliations. In the classroom the students used to sit according to their castes and were not willing to mingle together as one larger group. The students even base their friendships on caste. If we forced the upper-caste students to sit with the scheduled-caste students, the upper-caste students walked out of the classroom. During lunchtime, if I asked the upper-caste children to bring my lunch box from the staff room, they refused to bring it, stating that they should not touch anything belonging to someone from a lower caste. They said this to their teacher!

I wondered what had happened to our society. What kind of education are we giving our children, and why does untouchability continue even after so many decades of awareness and social movements?

Human rights education came as an answer to my questions. Human rights education questions the age-old traditions. It calls young minds to question their traditions, giving them the power to reevaluate the inhumane actions of upper-caste students. Human rights education has built a bridge across caste distinctions in my class.

The visible and positive outcome of human rights education is that there is no more caste division in my classroom. On the school campus, students of all backgrounds sit together and even share food. They join together for games and play as students of one class. This progressive change was successful, but it was also limited to my school's campus. With support and guidance from IHRE, I took some of the students on a field trip to Kerala so that they could learn to be agents of change beyond the

classroom. This has helped the students bond to various communities that they would not have normally encountered.

Another important social issue in our village is that a backward caste community, called Raja Kambalakararkal, makes a practice of pulling its female students out of school once they begin puberty. Their argument is that girls will have unwanted relationships with boys, and these relationships would have negative effects on families in the community. They indicate that a large number of girls are married before they reach legal age at 18. Hence, human rights education is useful to all areas of society and should not be limited only to schools.

Indicator 2: If a teacher does not discharge his/her duties, it is a violation of children's education right.



92% of the teachers agree that rights and duties go together. It is surprising, because the majority of the community does not good opinion of many teachers. This is because most of the teachers come late to the class and absenteeism and poor quality of teaching is commonplace. If 92% of the teachers believe that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin, this change is welcome as the students and communities can look forward for quality education.

The inputs from the HRE program have brought change in the attitude of the teachers. Moreover the teachers who are part of the HRE program in general have chosen the field the teaching as a vocation. Hence, the commitment is also very high and little motivation and guidance can bring vast changes in the teaching community.

Indicator 3: The vernacular language is the only tool for the total development of the children.

A majority - 89% – of the teachers opine that teaching through vernacular language would benefit for the total development of the children. In the initial years of child development, vernacular language

may be good, but as the child moves up the standards they require knowledge of other languages to be on par with the children passing out from schools with other syllabi such as ICSE / CBSE and English medium schools.

The challenge before large number of rural children and students of ADW/GTR students is poor knowledge of English and other languages, which leave them out of race when it comes to higher education, competitive exams and jobs. As a result many of them are frustrated. Though vernacular language is important, Languages needed to derive maximum benefits of the changes occurring worldwide need to be kept in mind, while preparing curriculum for students.

**Indicator 4: I developed the feeling of equality
due to Human Rights Education**

About 95% of the teachers feel that the HRE has given them the feeling of equality. But the very data denotes that the teachers are having different feeling after the HRE program. At the same time the study also notes that during a number of focused group discussions during the course of study, many teachers were angry at management and officials for being treated badly. Many teachers expressed such feeling, which is, put in nutshell “when we ourselves are denied rights how can we teach rights based education” Although they feel their rights are infringed, surprisingly their answers tell a different tale. The fear of the management is more among the diocesan teachers than the ADW/GTR schoolteachers.

A PROUD FATHER

Mr. Mohandas, a teacher in ADW School was on top of the world when he heard that he was soon going to be a father, but his joy was short-lived. His parents told his wife that she could return home only if she gave birth to a male child. Mohandas had earned through human rights education about the rights of a girl child and the right to be born. He immediately argued with his parents that their orders were unfair and that he, in fact, preferred having a girl child. His parents, though, stood their ground.

Months later, Mohandas's wife gave birth to a girl child. Much against the wishes of his parents, he brought his wife and daughter home. Soon Mohandas's brother's wife gave birth to male child. This incident brought out the inhumane behaviour

of his parents. They began ill-treating Mohandas's wife while they showered utmost care and love on the daughter-in-law who had given birth to a boy.

Mohandas could not continue to witness this injustice; he decided to move to a separate house. "I'm happy I am away from inhuman people. I'm sure they will realize their fault soon. I want my wife and daughter to be happy. If not for the human rights classes I too would have been inhuman like my parents". He then counseled his wife and told her that it was not a fault to give birth to girl children and that it was the wrong notion of his parents that was actually inhumane.

Indicator 5: Because of Human Rights Education, I have understood the objectives of and characteristics of Human Rights

The best part of the HRE program is that 86% of the teachers have understood the essence of HRE and what they teach to children. But about 14% have not understood the core character of HRE, which does create problem at the time of teaching / dissemination of the HRE.

Indicator 6: After I became a H.R. Teacher, I do analyze the social problems from Human Rights angle.

The change in perspective among the 93% of the teachers in looking at social problems from the RIGHTS angle perspective is one of the best practices that HRE has contributed. When the teachers are able to look at social issues from the rights view, there is hope that social-cultural problems of many poor and disadvantaged children will be addressed in the schools. Addressing social issues or for that matter problems of students has been possible because the modules (books) carries number of real life incidents and served as ready reckoners for counseling purposes.

A MURKY PLOT

Devi, a teacher in ADW high school in Senganatham-Alamelumangapuram, a hill station in Vellore District, was concerned when one of her students, Yuvarani, stopped attending school regularly. She decided to visit Yuvarani's home and find out the reason. When Devi heard her reason for dropping out, she was appalled at the ignorance of Yuvarani's parents and was angered by their action. Yuvarani's brother-in-law had expressed a deep desire to have sexual relations with her, and when she

refused he threatened her parents by saying he would not live with Yuvarani's sister anymore. He ordered them to stop sending Yuvarani to school. With the fear that their elder daughter's life was at stake, the parents agreed to his whims and kept Yuvarani from attending school.

Devi was furious with Yuvarani's brother-in-law and decided to teach him a lesson. She first counseled Yuvarani and her parents and convinced them that this was a case of human rights violation. Then she sent a warning to the brother-in-law that she would complain to the District Collector about his intentions. The case was viewed seriously by the collector, and instructions were passed on to the Yuvarani's brother-in-law through the local police.

Devi paid a number of follow up visits to Yuvarani's house and succeeded in bringing her back to school. "I'm happy that my student has succeeded in writing her 10th standard exams. Otherwise, she would have been a drop out and also emotionally battered," says Devi. She has also resolved to guide Yuvarani in her future.

Indicator 7: I still believe that beating of students is right.

About 89% of the respondents do not agree in corporal punishment which means there has been considerable change in the attitude of the teachers towards children, and this change could be attributed to the inputs they must have received through HRE program and also other factors such as new methods of teaching would have brought such changes.

The dissemination of knowledge has played an important role in the transformation of the teachers to give the culture of using sticks or giving impositions or scolding the students.

The state has also banned corporal punishment in the schools.

**Indicator 8: I am not only a teacher in the classroom,
but have also developed as a socially concerned person.**

The training in relation to human and child rights has brought change among 98% of the teachers causing them to look beyond their classrooms and schools and be involved in social development issues, which can be clearly seen with many teachers gathering together to be part of associations and involved in social development activities.

A TEACHER BECOMES AN ACTIVIST

Ms. Vanaja is a teacher in a Government Adi-Dravidar Welfare School in Pallavakkam, Chennai. Some of the scheduled-caste children in the school do not attend regularly. Ms. Vanaja decided to investigate, and, to her utter shock, she found that many of the children were employed as domestic servants in their own teachers' homes.

Vanaja was very angry when she came to know of this. As a human rights education teacher, she wanted to do something to stop this appalling behavior. She sent a number of petitions to the appropriate officials and met the school's headmaster to resolve this problem. The headmaster also felt guilty when he realized the violation of human rights in his school and warned the teachers to stop. He announced that he would take severe action against any teachers who did not immediately desist. After this, the children's attendance quickly normalized. The other teachers are still angry with Vanaja, but that does not disturb her one bit.

Indicator 9: I am proud to be a H.R. Teacher.

The self-confidence and pride of being HR teachers is very evident from the data. About 96% feel and have expressed they are part of HR education in their schools. This feeling is attributed because many of them have gained knowledge over the years on rights and on their personality development; there has been changes on the home and school front. There is motivation to do something different for most of the teachers. This can also be related to question number 21, where 92% have expressed the opinion that rights and duties go together, where many of the employers only seek rights and forget duties.

RESCUING VENDORS

Roadside fruit vendors are a common sight near bus stands in most towns in India. Mr. Prabhu, a teacher in ADW School at Masigam, Peranampet, Vellore District, had known this all his life. One evening, when he was with a group of friends near a bus stand, he noticed something strange happening. A group of policemen, headed by their sub-inspector, simply arrested fruit vendors with no reason. "What shocked me most was when people around casually said that this was a regular practice by the police by the end of the month in order to manipulate records," says a concerned Prabhu.

Recalling his human rights lessons, Prabhu was determined to raise his voice against such injustice. Immediately he rushed to the police

station with his friends and confronted the sub-inspector. The police official tried to defend himself by saying that he would not take serious action against the vendors, that he would just “book a petty case.” Prabhu persisted and quoted laws from the Human Rights Handbook. The sub-inspector realized that he was arguing with a well informed and determined person and refrained from booking a case. He released the vendors.

“I attribute this success to my knowledge of human rights, which I learned through human rights education classes in school. I realize that having knowledge of human rights violations will help us to act in such situations,” shares Mr. Prabhu.

**Indicator 10: I appreciate the efforts to introduce the
H.R. Education in our school**

Almost every teacher i.e. 98.6% liked the idea of introducing HR education in school. This appreciation is because, HRE discusses on core human values that are essential for fair and just society. Appreciation from teaching community indicates their feeling that HRE should be an essential subject that children ought to be taught. The HRE modules and methodology reflect on real life experiences. The appreciation is because of the involvement of students in the class when the learning is in progress.

**Indicator 11: I did not participate in the H.R. training
wholeheartedly and with interest**

Nearly 93% of the teachers participated in the training with eagerness, were keen to know and acquire knowledge on the subject RIGHTS. The trainings were in two parts, initial training was for a week focusing on social issues and social problems and linking to the rights violations and how to teach the module. The methodology adopted was innovative and participatory. The second training was also for a week, with the focus on legal issues, women and child rights, counseling and addressing issues that may emerge in the daily life and necessary skills to address the same. Many teachers have utilized the training to enhance their knowledge and are utilizing the same for the good of affected individuals.

**Indicator 12: There is a progressive change in me,
in my relationship with family members, students and colleagues**

About 90% of the teachers have expressed that HRE has enabled the teachers to have good and better relationship with the family members, students and colleagues. One should note that HRE in schools has also

helped in creating better family relations and has brought colleagues together to address many community issues and school issues together.

WOMEN RIGHTS UPHELD

Ranikkam is a human rights teacher at St. Francis Higher Secondary School, Vavarai, Kanyakumari. She was witness to a human rights violation against a woman named Latha. Ms. Ranikkam resolved this problem with help from her human rights knowledge and training.

Mr. Mani was having a secret relationship with Ms. Mary. Mani's parents decided it was time to find him a wife and arranged a marriage to Ms. Latha for a considerable amount of money. However, Mani maintained his illicit relationship with Mary, even cohabitating with her while he was married to Latha. He is, of course, not affectionate towards Latha, but he pretends to be in love with her.

After the couple had been married for four years, Mani's parents came to know of their son's extramarital affair. They were quite shocked. They did not know how to solve this problem. Mani ignored his wife, Latha, and showed no interest in their married life. Latha suspected his infidelity and finally discovered his relationship with the other woman. She was dumbfounded when she heard the real story from her in-laws. She suddenly felt insecure and frustrated. She informed her parents of the situation. The village elders ordered that Latha and Mani should live together, but even this has failed.

The human rights teacher intervened in this situation to attempt to find justice for Latha. She took Latha and her parents to a Women's Police Station and lodged a complaint against Mani. The police took a long time to pursue the case, but the human rights teacher followed their progress closely the whole time. In the end, Latha was allowed to separate from Mani, taking her jewels and a sum of Rs.50,000 with her.

Indicator 13: I treat my spouse as my equal after becoming a H.R. teacher

One of the best practices of HRE has been in bringing about a change in attitude among most of the teachers towards their spouses. Around 91% of them have change of attitude and treat their spouses equally; in majority of cases it has been change among male teachers. This definitely has brought change in the families of these teachers and their relationship with girl students.

Indicator 14: Being a HRE teacher there is a positive change in me towards the students

There is positive change among 96.6% of the teachers towards the students. Earlier to HRE program most of the teachers felt that students had to be disciplined. They never thought that the child too had feelings or rights. Students were never treated equally. All these have changed; teachers and students discuss the subject matter and organize programs such as Human Rights Day by sharing of responsibilities. Corporal punishments have been considerably reduced.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Ms. S. Sagaya Jayarani, teacher at St. Patrick Middle School, Kuyavarpalayam, near Madurai, has come across a human rights violation in her class. A student named Suganya was studying in 8 th standard. One day the girl did not attend school, and on inquiry it was found that her father had sent her to be employed at a dying unit.

The teacher met with Suganya's father and asked him why he did not send his daughter to school. He replied very harshly, stating that he had become old and could not work to support his family. "You can take any action and put me in the jail. I never mind," he said. The teacher approached Suganya's mother and asked her to send their daughter back to school, but Suganya's mother was also unwilling to comply. The teacher continuously met with her and counseled her on Suganya's need to be in school. Eventually, Suganya's mother gave her consent. The teacher arranged to monitor Suganya's enrollment until she was certain the child would not be withdrawn again. Now Suganya is studying, and she helps her family by earning money after school.

Indicator 15: Quality of education has increased because of HR Education

About 92% of the teachers have experienced the joy of teaching HRE, which has increased their standing among their colleagues, because their knowledge base has increased, change of attitude in self and that which has been felt by other teachers/students, their involvement in the issues that are related to rights. They have taken leadership among their colleagues and have been guide to their students.

Indicator 16: I am associated with a couple of Human Rights movements after receiving the training on H.R. Education.

Around 67% of the teachers have shown interest and are being involved in various movements that are related to demanding rights or addressing rights issue has been due to HRE inputs over a period of years whereas 31% have confined their learning to be within the premises of classrooms.

Indicator 17: It has become a habit to read books and other materials related on H.R. Education

Majority of the teachers have a habit of regularly reading human rights related books and materials. About 13.7% of the teachers don't read literature related to Human Rights. The percentage is large in relation to the universe we are looking at. If 13.7% are not updating their knowledge base, we need to rethink the dissemination of knowledge and relating HR subjects. If the teachers do not link the daily human rights violations or issues related to respecting of human rights the subject and learning may not be worthwhile to students.

Indicator 18: I can link H.R. education with the regular curriculum

Two important things that have occurred due to HRE are that about 93% of the teachers are able to connect or share examples related to Human Rights while conducting other subjects. They are sharing the experiences of the HRE classrooms in other classes, where HRE is not being conducted. Secondly, they are able to utilize opportunities to discuss or share issues related to Human Rights.

Indicator 19: The learning capacity of the students has increased due to HR education

The knowledge acquired by students on RIGHTS has given a different status among the students and their parents. About 94% of the teachers are of the opinion that the students of HRE are more respected by their friends because the HRE students are more aware of legal points and at the same time are positive towards change in the society.

Indicator 20: Because the students are asking too many questions, the classroom discipline is disturbed

Though the question has a negative tone, the teachers have responded positively, about 92% of the teaching community have not felt or experienced that HRE has disturbed the discipline in the

classroom. Moreover, the respondents are happy with the questions raised by students. It is only 7.4% who have felt that HRE is disturbing the classrooms; this can also be attributed to the inability of this percentage to answer questions or being unprepared to answer questions.

**Indicator 21: When we demand rights
we should also respect our duties**

Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin and both need to go hand in hand. The teaching community seems to have understood its rights and duties very well; this change could be attributed to HRE, because the perception of the community at large about the quality of education is not good. In this scenario, if 100% of the teachers feel that the rights and duties go hand in hand, one can look forward to quality education in many institutions.

The analysis also makes a point to unions that when people associate, they should also be given education on rights and duties as this would reduce confrontations and address issues in collaborative manner.

**Indicator 22: We must allow the students to participate in various
associations, activities and functions in the school**

The response has been unanimous among the teaching community that students should be allowed to participate in associations and partake in activities. Though the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) speaks about the participation of children in various fora, their participation is not very evident in the schools. Decision making, leadership will never be learnt if children are not allowed to participate. The unanimous response paves way for people and various other stakeholders to think about the children's participation in the schools, by forming children's club and involving them in the decision making process in the issues concerned with children.

Indicator 23: Do students have a right to evaluate the teacher's work?

About 87% of the teachers are favourable to the above question. Though the percentage is in favour of students evaluating the teacher's work, why and how was not discussed, but it still is a positive thought. The change in the perception could be possible because of training inputs and HR module that is being taught in the classroom. The participatory and interactive sessions in the training and the module design have brought in those necessary changes.

**Indicator 24: When I see a person begging for a meal,
I understand that his right to food is violated**

Though 85% of the respondents have understood that the concept of Right to Food is an essential right of the individual, about 13% don't feel the same. The reasons could be different. The right to food is related to major issues of the society - Poverty and Right to Work. The respondents have understood these concepts of UDHR and the inputs given by the resource persons have been assimilated by most of the teachers.

Indicator 25: All children are equally intelligent

It is common for the teachers to categorize children as clever, average and dull students based on the marks and the interest they show in the classroom. And this is the trend of majority of the teachers, without understanding that each child is unique and each of them has varied capacities. A child who may not have liking to be educated within the walls of a classroom, but is active in playground might have a mechanical bent of mind.

The reply of 93.7% of teachers is a very positive sign that teachers are accepting all children are equal and have common intelligence and are capable to performing various activities. The teachers have understood this and these would help in promoting education among the socially backward communities.

BROTHER SUPPORTS HIS SISTER'S EDUCATION.

I am Ms. C. Maria Rajan, teacher at St. Joseph High School, Siluvaipuram, Kollemcode, Kanyakumari. The prevailing attitude in most rural areas is that education is intended for boys, so only they are given the opportunity to further their educations. In one case, a brother and sister had completed their schooling and were ready to begin college studies. However, only the boy was admitted for higher education. The girl dropped out not because she lacked aptitude but because of orders from her parents.

I came to know about this situation and got involved in it for the sake of girl's education. I discussed her education with her parents, but they were adamant that their daughter could go no further in her studies. Instead of listening to my words, they simply described the traditional role of a girl her age. They said

that girls continue their lives by marrying into new families and that they would need to save the money that could be used for her college career in order to pay for her wedding. I attempted to explain the equality of gender rights in education, but they remained intractable.

Seeing that I could make no progress with them, I tried a new avenue. I approached her brother and explained the issue in terms of human rights. This convinced him that his sister's education is as important as his own and that he ought to pressure his parents to send her to school with him. In protest, the young man declared that he would not attend college unless his sister could do the same. Eventually, their parents allowed their daughter to continue her education.

Indicator 26: A Govt. that is not able to uphold Human Rights cannot be a good Government

Though the document of UDHR or for that matter CRC document and various other documents are churned out by United Nations, they have not brought changes in the governance of justice for the weak and the poor. Despite Laws enacted on the basis of the Constitution of India and International documents, we do see innumerable violations of rights on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, women and the weak.

Displacement as a result of development has ruined lives of millions of tribal population. Millions of children still work as bonded and child labourers. 97% of the teachers therefore feel that a government that is not able to uphold Human Rights cannot boast itself of good governance.

Indicator 27: Children should respect and care for their parents

Majority of the respondents –96% do agree that it is the duty of the children to respect and care for their parents. This opinion is important from the angle of social security to the senior citizens. The old age pension of the government is not sufficient to meet even one meal, the number of elderly people on the streets and old age homes are increasing due to change in the lifestyles of younger generations and no social security provisions from the government. During the discussions many thoughts emerged and one such thought was that the employed children should contribute 10% of their income for the well being of their parents.

Indicator 28: Awareness Indicators

Question	Right Answer	Right	Percent
1995-2004	10 years of UN Decade for Human Rights Education	257	73.4
March 8th	Women's Day	258	73.7
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	286	81.7
1989	Convention on the Rights of the Children	298	85.1

The recollection of information regarding the HRE imparted to students and the feedback on the knowledge gained and update of knowledge among teachers seems to be pretty good. But, at the same time around 20% of the teachers have no clue regarding important dates regarding rights.

73.4% are aware of UN Decade for Human Rights Education, 73.7% are aware that March 8th is marked to observe World Women's day, 81.7% know it was in 1948 the General Assembly of UN proclaimed the UDHR and 85.1% know it was in 1989 the CRC was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly of the UN.

Indicator 29: I am afraid that the dissemination of HR will lead to creating new problems in the society

The opinion varies - around 50% feel it will not cause any problems in the society, whereas another 49% believe it would. There are two dimensions to each of the opinions.

STOPPING HARASSMENT

I am Ms. C. Maria Rajan, Teacher at St. Joseph High School, Siluvaipuram, Kollemcode, Kanyakumari. I attend church regularly every Sunday. On my way to church, I noticed several times that there were a few young boys who sat at a particular street corner. These boys would harass young girls who were on their way to and from my church. It was a very uncomfortable situation for the girls, but they never protested. I decided to confront this activity with support from the local community.

One Sunday, I saw the boys on the corner harassing young girls again, and I immediately approached the village leaders to discuss the issue. The village leaders listened to me and approached the young boys, enquiring why they had decided to occupy their street corner. The boys were suddenly frightened and could not respond to the elders' questions. The village elders warned the young boys against harassing girls from street corners, and now the girls at my church are very happy to be free from the boys' constant advances.

Firstly, those who feel it will not create any problem believe the society at large will absorb the changes and will assimilate them without much disturbance, whereas, those who feel it would create problems justify their opinion that HRE would create problems in the feudalistic Indian society. They say awareness among the exploited class would lead to demand for rights and it would disturb the family, community, because one is seeking equal footing and other does not wish to give.

Indicator 30: I will ignore H.R. Violations that happens in my neighborhood, as it will create problems for me.

About 76% of the respondents have showed positive response towards addressing human rights violations. This response indicates that training in human values helps in changing the perceptions and the attitude of the adults. Another 22% don't wish to address issues related to human rights violations.

GAMBLING GROUNDS

When Raghupathi, a teacher in ADW School, Mallipatti, Vellore District, joined duty in school, he was shocked to see the inappropriate activities around the school premises. Local rowdies sold illicit liquor and some others gambled during the day. He realized the impact this would have on the school children, but he did not know what to do about it.

At first he tried speaking to them and convincing them to stop such activities near the school, as it would affect the schoolchildren. The arrogant people did not yield to his requests but only laughed at him. After attending human rights education classes, Raghupathi learned how to face such situations and, as a responsible citizen, informed the police about the inappropriate activities around the school. The wrongdoers were immediately

arrested. Soon afterwards the school premises became a safe place for children. "The human rights class taught me how to be a responsible citizen, and I feel satisfied for having done my duty," says a smiling Raghupathi.

Indicator 31: For children going to work it is not a violation of Rights, if they do not get an opportunity to attend school

There is lot of questions regarding our education. Are they appropriate? Many people specially the poor wouldn't like to spend money for their child's education and wait for such a long period for him/her to earn. Is our education providing the child necessary life skills? The other side is, if they attend school, do they receive good quality education. Many parents felt that when their child studying in 7th or 8th standard are unable to read a sentence properly, why they be sent to school. The third dimension is, "Do we have necessary infrastructure to provide education for all the children in this country?" Fourthly, "Is it possible to bring in the concept of neighbourhood schools?" Majority of the children don't get opportunity to attend the schools. And many a time our school schedules don't match the ground situation of our people and the villages. The state is not ready nor does it have political will to enforce minimum wages to the labour class. If it does majority of child labour problems can be solved. Though the issue of child labour is multi-dimensional, 87.4% of the teachers do not agree for the continuation of children in workforce - A positive move.

PAVING A PATH FOR HER FUTURE

I am A. Jancy Rani, teacher at St. Joseph High School, Mullavillai, Kanyakumari. I am part of the human rights education program here. My training and my work in the classroom gave me strength to address a couple of children's rights violations in my neighbourhood.

One family near my house has two children, one boy and one girl. Both of them have completed their 10 th Std. The boy was enrolled to continue his education in the town school, but their parents, due to their family's economic concerns, withdrew girl from further enrollment.

I felt that the girl's rights were being violated, and I decided to intervene with some positive action. I knew that the girl was a

good and brilliant student and that she was eager to continue her education. I met her parents and talked to them about gender discrimination, the equal rights of boys and girls to education, and the need to put a stop to human rights violation. I asked them to send their daughter back to school. After a long conversation, they agreed to send her back to school, but they still worried that their family condition would be too poor to support her education's needs. After understanding their family situation, I began to collect funds from my friends to try to meet the expenses of this girl's education.

Finally, I enrolled her in the 11th Std. at the town school. Now, she is very happy and is excelling in school.

Indicator 32: I agree that discrimination against women is a form of H.R. Violation

Perceptions of people are changing; awareness on social issues is also increasing. This is evident from 95% of teachers agreeing to the fact that discrimination to women in any form is HR violation. In India majority of women face numerous kinds of Human Rights violations, many of which go unnoticed. Even if it is identified, it is not recorded. Added to it the vast majority of women doesn't share those violations with outsiders, but are willing to suffer because of the families' honour, pride and respect.

CHILD MARRIAGE STOPPED

I am D. Sermain Anthony Mary, working at St. Patrick's Middle School, Madurai. Priya is a student in my class. She is very dedicated to her education, and she wanted to become an eminent figure when she grows up. However, her parents decided to arrange for her marriage to her maternal uncle. She refused the arrangement and came to me with tears in her eyes to complain about her parents' plans. I met with her parents and explained her unwillingness to marry and her interest in getting an education. I tried to convince her parents by outlining the rights of young girls and by pointing out that arranged marriages are particularly inappropriate for girls who are underage.

I asked them to postpone her marriage and to encourage her to continue her education. I said that if she is educated properly she will be able to take care of her parents and will be able to lead a life that is much better than what they could currently provide. Her parents were convinced. The marriage was

postponed, and they provided her with the necessary support for her education. Ms. Priya studied all the way through college and got a job on her own. She eventually married her uncle and lives comfortably. If I did not stop the early marriage of this child, Priya would have discontinued her studies, becoming just another dropout. She would have ended up as yet another woman confined to a life within the four walls of her house. Human rights education is a life-oriented education and is essential for every human being.

**Indicator 33: The rights of oppressed people
are violated in our society**

Right to equality, Right to worship, Right to own land, Right to expression and many other natural and constitutional Rights are denied to the shudras and adi-shudras, because the forward caste believe in the Manus code of law, which is not relevant to the present society. The laws of natural justice and constitutional guarantees have not been supportive of safeguarding the Rights of the Dalits. This feeling has been evident from the fact that 97% of the respondents agree that the Dalits are denied their rights and violations are visible.

MORTGAGE OF A CHILD

Ms. S. V. Govindammal is a human rights teacher in a Government Adi-Dravidar Welfare School in Peranampattu, Vellore District. Human rights education motivated her to be involved in child protection. Rajasekaran is a 6th standard student in her school. His parents mortgaged him to a beedi [a kind of small but potent cigarette] merchant for a sum of Rs.5,000 to help the family through some financial difficulty. Despite the legal proscription against bonded labour, this practice is still prevalent in every state in India. Mortgaging a person for labor is one of many methods used to continue the practice without alerting officials. The teacher came to know about this human rights violation after 4 months and, she quickly collected essential information regarding this issue.

She contacted the Child Labour Abolition Officer from the Labour Department in Tamil Nadu and filed a case against the beedi company. The officer took immediate and appropriate action against the beedi company, releasing Rajasekaran from the clutch of the owners. The teacher made sure Rajasekaran was reenrolled after his release. She and the labour officer warned Rajasekaran's parents that, if the child does not attend school regularly, action will be taken against them.

Indicator 34: I understood that sending the children to work is a violation of child rights

Almost 97% of the teaching community does not prefer children working - Any form of child labour - be it hazardous, non-hazardous or domestic child labour. The teachers believe that precious childhood is to acquire knowledge. The teaching community is also in favour of seeking compulsory education for all the children below 18 years as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the constitutional amendment has also given provision through Art-21 -C of the Indian Constitution that all children below the age of 14 years be given compulsory education.

CIRCUS GIRL

I am R. P. Rosalin Jesentha, teacher in Roman Catholic Middle School, Rosary Church, West Gate, Madurai. One day, when a friend and I entered the Periyar Bus Stand, I saw a big crowd, and wanted to know why it had gathered. Entering the crowd, I was shocked to see that a 5-year-old girl was entertaining the crowd by bending her body into painful positions and walking on a tight rope. Through further enquiry, I found out the girl's family was from Maharashtra and they made their money by performing in street-side circuses like this one. Such circuses are inhumane and exploitative of young children.

My friend and I shouted at the crowd, "We should not encourage this kind of inhuman activities. The man is exploiting his daughter to do some unusual exercise and violating her rights. She is supposed to go to the Kindergarten!" The crowd slowly started moving away. I met the bus stand manager and reported to him that the Transport Corporation should not allow inhumane performances like this.

Some of them questioned my actions, saying that I had deprived a poor man of his meal. To me, though, it was about the violation of 5-year-old girl's human rights.

Indicator 35: The reservation for women is a social justice

The 95% of the respondents favor reservation for women and believe it would create social justice. Among the respondents 50% are men and these men do support the reservation. The changed perspective among men gives hope that atrocities on women will decline and at the same time an early education on rights to students would build strong value system.

Indicator 36: I believe it is possible to create casteless society

In the long run, every one wishes to have a casteless society and no discrimination of any kind. The above bar chart clearly indicates that the majority - 98% of the teachers believe it is possible to have a casteless society. HRE should reach a larger majority and should be introduced early in lives of young. Then society can look forward for a casteless society.

**Indicator 37: I do not believe and support
caste discrimination**

After being part of HRE program, about 92% of the teachers have expressed that they don't have any feeling of caste discrimination. Theoretically, the change has occurred in 92% of them, but one needs to look at the impact of this change at the personal level, family and community level.

SEEKING LEGAL SUPPORT

I am Kumaresan, teacher in Government Adi-Dravidar Welfare Middle School, Erampakkam, Villupuram. Arumugam, one of my students, belongs to a scheduled caste. Naughtiness is part of any child's normal behavior, and Arumugam is no exception. One day he plucked some mangoes from a garden that belonged to people in an upper-caste. The upper-caste people caught him and tied him to a tree. He was beaten brutally. His parents came to the garden and begged the upper-caste people to release him. They refused to release the boy and spoke very abusively to his parents. The upper-caste people had taken the law into their own hands; they violated Arumugam's rights as a child and his rights as a human, all because he was born into a scheduled caste.

It was then that my human rights education training came in to support me. I took this issue to the police station and filed legal action against the upper-caste people. Fearing repercussions from the police, the upper-caste people left the boy alone. I felt a tremendous inner joy at having stood up for the human rights of this little boy.

Indicator 38: It is not possible to treat all people equally

The essence of the posed question was, whether people accept all people, as they are, irrespective of gender, caste, religion etc. About 33% feel it is not possible to treat all people equally. But 66% say it is possible to treat everyone equally. People may have likes and dislikes on an individual level, but dislike towards a group or a community, is what creates the divide among people.

Indicator 39: The Government should introduce the H.R. education in all schools

The entire teaching community - 99% in unison has expressed the need to introduce the HRE in all schools. It also means that the HRE needs to be introduced in all classes. This united decision is because the HRE has opened new ideas and thinking among teachers and students. It has been beneficial in many ways.

Indicator 40: The reservation policy is being implemented to maintain social equality

Nearly 82% of teachers do agree that reservation will create and maintain social equity. But 16% don't agree and the reasons for the same could be many. But the fact that 16% disagree to social equity and justice need to be viewed in the context of Human Rights and India's caste system.

The reason for 82% agreeing to the reservation for social equality is that many of the teachers are working in ADW/GTR schools and know the situation of the underprivileged.

Note : Reservation in India is a form of affirmative action whereby a percentage of seats are reserved in the public sector units, union and state civil services, union and state government departments and in all public and private education institutions, except religious / linguistic minority educational institutions, for the scheduled castes and tribes who were inadequately represented in these services and institutions. The reservation policy is extended for SC/STs in representing the parliament of India and state legislative assemblies.

Question 41: I treat all the boys and girls in my classroom equally

98.6% of teachers say that they treat boys and girls equally, though they may have favorite students. But in totality there is no

discrimination between genders. The vocational ethics speaks about dissemination of knowledge to students, irrespective of which gender is receiving it. The teaching of HRE has further strengthened the idea of equality among all people.

**Indicator 42: I did not understand fully the idea
of teaching the Human Rights Education.**

Though 79% of the teachers have understood the teaching of HR education to the students, it is the remaining 20% that worries the Human Rights program, because if 20% have not understood the idea and concepts of HR program, then the dissemination of HRE cannot provide the expected change in the teachers and the students to whom it was taught.

The understanding of specific human rights problems such as ignorance, apathy, cynicism political repression, colonialism / imperialism, economic globalization and environmental degradation cannot be imparted to students if 20% of them have not understood the idea of Human Rights Education.

**Indicator 43: I am capable of conducting training
on H.R. Education in detail**

The confidence level of 86% of the teachers in conducting the training on HRE is on the positive side. The eagerness to conduct training on HRE should pave way for creating resource team in the schools and in District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) DIET. The HRE teaching methodology adopted by IHRE team and its resource persons has given them options to adopt those methods and games while conducting the classes. Now they wish to be part of the training program. And the time is right to create resource persons in the zones and districts for RIGHTS program. Another 13% may require more training and inputs to be part of resource team.

**Indicator 44: I am aware about the Acts, Organizations and
Commissions, which protect Human Rights**

89% of the teachers are aware of Acts related to rights and also have established contacts with Human Rights related organizations. The confidence to conduct trainings is basically derived because of knowledge acquired and also because of attitudinal change.

The knowledge of Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Convention on Rights of Child, Women Rights and Constitution of India. The awareness on various Acts has enabled them to take bold steps to address social issues in the society; even if they are not able to challenge the might of the opponents, they sought support of the community to address the issues. Case studies are indicators of those actions.

Indicator 45: I have now realized that children also have rights

The positive side to the training and teaching is that it has enlightened 85% of the teachers on child rights, which is very important from the children's viewpoint. Despite conducting HRE/CRE/Discrimination classes and being trained in the above subjects, around 14% of teachers still have not understood that children do have rights.

Indicator 46: H.R. education has not made much change in my teaching methodologies

About 83% have expressed that the HRE has made considerable change in the teaching methodologies and about 17% feel it has not. If 83% of the teachers feel a change in teaching methodologies has been brought about, it is a positive picture in the school because to that extent the classes will be a better place for the children. The skills in teaching methodology have considerably improved.

Indicator 48: I teach Human Rights Education like any other subject

One may notice from the above data that around 41% of the teachers are imparting Human Rights Education in a manner similar to that of any other subject. This data to some extent questions the training inputs. The methodology adopted to teach the concept of HRE and has their attitude towards children have changed? Where they forced to take HRE classes? If they are still conducting HRE classes in a manner similar to any other subject, there is need to re-look the methodologies and also the content.

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Impact of Human Rights Education: Transformed Students

It has long been recognized that an essential element in protecting human rights was a widespread knowledge among the population of what their rights are and how they can be defended.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali,
Sixth UN Secretary-General, 1992-1996

An assessment study to ascertain the relevance of human rights education and to gauge its impact was undertaken among a combined sample of 4000 students of Diocesan Schools in six districts and of Adi-Dravidar Welfare schools in 30 districts of Tamil Nadu. Diocesan schools run by Roman Catholic Dioceses. Adi-Dravidar welfare schools are run by the Department of Scheduled castes and Tribes welfare of Government of Tamil Nadu. These schools were established all over Tamil Nadu even before our independence especially for but not restricted to the SC/ST's.

The profile of the sample of Diocesan school students shows that a substantial number of them (700 out of 1600 or 43.8 percent) were from one district, Kanya Kumari (see next page for details of representative samples from each district). This is because of the keen interest shown by the management of those schools in that district, where there is already a tradition of identifying with human rights issues and getting involved in the struggles of the people. Another positive indicator of this sample is the number of girl students who readily participated in the assessment study, underscoring a latent fact that girls and boys participated almost in equal measure in the programme.

The assessment was done through a set of 28 indicators, in the form

Diocesan Schools

District	Sample Size	Percent
1. Dindigul	95	5.9
2. Madurai	105	6.6
3. Theni	48	3.0
4. Virudhunagar	190	11.9
5. Thirunelveli	462	28.9
6. Kanyakumari	700	43.8
Total	1600	100.0

Respondents from ADW Schools

District	Sample Size	Percent
1. Chennai	90	3.8
2. Villupuram	78	3.2
3. Pondicherry	15	.6
4. Vellore	39	1.6
5. Tiruvallur	115	4.8
6. Thiruvannamalai	39	1.6
7. Kancheepuram	245	10.2
8. Cuddalore	735	30.5
10. Salem	90	3.7
11. Namakkal	50	2.2
14. Trichy	200	8.4
19. Coimbatore	87	3.6
20. Nilgiris	68	2.8
22. Dindigul	60	2.5
23. Madurai	135	5.6
24. Theni	155	6.4
27. Virudhunagar	50	2.1
29. Tirunelveli	90	3.9
30. Kanyakumari	58	2.4
Total	2400	100.0

of statements and questions, to which the students had to give detailed answers. They were recorded in full and are highlighted here:

Indicator 1: HRE class is a joyful class for me



This was more a statement than a question to which the students had to give some detailed responses. There was near unanimous opinion from both set of schools that HRE was indeed a joyful experience with 98.9 and 99.3 percent of the ADW school

students and Diocesan school students respectively agreeing to it.

Students agreed that HRE was more joyful than any other class. They attribute this to the real-life stories and incidents in the modules which they are able to identify with easily. Violations, atrocities, exploitations and discrimination have been experienced by the respondents in one form or the other. The word 'joyful' may not be appropriate to the context of the incidents, but it is very appropriate from the angle of teaching HRE classes - the methodology adopted, the space given for discussion on the issues, the eagerness on the part of each of the students to know more and the teacher being available to explain the issues – are what make the class joyful.

There is hardly any difference of opinion in what the students of ADW and Diocesan schools said. It only indicates that students are in need of appropriate education, rather than stereotyped learning by rote, and that they are open to explore new and innovative ways of learning.

**Indicator 2: Human Rights Education has given me
the courage to point out mistakes/wrongs**

Has human rights education created the space for children to overcome fear to point out the mistakes of their elders or teachers? Prior to the course being introduced in these schools, most students were afraid to do so or were indifferent. According to 98.3 percent of students in ADW schools and 96 percent in the Diocesan schools, they have gained the courage to speak about the wrongs that are taking place around them and this has been attributed to the HRE program.

A BRAVE SON TEACHES A LESSON

Vivek spent all his childhood in a poor family, trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. Everyday he witnessed his hapless mother being beaten ruthlessly by his alcoholic father. This made Vivek scurry to the dark corners of their little home in fear. This continued until one day when he boldly declared to his father, 'I will not go to school if you drink and create unhappiness in the home'.

This was the beginning of a change in his home. 'I was really scared of my drunken father. I hated his behaviour, but could not say anything. But the human rights education class gave me the courage to speak', says Vivek. Vivek's father was shocked to hear his little boy speak so boldly and, for the first time, he realized how shabbily and uncivilized his behaviour had been. Slowly, he reduced his drinking and began to treat his wife with more care and respect.

If the HRE program has given them the confidence to point out the mistakes/wrongs, it is a sign of the changing attitude of the teachers and the increased knowledge among students about various aspects, subjects and rights.

Indicator 3: HRE has developed the feeling of equality among students

The HRE program in schools has broken the barriers of caste and gender and has developed a feeling of equality among students, as

CHILD OVERCOMES BARRIERS

Sobitha is a 14-year-old girl studying in ninth standard at the Government Tribal Residential School, Kunjapanai, Nilgiris District. Her family consists of an elder sister and parents and they belong to a community of backward castes.

Her sister who completed her 12th standard became open to new ideas. She fell in love with one of the village boys who belonged to a scheduled caste. Neither her family nor the community at large knew about the relationship. One fine day, the girl ran away and got married to the man she loved.

All hell broke loose. Although the boy's family accepted her with some reservations, Sobitha's family could not accept her sister's elopement — especially with a boy from the scheduled caste community. Her parents went to the police station and filed false complaints, including kidnapping of a minor girl, against the boy.

Human rights education made the difference in this case. Sobitha

was a student of human rights education. The teaching of rights, human values and relationships, and the character formation that turns students in the programme into leaders of their communities showed vividly in Sobitha. She stood by her understanding of her sister's rights as a human being and her rights as a woman.

Sobitha went to the police station with her parents and some community leaders. During the course of discussion, Sobitha asked the police officer to listen to her version and she said that her sister is of legal age and has completed her 12th standard in school. Sobitha said that her sister had eloped of her own volition, and therefore the cases brought by her parents are only to impugn falsely the man she married. The police officer listened carefully to Sobitha's story and dismissed the case. Her parents were angry with her for interfering, but had no alternative because the police officer had listened to her statement. Her courage to speak the truth was rooted in her understanding of human rights and its core values. However, things did not end there.

After a couple of months, the in-laws showed their discontent over the marriage, this time over the question of dowry. The new husband also became indifferent to his wife, and, at the prodding of his family, asked her to leave the house. The young woman, supported neither by her parents nor by her husband, was left in a quandary. Sobitha once again took hold of the situation and confronted her brother-in-law, telling him that her sister had left her parents' home for his sake and all because of love. How could he leave her now just because his family members did not like her? She pointed to him that she herself had saved him from jail with her bold statement in the police station. The young man realized his mistakes and he found another home, where he now lives with his beloved.

Sobitha was not satisfied with the marriage of her sister. She wanted her sister and her new brother-in-law to come and visit her and to have a cordial relationship with her family. She hit upon a plan to make this possible. Everyday she read incidents from the modules on Human Rights and Child Rights to her mother, and talked about good times they had when her sister was there. She also shared the loneliness she felt because she and her sister were kept apart. Her efforts eventually got through to her mother and her sister was allowed to come back to their home with love and affection.

indicated by almost 97 percent of the students of ADW Schools. They have been able to understand the concept of right to freedom and equality as enunciated in the Indian Constitution and the UDHR. This understanding has enabled many students to point out the unequal



situations in their villages and the abusive character of the better-off communities. They have been able to identify the feudalistic nature of the society they are living in. The goal of the human rights education programme is not only to disseminate information on the principles of human rights, but also to institutionalize them among the weaker sections of the society.

Indicator 4: Is it correct on the part of the teacher to beat students in the classroom?

It is unfortunate that nearly 60 percent of the 2400 students in the ADW Board Schools were of the opinion that it is alright for the teacher to beat students, whereas, 38.8 percent did not subscribe to the idea. In the case of Diocesan Schools, only 33 per cent of the students said that corporal punishment was okay. Though the number may be small, the understanding that teacher should not beat the children is in the positive direction.

The very fact that such a large percentage of those surveyed subscribed to the idea of corporal punishment shows that it is still unchecked in schools and that 'the rod' is still a remedy. Some studies have indicated that the reason for some students dropping out of the school is related to corporal punishments. Many parents also believe that beating helps their children to excel in studies. In spite of the government banning corporal punishment, it continues in many schools. At times, corporal punishments that are meted out are humanly degrading and in utter violation of all principles of human rights, and specifically of the UNCRC, which states: "State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with present convention" (Art. 28[2]). The CRC clearly indicates that corporal punishments should be given up.

Indicator 5: I speak about HRE to my parents, friends and neighbours



The process of disseminating human rights information as the basis of forming a culture of human rights among family and community is another important component of HRE. When a child speaks about human rights to one's parents, family, friends, neighbours or community, what is essentially happening is that he/she is educating the community at large.

A majority of the students would not discuss their routine subjects at homes and in the community, but 96.5 and 86 per cent of students in the ADW Board and Diocesan schools said that they discussed human rights and HRE with their friends, family and neighbours.

CHILD IS THE FATHER OF CIVILIZATION

I am Kanga, studying in 9th standard in ADW School, Elamanur, Madurai. I have studied human rights education from 6th to 8th standard.

One day, while I was studying in 8th standard, I was walking with my grandfather through my village. I noticed that lots of lower-caste people who were around us removed their towels from their shoulders and folded it round their hips as a sign of deference toward us. Even the older men did it. I asked one of the old men about the reason behind it.

He explained that he belongs to a lower-caste community and that he has to do this whenever he sees a higher-caste man like my grandfather. He also mentioned that this is the social custom of our village. Then I pointed out his rights as a human. "All are equal" is the policy of our country. There is no difference among us by caste. I tried to explain it to him, but he was not ready to accept it. Then I discussed this matter with my grandfather. He said that he never asked them to do that, but they do it voluntarily. I asked my grandfather not to allow them to do it from today onwards. He agreed and promised to respect their dignity. Now he treats others equally, and they move freely around him. I can positively say that I received this level of mental maturity and courage only because of human rights education.

Discussion of rights with the community in the open would always attract the attention of the authorities, especially the Police. It may also attract the wrath of the feudalistic leadership in the villages who, in most cases, do not support the rights of the exploited. But children thought that they had a right to discuss this with anyone they felt like.

Discussing human rights issues with parents would certainly bring about change in the mindset of the traditional illiterate and semi-literate and caste-oriented parents. As one of the case studies indicates discussion of rights at home can bring about positive change in the attitude of the parents and the community.

**Indicator 6: Do human rights education teachers
allow students to raise questions?**

The education/inputs provided through new teaching methodologies adopted through DPEP and SSA has brought changes in the teaching methodologies in the classroom. It has been instrumental in bringing about some changes in teachers. But HRE teachers have had better deal along because of the inputs they received from a 'rights' perspective and constant training inputs.

This fact was attested by about 95 and 94.9 percent of the students in the ADW Board and Diocesan schools respectively. They were categorical in saying that teachers have created the space for dialogue and discussions and as a result HRE has been interesting and learning is more. The teachers have understood the essence of Art. 19 of UDHR and Art. 13 of CRC.

However, the students were quick to point that such space and freedom are possible only during the HRE classes or if the subjects are taught by the teacher handling HRE.

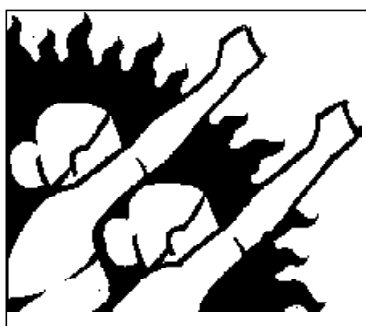
Indicator 7: Formation of 'Rights Clubs' in schools will help develop HRE

About 97% of the students from ADW Board schools felt that if Rights Clubs are formed in schools, it would help in the promotion of human rights culture. For the Diocesan Schools, the percentage was as high as 99.2.

There is a need for such clubs because they would help in promoting the values of human rights not only to the few students who study it, but also to a large number of other students in the schools. The National

Cadet Corps and Scouts build personality of the children and at the same time orient them for community service. It was felt that the Rights Clubs will promote respect and concern for fellow beings and promote values of justice and equality. The formation of clubs/associations among children would also lead to honouring Art. 15 of CRC.

Indicator 8: HRE creates the feeling of equality between men and women



Traditionally the upbringing of boys and girls is entirely different and this leads to discrimination of girls. Boys are given preferential

treatment whereas girls are sidelined. This upbringing leads to arrogance among boys and exploitation of the girl child, even after reaching womanhood.

Article 7 of the UDHR speaks about equality and protection of law irrespective of gender, caste etc. But the ground situation is different and marginalization and oppression of women continues.

It is creditable to note that the HRE program has brought about awareness on this very issue of discrimination based on gender among 96.5 and 94.9 per cent of students who attended the human rights classes in ADW and Diocesan Schools respectively. They feel that rights education has created a feeling of equality between genders.

Early education of students on rights helps them have a better understanding of gender issues. Attitudinal changes among boys would help in reducing the incidence of atrocities against women in later life and the knowledge of rights for a girl child would help her to assert her rights. Knowing about rights would also give them the confidence and attitude to address problems, which they may face in their later life.

FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

I am Sabitha, studying in 9th Std. at ADW [Adi-Dravidar Welfare] School, Arokanam. I can remember well my father's beating and ill-treating my mother during my childhood days. He used to torture her everyday by beating and burning her with cigarette butts and scolding her in filthy language. This ill-treatment was because he suspected the birth of my elder

brother. This torture continued without any break. My elder brother has grown up, but my father keeps on raising the problem and beating him, too. Finally one day my elder brother ran away from the house to escape the torture and cruel living conditions. I also attempted to commit suicide several times with the help of pesticide and erukkampal [the poisonous latex of *Calotropis gigantea*] because of the violence and the abusive language at home day in and day out. While this was going on, human rights education was introduced to our class, and it was an eye-opener for my life.

Human rights education has given me self-confidence and courage to face reality. I realize my survival rights. Everyone has his or her right to live. So why should I commit suicide? This kind of thought made me stronger, and I decided to show society that I can live without fear. Human rights education gave me essential information and empowered me to stand up for my right to live, my right to education, and my right to choose my life's desires.

Indicator 9: I feel that HRE should be for all

Almost all the students in both schools – 98 percent in ADW Board schools and 99.3 percent in Diocesan schools – felt that HRE should be included in the school curriculum.

The Government of India has developed a National Plan of Action in relation to Human Rights Education and has earmarked funds, as a result of which many universities and colleges have availed those grants and conducted many programs. They have also included human rights as an optional subject at the university level. The NCERT also has, in its guidelines, recommended that Human Rights Education be introduced in schools. The state boards need to incorporate the national plan of action while preparing its curriculum for school students.

The positive changes that have occurred among the student community, particularly those that have undergone the HRE curriculum, and their involvement in rights-based issues is clear indicator that human rights education would benefit the society at large in the run if it is introduced for all students at the school-level.

In the Focused Group Discussion it was revealed that children are aware of the rights, and many other students wish to know about rights but they do not have access to HRE program, as the program is designed only for a particular class and that too on a pilot basis.

Indicator 10: Child labour is a violation of human rights



In both set of schools over 90 per cent (90.7 in ADWB Schools and 97.3 in Diocesan Schools) of the children understand that employing children in any form of work is a violation of Human Rights and Child Rights.

Art. 32 of the UNCRC emphasizes that it is the state's responsibility to protect children from engaging in work. Art. 28 of the UNCRC specifies that it is duty of the state to provide free and compulsory primary education. The overwhelming 'yes' to this indicator/question affirming that child labour is a violation of human and child rights indicates that the children who studied human rights education will not drop out from schools and at the same time also show positive attitude towards ending child labour.

A small section of the children (8.5 percent) did not consider it a human rights violation. During the focused group discussions some of the reasons they had to say in support of this were that some children work to support their families, poor health of parents, alcoholic fathers, poverty, etc.

Indicator 11: A majority of the children are not treated as children in our country

The child population of India is around 33 per cent of the total population and about one-third of or around 126.6 million (Census 2001) children are engaged in some kind of work or other. Large numbers of tribal children are employed as domestic maids and many

EDUCATION MY PRIORITY

I. P. Packiaraj is studying in 9th Std. in Vellimallai-Villupuram District. His mother died and his father remarried, but his stepmother is not kind to him. During school holidays he is forced to collect firewood more than three times a day, but he is not provided good food and clothing. She treats him inhumanely and he feels that his rights are being violated. Though he realizes the inhumane situation in his home, he continues to stay there because he wants to complete his studies. Then he feels he will be able to stand up for his human and child's rights easily, as an employed person.

of them are trafficked and no details are available. Thousands of children support their families. Many girl children become baby sitters and take care of cooking at home. They are adult in mind and soul but child in physical frame.



Around 88.75 and 92 per cent of the children in ADWB and Diocesan Schools, respectively, said that they have seen or heard that children are not treated as children in India. Some even indicated that they had to go through that phase in life.

Though the UNCRC, through its Articles 28, 32, 34, 35 and 36, speaks about protection, the state has still a long way to go in providing even the basic minimum protection to children in India from discrimination and exploitation.

Indicator 12: I have realized that children also have rights of their own

Articles 42-54 of the UNCRC speak of various obligations on the part of Government [of India] and one of the obligations is to disseminate information on CRC. IHRE intervention in schools is a great step in disseminating the contents of the UNCRC.

In the poll done as part of the assessment, a whopping 97.1 percent of children of the ADWB Schools and 94.1 percent among the Diocesan

MIDDAY MEALS

Chitra is an 8th Std. student in St. Anne's Girls' Higher Secondary School, Mathavaram, Chennai. She is a human rights student and an active girl. The school provides midday meals for the students usually. One day in 2001, the students found some worms in their school lunches. Miss Chitra took her plate, complete with worms, to show it to the school authorities. She started shouting slogans on protection of children's rights. The other students joined in her protest.

Finally, the school administration appointed two teachers to supervise the entire process of preparing the midday meal and the system of distribution. It is notable that the students had been consuming the unhygienic food before they took the human rights classes, but after the human rights classes the students were well-informed about children's rights, rights violations, and discrimination. Unfortunately, Chitra eventually left the school for unrelated reasons.

Schools affirmed that they are aware of the various rights and obligations enshrined in the UN document. This, they say, has been possible because of the HRE program that they underwent in their schools.

Indicator 13: It is the duty of the Government to provide free and compulsory education for all children



When the Constitution of India was framed the members of the Constituent Assembly clearly emphasized the need for free and compulsory education for all, but during the five decades it has been in force, it was never realized for a variety of reasons. The primary reasons are the lack of political will and insufficient allocation of funds. Universal primary education being a subject under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, successive

State governments never gave it a serious thought. However, in the Unnikrishnan versus Government of Andhra Pradesh case, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of Unnikrishnan, upholding the right of children to have free and compulsory primary education. This ruling paved way for the 86th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2002, making primary education a fundamental right.

The majority of students – 98.75 per cent in the ADW Schools and 98.8 in the Diocesan Schools – see the importance and value of education and consider it as the duty of the state to provide free and compulsory education for all children.

Indicator 14: A happy childhood can only create a healthier society



A society where there is constant violence, broken families or continuous problems in the family will not help the child to grow into a better person and, in almost all cases, a child who grows in such an environment tends to become violent or aggressive. Caste prejudice and fundamentalist ideology

create hatred towards one another, as persons and as communities.

The understanding and knowing of rights enables an individual to respect all human beings, irrespective of caste, colour, religion, region and creed.

The family is to be a better place for the child to grow and learn. Articles 3, 5, 9, 32, 33, 34 and 35 of the UNCRC direct parents, communities and the State to create an environment suitable for a child to grow in.

Out of the 2400 children from the ADWB Schools who took part in this assessment, 97.04 percent of the children said that a happy childhood would create a healthier society, a society that is fair and just. The corresponding percentage from Diocesan Schools was 96.4 out of the 1600 students who took part.

Indicator 15: There is no need to treat the girl child on par with the boy child, because they are weaker, have less knowledge and do not have any exposure to outside world

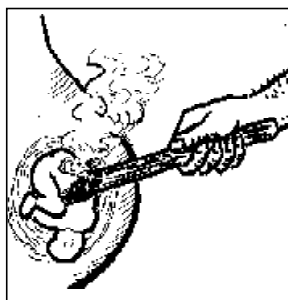


That 88 % of children in both set of schools disagree with the above statement indicates that children do not see any difference between a boy child and a girl child. The knowledge imparted through the HRE program has further strengthened the idea of treating all human beings equally.

Elders who are not exposed to the new tenets are people who tend to continue with the idea of differentiating between boys and girls and the debate on 'the weaker sex' goes on in the society. Since the HRE program intervenes at the level when most children are in their formative stage and are seeking an identity of their own, it is possible to direct their mindset to think in terms of equal and fair treatment of girl children. Assimilation of such knowledge on rights and equality will help them form the right kind of attitude and help to develop the individual person.

Indicator 16: Female infanticide is a very shameful action

In both set of schools an overwhelming majority of students - 94.1 percent in ADWB schools and 96 percent in the Diocesan schools - agree with the statement that infanticide is indeed a very shameful act. Many of them have heard of such incidents.



The UN CRC, in its Art. 6, says that the inherent right to life is curtailed by female infanticide. Female infanticide was a common phenomenon in some parts of Tamil Nadu, especially in the central region, but in the last decade or so because of the rising consciousness and the constant intervention of NGOs, there is a re-think on this in several communities. The state of Tamil Nadu introduced 'The Cradle Scheme' to protect the girl child and, to some extent, it has had a positive impact.

Culturally, women have a very special place in the society; they are kept on a high pedestal, worshiped and glorified, but in reality the fate of numerous newborn girl children is only death. The reasons

DEATH TO LIFE

Bibi Jan is studying in 9th Std. at ADW School for girls, Arokanam. Her father is Ismail, a native of Calcutta, and her mother is Sharbunisha, a native of Trichrapalli. Bibi Jan was the first of four girls born to her parents. There is a custom in her father's village: if the first-born is a girl, they kill her immediately (infanticide). Hence, her father took steps to kill her. Bibi Jan was saved, though, by the intervention of her maternal grandmother, who requested that Bibi Jan's father give up the idea and hand the child over to her custody for bringing up. Bibi Jan's grandmother secured custody to ensure the baby's survival and growth. After 7 years of married life Bibi Jan's parents separated.

Bibi Jan lives with her grandmother as per Muslim culture and customs. She is not allowed to go outside without her grandmother's permission.

Human right education has turned her into a very bold and courageous child. She has learned a lot of information about human and children's rights. The information has given her a feeling of empowerment. She slowly started sharing the information about human rights and the violations against children and women with her grandmother, and her grandmother understood the subject of their discussion by sharing on rights issues in her own way. Thanks to her story of survival, Bibi Jan wishes to help other girl children and protect them from the practice of female feticide.

cited for such an abominable behavior can never be justified. Campaigns to end this heinous crime by parents and the community must continue and the children who have undergone HRE program can contribute a great deal in this effort.

Indicator 17: There is no need to educate physically challenged children

Around 88 percent of the students in ADWB Schools and 90 percent of the children in the Diocesan Schools disagree with the above statement.

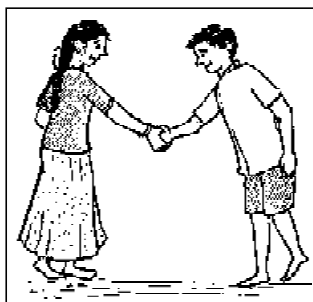
Every child, irrespective of physical or mental disability, wishes to have access to learning, playing and recreation. This has been expressed clearly in the UNCRC, which guides the 'state parties to ensure that mental and physical disabled child enjoy full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community' (Art.23 (1)).

The response to this statement indicates HRE has done the groundwork in that transformation.

The Disability Act, 2000, stipulates guidelines to the state to ensure that the disabled are given opportunities. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, seeks to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools (Sec 26[b]).

Students are concerned about disabled children and seek equal opportunities for them and an understanding of the issues of disability will pave the way for the integration of the disabled into mainstream education, instead of exclusive centers for the physically disabled children.

Indicator 18: I have realized now that all human beings are having equal rights



Prior to the HRE program many of children were not aware of the inherent rights that an individual is born with. Out of the 2400 children from the HRE program in ADWB schools who participated in this assessment study, 97.3 per cent were not aware of what 'rights' meant and what it

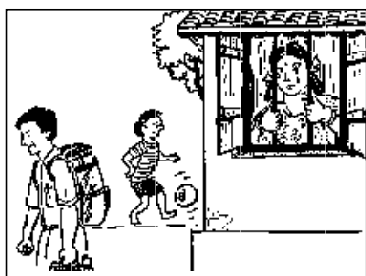
CONCERN FOR THE WIDOW

Sundari is a student in 9th Std. in an Adi-Dravidar Welfare Girls Higher Secondary School. Nalammalpuram Tirunelveli. She is a human right student. Her neighbour is a widow named Patcheammal. The people of her village do not wish to see the widow in the morning hours because they view her personally as a bad omen. Society has given a bad identity to widows. Sundari was worried about the community's blind belief and the suffering it caused her neighbour. She decided to educate the community about their blind belief and the rights of women. She educated her family first and then her neighbours. As a result, the villagers began showing respect and concern for the widowed Patcheammal. Now Patcheammal is a little happier and speaks with the villagers. Sundari's boldness and courage allowed her to do this wonderful thing. Her boldness was from the knowledge she had about human rights and the attitude she gained from her human rights education.

entails. Among the Diocesan school children the percentage was 95.3.

This is a clear indicator of the kind of impact the HRE program has had in the development of the young mind. It has also enabled a sizeable population with an understanding of human rights and child rights, with children being ambassadors to their families and communities. Their understanding of the concept of rights has enabled many students to take up issues on behalf of the weak. Many of the case studies in this book indicate that the teaching, together with the methodology adopted and the support HRE received from various quarters, has motivated a number of students to speak boldly and take action within their limited scope of being child and school student.

Indicator 19: I get very angry when I see children denied education while I can go to school



garbage and cannot attend school, they angry, when they themselves

Out of the 2400 and 1600 students participating in the assessment study from the ADWB Schools and the Diocesan schools respectively, 2360 and 1484, representing 98 percent and 92.8 per cent, said that when they see children of their age group working in shops and establishments, or collecting

are not rich, but come from lower middle class families and are sent to schools.

During the focused group discussions some students asked, 'If free and compulsory education is a fundamental right for every child, why is it that so many children are not provided education?'. This is indeed a very valid question. The anger among the school going children is a positive outburst to address the issues of school dropouts and retention. The understanding of the issue of education and child rights has been possible because of the HRE program.

COUNSELING

Marithai is a 14-year-old girl, studying in 9th standard at ADW School, Elamanur, Madurai. When she was studying in 7th standard, she began puberty, and her orthodox parents instructed her not to talk with any boys at school or in the community. She followed her parents' wishes.

One day a tiffin box was lying in the class room unattended during lunchtime. She came to know that it belonged to one of her classmates who happened to be a boy. With the best intentions, she took it and handed over it to him. Her action was reported to her parents by one of her friends, and she was scolded for it. This incident disturbed her a lot.

The next day she was sitting very sadly in class and her teacher enquired about her sadness. The human right education teacher, who came to know about the incident and knew very well Marithai's good character, called her parents and explained what had really happened. The teacher calmed her parents down and made them understand exactly what their child had done.

Indicator 20: I have the faith that we can create a casteless society



Casteism is the bane of Indian society and the atrocities on 'lower' castes continues unabated. The HRE module on 'Discrimination' has driven home the point of caste discrimination in Indian society, which has translated into a new vision for the majority of the children who underwent the HRE program, as responses to this statement indicate.

Out of the 2400 children of ADWB schools,

2334 of them said they have faith that casteless society can be created. The corresponding figure was 1495 out of 1600 students from the Diocesan schools. This kind of response was possible because of the awareness and sensitization imparted through the human rights education program.

A majority of the students in ADWB Schools are Adi-Dravidas and Adivasis, who have been subjected or vulnerable to exploitation and oppression. They look forward to a casteless society, where all are equal and wish to see the principles enshrined in the UDHR and UNCRC are practised. The implementation of Constitutional guarantees by the State will surely ensure a casteless society. The HRE program has created an environment among a large number of young minds to seek their rights and enable the process of creating a casteless society.

Indicator 21: Is it correct on the part of a youngster of a forward community to call an elderly domestic help belonging to SC/ ST singularly or in a derogative manner

It has become a norm for members of the 'forward' community to call people of the lower echelons by name and, sometimes, in a derogatory manner. All through the centuries and, even today, in many parts of the state that is how domestic helpers are called, which is accepted by them. But, in schools and culturally one is taught that one needs to respect all including elders. If this teaching has never been extended to encompass elderly persons who hail from the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities. This is a paradox that Indian culture has ingrained in the mind of all, young and old.

However, with the HR education program, several students seem to think otherwise, as the response to this statement indicates. From among the ADWB schools, 94.17% of the students say 'NO', while it was 91.7% per cent of the Diocesan school students.

Scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled Tribes (STs) are Indian communities that are explicitly recognized by the constitution of India as requiring special support to overcome centuries of discrimination by mainstream Hindu society. SCs/Sts together comprise over 24% of India's population, with SC at over 16% and ST over 8% as per the 2001 census. The scheduled caste people are also known as Dalits; Scheduled Tribe people (Bhil) are also referred to as Adivasis.

Indicator 22: It is not necessary to treat my mother and my father equally because the family is maintained by my father's earning



In both assessment studies, 93.2 per cent of the students disagree with the statement that only the father should be treated with more respect than the mother.

For very long, and even now, the family has been tutoring children that the father is the breadwinner and he is everything. The projected role that the mother is required to play is supporting her husband and cooking at home. This has been the image that every young girl/ woman has grown up with and is expected to do when she grows up.

However, there is some change taking place which means that 'rights' education has brought about some change in the young minds and this can be built up to ensure a fair and just society, where everyone can have equal rights and opportunities.

FAMILY PROBLEM SETTLED

I am Deivameenachi, studying in 9th standard in ADW School, Elamanur, Madurai. When I was studying in 8th standard, my family situation disturbed me greatly. My father used to drink alcohol and fight with my mother unnecessarily. This happened so frequently in my house that I could not concentrate on my studies. One day I explained my family's condition to my human rights education teacher. She came to my house and met my parents. She explained how their fighting habits affected the children. My parents understood the concern of the teacher. My father promised to give up alcohol and stop fighting with my mother, and both of them agreed not to fight in front of their children.

Because of my teacher's frequent efforts, my parents stopped their fighting. My father also stopped drinking alcohol. Now I am happy, and I can concentrate fully on my studies. I will be a witness for human rights education for the rest of my life.

Indicator 23: I have realized after the HRE program that each one of us can practice our own religion

Freedom to practice one's own religion is a fundamental freedom. The Constitution of India guarantees it. So do other instruments such as the UNCRC (Art. 14) and the UDHR, which says, 'Everyone has

the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion ... to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance' (Art18).

The module on religious freedom and freedom of conscience has left an indelible impression in the young minds as can be gauged by the response of 96.4 of the ADWB school students affirming that they are fully aware of this and would like it being honoured by all. The corresponding percentage of students in Diocesan schools who affirmed this statement and shared the sentiments of their counterparts from the ADWB schools was 96.9.

This is a clear indicator that proper awareness among students enables them to overcome the fear of the majority (due to unpleasant happenings in the recent past) and also to understand that India is multi-cultural society. This understanding is very much needed in today's context. Understanding religion in its true sense will reduce fundamentalism.

**Indicator 24: I have the right to get clean drinking water
and healthy environment in my school**



Clean and potable drinking water is one of the most urgent needs in many parts of the world. Large numbers of children worldwide do not have access to drinking water. Many schools in the country do not have either drinking water or adequate sanitation facilities.

Art. 21(c) of the Indian Constitution speaks about free and compulsory education. Articles 28 and 29 of CRC speak about education and total development of the child. For total development of the child the environment of the school is very important; facilities such as drinking water and sanitation are core essentials, especially for girl children. Unfortunately, a large number of adolescent girls drop out from school due to poor and unhealthy environment in schools.

Almost all the students from both schools – the percentage being 99 – would like to see a healthy environment in their schools. Some of the students of the HRE program have submitted petitions to District Collectors to provide drinking water and good sanitation

facilities in the school; this is a direct outcome of the HRE program.

**Indicator 25: I am aware that preserving
the environment is also a human right**

Forests, lakes, rivers, and unpolluted air are essential for survival of human beings, animals and all forms of life on the earth. Safeguarding these is an essential right and the duty of all citizens. The holy scriptures of many of the religions also speak about safeguarding the earth and protecting its environment if human beings are to survive; so do modern scientists and environmentalists. Unfortunately, over the decades, human beings have plundered mother earth and polluted its environment. Sensitivity to the preserving the vital elements that are required to sustain human, animal and plant life has taken a back seat.

GREEN CLUB

John Marshal and his two friends are studying in 9th Std. at St. Joseph Higher Secondary School, Martha dam, K.K. District, Tamilnadu. They were introduced to Human Rights Education in their 6th Std. and continued up to 8th Std. Human rights education had a great deal of impact on them. They were influenced by various child rights and human rights like the right to education, the right to life, and the right to protection.

John Marshal shared his experience that everyone has the right to survival, but in his village that right was threatened by environmental degradation. The village pond had been polluted by the villagers using it for bathing, washing cloths, and cleaning cattle. The water had gone bad, and the environment around it was also badly affected. John Marshal and his friends took initiative to preserve the pond. First, they promoted awareness among the villagers for the protection of the pond. Then, they approached the members of the local governing body to get their support to stop villagers' unhygienic practices. They placed a board near the pond that said, "Keep the pond clean and do not use as dust bin." After a period of time the villagers slowly began to change their attitudes and began to use the pond very hygienically. The students prepared a project report called "Preserve our bio-diversity" for school, and it won a state-level prize. They have formed a group called "Green Club" to work for a cleaner environment and to ensure everyone's survival rights by promoting clean air and water. They said that human rights education was a good experience that both provided knowledge and changed their attitudes and behaviors.



It is imperative that one rediscovers that concern and the best way to start is by inculcating the young minds with environmental awareness. The specific modules in the HRE curriculum has played a major role in sowing those seeds, as can be gleaned from the responses of students from both set of schools - 98.4 percent of the ADWB schools students and 96.9 percent of Diocesan school students – avowing that they are aware of the degradation and depletion of the environment. They also feel that it a violation of their rights to enjoy clean drinking water and also as a violation of the rights of those who are yet to be born, as they see that they have only ‘inherited this planet from future generations’ and that it is their duty to preserve and protect it.

Article 29(e) of the UNCRC explicitly speaks about developing respect for the natural environment.

Indicator 26: Knowledge of historical

Issue	Personality	ADWB Schools		Diocesan Schools	
		Right ans.	%age	Right ans	%age
Racism	Abraham Lincoln	192	8.01	27	1.7
Child Marriage	Dr. Muthulakshmi	325	13.54	72	4.5
Untouchability	Am bedkar	750	31.25	870	54.4
Self respect and caste abolition	Periyar	205	8.54	31	1.9
Wrong answers		928	38.66	600	37.5
Total respondents		2410	100	1600	100

personalities and their movements

Students were asked to names of great personalities against the causes they espoused for to gauge their understanding of historical linkage to human rights issues. The eminent personalities were Mr. Abraham Lincoln, who ended black slavery in the USA, Dr. Muthulakshmi, who led the fight against child marriage, Dr. B. R.

Ambedkar, champion of Schedule Castes and 'father of the Indian Constitution', and EVR Periyar, who took up the cause of self-respect for Dravidians and fought the brahminical domination in Tamil Nadu.

The knowledge of students of the roles played by each of the eminent personalities has been below average, as the table above indicates. The spirit of the struggles and the causes they championed has not been imbibed by students and linked. The struggle needs to be associated with the outcomes of that struggle and how that struggle changed the history and living of the society.

Indicator 27. It is the duty of family members to care for elders



The love and affection towards the elderly is very high among the students, 95.1% of them agree to the fact that it is the duty of the family members to take care of elderly people at home. But in most cases, the elderly and infirm are left to fend for themselves due to family and economic reasons. Today, we find large number of elderly people seeking shelter in old age homes or youngsters sidelining elders from family matters. The atmosphere of families is so focused on economic needs and how much would the elderly also contribute to the management of the family. When the grown up children seek wealth and property from their parents, they are duty bound to take care of their parents or contribute 10% of their income towards maintaining the elderly. Social security needs to be introduced as a compulsory measure to take care of the elderly.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Rajeshwari, a 9th std. student in ADWB School, Punthamalli, Chennai. She has one elder brother who is continuing his education in the college. Her father is an alcoholic, and everyday he mistreats his wife and children, beating them mercilessly. Her father's atrocities disturbed Rajeshwari very much and she became hopeless and was afraid of him. After studying human rights she became bold and courageous enough to put a stop to his inhumane activities. She started to speak to her father about his inhumane attitudes very openly. Her father is a good person and he loves his children, especially Rajeshwari. After the advice from his daughter, he slowly reduced his alcohol consumption and the unwanted activities.

He was also illicitly brewing arrack in the village and selling it. He reduced his intake of alcohol, but his selling of arrack was giving him a lot of money. It had become his primary source of income. Rajeshwari, knowing about her father's activity, felt that her understanding of human rights forced her intervene and put a stop to his arrack business. Still, her father refused to stop his selling arrack.

Rajeshwari, was very much upset and decided to complain to the police. She called up the nearest police station and spoke to them through the telephone without giving her name. A police officer came as she expected, but the officer only collected a bribe of Rs.250/- from her father and went away. Still, she did not give up. She called the police station again after couple of weeks. The same thing happened again; they collected their bribes and left without enforcing the law.

Deciding to end the drama once and for all, Rajeshwari went in search of an honest police officer, who would take action. She found a police officer and informed him personally. The officer, Mr. Sundar, came to her village and arrested her father. He filed cases against her father and took him before a court, which gave him a one-year sentence. She cried a lot due to her affection for her father, but she never felt sorry for her action. After a year, he was released from the jail, and he came back home very happy. Rajeshwari also was very happy that her father returned as a good man, and she assured herself that her father would commit the same crime again. Her belief and hopes disappeared after couple of weeks when he once again started to brew the illicit arrack. But Rajeshwari did not get frustrated.

Rajeshwari decided that she will take the path of love and affection as means to correct her father. She slowly stopped her conversing with her father and eventually refused to see him. She expressed her protest against his activities by refusing to wear the clothes and ornaments purchased by her father with money from his arrack sales. She declared, "I will not wear any new clothes or rings and earrings because these are all earned through the arrack money. I will not touch at all." It was a shock to her father. She wore the old clothes that were available to her and clothes purchased by her relatives, which were purchased with legally earned money. This stand of Rajeshwari has forced her father to give up his arrack business. Rajeshwari is not all that happy, knowing her father, who may restart the same business after some time, but she has decided she will press the issue from within the family.

Indicator 28: It is not necessary to pay equal wages for men and women involved in the same kind of work.

84.5% of the students disagree to the disparity of wages between men and women for the same kind of work. Apart from the awareness created by the HRE program they are also aware of the wages received by men and women in their vicinities. They do see the disparity existing in wages, but the very identification of disparity is the beginning of reasoning ability among the students and also the ability to identify violations against women. Though they are not able to pin point the constitutional obligations and Articles in UDHR in relations to wages, at this juncture the students need to know and identify violations that are taking place.

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Lessons Learnt, Constraints and Challenges

The design for the human rights education programme took shape through feedback from teachers who had participated in a women's rights training programme. The programme's creators built the framework through a deliberative process, encouraging and incorporating new ideas and thoughts while keeping in mind the broader framework of human rights education in schools. Some important lessons learned from this process are given below.

Project Sequencing

The human rights education programme was initially envisioned as a pilot programme, to begin in nine schools and eventually expand to 100 schools. The process of beginning small and expanding every year has allowed the programme to remain responsive to target communities' shifting needs. Three important subjects – human rights, children's rights, and discrimination – have been sequenced in teaching modules to support teachers' skills as much as possible. As teachers built their knowledge and sensitivity toward new subjects, these subjects were included in the curriculum. This evolving lesson sequence helped to keep the programme fresh and effective.

Since the programme's inception in 1997, its focus has expanded and shifted according to stakeholders' needs. The primary focus shifted from nine schools in 1997 to 100 schools in 1998; to schools aided by Tamil Nadu's Conference of Religious, India (CRI) during 1999-2002; to schools run by Adi Dravida Welfare Board/Social Welfare Department from 2002 to 2005 and to schools aided by the Church of South India (CSI), again in 2002-05. The programme has expanded effectively through these various forums by staying loyal to its central

goal of communicating the importance of human rights education in schools.

Institutional Mechanisms

Management structures for implementation have changed during the various phases of the project. The first two phases depended entirely on volunteerism. Creating a volunteer base, especially among academics, was vital for monitoring the pilot phase. Volunteers in the first phases of the programme required quite a few institutional resources and their work has served as a template for similar work throughout the life of the project. With limited resources at hand, it was only through its volunteers that People's Watch was able to spread human rights education to reach its target communities.

Collective leadership is now needed to strengthen the monitoring process. People's Watch will spread monitoring responsibility from its volunteer base to local institutions and people. This decentralization process has the advantage of internalizing HRE in target communities, spreading ownership of the programme to each state and community and involving more people in preventing violations of rights of the people. Local monitoring institutions and structures should include elected representatives from the beginning. These structures should also be linked with local bodies. A collaborative process will help to sensitize elected representatives and put rights on the agenda of established local institutions.

It is vital to adopt a community-based approach from the beginning. For example, schools can establish rights clubs and communities can create committees to fight sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Addressing such pressing issues as infanticide and feticide through school clubs will reinforce the lessons of human rights education among students. School-level committees can help by encouraging discussion of rights issues in schools and in the community, thus spreading practical knowledge on how to address violations. Inclusive processes such as these become self-perpetuating and sustainable in the long run.

Role of State-level Bodies

Though most activities should employ a bottom-up approach, state-level bodies necessarily exercise some control through macro-level policy making. Many rights violations and other problems can be

addressed through quarterly review meetings in the presence of all state-level heads of departments, especially the Social Welfare Department, Education Department, Directorate of Mass Education, Minorities Commissions, Scheduled-Caste/Scheduled Tribe Commissions, and other bodies. Through this engagement with State authorities, young activists can gain confidence and more people will feel involved in the human rights movement.

Linkages to Local Bodies

IHRE's target schools fall under the purview of both panchayats and municipalities, while some schools in the programme are also operated by city corporations. At present, involvement with these local bodies is limited to the classroom: human rights classes are conducted according to the understanding between People's Watch and local city corporations. IHRE can expand this relationship beyond the classroom by teaching the officials and staff of city corporations, municipalities and panchayats about human rights issues. Lessons learned through the programme can be spread through the creation of networks between panchayats and municipalities.

NGO Involvement

With the addition of specific groups (i.e. ADW/GTR, CSI, and CRI schools), the human rights education programme now covers almost all of Tamil Nadu. The programme reaches over 100,000 children, spanning over 900 schools. The programme should involve the numerous NGOs working throughout the State's districts, taluks and villages, but their participation remains minimal. The involvement of CBOs is also required for the human rights movement to become a human rights culture. Their involvement will help in building a network of human rights advocates from the village level to the state level.

Ultimately, school intervention is only one of several methods for spreading human rights education through the community. Community members should be involved in committees at various levels to enhance the dissemination of human rights information.

Stakeholder-specific Capacity-building

Mere environment-building activity has proven to be insufficient in tackling the challenges of a programme of this magnitude. The

People's Watch/IHRE team realized that every group, be they actors, teachers, volunteers or project staff, has a specific role to play in implementing human rights education. This prompted the project teams to evolve differentiated training packages for various groups. Still, the major focus of capacity-building has been on human rights and on teaching the curriculum set forth in the three modules. To a lesser extent, it has focused on legal education and perspective-building.

Expansion

The involvement of volunteers had a broad effect on the rights education programme. Many of the volunteers associated with the programme have initiated human rights education programmes in their home institutions (colleges and universities) as an optional subject. Some volunteers have introduced a week-long training for National Service Scheme students at the college-level. Two volunteers, working with IHRE, have introduced Social Analysis as part of human rights education to understand the programme better.

CONSTRAINTS FACED

Some of the major constraints faced during various stages of implementation are:

Accepting the Concept

IHRE proved in the 1997-8 school year that it is possible to conduct a human rights education programme in schools. Yet bureaucrats and politicians felt uncertain that the initiative would be accepted in communities outside the schools. They refused to provide space for introducing the programme in schools, convinced that such a small experiment could not adequately support a new policy. Disappointed but not deterred, People's Watch expanded the programme to 100 experimental schools. Even now as the programme reaches almost 1,000 schools through CRI, CSI, and ADW/GTR schools, the education department that operates over 60 per cent of the schools in the State has not accepted the feasibility of this programme. Limited resources (time, energy and money) still create a major constraint. It remains a challenge to convince the bureaucracy and political leadership to support the programme.

Limited Political Commitment

For any programme to succeed it is imperative to have commitment

from top-level political leadership and within the bureaucracy at the state and district levels. In a democratic structure the top-level leadership consists of elected representatives, particularly members of legislative assemblies (MLAs), members of Parliament (MPs) and ministers. Even though the political leadership echoes the spirit of human rights from public platforms, actual support for a human rights culture is lacking. They fail to understand that building awareness among the young will enable a new vision and new society of justice and liberty.

Wide Coverage

Schools operated by the Department of Education and non-government groups are spread across the State. Therefore, it is difficult to monitor visits and provide necessary support to implement the programme. Though coordinators individually monitor eleven zones in the State, most of them are stationed at IHRE headquarters and are simultaneously involved in other People's Watch programmes. As a result, it is difficult to find time to spend at the zonal office working with teachers. Visits to schools have only been possible once every quarter, if at all.

ADW/GTR schools are located in remote or forested areas where transportation is difficult. This has constraints on monitoring efforts.

Capacity-building

The programme needs to train or enhance the capacity of its staff in areas of planning and monitoring, a key component which is at present a weak link in achieving the programme objectives. Dependency on resource persons outside the project has to be minimized. All zonal coordinators should have expertise in at least one subject.

The human rights education programme could link the staff to the Child Welfare Center and Child Helpline, giving them insights on how to respond to human rights violations. The staff should also be trained on how to form human rights clubs and committees in schools and communities.

Resource Team

The volunteers in the second phase of the project acted as a resource team, training teachers and monitoring the programme at the district

level. This could have served as a template for the development of district level resource teams of volunteers and teachers who could monitor the programmes and provide regular feedback for teachers regarding rights and development issues. District-level or zonal-level resource teams have to be created.

Core Issues Not Addressed

The teaching modules still leave many important human rights issues unaddressed. These include issues of child abuse, trafficking of children, child welfare centers, and juvenile justice. The modules also fail to touch upon ways of redressing rights violations within the existing institutions of district and state administration. Building trust and confidence in the existing systems of justice would enable these institutions to function more effectively.

CHALLENGES

The Human Rights Education Programme which begun 10 years ago on an experimental basis is now introduced in schools across the length and breadth of the country as part of the National Programme on Human Rights Education in Schools. But the challenges faced in this process should also be registered. Only when there is clarity on the type of social structure and environs in which Human Rights Education has been introduced, it would be appropriate to speak of failure or success of the programme.

Systemic Challenges

The social structure in India has never been one where rights have been celebrated or even respected. Our social structure is intertwined by the varnashrama and rigid class structures. The rigid class structure designated a duty to each of the castes but bestowed rights upon none. This structure taught that doing one's duty (assigned to various castes) as dharma and therefore, held the view that social discipline was manifested through dharma. This principle which was justified by religious policies was never questioned by people. The practice was subjected to questioning occasionally and leaders who spoke of social change, abolishing caste system and caste domination began to emerge. Associations and movements began to take shape. Leaders of free India who realized the unequal situation that prevailed because of the casteist oppression gave us the Constitution with values like equality, democracy and secularism. This brought about a great revolution in

the Indian social structure. The Indian Constitution, the laws that were enacted consequently and the commissions that were created for the protection of human rights are gifts of the democratic state.

Caste dominance that is still vibrant, despite movements that advocate abolition of caste and promotion of equality, may find some justification, but what cannot be justified is the fact that the oppressed sections do not realize that they are being oppressed and their conditioned mentality to take oppression as a justified way of life. Age-old beliefs and faiths that validate this unequal state of affairs are yet to be broken.

Although the Government and its machinery have been established in the name of democracy, democracy is yet to become a way of life. Even after 60 years of independence, the practice of 'reservation' which was introduced with the intention of establishing social justice is still being questioned and made fun of. Even the courts are of the opinion that reservation should be rethought.

People who talk of rights are seen as problem-makers. The argument is that no matter how much clarity is given to the fact that the term 'rights' is inclusive of 'duties', people who speak of rights do not attribute much importance to duties. As long as the unequal state is justified and inequality is ingrained in the psyche of people, a discourse on human rights will be out of place. In such a social situation it is a great challenge to take human rights, which uphold equality, to the people through human rights education.

Note : Brahminic Hinduism categorizes the people into four "varnas" according to the body part of the divinity Purusha from which each group was created, and these categories define the group's social standing. Originally, this division was based on the professions and not birth.

System of Education

It is important to ask oneself about the kind of educational system in which human rights education is being introduced and if the system has the capacity to accept Human Rights Education in its totality.

The education system as followed in India is not an autonomous one but one which is an offshoot of the Indian social structure and has absorbed all its negative characteristics. None of the oppressive

characteristics are questioned by this educational system. This system is also a dual system, similar to the social system, divided for the affluent and the needy. It has been ingrained into the minds of people that this duality is valid and natural. There is no democracy in the schools run by the democratic state.

Schools are not accessible to some children; some are run with just a single teacher. Schools like most of the Adi Dravida Welfare Schools and Government Tribal Residential Schools where human rights education has been introduced do not even have basic facilities. How can quality education be expected from schools where even the most basic of facilities are denied to students? Many students are still not able to read their lessons. What use will the books on human rights be to them? IHRE provided them human rights lessons in cassettes. But to play them, wouldn't they need tape recorders? Posters were prepared. But where are the walls? Teachers who had become accustomed to an exam-oriented teaching method and making their students memorize their lessons were not interested in human rights education which was life-oriented. The basic 5-day training programme, the 2-day review programme and the summer training sessions did not create the expected changes in the teachers. IHRE is sparing no effort to motivate them in the right manner.

In many schools all classes do not have a teacher each. In some schools there is only one teacher for eight classes. When will these teachers get the time for human rights education? Even if there is a teacher for every class, the student-teacher ratio is such that classes cannot be taken efficiently. Only one teacher who is trained in human rights education should handle the classes in all the three years. But teachers are suddenly transferred to other schools and teachers who are not trained in teaching human rights are left to continue the modules.

The distance between the teachers, who have become middle class citizens with their salaries, and the economically poor students is high. Most of the teachers who behave in an authoritarian manner cannot do without a cane in their hands. How can it be expected that persons who emerge from a society that does not have a democratic outlook to transform overnight into teachers who teach human rights?

The experience that the Institute had while introducing human rights

education in Pondicherry schools has to be mentioned here. Changes to the module were demanded four times and when it was felt that the changes that were made were destroying the content of human rights, IHRE opted to suspend the programme there. The Educational Officer of Pondicherry said, "The module introduced in Government Schools should be a module of the Government and not that of a movement." Such problems are encountered while attempting to introduce human rights education into a formal system.

No matter how much dedication is put into training the teachers, who have imbibed the values prevailing in the society, they are reluctant to accept the values of human rights. The fact is that the values in this unequal society are so deeply ingrained in them.

Diversity

In the preparation of modules too there is a great challenge. Modules that suit schools that do not have much quality and schools that are 'quality schools' have to be prepared. Since there are rural and urban schools and now that human rights education is being taken forward by the Institute to various States, the lessons have to be prepared bearing in mind the diversity in social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Human rights may be common for all but one has to remember that the forms of human rights violations are never similar.

Bureaucracy

While imparting human rights education in Government schools, even with the permission of the Government, problems are created by implementing authorities. For example, the Chief Minister of Pondicherry agreed very enthusiastically to the implementation of human rights education in the schools in the Union Territory of Pondicherry; his felicitation message along with his photograph was included in the module meant for the students; the Secretary for School Education draped a ceremonial shawl around the shoulders of the Director of the Institute of Human Rights Education and said, "You may consider HRE implemented in the schools of Pondicherry, from now on;" but a Joint Secretary of School Education came up with new problems every time and has caused the programme to be suspended. The Government that granted permission has not asked why the

programme has not been implemented yet. The authorities too have not shown any interest in this regard. The Institute has not been able to proceed with the programme there even though its precious time and money have been spent in conducting the 5-day training programmes for teachers.

When attempts were being made to introduce human rights education in the Adi Dravida Welfare schools of the Government of Tamil Nadu, the then Commissioner welcomed this programme. But the said Commissioner was transferred even while the initial preparatory meetings were in progress. Before the Order for implementation of this programme could be passed Directors and Commissioners changed five times. Every time a new Director or Commissioner came in, the programme had to be explained anew. The amount of time that is taken to implement the programme increases because of this. Also, it has never been easy to get permission to conduct training for teachers, for the review meeting and for the headmasters' meeting. The delayed actions of Government officials have caused a weakening in the process of implementation of human rights education. When a stage where is reached where all think that the authorities have gained a level of clarity on human rights education and there would not be problems in the implementation thereafter, the concerned authorities are transferred.

It was also seen that when Government's permission was sought and when the programme was taken to schools, some headmasters did not cooperate. It is not possible to implement this programme in schools without the complete cooperation of the headmasters of the schools. They are under the impression that the programme is being conducted by someone with a few teachers, overlooking them. In some schools modules were distributed because of this. Since the cooperation of the headmasters is crucial for the success of the programme, separate training sessions were conducted for the headmasters and their support was sought. This is not the case of Government schools alone. In private schools too, the administrators and headmasters pose problems.

Educational Values

Education has been commercialized and the emphasis is no longer on promoting human values. In such an educational scenario, already

introduced classes like moral education and value education are being implemented as mere rituals. When competition, individualistic growth and profit alone are seen as objectives what could be the value of human rights education? In most schools education is exam-oriented. In a social structure where exams and marks obtained are given prominence, all-round growth and leadership skills have taken a backseat. When humaneness, social concern and equality have become inappropriate values for today's educational society, what value can the *value* of human rights be given?

Sustainability

People's Watch has designed this project to be people-oriented. It has also sought to make IHRE a model-cum-demonstration project that is ready for both replication and expansion. However, given the poor human rights record in Tamil Nadu and the prevalence of children's rights violations (especially against young girls and dalits), the IHRE needs to focus on the sustainability of human rights education in schools. It is essential to view the project from the perspective of Tamil Nadu's oppressed groups, who require long-term solutions.

Commitment of Stakeholders

Given the above issues, one of IHRE's challenges was to ensure a built-in mechanism for sustainability, independent of support from People's Watch. To improve sustainability, it was important to build confidence among the stakeholders – CRI, ADW/GTR, and CSI – that human rights education was useful and had visible impacts on everyone involved, particularly the students and their families. Institutional commitment to the issue would ensure the sustainability of the programme. The programme should not end when the initial phases end. It must become a regular part of curricula in schools.

Continued Support from IHRE

Once the key players/stakeholders have realized that human rights education is too valuable to be terminated, there will be efforts to continue the programme. The human rights education programme should be clearly ingrained in the minds of educationists and policy makers so that its progress continues. The role of IHRE should turn towards providing technical support and capacity-building. IHRE should ensure that textbooks are reviewed and that the concepts of

human rights education are incorporated for the program's continuation in all schools in the State.

Sense of Ownership

Though the project was initiated by People's Watch, the emphasis is on helping the Government, elected bodies, civil society and communities to assume ownership of the programme and review the rights situation in schools and communities. Though there is now a greater sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment from the Social Welfare Department, CSI, and CRI institutions, this trend must continue even after People's Watch withdraws from the programme. In order to build a sense of ownership, the programme needs regular review at the community level. The programme should also be calibrated to tie human rights education in with the actual situation on the ground.

Integration of Lessons into Ongoing Work

The goal of reviewing the modules is to ensure that feedback from various stakeholders is incorporated in the modules as well as in the capacity-building programmes. This process has helped to create innovative thinking among teachers and has helped to shape the modules. The Department of State Education Research and Training (DSERT) and District Institution of Education and Training (DIET) need to be involved in the preparation of teaching modules. Their feedback could help to evolve the IHRE concept, and their involvement might influence them to introduce human rights education textbooks.

Institutionalizing Processes

Though the programme with ADW/GTR schools has been successful it has not been institutionalized by the Government. Mere circulars alone cannot institutionalize the process. The project needs to converge with the Department of Education and Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Rights Education Accepted as Norm

IHRE needs to ensure continuous awareness and social mobilization campaigns among teachers, students and parents. Elected representatives and civil society groups publicly admit that child labour is an avoidable evil, that education is the right of every child, and that caste hierarchies should be abolished to allow everyone to be treated equally. Ultimately, the community itself will work towards establishing

these goals as social norms, even in the absence of the initiators, provided the programme reaches every student in every school.

Support Structures to be Institutionalized

Necessary structures, such as children's rights clubs within schools and community rights monitoring groups affiliated with local village and municipal levels, need to be institutionalized to overcome societal apathy.

Community to Claim Right to Education

In order to ensure that every child in a given community receives education, the school needs to provide quality education and the community needs to be aware and be empowered to claim its rights. As a step in this direction every school in the project area should display on their notice board the details of welfare provisions, such as those regarding scholarships, uniforms and books. CBOs need to be empowered to demand their rights from schools. If every child is in school, human rights education can reach all of them. IHRE has focused entirely on schools, leaving outside the programme's reach the large number of children who do not attend school and are most vulnerable to human rights violations.

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Going Beyond Tamil Nadu

At the end of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education in 2004, the UN had organised a consultation in Geneva, for which Mr Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director of People's Watch, was invited and he contributed to the development of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education.

The World Conference on Human Rights considered 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). The report on the Decade's Mid-term evaluation (2000, UN Doc. A/55/360), the study on the follow-up to the Decade (2003, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/101) and the report on achievements and shortcomings of the Decade (2004, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2004/93), compiled by the Office of the High Commissioner - in cooperation with UNESCO - on the basis of the inputs received from relevant actors, expressed the need to continue an international global framework for human rights education beyond the Decade.

In 2004, the General Assembly proclaimed, 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.

The stated objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education are:

- a) to provide a common collective framework of action for all relevant actors;

- b) to promote a common understanding, based on international instruments, of basic principles and methodologies for human rights education;
- c) to enhance partnership and cooperation at all levels;
- d) to support existing human rights education programmes and provide an incentive to continue/expand them and to develop new ones; and
- e) To ensure a focus on human rights education within the international agenda.

In the First Phase (2005-2009) a Plan of Action for Human Rights Education in the Primary and Secondary School System was drawn up. It complements the concept of education for sustainable development as adopted in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The World Summit sees education as a tool for addressing important questions such as rural development, health care, community involvement, HIV/AIDS, the environment, 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.” The World Programme for Human Rights Education creates synergies with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and combining efforts to address issues of common concern.

National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools in India



The World Programme for Human Rights Education mandated by the United Nations wings the state and civil society organizations to introduce Human Rights Education in the school system. In pursuance of the objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, the IHRE has initiated a National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools in India from 2005. The National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools strives to introduce human rights education in the schools of at least 12 States, apart from

Tamil Nadu, during 2005-2008. These states are Kerala, Pondicherry, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Tripura, Rajasthan, Bihar and Delhi.



The stated objectives of the National Programme for Human Rights Education in schools are:

1. to build a universal culture of human rights;
2. to advocate for the inclusion of Human Rights Education in curriculum for schools students;
3. to promote Human Rights Education in Schools;
4. to sensitise various strategic groups involved in Human Rights Education such as parents, teachers, headmasters, education department officials, etc., and
5. to develop teacher training manuals and student modules for Human Rights Education.

This programme is very unique because:

- It is special for the children for it is not part of their regular curriculum.
- It aims at the all-round development of children in terms of social, spiritual, moral, and cultural development and is value-based as against partial development of individuals in the existing education system.
- This programme is not only about teaching human values as part of its curriculum but also of human rights itself as a value.
- While the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) came to an end without much success in India, the United Nations has come up with the World Programme for Human Rights Education with a special focus in Primary and Secondary schools from 2005 to 2009. India, being a signatory of both, has committed that human rights education is introduced in all schools. This initiative which aims at building up a culture of human rights will serve as a model for the state governments and the central government and also show to them

that it is really a feasible programme.

- This programme will reach more than 250,000 children who are economically poor, socially backward and oppressed. It is they who need this type of education for empowerment.



- The special education programme on child rights will not only create awareness among children and reflect reality but also provide them positive stories, which will give birth to hope in their life.
- This type of education reaches 250,000 families through the 250,000 children engaged in the programme, making it a unique programme that gives the children as well as their families an opportunity to become aware of something that was denied to them so far in their life.

IHRE's Role

The National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools is



taken forward by the Institute of Human Rights Education of People's Watch with the support, solidarity, cooperation and partnership of various organizations / institutions in different states as main holder or

partner of the programme in their respective States. They are as follows:

State	Partnering organization	Chief Functionary
1. Gujarat	Centre for Social Justice	Ms. Nupur
2. Orissa	PECUC	Mr. Ranjan Mohanti
3. Karnataka	SICHREM	Mr. Ashok Mathew

4. Kerala	SICHREM	Mr. Ashok Mathew
5. West Bengal	Loreto Day Schools, Sealdah	Sr. Cyril
6. Andhra Pradesh	Peace & Justice Commission	Fr. Thomas Pallithanam
7. Pondicherry	Suspended	
8. Chattisgarh	Hidayatullah National Law University	Prof. Shanthakumar
9. Tripura	Government Law College, Agartala	Prof. K. K. Roy
10. Rajasthan	Sophia Girls College, Ajmer	Sr. Serena
11. Delhi	Suspended	
12. Bihar	Asian Development Research Institute, Patna	Dr. Shaibal Gupta
13. Madhya Pradesh	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	
14. Maharashtra	SABRANG, Mumbai	Ms. Teesta Setalvad

The Programme was formally launched on November 26, 2005 in Madurai by Ms. Elena Ippoliti, representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



The following table shows the number of schools covered, number of teachers trained and number of students who are studying human rights education in schools in each State.

National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools

State	Schools	Students	Teachers
1 Gujarat	91	8450	110
2 Orissa	120	8300	114
3 West Bengal	50	8290	61

4	Tripura	62	3500	68
5	Chattisgarh	36	3000	36
6	Rajasthan	35	3200	40
7	Andhra Pradesh	70	4500	65
8	Kerala	55	8500	56
9	Karnataka	127	12300	140
10	Bihar	55	7000	70
11	Tamil Nadu	1860	1,74,057	2635
12	Maharashtra(To be started)	50	6000	60
13	Madhya Pradesh(To be started)	50	7000	65
Total		2540	2,54,097	3520



In every State, various stages were followed prior to teaching human rights. After the identification of the collaborating partners and state coordinators, various actions such as State Level Consultations, constitution of

State Advisory Committees, State Implementing Committees and State Resource Teams, identification of schools, training of the State Resource Teams, Meetings of Headmasters, Training of Teachers, State Launch of HRE, translation and printing of modules and so on were undertaken. Simultaneously, efforts were made to get the approval of the government for introducing HRE in schools. Advocacy at the national and state levels is an ongoing activity so that HRE becomes an integral part of the regular school curriculum. While HRE is being taught, regular school visits, teachers' review meetings, summer training for teachers, celebrations of important days, interactions with headmasters, teachers and pupils are carried out to facilitate and strengthen the process.

Experiences in interactions with governments in different states vary. For example, in Karnataka and Orissa the governments have been enthusiastic partners from the



beginning, while in Gujarat and Rajasthan, ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party, IHRE was wary of directly seeking the support of the Governments. In these two states, the programme is implemented by a civil society organization and a reputed women's college respectively, bringing in interested private schools. Even in these states government support is gradually being won.

Designing the Content

Human Rights Education is offered in Classes VI, VII and VIII. The Institute has brought out three modules on HRE for the use of students and teachers in classes VI to VIII. Of the three modules, the first is an introduction to Human Rights, the second is exclusively on Child Rights and the third deals with Discrimination. These modules were initially written in Tamil and are now translated into English and other Indian languages – Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Bengali, Gujarati and Hindi – to enable the expansion of this programme to these other states and its eventual spread to the rest of the country. The writing of each language module is entrusted to a group of educational, human rights and language experts of the state. Care is taken to see that in each state the original module is not mechanically translated, but is dynamically adapted and rewritten to reflect the local reality and is relevant to local human rights issues.

The ultimate quest of IHRE through this Programme is the integration of human rights education with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme SSA, a programme of the Government of India to encourage universal elementary education.

Human Rights Education to the Community

With so many deeply engrained social inequalities, dismaying forms of discrimination and a high level of acceptance of domestic violence without much demur and violence against children, the only way to bring an end to human rights violations and the other social evils is by promoting a human rights culture in society among the common people. Unless values of human rights and dignity, equality and non-discrimination are imbibed by them, the vicious circle of discrimination and violence will persist. This objective will be pursued through cultural forms, training and small booklets on various human rights topics and issues. Human rights education to the community will be closely linked to other programmes of People's Watch, especially

Citizens for Human Rights Movement (CHRM), which already has 1200 human rights cells throughout Tamil Nadu. (A Human Rights Cell is a group of 15-20 people coming together in the communities.)

Conclusion

From the beginning of the IHRE pilot programme, the organization was very clear that the government should eventually operate the programme and introduce human rights education in all schools. Over the last ten years, the programme has grown from 9 to 1,000 schools. Human rights education is on the verge of becoming part of the regular school curriculum. The outcome of the initiative is quite visible from the case studies presented in this document.

Viewed from the objectives set by the UDHR, the programme has succeeded in addressing the requirements of all stakeholders – the United Nations, the Government of India, the marginalized communities, and, most importantly, the teachers and students involved in the programme.

The efforts taken by the Institute of Human Rights Education over the years are bearing fruits not only in Tamil Nadu but also in other parts of the country as well. The hope is that these efforts will result in building up a culture of human rights among the future generations. This is a humble beginning towards creating a violation-free society in India.

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Institute of Human Rights Education

The Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE) is established with the goal of building up of human rights culture in society through education and training. During UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), a pilot program on human rights education was initiated in schools in Chennai in the year 1997. It paved the way for the expansion of this programme in a variety of schools with different backgrounds.

At the end of the UN Decade for HRE, the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-2007) was introduced by the United Nations making it obligatory for the state and civil society organizations to introduce Human Rights Education in the school system. In pursuance of the objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, the IHRE has initiated a National Programme for Human Rights Education in Schools in India from 2005 in the following states in addition to Tamil Nadu namely, Orissa, West Bengal, Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Tripura and further to Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra from 2008.

S. No	State	State Partners	Schools	Students	Teachers
1	Gujarat	Centre for Social Justice, Ahmedabad	91	8450	110
2	Orissa	People's Cultural Centre, Bhubaneswar	120	8300	114
3	West Bengal	Loreto School, Sealdah, Kolkata	50	8290	61
4	Tripura	Government Law College, Agartala	62	3500	68
5	Chattisgarh	Hidayatullah National Law University, Raipur	36	3000	36
6	Rajasthan	Sophia Girls College, Ajmer	35	3200	40
7	Andhra Pradesh	Justice and Peace Commission, Ravulapalayam	70	4500	65
8	Kerala	SICHREM, Trivandrum	55	8500	56
9	Karnataka	SICHREM, Bangalore	127	12300	140
10	Bihar	Asian Development Research Institute, Patna	55	7000	70
11	Tamil Nadu	IHRE	1860	1,74,057	2635
12	Maharashtra	SABRANG, Mumbai	50	6000	60
13	Madhya Pradesh	National Law Institute University, Bhopal	50	7000	65
Total			2540	2,54,097	3520

In the past ten years, about 2,54,097 children from 2540 schools have been reached and about 3520 teachers have been trained for this purpose.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and National Human Rights Commission has commended the work and appreciated IHRE for introducing such a programme.



Institute of Human Rights Education,
6, Vallabai Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai-625 002
Ph: 91-452-2531874, 2539520 Fax: 91-452-2531874
E-Mail: ihre@pwn.org/info@pwn.org Website: www.pwn.org

