



Input for report on 5th Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

Equitas, International Centre for Human Rights Education

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Equitas is a Canadian-based organisation that works to advance equality, social justice and respect for human dignity through transformative human rights education programs in Canada and around the world. Our Theory of Change adopts a holistic approach to advancing human rights and gender equality through human rights education (knowledge & capacity-building), movement building, and influencing decision-makers.

Equitas provides knowledge, skills and tools to support the empowerment of groups that are subject to discrimination, exclusion and other forms of human rights violations, particularly women, children and youth.

The fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020-2024) focuses on human rights education for youth. Equitas believes that the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education should **continue focusing on youth**. Youth who are aware of their rights are better able to think critically about the impact of their behaviors, problem solve, and take action to promote greater respect and inclusion in their communities. When equipped with skills and knowledge, they can take on leadership roles on issues that are important to them and can engage community members and decision-makers in dialogue to ensure greater promotion and protection of everyone's human rights.

The fifth phase could emphasize, as a thematic human rights issue, the importance of **gender equality** and the inclusion of a gender **transformative/feminist approach** to HRE, which:

- **Examines** gender norms, power imbalances, roles, stereotypes, dynamics, and the different impacts of these on women, men, girls, boys, and 2S and non-binary people. Special attention is given to the impacts on women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people.
- **Considers and addresses** the different issues, barriers, conditions, priorities and needs of women, girls and boys, men and 2S and non-binary people. Special consideration is given to the specific issues, barriers, conditions, priorities and needs of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people.
- **Tackles the root causes** of gender inequalities, aiming at challenging patriarchal systems, deconstructing and transforming gender power imbalances and harmful gender norms.

Human rights education for and with youth with a focus on gender equality will contribute to their long-term empowerment and lead to the adoption of more favourable and egalitarian social norms.

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework based on international human rights standards that sets the achievement of all human rights as the objective of social actions. Human rights education is a social action that has a fundamental role to play in the realization of human rights. Therefore, HRE with youth as a focus on gender equality should be guided by HRBA, which emphasizes PANEL: **P**articipation, **A**ccountability, **N**on-discrimination, **E**mpowerment and **L**ink to human rights. HRBA provides an internationally recognized common standard of achievement for social actions.

Participation: When focusing on youth and gender equality, using a HRBA and gender transformative approach, we need to reflect on the barriers and strategies to encourage the participation of a broad spectrum of youth and the impacts of harmful gender norms to youth participation, particularly to including, poor and disadvantaged youth, youth who are part of minorities, Indigenous peoples, youth living with disabilities, LGBTQI+ youth and young women and girls. In addition, an intersectional approach needs to be taken to understand diverse experiences of oppression in society and how these can converge to impact youth's participation differently.

Accountability: It is also important that duty bearers be identified and held accountable for the violation or neglect of young people's human rights. HRBA challenges the power imbalance between duty bearers and rights holders. Human rights education on the issues faced by young people and the roles and responsibilities of duty bearers at different levels (municipal, regional, national, including responsibility holders, such as parents and guardians) to address these needs also to be part of the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education so that duty bearers can be allies in the promotion, protection and respect of human rights for diverse youth and gender equality.

Non-discrimination: HRBA gives particular attention to non- discrimination, gender equality, equity and marginalized groups, including young people. HRBA requires that the question of who is marginalized be answered locally and that they are not seen merely as beneficiaries and passive actors but as rights holders and active and vital actors of change.

Empowerment: We also need to support rights holders (youth) the capacity and the power to claim their human rights and not only hold duty bearers accountable but also make sure duty bearers have the capacity to know and meet their obligations to advance human rights and gender equality.

Links to human rights: The use of human rights standards in our actions with youths should be the foundation for all work in all sectors and in all phases of programming, from planning to implementation, with the goal of promoting human rights and human dignity for all. The fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education should ensure that knowledge of the international human rights system as well as the regional and national human rights systems are at the centre of human rights education initiatives, especially instruments used when working on the rights of youth.