

June 2014

**IHRC Comments on Draft
Plan of Action for the Third
Phase (2015 – 2019) of the
World Programme for
Human Rights Education**

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) was established under statute in 2000 with a mandate to work to ensure that the human rights of everyone in the State are fully realised and protected in law and practice. It is recognised by the United Nations (UN) as Ireland's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) with "A" status. Its mandate includes the promotion of a culture of human rights in Irish society that respects the dignity of every person. The IHRC considers that human rights education (HRE) is central to building that culture.¹

Following on from the IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE),² we are pleased to contribute comments on the 'Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase (2015 – 2019) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education'.

Summary of Comments

- Continuity of First and Second Phase including higher education including teachers and educators, and human rights training for civil servants, law enforcement officials and the military.
- Focus on stocktaking and embedding work already underway to a systematic or meaningful level in relevant organisations.
- Support for inclusion of journalists and media professionals under WPHRE.
- Need for national strategy and coordination of WPHRE through government commitment.

The IHRC is pleased to find that the majority of the key recommendations from our submission were incorporated into the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase, namely, continued focus on embedding the Second Phase and stocktaking on progress to date.³ As noted in the submission, the IHRC considers that there is still considerable work to be done to organise Human Rights Education (HRE) in the sectors targeted in the First and Second Phase because of their size and diverse needs. At this point, it is necessary to take stock of progress, particularly as not enough Member States have adopted National Action Plans on Human Rights Education (including Ireland).⁴ With this in mind, the IHRC welcomes the focus on 'strengthening the implementation of the first two phases' and the recognition of the need for continuity between the First Phase, Second Phase and Third Phase by including teachers and educators, and civil

¹ Further information on the IHRC can be found in IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013 or online at: www.ihrc.ie

² IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

³ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

⁴ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel as continuing priority sectors.⁵ The IHRC would suggest the OHCHR reconsider including the Judiciary as a logical extension of this priority group.⁶

The Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase ambitiously expands the educational reach to target media professionals and journalists. The IHRC welcomes this development but would emphasise the importance of continuity with the First and Second Phases. The Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase in reality encompasses two action plans: one for continued work with teachers and educators, and civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel and one for the new area of work with media professionals and journalists. As an interim measure for this work, the IHRC suggest targeting press officers within the Civil and Public Service for both training and collaboration with the wider media sector.

In contributing comments on the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase, the IHRC has chosen to map its response on the main sections guided by the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase, reaffirming its support for the definition of HRE espoused by the WPHRE and the principles that should underpin HRE activities.

I. Introduction

A. Context and Definition

The IHRC has adopted the definition of HRE set out in the WPHRE and it informs its approach to human rights education regardless of the sector it is working with.

“Human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights. Effective human rights education not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms that protect them, but also develops the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life. Human rights education also fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold human rights for all members of society.”⁷

The IHRC is mindful of the above in the context of the definition put forward in the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase which provides that *“human rights education can be defined as any learning, education, training and information efforts aimed at building a universal culture of human rights”*. The important element included in this definition is found as a separate point

⁵ See Rationale for continuity in IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

⁶ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

⁷ UNESCO/OHCHR Booklet on the Plan of action for the Second Phase of the World Programme on Human Rights Education, 2010, p.2.

regarding, knowledge and skills, values, attitudes and behaviour, and action. To uphold the strength of this definition, we would suggest clearly linking the two from the offset.⁸

B. Objectives of the WPHRE

The IHRC agrees with the objectives laid out in the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase. Towards the aim of highlighting successful practices (f.), the IHRC would recall its previous submission which provided information on HRE initiatives and projects in great detail including: a study mapping the provision of HRE in Ireland in schools, higher education institutions, the civil and public service, the legal professions and among community and voluntary organisations which was published in 2011 and serves as a baseline study;⁹ Express Yourself – Young People promoting Human Rights in Ireland which contains resources to support teachers engage students within the secondary school system on human rights in Ireland;¹⁰ and a comprehensive Human Rights Education and Training Project (HRETP) which provides tailored training for the Irish civil and public service.¹¹

C. Principles for human rights education activities

The IHRC considers that the principles of Human Rights Education outlined in the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase, is in line with the development, direction and expected outcomes of our human rights education and training programmes, particularly the recommendation of participatory pedagogies (h.) and tailoring design and delivery to be relevant to ‘daily life of learners’ (j). The IHRC also supports the emphasis on developing capacity of ‘duty-bearers’, (e.) in particular government officials, who have an obligation to protect, respect and fulfil human rights in their jurisdiction.

II. The Third Phase (2015 – 2019)

A. Scope

The IHRC welcomes the continued focus on teachers and educators, and civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel as continuing priority sectors. The IHRC considers the scope of the third phase to be ambitious, but cautiously welcomes the inclusion of journalists and media professionals. With regard to strengthening efforts to advance the implementation of the First and Second Phases, the IHRC welcomes the inclusion of a strong focus on “applying and strengthening sound educational methodologies based on good practice and assessed through continued evaluation” (13.d).

⁸ Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, pg.2., para. 4.

⁹ IHRC *Human Rights Education in Ireland – An Overview*, July 2011.

¹⁰ Further information on Express Yourself can be found at: <http://www.ihrc.ie/cspe/exhibition.html>

¹¹ Further information on the HRETP can be found at: www.ihrc.ie/training

The IHRC's HRETP is pleased to contribute to sharing good practices and lessons learned (13.c), for example, through an International Conference on Human Rights Education and Training for the Civil and Public Service jointly organised with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Methodology, Education and Training Unit, which was held in Dublin, Ireland in December 2013. The conference brought together approximately 90 participants from over 30 countries worldwide to share and showcase good practice in human rights education and training for the civil and public service. The conference also aimed to encourage and support the design and implementation of human rights education and training for the civil and public service in accordance with the WPHRE. The breakdown of interest groups at the conference consisted of law enforcement officials, teachers and other education personnel, Ministry personnel, health professionals and local authorities. The post conference report will shortly be available online at www.ihrc.ie/training

Though the IHRC is pleased with the ongoing focus on educators in the formal and non-formal sectors (13.b), we would like to see a stronger emphasis maintained on civil servants including law enforcement officials and the military as per Second Phase of WPHRE. Our rationale for this continued focus is recorded in our previous submission.¹²

Specific Objectives

The IHRC approves of the specific objectives outlined in the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase and in particular welcomes the focus on strengthening implementation from First and Second Phases(15.a). With regard to journalists and media professionals (15.b), the IHRC considers this area to be an interesting and important expansion point for its HRE activities. The IHRC would recommend including as a specific objective in relation to establishing policies and practices within media agencies, to ensure an environment where human rights education is supported throughout and the linkage between media related to the civil and public service and teachers and educators to continue to strengthen objectives of the First and Second Phases of the WPHRE. For example, media centres and press offices within Government could be targeted for training and collaboration in reaching wider media agencies.

B. Action to strengthen implementation

Strategies

With regards to action on the specific objective of strengthening implementation of the First and Second Phases, the IHRC is pleased to note a major focus on evaluation and assessment of work already undertaken in order to advance and consolidate current efforts. We agree with

¹² See Rationale for continuity in IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

the understanding that “good practice in human rights education includes learner centred, participatory, interactive, experience-based, and practice-based techniques, taking into account cultural considerations” (27.) and that “evaluation of a human rights training course is not a matter of simply asking participants to fill out an evaluation questionnaire at the end” (28.).

This is the approach taken by the IHRC’s HRETP who adhere to best practice in human rights education monitoring and evaluation by employing external evaluators to impartially assess all training.¹³ The IHRC in part, uses the evidence gleaned from training evaluations to make the case at national level for the development of a comprehensive approach to human rights education and training of the civil and public sector.¹⁴

The final outcome of “high quality and sustained HRE and trainings” (18.g) is a key objective of the IHRC’s HRETP as it enters its third stage, in parallel to the WPHRE. While the HRETP is currently solely a programme of the IHRC, the longer term ambition is to support the institutionalisation of human rights education and training across the civil and public sector including law enforcement and the military with corresponding policies.¹⁵ The directions suggested in the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase to achieve fulfilment of this goal are useful markers to meet, including but not restricted to: new or revised laws and policies; increased coherence between various HRE components, such as training curriculum, teaching and learning content and practice and policies; the expansion of the presence of human rights education in curriculum and related training; improvements in the quality of existing HRE programming and trainings; increased human and financial support; effective monitoring and assessment processes in place (18.a – f).

The IHRC welcomes the retention of a human rights-based approach to learning(19.) and the continued inclusion of formal and non-formal sector training (20.) as strategies for advancing implementation. The IHRC supports the inclusion of the extract from the First Phase WPHRE, Section E, on how to go about developing training policy, curriculum, and methodologies (22., 23., 24.) and to these being tailored in accordance to contextual needs and target group (21.).

As an example of Training for Trainers programme in practice (22.iii), the IHRC is happy to share the experience of the HRETP’s ‘Training for Trainers’ course with the Irish Prison Service. The training pack was developed by the IHRC with significant collaboration with the Irish Prison Service. It was designed to train and support Training Liaison Officers (TLOs) to in turn deliver short introductions to human rights to Prison Officers and auxiliary staff across the country. The Training for Trainers programme which included the training pack was delivered by the IHRC

¹³ Further information on the IHRC’s HRETP evaluation is available as an appendix.

¹⁴ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

¹⁵ See Section D. Action Promoting human rights training for civil servants, law enforcement officials and the military in IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

over five days in February and April 2013 and the training was attended by 21 TLOs within the Irish Prison Service. To date, 1,700 Prison Officers have received the introduction to human rights delivered by the prison service training officers.¹⁶

The IHRC would caution against explicitly including ‘rights and responsibilities’ in the human rights curriculum for educators (23.viii). This model of responsibility-led teaching of human rights can be detrimental to the purpose of human rights education as it can easily lead to misunderstanding and prioritisation of responsibility at the expense of rights.¹⁷ Many HRE specialists refrain from using reference to ‘rights and responsibilities’ in relation to children’s rights, as children are not responsible for upholding the human rights framework. The IHRC believes that this terminology reinforces an inaccurate view of human rights by linking rights and responsibilities.

The IHRC finds that “[f]ostering dialogue, cooperation, networking and information-sharing among relevant stakeholders” (29.) is achieved through the training and events such as Training for Trainers, Thematic Seminars or International Conferences which bring together key stakeholders from across the civil and public service including Local Authorities, law enforcement officials and health professionals. These groups of stakeholders are connected not only through events and training, but through a specifically designed training microsite which has resources and information of relevance for the civil and public service, see: www.ihrc.ie/training The IHRC is particularly interested in expanding its online reach with regard to human rights education and training and has over the past year launched a pilot eLearning module with An Garda Síochána (the Irish police). Consequently, as the IHRC begins to develop an online learning platform, the suggestion of creating electronic platforms (29.) is of particular interest in that the new dedicated learning platform could provide an opportunity for discussion groups to allow stakeholders share information and experience. However we caution that eLearning will usually only reach a level of human rights awareness rather than a full human rights education programme and as such, emphasis should be given to programmes that focus on attitudinal and transformative change as per good practice in HRE.

(f) Furthering the integration of human rights education and training into school and training curricula

¹⁶ Further information on Training for Trainers is available here:

<http://www.ihrc.ie/training/training/trainingfortrai.html>

¹⁷ Waldron, F., Ruane, B., Oberman, R. (forthcoming). Practice as Prize: Citizenship education in two primary classrooms in Ireland. *The Journal of Social Science Education* accessed here:

<https://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/chrce/documents/PracticeasPrize.pdf>

The status of human rights training in curricula in the Irish civil and public service remains poor.¹⁸ The IHRC appreciates the guidance and suggestions on how to increase human rights into curricula [31. (a – e)] but would note that progress in this area has been slow and the IHRC has encountered some resistance to formalising human rights education in a cross cutting way. It may therefore be unrealistic to expect significant change in this area without further commitment from civil and public service agencies to embedding human rights education across the learning and working environment. This is an ongoing process and one which requires attention. For this reason, the IHRC suggest more firmly focusing on the civil and public service in terms of the continued process of embedding work achieved in the First and Second Phases.

2. Actors

The IHRC would agree with the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase statement that the main responsibility for advancing implementation of human rights education during the Third Phase rests with the relevant government ministries, including local government (32., 33.). The IHRC is encouraged to see this clear statement but would recommend renewed priority be given to the development of national action plans on human rights education and sustainable human rights education and training programmes in the absence of much advancement in this area.¹⁹

D. Action to promote human rights training for journalists and media professionals

The IHRC welcomes the introduction of a new area of focus for HRE activities proposed by the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase and in particular recognises the role of media in the realisation of cultural rights. The IHRC recognises the opportunity to link media related to the civil and public service and teachers and educators to continue to strengthen objectives of the First and Second Phases of the WPHRE. The IHRC supports the general outline for action to promote human rights training for journalists and media professionals and would comment on a small number of points.

Insofar as strategies for implementation are concerned, the IHRC highlights the success of training of trainers models [43.(e)] in its own work with the civil and public service, mentioned above.

Towards creating an enabling environment in which human rights are practiced, the IHRC agrees that “civil servants, in particular military and law enforcement personnel, should be trained on human rights standards regarding freedom of information, transparency, whistleblower protection and protection of journalistic sources”. To this end, the IHRC aims to

¹⁸ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

¹⁹ IHRC Submission on the 3rd Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2013.

include more of a focus on these topics in training delivered through the HRETP to the civil and public servants, especially to the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána.

An additional comment on the ‘enabling environment’ is that the IHRC would suggest the inclusion of human rights events, competitions, awards, scholarships and prizes to “encourage the recognition and celebration of human rights achievements”²⁰ in the media sphere (50.).

With regards to ‘Actors’ of this section of the Draft Plan of Action, the IHRC as the NHRI is pleased to be counted among other actors in sharing responsibility for the design and delivery of appropriate human rights education strategies and activities. The IHRC welcomes close collaboration in this area with other relevant stakeholders.

III. Processes for National Implementation

A. Steps for implementation

The planned steps identified in the WPHRE for the national process of planning, implementing and evaluating action in relation to the Plan of Action is an ambitious one (58., 59., 60.). Although the IHRC welcomes the suggested process, we could caution that without government commitment to provide capacity and priority to fully establish the objectives of the First and Second Phases, this process is unlikely to be fulfilled. Each step consists of tasks that require clearly identified relevant bodies to take responsibility for the role.

The IHRC would comment that the focus on “interventions leading to impact giving priority to measures that will secure sustainable change vis-à-vis ad hoc activities” (59.) may not be the best way to embed and strengthen human rights education and training. Likewise, identifying “concrete products” (59.) as outputs may not be the most meaningful result for human rights education, though certainly the sentiment of ‘having something to show for your effort’ applies equally to HRE as any other area.

IV. National Coordination and Evaluation

As noted above, it is important to identify and establish who is responsible for the implementation of the Draft Plan of Action for the Third Phase. To this end, Section IV on national coordination and evaluation clearly states that “governments should identify a relevant department as a focal point for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national strategy.” (61.) As the Irish government has not designated a specific unit responsible for coordinating implementation of either the First or Second Phase, the IHRC welcomes the encouragement and support in the Draft Plan of Action for governments to create a national focal point and resource centre. It is envisaged that this same body would be

²⁰ World Programme for Human Rights Education, Second Phase, Plan of Action, p. 37, para. 45.(b).

required to liaise with national agencies responsible for drawing up country reports to the UN human rights mechanisms as well as submit the final report to OHCHR in early 2020. Before this progress can be made, it is essential that the Irish government identifies a unit responsible for human rights education; otherwise no such action can be expected.

V. International cooperation and support

The IHRC welcomes the intention of international cooperation and assistance to be directed at strengthening national capacities with regard to national strategies for human rights education and training and looks forward to working in collaboration with some of the organisations listed. For example, the IHRC's HRETP collaborated with the World Bank's Nordic Trust to deliver training on Freedom of Information and give support and advice on a new project in Vietnam based on human rights training for the civil and public service.