

Human Rights Education in the Primary and Secondary School Systems
1st Phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

**UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY COORDINATING
COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background

The international community has expressed consensus on the importance of human rights education as a means to greater ends, such as achieving empowerment, enhancing participation, promoting equality and contributing to conflict prevention and resolution.

With a view to encouraging the elaboration and implementation of human rights education initiatives at the national level, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 59/113A of 10 December 2004, proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE)¹ to begin on 1 January 2005.

The Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme, dedicated to the integration of human rights education in primary and secondary school systems, was adopted by the General Assembly on 14 July 2005 by resolution 59/113B. This resolution, inter alia, *encouraged* “all States to develop initiatives within the World Programme and, in particular, to implement, within their capabilities, the Plan of Action” (para. 2) and appealed to “relevant organs, bodies or agencies of the United Nations system, as well as all other international and regional intergovernmental and non-

¹ The World Programme fosters the following human rights education principles (see Plan of Action, para. 8): (a) Promote the interdependence, indivisibility and universality of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development; (b) Foster respect for and appreciation of differences, and opposition to discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, physical or mental condition, and on other bases; (c) Encourage analysis of chronic and emerging human rights problems (including poverty, violent conflicts and discrimination), which would lead to solutions consistent with human rights standards; (d) Empower communities and individuals to identify their human rights needs and to ensure that they are met; (e) Build on the human rights principles embedded within the different cultural contexts and take into account historical and social developments in each country; (f) Foster knowledge of and skills to use local, national, regional and international human rights instruments and mechanisms for the protection of human rights; (g) Make use of participatory pedagogies that include knowledge, critical analysis and skills for action furthering human rights; (h) Foster teaching and learning environments free from want and fear that encourage participation, enjoyment of human rights and the full development of the human personality; (i) Be relevant to the daily life of the learners, engaging them in a dialogue about ways and means of transforming human rights from the expression of abstract norms to the reality of their social, economic, cultural and political conditions.

governmental organizations, within their respective mandates, to promote and technically assist, when requested, the national implementation of the Plan of Action” (para. 4).

Drawing from the principles and frameworks set by international human rights instruments, as well as international declarations and programmes on education², the Plan of Action highlights that human rights education in the school system involves not only the integration of human rights in all educational processes and tools (curricula, textbooks, materials, methods and training) but also the practice of human rights within the education system.

The main responsibility for implementing the Plan of Action rests with each country’s Ministry of Education, which should assign or strengthen a department or unit responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of a national strategy for the effective integration or enhancement of human rights education in the school system based on four stages: needs assessment; priority setting; implementation; and evaluation in close cooperation with all relevant actors. Member States are also encouraged to identify and support a resource centre for collecting and disseminating related initiatives and information (good practices from diverse contexts and countries, educational materials, events).

At the international level, the Plan of Action envisages the establishment of a United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee, composed of OHCHR, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and other relevant international agencies, including the World Bank, to be responsible for the coordination of international activities under the Plan of Action.

2. Composition

The Committee will mainly be composed of UN system actors involved in human rights education in the school system or more broadly in the education sector. A tentative list of members includes:

- ILO;
- OHCHR;
- UNAIDS;
- UNDG;
- UNDP;
- UNDPI;
- UNESCO;
- UNESCO/ International Bureau for Education;
- UNFPA;
- UNHCR;

² Including international human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), the Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1994), as well as international frameworks and programmes such as the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012).

- UNICEF;
- UNIFEM;
- UNRWA;
- World Bank.

The Committee may also invite to its meetings the United Nations human rights treaty bodies (Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families), the UN Special Procedures (in particular the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education) and relevant international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individual experts.

3. Objectives and Tasks of the Committee

The main objectives of the Committee are to:

- Contribute to a coordinated and coherent United Nations approach to assisting national and local capacities for human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems; (46)³
- Increase cooperation among international actors involved in human rights education in the school system; (44)
- Ensure that human rights education is adequately reflected in all other United Nations initiatives relevant to education/human rights;
- Promote a sustained political commitment to human rights education at the international and national level;
- Ensure follow up on the implementation of the Plan of Action. (39)

Consequently, the major tasks of the Committee are:

- Encouraging and supporting appropriate implementation of human rights education in the school system at the national level, including by:
 - Liaising effectively with United Nations country presences, UN country teams and other international actors; (40)
 - Enhancing the use of UN mechanisms (treaty bodies and thematic and country procedures). (41/42)
- Sharing information on relevant programmes and plans by each member agency in order to maximize resources, avoid duplication and ensure coherence; (45)
- Liaising with all other United Nations initiatives, frameworks and inter-agency efforts relevant to education/human rights;
- Liaising with other relevant actors;
- Developing ways to collect and disseminate examples from various contexts and countries; (37)

³ The numbers in parentheses refer to corresponding paragraphs in the Plan of Action.

- Developing a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action;
- Interacting with international and regional financial institutions, as well as bilateral funding agencies, to explore ways of linking their funding programmes on education to human rights education programmes; (48)
- Contributing to reports to the United Nations General Assembly. (35/51)

4. Working Methods

The Committee will meet every four months. At its first meeting it will adopt its Terms of Reference. Subsequent meeting dates and venues will be determined taking into account related events such as sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, inter-agency meetings of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and so on.

Costs related to the participation in the Committee will be borne by each participating organization. The working language of the Committee is English.

Optimum use of IT is envisaged for easy communication among the members.

5. Secretariat

The secretariat of the Committee will be hosted by OHCHR. In this regard, OHCHR will:

- i. Send invitations to the Committee's members and other organizations/specialists designated by the Committee to participate in its meetings;
- ii. Establish the provisional agenda of each meeting, in consultation with the Committee's members;
- iii. Distribute background materials;
- iv. Prepare the minutes of the meetings and distribute them among the members;
- v. Maintain a master file of relevant documents, correspondence and meeting materials.