

Draft Plan of action for the fifth phase (2025–2029) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education
Inputs by Amnesty International Switzerland
5 June 2024

Paragraph 17

- *“The inclusive participation of children and young people in shaping, implementing and monitoring policies that affect them, or will in the future, is **essential**.”*

Comment 1: Art. 12 of the UNCRC provides for the right of children to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be given due weight. Ensuring the effective participation of children is therefore required by State obligations not merely “essential” but also an obligation of State parties. Hence, the sentence could rather be:

*“The inclusive participation of children and young people in shaping, implementing and monitoring policies that affect them, or will in the future, is **required by State obligations**.”*

Paragraph 23

- *“In this regard, the UN General Assembly highlighted the importance of capacity-building initiatives to enhance understanding, knowledge and skills relating to the human rights implications of new and emerging digital technologies.”*

Comment 2: Reference is made to Resolution A/C.3/78/L.19/Rev. 1, para. 9. In line with the language of the resolution, the sentence could be rephrased as follows:

*“In this regard, the UN General Assembly highlighted the importance of **promoting digital literacy and supporting** capacity-building initiatives to enhance understanding, knowledge and skills relating to the human rights implications of new and emerging digital technologies.”*

It is important to link education about the human rights implications of technology with digital literacy education, as the latter often serves as the primary discipline for the former. This is also aligned with the position of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment 25, which notes that digital literacy should be taught throughout all school years.

- *“The Committee of the Rights of the Child recommended States to **transform education and build the digital literacy and skills of children and youth in all formal, non-formal and informal contexts**.”*

Comment 3: Reference is made to CRC General Comment 25 of 2021. Yet, that document does not contain any mention of “transforming education”. The Transforming Education Summit was organized by the UNSG the following year, in 2022. Using here the language of “transforming education” could convey the unhelpful idea that developing digital literacy of children would require a complete upheaval of the education system. The approach of the Committee is rather to recommend positive incremental changes to bring the education system in greater conformity with child rights (through the progressive realization of rights).

Paragraph 26

- *“To provide guidance on key components and actions for human rights education **for youth in formal and non-formal education, against which relevant data can be collected and national progress can be assessed**.”*

Comment 4: Complement the sentence by saying “education for children and youth,” in keeping with the focus of the 5th phase, which is devoted to children and youth.

Paragraph 31

- *“Their rights in digital environments, particularly the right to privacy, the right to protection from recognized and emerging risks of all forms of **violence** in the digital environments, the right to access information, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of association and peaceful assembly.”*

Comment 5: Complement the sentence as follows:

*“the right to protection from recognized and emerging risks of all forms of violence **and discrimination** in digital environments”.*

Not only is non-discrimination a foundational human rights principle; but there is also growing evidence of discriminatory practices taking place in digital environments, including by algorithms reflecting pre-existing biases.

- *“Analyse the place of technologies in society, their impact on daily lives, their role in building knowledge and their uses for **social participation**.”*

Comment 6: Add “and for the promotion and protection of human rights”, as digital technologies have become central to the work of many human rights defenders around the world.

- *“Detect and combat online disinformation, misinformation and other forms of biased or false content, including on sexual and reproductive health issues and human rights.”*

Comment 7: Amend as follows:

*“Detect and combat online disinformation, misinformation and other forms of biased or false content, including on **the environment and climate change**, sexual and reproductive health issues and human rights.”*

This addition would be relevant considering the focus area of the plan of action and the fact that disinformation is particularly problematic in that area.

- *“Seek professional help and support (psychological or legal)”*

Comment 8: One could replace “psychological” by “**psychosocial**” to encompass other forms of support that children and young people may need regarding their relationship to their online and offline environments.

- *“Digital **agency**, which is the ability to control and adapt to a digital world with digital, media and information literacy, competence, and accountability;”*

Comment 9: Either in addition or in replacement of “digital agency”, one could include – in line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 on digital citizenship education of the Council of Europe:

“Digital citizenship, which is the ability to participate actively, continuously and responsibly in communities (local, national, global, online and offline) at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural).”

The inclusion of “digital citizenship” in the plan of action (either as an attitude or a skill), would be important, as it is the frame used in many countries to deliver educational content on human rights and digital technologies. For example, the new curriculum for digital education adopted in French-speaking Switzerland in 2020, is centered around the concept of “digital citizenship”, which is defined as *“the ability to engage positively, critically and competently in the digital environment, drawing on effective communication and creative skills, to practice forms of social participation that respect human rights and dignity through the responsible use of technology.”*

This alternative definition to the one proposed by the Council of Europe could also be used in the plan of action.

Comment 10: Another attitude that could be added, in line with the report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education of 2021 (p. 72), is:

“Critical digital literacy, which is a set of critical dispositions towards the politics of the digital society and digital economy.”

As explained by the International Commission on the Futures of Education, this attitude (or skill) is needed to recognize the motivations of actors in digital spaces. This echoes the call by the CRC (in General Comment 25) to educate children on the business practices of enterprises online, including their persuasive strategies. Research by Amnesty International (Surveillance Giants, 2019) has shown how the surveillance-based business model of Big Tech companies poses a threat to users’ right to privacy and freedom of thought, among others. It is essential that this angle is well reflected in the plan of action.

- *“With regard to education concerning the environment and climate change: (i) Knowledge: children and young people are aware of and understand...”*

Comment 11: For human rights education efforts to be action-oriented, it is important to mention the role of environmental human rights defenders. Hence, one could add the following element to the list of knowledge:

*“The vital role played by **environmental human rights defenders**, in particular those belonging to Indigenous Peoples, in claiming the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and other rights, as well as the specific human rights challenges that they are facing;”*

- *“The link between historical and ongoing patterns of inequity, such as colonialism, with the differing vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change.”*

Comment 12: While the notion of climate justice appears under the “skills” section, it should also be included among the list of necessary knowledge for children and young people to acquire. One could therefore adapt that sentence as follows:

*“The **movement for climate justice**, which calls for climate action to recognize and address historical and ongoing patterns of inequity, such as colonialism, which have led to differing vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change.”*

- *“The equal rights of women, girls, men, boys and people of diverse gender identities to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity;”*

- *“The historical roots, manifestations and evolution of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity,”*
- *“Empathy towards the perceptions and lived experiences of those who experienced discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.”*

Comment 13: In line with the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10, one could also highlight here the discrimination faced by people on the basis on their non-conforming gender expression (regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity):

*“The equal rights of women, girls, men, boys and people of diverse gender identities to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity **and expression**,”*

*“The historical roots, manifestations and evolution of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity **and expression**,”*

*“Empathy towards the perceptions and lived experiences of those who experienced discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity **and expression**.”*

- *“The historical roots, manifestations and evolution of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, including gender-based violence, violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights, child and forced marriage, gender gap in education, discrimination in formal and informal employment, unequal access to resources and unequal distribution of care functions and related activism and movements;”*

Comment 14: To reflect the language of HRC Resolution 55/L.9 of 21 March 2024 on combating discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against **intersex persons**, one could add the following:

*“The historical roots, manifestations and evolution of discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, including gender-based violence, violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights, **acts of violence and harmful practices against persons with innate variations in sex characteristics**, child and forced marriage, gender gap in education, discrimination in formal and informal employment, unequal access to resources and unequal distribution of care functions and related activism and movements;”*

- *“The link between their choices and their own well-being and that of others.”*

Comment 15: The phrasing of that sentence is vague and should be further clarified. What did the author mean exactly?

- *“Challenge patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies and structures that limit girls and women from freely and fully exercising and enjoying their human rights and uphold diversity and inclusion;”*

Comment 16: To render this sentence more inclusive and reflect the use of the word heteronormative, one could add:

*“Challenge patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies and structures that limit girls, women **and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions** from freely and fully exercising and enjoying their human rights and uphold diversity and inclusion;”*

Paragraph 49

- *“The coordinating body is responsible for leading and overseeing the national strategy for human rights education for children and youth, including needs assessment, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in line with intergenerational collaboration and gender mainstreaming approaches; three steps to this end are outlined below.”*

Comment 17: The establishment of such coordinating body represents an “ideal” situation, which will unfortunately not exist in many national contexts, due to lack of resources or political will. Hence, to ensure closer alignment with the reality on the ground, one could pragmatically add the following sentence at the end of paragraph 49:

“In the absence of such coordinating body, these steps – or some of them – could be undertaken by other relevant actors.”

Paragraph 51

- *“The study should analyse the following...”*

Comment 18: For the same reasons, one could nuance that sentence by saying:

“Where feasible, the study should analyse the following...”