

INPUT FOR THE HR75 YOUTH DECLARATION

SUBMITTED BY EDMUND RICE INTERNATIONAL

PROCESS: Students representing Edmund Rice Schools, India participated in a survey and then a zoom discussion based on the questions below

1. What are the challenges the world is facing now, how they will affect the future of human rights, and what future do you want for human rights?

The challenges the world is facing are related to first of all Climate Change like the alarming rise in temperature, flash floods, landslides, forest fires, etc. Then there is poverty and this is connected to the way economy and markets are being controlled by the rich and powerful. In fact, the economic systems of the world are now more than ever before designed to be unjust. Thirdly we see in many parts of the world and in our own country, India, the problems that are arising due to the lack of respect for diversity. We witness clashes between different ethnic, racial, and religious groups. In India, we also have the caste system, which though illegal by law, still continues to cause massive oppression and injustice. Discrimination against women and LGBTQAI+ people continues. We also feel democracy is being challenged as regimes are tending towards autocracy and oppression especially affecting minorities and women. War is also one of the biggest challenges as is the failure of government systems in many places as peace is disrupted and more young people die in wars!

These factors we feel are leading to the exploitation of resources selfishly, leading to the frightening possibility of leading the future generations into an unsustainable future. This is a violation of their rights! Poverty has led to millions having no access to resources or to even their basic necessities. Food, water, and even basic education are not accessible to millions in India to date. Economic systems have added to the large-scale poverty and keep marginalizing the poor. Discrimination and lack of respect for the human rights of people have led to much violence and deaths. Climate Change has especially affected the livelihood of many who depend directly on the resources of the Earth, like fisherfolks and people living in coastal and hill regions. World hunger is still an issue. Global Progress in GHI 2022 is stagnant. Globally, the progress against hunger has largely stagnated in recent years, with a global score of 18.2 in 2022 as compared to 19.1 in 2014 showing that there is only a slight improvement. Economic inequality has led to disparities in opportunities and resources, potentially violating the principle of non-discrimination. Additionally, economic downturns can lead to job loss and poverty, affecting the right to work of millions of young people.

The future we want for Human Rights is once again a strengthening of the commitment to the values that it stood for - like equality, non-discrimination, and respect for all races, cultures, religions, and genders. Human Rights should be a movement to end injustices like racism and sexism that continue to exist. Human Rights should engender a world moving towards sustainability with Care for our Common Home (The Earth). Ensuring the right to be heard and to give opinions, especially to those who make policies and laws. For youth ensuring the right to education, freedom, and promoting peace. The SDGs framework aligns well with Human Rights and its values and working towards that as a collective can be the future.

2. What are your recommendations to decision and policymakers, including governments, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, and others, to advance human rights in the future?

- There should be no bias and partiality towards countries especially when it comes to the UN and international organisations. Both the rich/powerful nations and the poor/developing nations should be given equal access to justice and rights. Views of people who are affected by policies and laws should be taken. Citizens and civic bodies should be consulted and their inputs valued.
- There should be a review of past laws and policies especially those that directly affect young people (like education systems and reservations etc.) and if needed they should be changed or amended to facilitate the current needs and realities of the youth. Leaders should strive for the economic rights of the young people too.
- Work towards creating awareness amongst all about Human Rights if you truly want a just and equitable world. Young people desire peace and freedom to live their life and leaders should prioritize this even over economic growth! While making laws they should consider how the rights of all – especially youth from disadvantaged communities – will be respected.

3. What commitments and actions can young people take towards advancing human rights in the future?

- Young people need to commit to creating Human Rights awareness, stay informed about global concerns and challenges, and update themselves on actions that are being taken by their governments. Awareness programs to educate youth are needed on Human Rights as many young people still remain either uninvolved or ignorant of what is happening in the world! Young people can be great contributors to this work of creating awareness among their own peers. Educated young people can act to empower others, especially underprivileged children and adults in their communities, and make them aware of their rights.
- Secondly, young people must look out for and work with groups that promote equity, justice, respect for diversity, and peace. They can join movements and organizations that aim to promote Human Rights. In fact, young people can themselves form like-minded groups and initiate work for Human Rights in their local communities and nations. Young people do participate in protest movements and this is also one way of advancing Human Rights. However, they must ensure that they are part of peaceful and non-violent activities.
- Finally, social media is another useful tool for promoting Human Rights and can be used effectively to spread awareness on numerous issues. Social media platforms may help also to highlight the problems of the youth to governments and international bodies in a proactive way and effect changes that are needed.