

## **LAUNCH OF THE RIGHT TO HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

**SIDE EVENT TO THE 27<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL,  
ROOM XXI, PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA, 10 SEPTEMBER 2014**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you this afternoon representing the global civil society coalition, HRE 2020, and to sit with others on this panel who also support the realization of the right to human rights education.

**HRE 2020** is a global civil society coalition that promotes human rights education through advocacy, capacity building and resource development. We work with civil society, governments and international organizations to support and strengthen the monitoring and implementation of international standards and commitments on human rights education. Our objectives are fourfold:

1. To increase awareness of existing international human rights education commitments;
2. To strengthen and mainstream the monitoring and reporting of such commitments into international human rights mechanisms;
3. To support civil society to use international human rights mechanisms, instruments, standards and policies to hold governments accountable for their human rights education obligations;
4. To assist international human rights mechanisms to assess government commitments to human rights education.

HRE 2020 was launched in December 2013, and is comprised of 14 like-minded international, regional and national organizations from all regions of the world. As a group, our coalition members have a wealth of experience in raising awareness, implementing human rights education and capacity building programmes, and advocating government adherence to international commitments on human rights education. HRE 2020 also has hundreds of supporters who support the mission of the coalition.

I would like to thank the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and particularly the Methodology, Education and Training Section, for organizing this event, and for having produced the revision of *The Right to Human Rights Education*, a resource originally published in 1999.

As you know, the newly updated web publication is an invaluable compilation of international and regional instruments that highlights States' commitments to human rights education and training.

HRE 2020 sees this as a useful resource not only to remind us of State obligations to implement human rights education and training, but also as an invaluable tool to lobby governments to make good on these promises. It demonstrates the recognition of the fundamental contribution of human rights education to the broader realization of human rights.

HRE 2020 sees the launch today of the revised version of *The Right to Human Rights Education* as an opportunity to acknowledge the important developments in international and regional human rights education standards over the last fifteen years. It also allows us to consider how we can ensure that the content of this resource is available for use by all who seek to hold governments accountable for the delivery of their commitments.

We should also take the opportunity of the launch to consider how we can meet current challenges to the implementation of human rights education. In other words, how do we make these commitments REAL? How can we address the critical gap of getting governments to take these international standards and commitments on board and implement human rights education, and to strengthen accountability at the domestic level?

Human rights education has played a crucial role in building knowledge, shaping attitudes and positive behaviours that advance the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in international human rights instruments. Human rights education methodologies have strengthened solidarity and public accountability, promoted equality and non-discrimination, and fostered inclusive and effective participation in decision making processes, particularly for discriminated, marginalized and vulnerable groups. Education *about, for* and *through* human rights has led to empowerment of rights holders, increased dialogue with governments, and the enhancement of effective participation in decision-making at national and local levels. Human rights education is critical to meeting a nation's needs in regards to social integration, social cohesion and diversity, as well as facilitating educational achievements, and positive social behaviours. Human rights education helps a nation to address its national challenges, even in contexts of conflict and instability.

The standards that embody the right to human rights education are well known to us all. International standards and conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in article 26), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in article 13), Convention on the Rights of the Child (in article 29), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (in article 10), make reference to human rights education as necessary to ensure the full development of the human personality, the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the promotion of understanding, tolerance, peace and friendship amongst diverse groups.

Other more targeted international instruments, such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and the World Programme for Human Rights Education, are both useful to reiterate state obligations, clarify duties, provide frameworks for implementation, and motivate for increased activity and accountability. For many of our coalition members, the UN Declaration and the World Programme have provided a platform for building the capacity of civil society, human rights institutions and governments to better promote and protect human rights through human rights education.

Much more remains to be done, however, in order to ensure implementation of human rights education in order to bring these international standards and commitments to life.

Here, I highlight three points which HRE 2020 considers fundamental to address current challenges:

- Raising awareness, and inciting governments to implement human rights education
  - Integrating human rights education in UN mechanisms
  - And effectively monitoring the implementation of human rights education
1. There is an urgent need to build greater awareness of States' commitments to implement human rights education. This includes the content and scope of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and the World Programme for Human Rights Education. This applies to all actors (including civil society, governments, and international organizations), with a particular need for governments be incited, encouraged and equipped to integrate human rights education into domestic legislation and education policies.
  2. HRE 2020 is concerned that in many parts of the world there is no political will to implement human rights education and that indeed nothing has been happening in regard to implementation of these states' commitments. Unfortunately there is a lack of strong reporting, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure States make good on these commitments. To address the issue we must find practical ways to fully integrate human rights education and training in UN system and mechanisms. For example by:

- Promoting human rights education among special procedures mandate holders, as a means for them to promote access to quality education, to strengthen the implementation of the rights of specific population groups, and to improve country situations;
  - Working with the treaty bodies in order to better monitor human rights education commitments and include these in concluding observations, and general comments and recommendations;
  - We must also ensure civil society is strengthened to hold governments to account. For example through inputting into specific country's UPR process on the area of human rights education in order to increase the focus on and accountability for human rights education.
3. The third challenge also relates to monitoring implementation. Currently there is no specific set of human rights education indicators which can be applied effectively by all stakeholders (civil society, UN mechanisms and also governments themselves) to measure progress of governments in implementing human rights education commitments and standards.

In an attempt to meet this gap, HRE 2020 is developing a resource (the **Human Rights Education Indicators Framework**) to measure, monitor and assess the implementation of human rights education and training at national level in policy and practice over a range of sectors. This resource will include a range of indicators and associated explanations for the presence of human rights education in legislation and policies, in the schooling sector (curricula and learning materials) and in the training of teachers, law enforcement officials and military personnel, civil servants and other professional groups, such as health workers and social workers. HRE 2020 anticipates use of this resource by civil society organisations in consultative processes associated with treaty body reporting and the universal periodic review as well as the preparation of shadow reports. This resource will also assist governments and treaty bodies to identify in concrete terms ways in which human rights education and training may be implemented.

HRE 2020 is also developing a series of **simple, user-friendly one page summaries** for each of the various relevant treaty bodies and special procedures, which will highlight:

- the reason human rights education should be considered and prioritised by each treaty body;
- human rights education provisions within the mandate of specific treaty bodies or special procedures, with specific references to articles of the relevant Convention;
- how human rights education can be integrated in the monitoring and reporting activities of each treaty body and special procedure, including specific questions and recommendations for states.

We are further developing an online guide to **Using UN Mechanisms for Human Rights Education** which will offer support to civil society organizations to use international mechanisms to promote human rights education.

As a final note, HRE 2020 welcomes the opportunity provided by this web resource *The Right to Human Rights Education* to remind governments, civil society and international human rights mechanisms of existing commitments to implement human rights education, and we look forward to future continued cooperation with the OHCHR and with all of you in this regard.

For more information about the global civil society coalition, please visit our website [www.HRE2020.org](http://www.HRE2020.org) or contact [HRE2020@HRE2020.org](mailto:HRE2020@HRE2020.org)