

Human Rights Topics for Upper Primary and Lower and Senior Secondary School

A human rights culture attempts to define principles for the positive conduct of all human behaviour. What follows are issues involved in realizing these principles. Although only a few activities are described for each issue, they should provide teachers with a start for developing their own activities. As some of these issues may prove to be controversial, the teacher's sensitivity and discretion are required.

Teachers who want to concentrate on specific issues (e.g. peace and disarmament, world development, prisoners of conscience, minority peoples, anti-racism or anti-sexism) should present them in a human rights context. Students will then be able to see that what they discuss is only one aspect of a larger framework involving many other issues. This general understanding will provide breadth while the specific issue will provide depth. Teachers who specialize in different aspects of human rights should work side by side to provide understanding in depth.



Protecting life – the individual in society

To establish a clear sense of humanity as a composite of individuals, the teacher can explore with students the concept of what being “human” means. This is a more sophisticated form of the activities in Chapter Two on confidence and respect. Human beings are social creatures; we have individual personalities, but we learn most things by living with others. Hence work about the individual is work about society too.

Being a human being

Place a convenient object (e.g. an inverted wastepaper bin) before the class. Suggest that it is a visitor from another part of the universe. This visitor is curious to learn about the beings who call themselves “human”. Ask for suggestions that might help the visitor identify us as “human beings”.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to be “human”?
- How is that different from just being alive or “surviving”?

(UDHR article 1; CRC article 1)

Message in a bottle

Ask students to imagine that signals have been received from outer space. The United Nations is going to send information about human beings in a special ship. It is the students’ job to choose what to send (e.g. music, models of people, clothing, literature, religious objects). Brainstorm possibilities as a class, or set the activity as an individual or small group project.

The questions at issue here – “What am I?”, “Who are we?” – are profound. The activities above should provide an opportunity for students to begin to establish a sense of themselves as human beings and an understanding of human dignity. This is crucial if they are ever to see themselves as human agents, with a responsibility to humanity in

all its many and varied forms. Defining what is human in general helps us to see what might be inhuman.

(UDHR article 1; CRC article 1)

Beginnings and endings

Human beings within societies are of the highest complexity. At the teacher’s discretion, the class can look at the right to be alive as argued for at each end of an individual’s life:

- Where does “life” begin?
- Could it ever be taken away?
- What kind of factors determine our opinions about what “life” means (e.g. religion, technology, law)?

(UDHR article 3; CRC article 6)

“A journalist has disappeared!”

For the following case study the teacher’s discretion is advised. Provide the class with the following details:

You are a journalist. You wrote a story in your newspaper that made someone in a high position angry. The next day unidentified people broke into your home and took you away. You were beaten and put in a room alone. No one knows where you are. No one has offered to do anything. You have been there for months.

This journalist has been deprived of a number of basic rights. Using the Universal Declaration, ask the class to determine which specific articles have been violated.

Ask each student to draft a letter to the Minister of Justice concerned, mentioning these rights, or an open letter to the journalist. Who else could be of assistance in this case (introducing students to the role of civil society’s organizations)?

(UDHR articles 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12)

Protecting children

Look through the Convention on the Rights of the Child and list all the articles that offer protection to children and the circumstances and specific forms of abuse and exploitation that these articles mention.

- Are there others that you might add?
- Are some children more vulnerable and in need of protection than others?

Discuss responsibility for protecting children:

- According to the Convention, who has the responsibility for protecting children?
- Does the Convention give any order of priority for this responsibility?
- What happens when those responsible for protecting children fail to do so?

Research child protection in your community, using the list generated at the beginning of this activity.

- What are children's particular needs for protection in your community?
- What people or groups are providing protection for them?
- Are there ways you and your class can contribute to this protection?
- Why do you think that the rights of children needed to be expressed in a special human rights treaty?

(CRC articles 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38)

War, peace and human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was written in response to the devastating events of the Second World War. In the preamble, the Declaration states that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind" and stresses that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

Peace, disarmament, development and human rights are interrelated issues. A comprehensive approach to teaching for human rights is teaching for peace and disarmament, as well as for development and environmental awareness.

Information on the arms race and on the attempts to control it could be provided to students. The fact that there have been more than 150 conflicts since the end of the Second World War

shows that armed violence continues to be used. Depending on the level of the class, a study of international political and economic issues would also deepen students' understanding of why peace is so hard to preserve. Developmental imbalances and ecological problems are also endemic; they are not only violent in themselves, but may contribute to sowing the seeds of war. And war – in particular nuclear war – even on a small scale, can result in an environmental catastrophe.

A Peace



Pick a fine day if possible. Pose the question: "In a world with local conflicts and the threat of war, why do you think peace is important?"

Take the class outside, perhaps, to somewhere pleasant. Everybody lies on their backs without talking and shuts their eyes for approximately three minutes. Resume the class and discuss the fundamental value of peace. How would they define "peace"? What is the relationship between peace and human rights?

(UDHR articles 1, 3, 28; CRC articles 3, 6)

B Summit

Role-play a summit discussion between the leaders of all countries about a critical issue, for example reduction in the use of land mines or the protection of children from dangerous work. Stage a classroom debate on the topic, with groups working together as the countries involved: some groups trying to ban these practices, some groups refusing to ban. Compare, when feasible, the discussions that led to the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (1997) or the Convention concerning the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (International Labour Organization's Convention No. 182, 1999). Emphasize that different countries and people can work together in ways that allow all of us to live together in peace. (See the activity *A model United Nations simulation* below for an alternative format.)

(UDHR article 28; CRC articles 3, 4, 6c)

Packing your suitcase

One of the common results of war and oppression is the creation of refugees, people who flee their home countries because of a “well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (article 1.A.2 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951).

Read this scenario:

You are a teacher in _____. Your partner disappears and is later found murdered. Your name appears in a newspaper article listing suspected subversives. Later you receive a letter threatening your life because of your alleged political activities. You decide you must flee. Pack your bag. You can take only five categories of things (e.g. toiletries, clothing, photographs) and only what you can carry in one bag by yourself. You have five minutes to make these decisions. Remember that you may never return to your home country again.



Ask several students to read their lists. If they omit the newspaper article or the threatening letter (the only concrete proof to offer authorities in the new country that they are fleeing a “well-grounded fear of persecution”), say “Asylum denied”. After a few such examples, explain the definition of a refugee and the importance of proof of persecution. Discuss the experience of making emotional decisions in a state of anxiety.

Research refugees in the world today:

- Where are the greatest concentrations of refugees?
- Where are they fleeing from and why?
- Who is responsible for caring for them?

(UDHR article 14; CRC article 22)

Child soldiers

In some parts of the world, boys and girls, even younger than ten years old, are recruited to serve as soldiers. Often these children are kidnapped and forced into this dangerous work, which can lead to death, maiming and alienation from their home communities and society as a whole. A new Optional Protocol (2000) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child bans the involvement of children in such armed

conflict, as does the International Labour Organization’s Convention concerning the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).

Discuss:

- Why would armed forces want to use children in warfare?
- What human rights of these children are being violated? Cite particular articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- How might being a child soldier affect girls and boys differently?
- If a child manages to survive and return to the home community, what are some difficulties that she or he might face at first? In the short term? In the long term?

Here are some ways in which students can take action or explore the issue further:

- Find out more about child soldiers in different parts of the world;
- Find out what organizations are working to rehabilitate former child soldiers and offer them support;
- Write letters encouraging the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child banning the involvement of children in armed conflict.

**(UDHR articles 3, 4, 5;
CRC articles 3, 6, 9, 11, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39)**

Humanitarian law

Operating parallel to international human rights law is the complementary legal system of international humanitarian law. Embodied in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, these so-called “rules of war” establish standards for the protection of wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel, prisoners of war and civilians living in war zones or under enemy occupation. Military forces in many countries train their personnel in the Geneva Conventions, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) takes a global lead in educating the public in international humanitarian law as well as in supplying humanitarian relief during armed conflicts.

However, the reality of modern warfare has changed. The combatants are no longer just the armies of warring countries

(international armed conflict) but also rebel armies, terrorists or competing political or ethnic groups (non-international armed conflict). Furthermore, most victims are no longer soldiers but civilians, especially women, children and the elderly.

In many ways, the human rights framework and international humanitarian law reinforce each other. For example, both show particular concern for children recruited as soldiers and recognize the need for special protection for children in situations of armed conflict.

Find out more about how human rights and humanitarian law apply in conditions of warfare:

- Research the history of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the Geneva Conventions. How have the original Geneva Conventions of 1949 been adapted to address the conditions of modern warfare?
- Find out about the humanitarian work of the International Committee of the Red Cross for victims of war. Compare the ICRC's seven fundamental principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality) with the principles of the Universal Declaration.
- Compare the provisions for children in war situations in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention (the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War) and the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Why are both international human rights law and international humanitarian law needed to protect children?
- Compare the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the involvement of children in armed conflict and article 77 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions regarding the recruitment of children. Which is more effective? Are both needed? Do you agree that a person of fifteen is old enough to serve as a soldier?
- Examine news reports of armed conflicts in the world today. Are the Geneva Conventions being observed in this conflict? Is the UDHR being observed?

**(UDHR articles 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 21;
CRC articles 3, 6, 22, 30, 38, 39)**

Government and the law

Human rights are rights inherent in every human being. We can make moral claims regardless of whether they are laid down by law. For example, all human beings have a right to life, whether or not a law has been passed to endorse that right.

Laws, however, give moral claims legal force. In countries where rights have been made into laws, we still need to know whether these laws are being fully put into practice. Yet, turning moral claims into legal rights is an important first step.

Laws can also have an important educational effect. They define what a society officially thinks it is proper to do, and they provide a specific expression of the standards it thinks should be endorsed. They are there for all to see, and they stand equally – in principle at least – above the leaders as well as the led.

Councils and courts



Laws are made by national law-making bodies. Students need to see the process of law-making for themselves in order to answer these questions:

- What is “the law”?
- Who makes it? and
- Why?

Arrange for a class visit to a regional or central chamber of the country's parliament in session

so that students can watch its members at work. Discuss the three questions above. Likewise, arrange a visit to a law-court to see not only laws being administered but also decisions being made that set legal precedents which may directly or indirectly affect future decisions. Discuss the same questions above.

If the suggested visits are not possible, or even if they are, organize the class into a model parliament and arrange a debate on current issues or a mock trial to adjudicate a local or national case at law. Encourage students to find suitable examples themselves.

To introduce an international dimension, teachers could have the class research the decision-making processes of the United Nations and the issues currently discussed. They could also review some cases brought before international commissions, tribunals and courts. (See the activity *An International Criminal Court* below.)

You may also wish to invite a local political figure to talk to the class about the three questions raised at the beginning of this activity, plus three more:

- Why are laws obeyed?
- How is “justice” done? And
- How is “fairness” achieved in government and the law?

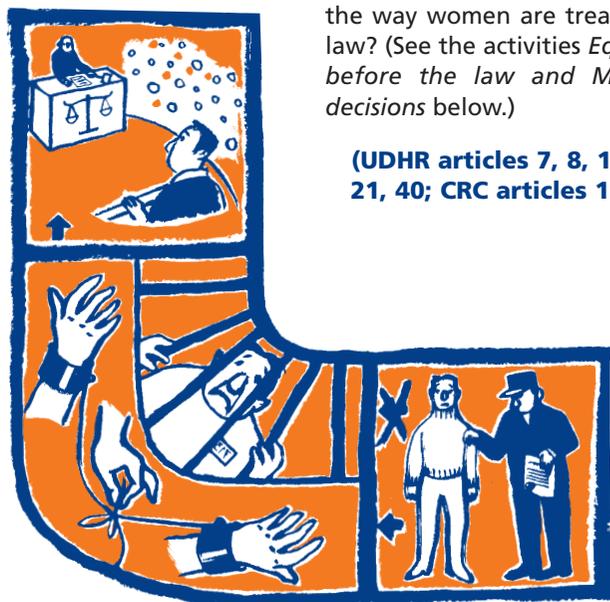
Examine article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives children the right to an opinion in matters that affect them. Has this right been recognized in the courts of your country? How?

Discuss:

- Are women given equal status before the law?
- How many women are lawyers in your country? Magistrates? Judges? Lawmakers in local or national legislative bodies?

- How do these numbers affect the way women are treated in law? (See the activities *Equality before the law* and *Making decisions* below.)

(UDHR articles 7, 8, 10, 12, 21, 40; CRC articles 12, 40)



B Sorts of courts

Legislative processes can also be learned by arranging the class into an informal court. The “disputants” can be in the middle, with their “friends” and “family” close by and the rest of the class in a circle around them as a “village”. Appoint a “magistrate” outside the circle as someone to be turned to only when the locals want an outsider’s opinion. Have the disputants put their cases in turn, allowing everybody to elaborate their points. The discussion should continue until a consensus verdict is reached.

The issue to be dealt with can be chosen by the teacher with the students’ help. Discuss afterwards how the “law” has worked here in both the formal and the informal cases. Note how it may be impossible to find someone to blame, particularly when each party has reasonable points to make.

(UDHR articles 8, 10; CRC articles 3, 12)

C Equality before the law

Article 7 of the Universal Declaration begins: “All are equal before the law ...”. However, this statement of principle is not always reflected in practice.

Discuss:

- Are all equal before the law in your community, or are some people treated in different ways?
- What factors might give some people an advantage over others?
- Why is equality before the law essential for a human rights culture?

(UDHR article 7; CRC article 2)



D Comparing “rights” documents⁹

Point out that rights are guaranteed not only by international documents like the Universal Declaration (UDHR) but also by regional, national and local law codes such as nation-

⁹ Adapted from *Teaching Human Rights* by David Shiman (Center for Teaching International Relations Publications, University of Denver, 1998).

al constitutions. Give students copies of the UDHR and any two other documents and ask them to compare whether each contains the following rights and to identify the relevant article(s):

1. Right to education
2. Freedom of expression (including the media)
3. Free choice of spouse
4. Equality of all persons, including women and minorities
5. Free choice of number of children
6. Freedom from torture and inhumane treatment
7. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
8. Right to own property
9. Right to own firearms
10. Adequate food
11. Adequate shelter
12. Adequate health care
13. Right to travel freely within and outside the country
14. Right to peaceful assembly
15. Right to clean air and water

Discuss:

- What similarities and differences did you discover? How can you explain these?
- Does your Constitution or local law include more or fewer rights than the UDHR?
- Did the writers of these documents seem to have the same concept of what “rights” mean?
- Do all documents contain responsibilities as well as rights?
- Do citizens of your country have any rights besides those included in your Constitution or local law?
- What happens when these laws conflict?
- What should be the limits and responsibilities of Governments in guaranteeing their citizens certain rights? For example, is hunger or homelessness a Government’s responsibility?
- Should any of the rights listed be guaranteed by all Governments?

(UDHR articles: all)

An International Criminal Court

At the international military trials held in 1945-1946 in Nuremberg and Tokyo, the victorious Allies prosecuted individual German and Japanese officials for “crimes against peace”, “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity” committed in connection with the Second World War.

Since that time, such crimes and massive human rights violations have been committed in many other armed conflicts. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge killed an estimated 2 million people during the 1970s. Thousands of civilians, including horrifying numbers of unarmed women and children, lost their lives in armed conflicts in Mozambique, Liberia, El Salvador and other countries. However, international agreement to establish international courts to deal with such atrocities could not be reached until the 1990s, when the conflict in the former Yugoslavia erupted and war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide – in the guise of “ethnic cleansing” – once again commanded international attention. In 1993, the United Nations Security Council established the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, to prosecute and punish individuals for those systematic and massive human rights violations. Similarly, following the end of the civil war that raged in Rwanda from April to July 1994, in which some 1 million unarmed civilians were massacred, the Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

History has shown that without the enforcement mechanism of an international criminal court to deal with individual responsibility, acts of genocide and egregious human rights violations often go unpunished. Such a court could provide a complementary means by which to ensure that individuals can be prosecuted for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity when the country in which such crimes are perpetrated is unable or unwilling to prosecute. Also, such an institution could deter grave crimes under international law from being perpetrated in future. Accordingly, in 1998 government representatives met at a diplomatic conference in Rome to formulate a statute for a permanent international criminal court. On 17 July 1998, the Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted: 120 Governments voted in favour, 7 against and 21 abstained. The Statute

entered into force in July 2002, having been ratified by at least 60 States, and the International Criminal Court has now been set up in The Hague (Netherlands).

The establishment of the International Criminal Court raises several important issues and provides opportunities for student research and activity:

- Why is such a Court needed? Can it be effective?
- By what authority can the international community intervene in a country's internal matters, such as how a Government treats its own citizens? Is this interference in domestic affairs? (A class activity could be developed to discuss whether and when an international body has the right to intervene in a country's domestic affairs.)
- Find out more about the International Criminal Court (e.g. its rules of procedure, the kind of cases it will deal with, etc. – the official web site of the Court is <http://www.icc.org>). What will be the obligations of each Government to cooperate with the International Criminal Court?
- For the International Criminal Court to be set up, its Statute had to be ratified by at least 60 countries. Find out which countries have ratified it so far. If your own country has not yet ratified, hold a debate about the pros and cons of ratification. Send letters or petitions to your country's legislators urging your position(s) on ratification.
- Survey world history for examples of situations that might have been taken to an international criminal court, if such a court had existed at the time.

(UDHR articles 7, 10, 11, 28; CRC articles 3, 40, 41)

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression is central to a human rights culture. The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives these rights to children based on their developing maturity (see activities *Growing maturity* and *When is old enough?* below). These rights include the freedom to change religion or belief; to hold opinions without interference; and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.



Frames of reference

Opinions may vary depending on whether we like what we see or not. This is reflected in our choice of words. For example, a person can be described as “aloof” or “independent”, “aggressive” or “assertive”, “submissive” or “prepared to cooperate”, “more driven” or “less afraid of hard work”. Ask students to think of other dichotomies of this sort.

Have students list in the most positive way possible five qualities about themselves they really admire. Then put these into a negative frame of reference so that the same things become hurtful instead of praiseworthy. Then do the reverse, first listing possible negative qualities they do not particularly like about themselves, and then using mirror words that make the list less offensive.

Another version of this activity is to ask students to list adjectives that generally describe girls or boys. Then reverse the gender (e.g. qualities described as “energetic” or “ambitious” in a boy might be considered “abrasive” or “pushy” in a girl).

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC article 2)

Words that wound

Article 13.2.a of the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives a child the right to freedom of expression but specifically restricts expression that violates the rights and reputations of others. Should limits be placed on what we can say about our thoughts and beliefs? Should we always be able to say whatever we like? For the following activity the teacher's discretion is advised.



Give everyone slips of paper and have them write down hurtful comments they hear at school, each on a separate paper. Make a scale on the wall ranging from "Teasing/Playful" to "Extremely

Painful/Degrading". Ask students to put their words where they think they belong on the scale (alternatively, papers can be collected and read by the teacher in order to ensure that

inputs remain anonymous – students would then put them on the scale). Then ask everyone to examine the wall silently. Usually the same words will appear several times and almost always be rated at different degrees of severity.

Discuss this experience: ask students to categorize the words (e.g. appearance, ability, ethnic background, sexuality).

- Are some words only for girls? For boys?
- What conclusions can be drawn about abusive language from these categories?
- Why did some people think a particular word was very painful and others find it playful?

Divide the class into small groups and give each group several of the words considered most painful. Ask someone in each group to read the first word or phrase. The group should accept that this is a hurtful comment and discuss (1) whether people should be allowed to say such things (2) what to do when it happens. Repeat for each word or phrase.

Finally discuss with the class the rights and responsibilities involved in abusive language.

- Does a teacher have a responsibility to stop hate speech at school?
- Do students have a responsibility to stop it in their own lives? If so, why?
- What can you do in your community to stop hate speech?
- Why is it important to do so?

(UDHR articles 1, 2, 18, 19; CRC articles 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 29)

Growing maturity

The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, according to their growing maturity. Ask students to debate when a young person is sufficiently mature to practice a religion or hold political views that differ from those of the family, culture or tradition. Who should decide?

(CRC article 14)

The right to privacy

Article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives a child the right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence and from libel or slander. However, like many other rights guaranteed to children in the Convention, the extent to which it can be exercised depends on the child's "evolving capacity". Certainly a seven-year-old is not ready to have the same rights and responsibilities as a seventeen-year-old.



When is "old enough"?

Read the following story to the class:

Eku and Romit met when they sat side by side at primary school. They soon became best friends, but their friendship had a problem. Their families belonged to different social

groups that had a long history of distrust. So when Romit asked if Eku could visit, both parents firmly refused. Eku's family spoke to the teacher and had the friends seated separately. However, their friendship continued until Eku was sent away to finish secondary school in another town. The friends promised to write, but whenever a letter from Eku arrived, Romit's parents destroyed it before Romit could even open it. Romit understands his parents' feelings but also thinks that at sixteen you are old enough to choose your own friends and entitled to have letters kept private.

Discuss:

- What rights does Romit have according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
- How can Romit's "evolving capacity" be determined?
- What rights do Romit's parents have?

Strategize how this conflict might be resolved.

(UDHR article 12; CRC articles 5, 16)

The freedom to meet and take part in public affairs



How does a community maintain itself and flourish? In part, by having its members meet together and organize their affairs. These freedoms make communal involvement very important. Their denial would deprive a society of one of its richest resources: the skills and talents of its own people.

Habits of communal participation can be fostered throughout a student's schooling. Opportunities for community service outside the school can also become the basis for a lifelong contribution to social and political affairs. Many schools have student councils that allow participation in their affairs, though the adult hierarchy usually limits what can be done in practice.

A human rights club

A direct experience of working together for something worthwhile may be achieved from having the class form a club to promote human rights. The teacher can initiate a number of relevant tasks aimed at establishing such a club:



- Define the purpose of the Human Rights Club in more detail;
- Hold a competition for a club symbol;
- Make individual membership cards that carry this logo;
- Organize office-holders;
- Put up a special noticeboard for Human Rights Club activities;

- Find out about national and international human rights networks and organizations with which the club can liaise; ask for their publications and display these where people can use them;
- Begin holding meetings – the first could discuss the right to freedom of association itself: "Why organize? Why is it important to take part in public affairs, locally, nationally and beyond?"
- Invite guest speakers (e.g. local politicians, issue specialists, area specialists) to give short talks and hold discussions;
- Set up sub-committees to meet and to research particular tasks;
- Commemorate International Human Rights Day, 10 December; find out about other International Days related to human rights and commemorate them.¹⁰

A group could approach other classes with offers to speak to them about particular human rights issues/areas, explaining why the club was formed and what it does, and offering associate membership; where resources permit, the club could also publish a regular newsletter.

(UDHR articles 20, 21; CRC article 15)

¹⁰ For practical ideas, see "More than 50 Ideas for Commemorating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", available at <http://www.ohchr.org> or through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A list of International Days is also available on the web site or through the Office.

Social and cultural well-being



The Universal Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide for people to rest, learn, worship as they choose, share freely in the cultural life of the community and develop their personalities to the full. Schools should give students access to the arts and sciences of their region and the world and foster respect for the child's cultural identity, language and values, as well as those of others. They should also teach human rights issues using multicultural examples from different historical periods.

Much of a sense of personal and social well-being is derived from the family. Families take the form most relevant to the culture and economy in which its members live, ranging from single-adult units in separate enclaves to extended kinship systems that embrace whole communities. Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the joint primary responsibility of both parents for bringing up their children and article 20 provides for special protection for children without families, either in an alternative family or in an institution.

Most activities in the school curriculum are relevant to this topic. Discussions could perhaps begin with the process of education itself. Education (as opposed to schooling) is a life-long affair and a truly comprehensive one, since every generation's culture must be learned again if it is not to disappear. (See also the activity *Cultural identity* below.)

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A Once upon a time ...

Invite a few grandparents to come and talk to the students about what they were taught as children and whether it served them well in later life. What rights now guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child did they lack in their childhood?

Ask them how they would foster the full development of the human personality, what they have learned about strengthening respect for human rights and freedoms, how they

would further understanding and mutual respect between different human groups and nations and what makes for justice and peace.

(UDHR articles 19, 27; CRC articles 29, 31)

B A family map

Have students map their family as it stands at the moment (teachers should be sensitive to the possibility of adoption cases in their classroom). Compare and discuss eventual differences:

How is their family life different from that of their great-grandparents? Their grandparents? Their parents?

What has caused these changes? Are they changes in values, culture, technology or others kinds of change? Which are beneficial and which are not?

Have the human rights of family members improved over the last generations?

(UDHR articles 16, 19, 27; CRC articles 5, 29, 31)

Discrimination



No person is more of a human being than another and no person is less. Essentially we are all equal, and equally entitled to our human rights.

Equal, yes, but not identical – a fact that leads people to draw lines across the human map and to draw attention to differences they believe to be important. When lines are established that not only separate groups but suggest that one group is superior or inferior

simply because of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or national or social origin, this is discrimination.

Gender is among the most common bases for discrimination. Since it coincides with a biological dichotomy built into our species itself, it can be very hard for people to see past such a difference to our deeper identity. Being different in some ways does not make us different in all ways. Having differ-

ent bodies that do different things does not mean that our human rights should be different too.

Another pernicious form of discrimination is colour or race. A particular difference is repeatedly over-emphasized to hide our common humanity.

No teacher can avoid the issue of discrimination. Human equality, and the life-chances and life-choices it promotes, does not just happen. It has to be taught, not least by exploring stereotyped attitudes and prejudices, by helping students to understand that they can be competent and caring, and by providing appropriate and accurate information.

This is a process of questioning that never ends. It is important to be informed about socio-economic and political issues and how they work. However, it is even more important for teachers to be aware of the biases and discriminatory attitudes that they themselves, like all people, harbour. The individual teacher bears a heavy personal responsibility of self-examination, for unless prejudices are recognized, they will persist and influence a generation of young people.

1. Discrimination - stereotypes

In confronting stereotypes, point out the danger of encouraging their opposite. Insist that any grain of truth there may be in a stereotype is just that – a grain. Alternatively, ask the class about occasions on which they may have heard such expressions as “They’re all alike, aren’t they” or “That lot are all the same”.

They’re all alike

Give each student a small stone or some other ordinary object, such as a potato, and ask them to become “friends” with it – really get to know it. Ask a few to introduce their “friend” to the class, and to tell a story about how old it is, whether it is sad or happy, or how it got its shape. They can write essays on the subject, songs or poems of praise. Then put all the items back in a box or bag and mix them up together. Tip them out and have the students find their “friend” from among the common lot.

Point out the obvious parallel: any group of people seem to be alike at first, but once you get to know them, they are all different, they all have life-histories and they are potentially all friends. This means, however, suspending any stereotypes (like “rocks are cold and hard and indifferent”) long enough to get to know them. It means not prejudging them.

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC article 2)

Spot the difference

Present the following statements:

1. I like doctors because they are always kind.
2. I like the fact that some doctors are kind to me.
3. Doctors are a kind lot.

Discuss which is the stereotype (No. 3), which is the prejudice (No. 1), and which is merely the statement of opinion (No. 2). Point out how all three statements (as mental frames of reference) will make it harder to appreciate doctors not only as kind and caring people, but as cross and impatient ones too! Discuss how stereotype, prejudice and opinion predetermine attitudes.

(UDHR article 2; CRC article 2)

2. Discrimination - colour or race

Racism is the belief that there are human groups with particular (usually physical) characteristics that make them superior or inferior to others. Racist behaviour can be not just overt, such as treating some people according to their race or colour, but also covert, when society systematically treats groups according to some form of discriminating judgement.

Racist behaviour often results in racial discrimination, with its obvious negative consequences, ranging from simple neglect, or the avoidance of those believed to be different and inferior, to more explicit forms of harassment, exploitation or exclusion.

A good source to examine is the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

Skin colour is one of the most arbitrary ways of discriminating between people that humankind has ever devised. As an exercise, ask students to plan a multiracial society where they are destined to live, without knowing in advance what their own skin colour will be.

The non-racist classroom

There are many ways of making the classroom a place of acceptance and of multiracial celebration. Cultural factors influence a student's responses, such as how much eye contact he or she finds comfortable, how receptive he or she is to group learning strategies, or his or her style of dramatic play or story-telling. If and when there is a racial conflict in the class, deal with it; do not dismiss it. Teach your students how to recognize behaviour that may reinforce racism. Study the stories of famous people who have fought against discrimination. Study the contributions made by people from all parts of the world to the common stock of human knowledge and experience. Introduce as much cultural diversity as possible into the curriculum. Ask parents or other relatives or friends to help in this regard. Invite people of other races or colours who are active in community work to speak to the class about what they do.

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC article 2)

3. Discrimination - minority group status

The concept of a "minority group" is confused with the concepts of "ethnicity" and often "race", and when it is, earlier activities are relevant here as well. The term is a loose one, and has also been used to describe indigenous peoples, displaced peoples, migrant workers, refugees and even oppressed majorities. Often common to these groups is poverty. A minority group may cease to be a "minority group" if it becomes powerful enough.

The members of minority groups are entitled to their individual human rights, but they usually claim certain rights as

members of a group as well. Depending on the particular group, these might include claims for cultural and political self-determination, land, compensation for dispossession, control of natural resources or access to religious sites.

A Identifying some "minority groups"

Help the class develop a definition of "Minority group".

- Are they always in a minority mathematically?
- In what ways do minorities usually differ from the majority or dominant population?

Brainstorm with the class a list of contemporary "minority groups", starting with the local community. Be sure to include minorities based on class, ability, sexual orientation and other non-racial factors. Do these minority groups experience discrimination? In what ways?

Seniors students could eventually do case studies to find out about the size, location, history, culture, contemporary living conditions and key claims of specific minority groups.

- What are some circumstances that create minority groups in a population (e.g. indigenous peoples, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers)?

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC articles 2, 29, 30)

B Cultural identity/cultural diversity

Everyone has a cultural identity, of which they are often unconscious because it is so much a part of them. However, in countries with ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or

minorities of indigenous origin, cultural identity often becomes a human rights issue, especially when a more powerful group seeks to impose its culture on less powerful groups.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child pays particular attention to a child's right to his/her cultural identity. Article 29 guarantees a child an education that develops respect for his or her culture, language and values.



Article 30 especially recognizes the right of children of minority communities and indigenous populations to enjoy their own culture and practise their religion and language and article 31 recognizes a child's right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.

UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* emphasizes the link between cultural identity and diversity: "Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (article 1).

Examine your own community.

- Are there cultural minorities?
- Is their culture respected?
- Do they participate freely and publicly in their culture, or are they expected to do so only privately or not at all?
- Does your school encourage respect for the culture of minority groups?

Discuss:

- Why is the right to cultural identity so important? Why is it important to preserve, develop and appreciate different cultures?
- Why do dominant groups often seek to impose their culture on minority groups?

(UDHR article 26; CRC articles 29, 30, 31)

Minority group speakers



Invite members of a particular "minority group" to speak in class, perhaps under the auspices of its Human Rights Club. Prepare students by helping them to recognize their stereotyped expectations and to prepare useful questions. How can students best participate in promoting justice, freedom and equality in these particular cases?

(UDHR article 26; CRC articles 29, 30)

4. Discrimination - gender

Article 2 of the Universal Declaration proclaims the validity of human rights "without distinction of any kind". It goes on to make specific mention of a number of labels that are used to draw arbitrary lines between peoples. One of these is sex, and there is good reason to be specific, since sex discrimination ("sexism") remains one of the most pervasive sources of social injustice.

Sexism, like racism, may involve every aspect of culture and society. It is reflected in people's attitudes, many of them unconscious, which further that discrimination. To deny one sex full enjoyment of human rights is in effect to imply that that sex is not fully human.

Sex or gender?

Explain the difference between sex (biologically determined factors) and gender (culturally determined factors). Divide students into two teams and ask each to make a list of differences between males and females, some based on sex (e.g. adult men have beards; women live longer) and others based on gender (e.g. men are better at mathematics; women are timid). Each team in turn reads one of its characteristics and the panel must decide whether it is a difference based on sex or gender. Of course, disagreements will arise (e.g. are men naturally more aggressive?) but the resulting discussion will help students to recognize their own gender stereotypes. Examine the classroom, textbooks, media and community for examples of gender stereotyping.

(UDHR article 2; CRC article 2)

Who's who?

Have students survey the books and other materials they encounter at school:

- Are there the same number of references to males and females?

- Are female characters shown as brave decision-takers, physically capable, adventurous, creative and interested in a wide range of careers?
- Are male characters shown as humane, caring people, who can be helpful, who express their emotions, who are free of the fear that others might not think them “manly”?
- Do the men and women respect each other as equals?
- Do the men take an active part in parenting and house-keeping tasks?
- Do the women take an active role outside the home and, if so, in other than traditionally female occupations (e.g. teachers, nurses, secretaries) or unpaid or poorly paid jobs?

(UDHR article 2; CRC articles 2, 29)

Gender bender

Take a familiar story (e.g. from a novel, film, TV series or folk tale) and retell it with the gender of the characters switched. Discuss the effects of this gender switch.

(UDHR article 2; CRC article 2, 29)

What I like/What I do¹¹

Ask students to write out answers to these questions about themselves:

1. Three things that my sex is supposed to do that I like.
2. Three things that my sex is supposed to do that I don't like.
3. Three things that I would like to do or be if I were of the other sex.

Ask students to share their lists with a partner of the same sex. Then ask each pair to share with a pair of the opposite sex (or in same-sex classrooms, with another pair).

Discuss the results. How does this community respond to people who don't conform to gender expectations? Do gender expectations limit people's human rights?

(UDHR article 2; CRC article 2)

Making decisions

Ask students to brainstorm some important decisions a family has to make that affect all its members. Next to each decision, write whether it is made mainly by men, women or a combination. Discuss the differences in the kinds of decisions that males and females make in the family.

Next ask students to list some important decisions affecting the whole population that were made in their community in the last few years (e.g. starting a new club or team, building or closing a hospital, allotting land, increasing bus fares). Assign each small group one of these decisions to analyse:

- What are the gender implications of these decisions? Do they have any particular impact on women and girls? On men and boys?
- Next to each decision, write the name of the body that made the decision and the approximate percentage of males and females in that body.
- How might the decision be different if the decision-making body were composed of an equal number of males and females?

(UDHR articles 2, 21; CRC articles 2, 12)

The non-sexist classroom

Most of the suggestions made for the non-racist classroom (See “2. Discrimination – colour or race” above) can be adopted to promote a non-sexist one. Seek help from wherever possible in breaking down gender stereotypes. Never allow exclusion based on sex. Always ask: what is fair? Acquaint students with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

¹¹ Adapted from *Local Action/Global Change: Learning about the Human Rights of Women and Girls* by Julie Mertus, Nancy Flowers and Mallika Dutt (UNIFEM, 1999).

Research has shown that teachers themselves can be potential sources of discrimination against girls, giving more attention to boys and calling on boys to speak twice as often as girls. In many classrooms boys are praised for their curiosity and assertiveness while girls are praised for their neatness, promptness and ability to follow instructions. Most teachers in these studies were unaware of their preference for boys and dismayed by the evidence.

The media, especially advertisements, provide good material for gender analysis. A close scrutiny of the school curriculum and textbooks is also advised (and see the activity *Who's who?* above).

- Does "history" give serious attention to the role of women as well as men?
- Does "economics" discuss women in the labour market (home or outside the home)?
- Does "law" look at women and property?
- Does "government" look at female under-representation?
- Does "science" give due weight to what women have done?
- Are girls encouraged to excel at mathematics, science and computers?
- How sexist is the teaching of "literature", "language and "the arts"?

Examine too the extra-curricular life of the school:

- Are girls given equal opportunities for leadership in clubs and elected offices? For representing the school publicly?
- Are there school-sponsored activities from which girls are excluded?
- Do girls have the same access to sports facilities and athletic teams as boys?
- Do girls feel safe from sexual harassment or physical threats at school?
- Are prizes, scholarships, financial assistance and other awards equally available to girls?

(UDHR articles 2, 26; CRC articles 2, 29)

5. Discrimination - disability

Practical work in the community outside school with people who are physically or intellectually disadvantaged is the best activity if students want to understand the issues involved.

Speakers on disability

Invite people with particular disabilities to speak to the class, perhaps under the auspices of its Human Rights Club. They can explain the difficulties they encounter, the lessons they have learned as a result and what their specific rights might be. Stress the fact that people with disabilities are human first and disadvantaged second.

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC articles 2, 23)

One school for all

Have the class examine the school and its environment and work out how accessible it is to people with particular disabilities.

Discuss:

- What changes would they recommend?
- What could your school do to promote the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, proclaimed by the United Nations in 1975 and 1971 respectively?

(UDHR articles 1, 2; CRC articles 2, 23)

The right to education



Although everyone has the right to education, many never receive an education that fulfills article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fosters "the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" **(CRC, article 29.1)**. Millions of children never have the opportunity to attend school at all. Many factors exclude them, such as their social

status, their sex, or poverty which forces them to work to survive. Lack of education also limits their ability to enjoy other human rights.

Who is not in our school?

Ask students to consider what young people are not represented in their school, for example:

- many girls or boys?
- children with physical disabilities?
- children with mental disabilities?
- children who have been in trouble with the law or the school authorities?
- children who are orphaned?
- homeless children?
- children who are parents and/or are married?
- children of migrant workers?
- refugee children?
- children of minority groups in the community?
- poor children whose families need them to work?

For each group mentioned as absent from their school, ask:

- Why don't these children attend this school? Should they? Why or why not?
- Do they attend school elsewhere?
- What about children who cannot physically attend a school? How do they get an education?

If some children named attend different schools, ask:

- Why do these children attend a different school from yours?
- Where is this school? Can children get there easily?
- Must families pay for their children to attend this school? What if the parents cannot afford this alternative school?
- Do you think children get a good education there?

Ask how the right to education can be made available to those children who do not attend school (e.g. poor children whose families need them to work; girls who marry or have

children while still of school age). Whose responsibility is it to ensure that they receive an education?

If possible, have students research and perhaps visit some schools for students with special needs. Have students discuss or write about whether these alternative schools meet the standards of the Convention of the Rights of the Child regarding the child's right to education. What can they do to advocate for the rights of all children to an education?

(UDHR article 26; CRC articles 28, 29)

What if you couldn't read?

Ask students to make a list of all the times they read something in a normal day: at home, at school, in the community or anywhere. They should include such "unconscious reading" as that done while using a computer, watching television and walking in the neighbourhood.

Ask students to compare their lists and discuss:

- How would your life be affected if you couldn't read?
- What activities would you be unable to do or do well?
- How could illiteracy affect the health, safety and security of you and your family?
- How would you be affected if you couldn't read and you were a
 - Mother? / Father?
 - Factory worker?
 - Agricultural worker?
 - Shop owner?
 - Soldier?
 - Citizen?

Education as a human right

The right to education illustrates the principle of the interdependency of human rights. Ask the class to consider each of the thirty articles of the UDHR and/or the summarized version of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and ask "How would your ability to enjoy this right be different if

you had no education?” (e.g. **UDHR article 21, the right to participate in government and in free elections; or CRC article 13, freedom of expression**)

Point out that, in the year 2000, of more than 850 million illiterate adults in the world, nearly two thirds were women. In addition, among the approximately 113 million children in the world who are not benefiting from primary education, 60 per cent are girls.¹² Ask students to explain these statistics. How does this fact affect the human rights of women and girls?

The right to learn your rights

Explain that education about and for human rights is itself an internationally agreed human right (see Chapter One of this booklet). Ask students:

- What do people need to know about human rights?
- Why is human rights education important? Do some people need it more than others? If so, who? And why?
- How should human rights be taught?
- How do human rights differ from other school subjects? (e.g. they involve action as well as knowledge)?
- How can students themselves learn about human rights?

(UDHR article 26; CRC articles 17, 29)

Development and the environment

Where do you live? Everywhere, the issues of development, human rights and the environment are interdependent, since development is meant to be people-centred, participatory and environmentally sound. It involves not just economic growth, but equitable distribution, enhancement of people’s capabilities and widening of their choices. It gives top priority to poverty elimination, integration of women

into the development process, self-reliance and self-determination of people and Governments, and protection of the rights of indigenous people.

The strong link between human rights and development has figured prominently in United Nations deliberations for more than half a century. In 1986, the right to development was made explicit in article 1 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Right to Development*, which states that “the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”. The right to development includes:

- full sovereignty over natural resources
- self-determination
- popular participation in development
- equality of opportunity
- the creation of favourable conditions for the enjoyment of other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Students may have a different understanding and experience of these issues, depending on the part of the world in which they live.

Teachers working with students who live daily under conditions of material deprivation may want to base their activities on the realities at hand and relate them as closely as possible to those of the world system. They may want to consider the prospects for progressive development and the steps necessary to achieve it.

Teachers working with materially privileged students may want to foster their responsiveness to claims for development and self-determination and to provide practical examples of how to facilitate them. Students may research the role of international cooperation by non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme in fostering the right to development and the environment.

¹² UNESCO, “Education for All Year 2000 Assessment”.

A Food

Ask students to keep a record of everything they eat and drink in a day. Analyse what they learn in terms of what their bodies need to survive and grow (i.e. carbohydrates, fats, proteins, minerals, vitamins and water).

Choose one meal and trace its components back to the people who produced, processed, transported and prepared them. This study might be combined with field trips to the sources that supply local markets and grocery stores.

Choose something from the daily diet – preferably something unfamiliar – that grows readily nearby. Have the class, working in pairs, grow an example of it in a can, pot or school garden. Determine why some students have more success with their plants than others. Invite someone with a



good knowledge of gardens or crops to talk to the class about plant care. Start a class garden in which all students can work and share the produce. Hold brainstorming sessions to discuss possible improvements. For example, is the method of cultivation the most suitable? Are there other ways of controlling pests? How could the system of sharing the work be made more efficient and cooperative?

Parallels could be drawn between the class work and the situation in other parts of the world. A school in an urban area might try to arrange with a school in a rural area to exchange visits and share particular experiences (in this case, their respective relationships to food production and distribution).

(UDHR article 25; CRC articles 24, 27)

B Water

Fresh water is scarce in the world and becoming even scarcer. Students who live in an arid area will be fully aware of this condition. Have the students calculate how much water they use in a day by making a chart that indicates drinking, washing, etc. Have them research where the water they use comes from.

Water carries wastes and organisms that cause diseases. Sanitary water management (both supply and disposal) is essential to communal well-being. Have the students – singly or in small groups – research the water supply and disposal system of their school and suggest how it might be improved. This can be done for the whole community as well. Who, if anyone, is responsible for the safety of the water they use?

(UDHR article 25; CRC articles 24, 27)

C An adequate standard of living

Adequate food and water are basic development priorities. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration includes specific reference to food as part of the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being. Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child further guarantees every child the right to a standard of living adequate for her or his physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. These rights in turn are a concern of such bodies as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and have a bearing also on national security and world peace.

Ask students to research the minimum requirements for food and water necessary for survival and for well-being. What happens when a child lacks a standard of living adequate for full development?

Assign students countries with contrasting levels of development to research using United Nations statistics from publications such as UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* or the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report*. Have each student present a profile of an average person from that country (e.g. life expectancy, income, diet, and access to clean water). Discuss the effects of such differences on the development of individuals as well as nations and regions.

Teachers of materially privileged students might ask them to find out about poverty in their own communities. Discuss who bears responsibility for protecting people from the effects of poverty.

(UDHR articles 23, 25; CRC articles 6, 27)

D Housing



Houses directly reflect such things as local climate and geography, family structure and status, cultural and religious preferences and the availability of building materials. Brainstorm with the class a list of all the things that a house should have and then get them to design one that has these features. Have

them describe and explain the features of what they have designed.

- How does the design reflect their values and culture?
- How might local house designs be modified and improved to conserve resources like water and power, and to minimize pollution?
- What could be the specific needs of family members with physical disabilities?

If there are homeless people in the community, discuss and research who is homeless and why.

- Who has responsibility for the homeless?
- Is homelessness a human rights issue?
- What can be done to address it?

(UDHR article 25; CRC article 27)

E Population

In many parts of the world, the effects of population growth are very clear. In other areas they are less obvious. The impact of this phenomenon is universal, however. Statistics show how the world population is expanding at an exponential rate and how this growth will affect the environment and competition for resources. It is important for students to think about population growth and the issues behind it.

The topic of population also provides opportunities to discuss conflicting rights and the relationship of the individual to the State. Ask students to research and debate the poli-

cies of different States on family size, either encouraging or discouraging many children.

- Do these policies conflict with individual rights?
- If so, how should these conflicts be resolved?

(UDHR article 16)

F Work

As the world economy changes, so does the nature of the world's work. In developed countries, for example, industrialization brought urbanization, with fewer people now living in the country and producing agricultural products. In large cities a greater number of people work in service industries. Where there is not enough work to employ all those looking for jobs, people tend to move around the world to improve their economic opportunities. Migration patterns both within and between countries are often related to work, as are patterns of economic development. Countries should endeavour to integrate their agricultural, industrial, financial and trade policies so as to maximize the productive capacity of their people.



As part of becoming adult, many students will already be investigating different types of work. Bringing a wide range of working people into the classroom helps to broaden students' awareness. Even better, take students into different work environments so that they can actually see what is involved. If possible, ask the students what areas of work interest them and organize field trips.

Of particular interest are issues relating to child labour: should children's working age, hours of work and kind of work be regulated? The practical and moral issues involved provide important areas for reflection and research. Students might compare the 1999 Convention concerning the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182) of the International Labour Organization (a United Nations

agency specialized in human and labour rights) with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Examination of child labour and labour practices can generally also lead students to explore the subject of consumer responsibility and the connection between human rights and global trade practices. (See “Business and human rights” below).

Student projects on work (e.g. patterns of local, national and international employment; how “work” is changing at one or all of these levels; how “workers” organize to protect their rights) can produce important learning outcomes. Conventions, recommendations and reports of the International Labour Organization provide useful information about work and human rights.

(UDHR articles 23, 24; CRC articles 31, 32, 36)

Energy

Doing anything takes energy. The more you do, the more you need. Brainstorm with the class all the possible sources of energy, such as sunlight, food, coal, gas and electricity. Ask students to record all the forms of energy they use in a day. Trace where each comes from and how it gets to those who use it. Is it a “renewable” source? Discuss the environmental effects of these forms of energy as well.

Make an energy inventory of the school. Are there ways in which energy is wasted? Make suggestions for saving energy. The same procedure could also be applied to the home, the community, the region and the whole world.

Set group projects to design – even build – devices which can provide energy for the community. What is available locally that can be used for this purpose: wind? sun? water? fossil fuels? wastes?

(UDHR article 25; CRC article 27)

Health

Health is a fundamental human right, and a basic goal of global development. Numerous resolutions of the World Health Organization (WHO), a United Nations agency specialized in



this area, have reaffirmed this goal and the need to reduce the gross inequalities in the health status of the world’s people. The planning and the implementation of primary health care requires both individual and collective action to ensure that while health is provided for all, most resources go to those most in need. Exploring local, national and global health care systems suggest diverse and interesting projects. Most countries include health education in their

school curricula, providing students with basic information about nutrition, physiology and the causes and prevention of disease. A local doctor or visiting health worker can be a good resource as a guest speaker or for relevant facts and ideas. Arrange field trips to hospitals and community health projects.

The general topic of health also raises other important human rights issues: discrimination against girls in health care, the health implications of child labour and child marriage, the right to information about reproductive health, the negative effects of environmental pollution and malnutrition, and the positive effects of education on health.

**(UDHR articles 2, 19, 25;
CRC articles 2, 3, 17, 24, 17, 28)**

Economic development and interrelatedness

The Universal Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child contain a number of articles that affirm the rights of human beings to a decent standard of living. Whether these are realized or not is a complex issue which depends also on national resources, industrial development, economic priorities and political will. The achievement of economic development – which has both national and international implications – clearly has a bearing on the implementation of those rights.

The world’s resources and its disposable wealth are unevenly distributed. Why is this so? Any adequate answer would have to describe and explain the geography and the history of world society and of its political economy as a whole.

A Local/global



Ask students to search through newspapers and news magazines for articles that describe how another part of the world is having an impact on the local community or how their country is having an impact on another part of the world (e.g. environmental, economic, health or political problems; exchanges of food, fashion, music or other forms of culture; migration; imports or exports, especially of food or resources). Ask the class to make some

categories for the kind of links they have found (e.g. trade, culture, tourism, environment) and label each article with the relevant category.

Post a map of the world and ask students to group their articles around it by category. Draw a line with arrows or stretch a piece of yarn between the country of origin and the country impacting or being impacted by it.

Discuss:

- Which parts of the world had the most links? The least? Why?
- What kinds of links were most frequent?
- What does this activity show about our global interdependence?

(UDHR articles 13, 19; CRC article 17)

B Working life

Describe a working environment (e.g. a factory, a plantation or a farm) where the workers have decided to make a number of requests to the owners or managers. They want more say in how the place is run. They also want better wages, better provision for sickness and injury, more attention to workplace safety, the chance to set up an education programme and longer rest periods.

Form the class into two groups: workers and officials. Have them negotiate, each side sending delegates who report back. Refer students to the conventions of the International

Labour Organization for the relevant information on workers' rights. Then repeat the activity but reverse the roles.

(UDHR article 23; CRC article 32)

C Effects webs

Young people today need to understand the world as a complex web of interdependent relationships and appreciate the delicate balance among the parts of that web, so that changing any one part affects the whole. For example, environmental pollution in one place can affect food chains, health, living conditions and livelihoods in many other places. Issues too are interrelated. Poverty may be caused by many factors, and any efforts to eradicate poverty must consider all of them.

To help students appreciate the complexity of these interrelationships, divide the class into an even number of small groups and assign each a statement, with at least two groups receiving the same statement. These sentences should express either a fact (e.g. "In ___ at least 30 per cent of the population is infected with the HIV-AIDS virus") or a "what if" statement (e.g. "What if women owned as much property as men?"). Each group writes its statement at the top of a piece of chart paper. Below the statement, they should write three consequences of that statement (e.g. "The parents of many children will die", "Many children will be born infected with HIV-AIDS", "National health care services will be overburdened by so many sick people"). Then below each of these three statements, write three consequences resulting from each (e.g. "The parents of many children will die" might lead to "Families and social services will be overburdened caring for orphaned children", "There will be fewer workers available", "There will be many children without parents to raise them properly"). The result is a graphic web of effects that could be developed even further. Ask groups with the same statement to compare and discuss their work. Display the charts and make a "gallery walk" so students can explain their webs to other members of the class.

Discuss the human rights implications of these webs and how single issues affect many aspects of society and many different countries.

(UDHR article 28; CRC article 3)

Speakers on development issues

Invite someone involved in development issues to speak to the class, perhaps under the auspices of its Human Rights Club. Prepare for the visit by giving students background information and helping them formulate questions for the speaker. Follow up by assigning class groups to study aspects of what was discussed (e.g. geographic areas, specific sections of the community, special issues that affect everyone, such as modernization, bureaucratization, globalization, urbanization and changes in cultural values).

(UDHR articles 19, 25; CRC articles 6, 27)

Business and human rights

At its inception in the mid-twentieth century, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the developing human rights framework mainly addressed how Governments behaved toward their citizens. However, with the emergence of the global economy, many businesses today surpass Governments in their finances, power and influence over the lives of people. While Governments are legally accountable to their citizens, businesses, especially those that operate in many different countries around the world, have little legal public accountability, except to their stockholders. As a result, these transnational corporations are increasingly at the centre of human rights issues.

Should businesses be accountable?

Discuss these issues:

- In what ways could a large transnational business violate the human rights of its employees? Of people in general?
- In what ways could such a business use its influence to promote human rights?
- Why might it benefit a business to adhere to human rights standards? Why might that be a disadvantage?

- Should a business be accountable for observing human rights standards?
- How can citizens and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) put pressure on businesses to adhere to human rights standards?

(UDHR article 28; CRC articles 3, 6)

A corporate code of conduct

Some businesses have responded to the growing pressure to conform to human rights standards by creating corporate codes of conduct to be used by all their companies and business partners.

Imagine you have been hired by a large transnational corporation (e.g. a garment manufacturer, an oil company) to help them draft a code of conduct. Working in small groups, draft a list of principles that the business should follow in all aspects of its work. Include human rights, labour practices and environmental considerations. Compare all the drafts and combine them to create a final document.

You might want to compare your list with the “Global Compact”, a list of principles launched by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999 (available at <http://www.unglobalcompact.org> or by contacting the United Nations).

(UDHR articles 3, 28; CRC articles 3, 6)

Speakers from the business community

Invite representatives from local business associations (e.g. chamber of commerce, Rotary Club, bankers or merchants association) as well as public authorities and non-governmental organizations involved in fair/ethical trade initiatives, perhaps under the auspices of the class’s Human Rights Club, to discuss how local commerce is affected by the global economy and to explain their view on corporate accountability for human rights.

(UDHR articles 19, 23, 25; CRC articles 3, 6, 17, 27)

Understanding the United Nations



Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education “shall ... promote the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”. A model United Nations, a simulation of the United Nations system in which students assume the roles of “ambassadors” of the United Nations Member States, is

a powerful educational tool to help students understand the limitations and potential of the United Nations.

Most model United Nations programmes are based on three distinct steps:

1. Preparation: Students research three basic subjects:
 - (a) The United Nations and its work;
 - (b) The Government, policies and interests of a United Nations Member State;
 - (c) The global issues on the agenda.The research and study should lead to the development of a “position paper” or resolution and a negotiation strategy for the assigned Member State.
2. Participation: The research comes to life as students become “ambassadors” of Member States and practise the skills of public speaking, listening, time management, negotiation and consultation.
3. Evaluation: Careful debriefing and assessment is essential to bring the exercise to a close. Some criteria should be developed for success in each aspect of the simulation (e.g. research, presentation, negotiation).

The role of the teacher is that not of an expert but a guide who can assist students with research and analysis. The following is a simplified version of a model United Nations activity. See the resource list in annex 5 for further information about model United Nations programmes. Contact the World Federation of United Nations Associations for further information about model United Nations programmes (see annex 4).

A model United Nations simulation

Select a few current issues of global importance for students to focus on. Assign individuals or groups of students to represent and research a variety of United Nations Member States. Explain that the goals of their research are to understand the assigned country and how it would regard the key issues.

When students have had time to complete their research, ask each “ambassador” to write a resolution for the “General Assembly” on one of the key issues of importance in their country or region. The resolution should include a detailed description of the problem and a plan to improve the situation, including what role the United Nations should play. Students will need to convince others that their resolution benefits everyone and deserves to be considered. Encourage students to compare their resolutions and begin to seek supporters and/or co-sponsors. Explain that they need to be prepared to amend their resolutions and build consensus to get them passed.

Hold a mock United Nations forum. Seat students in a circle with the names of their countries in front of them. The teacher or a capable student serves as “Secretary-General”. Establish some rules of order for the forum (e.g. each person is addressed as “The Ambassador from ___” ; no one may speak unless recognized by the “Secretary-General”).

The “Secretary-General” calls for resolutions to be presented, debated, questioned and voted upon. After discussion on a potential resolution, anyone may move that the resolution be put to the vote. For a motion to pass, it must be seconded by any other “ambassador”. A two-thirds majority is needed to pass a resolution.

Conclude the simulation with a written or oral evaluation, including both a self-evaluation and an assessment of what students learned about the United Nations and its role in world affairs.

(UDHR articles 1, 28, 30; CRC article 3)

Creating a human rights community

One of the ultimate goals of human rights education is the creation of a genuine human rights culture. To do so, students must learn to evaluate real-life experience in human rights terms, starting with their own behaviour and the immediate community in which they live. They need to make an honest assessment of how the reality they experience every day conforms to human rights principles and then to take active responsibility for improving their community.

Taking the human rights temperature of your school¹³

Ask students to evaluate their school's human rights climate, i.e. take its "temperature", by completing the survey below. Record and discuss their findings:

- In which areas does your school seem to be promoting human rights principles?
- In which areas do there seem to be human rights problems?
- How do you explain the existence of such problematic conditions? Are they related to discrimination? To participation in decision-making? Who benefits and who loses/suffers from these human rights violations?
- Have you or any other members of the community contributed to the existing climate, either to improve or to worsen it?
- What needs to be done to improve the human rights climate in your school?

Develop an action plan as a class, identifying goals, strategies and responsibilities.

¹³ Adapted from *Social and Economic Justice: A Human Rights Perspective* by David Shiman (University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center, 1999).

Taking the human rights temperature of your school

Directions: Read each statement and evaluate how accurately it describes your school community. Keep in mind all members of your school: students, teachers, administrators, staff. Add up your score to determine the overall assessment for your school.

Rating scale:



- Members of the school community are not discriminated against because of their race, sex, family background, disability, religion or life style.
(UDHR articles 2, 16; CRC articles 2, 23)

- My school is a place where I am safe and secure.
(UDHR articles 3, 5; CRC articles 6, 37)

- All students receive equal information and encouragement about academic and career opportunities.
(UDHR articles 2, 26; CRC articles 2, 29)

- My school provides equal access, resources, activities and accommodation for everyone.
(UDHR articles 2, 7; CRC article 2)

- Members of my school community will oppose discriminatory actions, materials or words in the school.
(UDHR articles 2, 3, 7, 28, 29; CRC articles 2, 3, 6, 30)

- When someone violates the rights of another person, the violator is helped to learn how to change her/his behaviour.
(UDHR article 26; CRC articles 28, 29)

- Members of my school community care about my full human as well as academic development and try to help me when I am in need.
(UDHR articles 3, 22, 26, 29; CRC articles 3, 6, 27, 28, 29, 31)

8. When conflicts arise, we try to resolve them in non-violent and collaborative ways.
(UDHR articles 3, 28; CRC articles 3, 13, 19, 29, 37)

9. The school has policies and procedures regarding discrimination and uses them when incidents occur.
(UDHR articles 3, 7; CRC articles 3, 29)

10. In matters related to discipline, everyone is assured of fair, impartial treatment in the determination of guilt and assignment of punishment.
(UDHR articles 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; CRC articles 28, 40)

11. No one in our school is subjected to degrading treatment or punishment.
(UDHR article 5; CRC articles 13, 16, 19, 28)

12. Someone accused of wrong-doing is presumed innocent until proved guilty.
(UDHR article 11; CRC articles 16, 28, 40)

13. My personal space and possessions are respected.
(UDHR articles 12, 17; CRC article 16)

14. My school community welcomes students, teachers, administrators and staff from diverse backgrounds and cultures, including people not born in this country.
(UDHR articles 2, 6, 13, 14, 15; CRC articles 2, 29, 30, 31)

15. I have the liberty to express my beliefs and ideas without fear of discrimination.
(UDHR article 19; CRC articles 13, 14)

16. Members of my school can produce and disseminate publications without fear of censorship or punishment.
(UDHR article 19; CRC article 13)

17. Diverse perspectives (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, ideological) are represented in courses, textbooks, assemblies, libraries and classroom instruction.
(UDHR articles 2, 19, 27; CRC articles 17, 29, 30)

18. I have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities at the school and my cultural identity, language and values are respected.
(UDHR articles 19, 27, 28; CRC articles 29, 30, 31)

19. Members of my school have the opportunity to participate in democratic decision-making to develop school policies and rules.
(UDHR articles 20, 21, 23; CRC articles 13, 15)

20. Members of my school have the right to form associations within the school to advocate for their rights or the rights of others.
(UDHR articles 19, 20, 23; CRC article 15)

21. Members of my school encourage each other to learn about societal and global problems related to justice, ecology, poverty and peace.
(UDHR preamble, articles 26, 29; CRC article 29)

22. Members of my school encourage each other to organize and take action to address problems related to justice, ecology, poverty and peace.
(UDHR preamble, articles 20, 29; CRC article 29)

23. Members of my school community are able to take adequate rest/recess time during the school day and work reasonable hours under fair work conditions.
(UDHR articles 23, 24; CRC articles 31, 32)

24. Employees in my school are paid enough to have a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families.
(UDHR articles 22, 25; CRC article 27)

25. I take responsibility in my school to ensure that people do not discriminate against others.
(UDHR articles 1, 29; CRC article 29)

Total

Possible temperature = 100 human rights degrees

Your school's temperature = ____ human rights degrees



Just a beginning...

ABC: Teaching Human Rights is a beginning, not an end. It contains proposals, not prescriptions. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion and ideas and thus to help children to develop an objective, basic understanding of rights and obligations, so as to apply human rights principles to the fullest extent of our human existence.

This booklet is intended to empower and inspire teachers, motivating them to find the most effective teaching methods and strategies for integrating

human rights into the curriculum and culture of their schools. Teachers are encouraged to seek out other human rights educators and to form networks for sharing ideas and experiences.

However, all human rights education efforts share some basic features:

- A core value system of universal human rights principles, such as human dignity and equality;
- A content rooted in central human rights documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- An acceptance of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights;
- An awareness of the interrelationship between human rights and individual and State responsibilities;
- An understanding of human rights as an evolving process, responsive to the developing understanding of human needs, and the role of citizens and non-governmental organizations in bringing their concerns to the international arena. For example, in 1948 when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, few people were concerned about environmental pollution. Now clean air and water are increasingly viewed as a basic human right and international legal instruments to address environmental concerns are under discussion.

Last but not least, students need to recognize that human rights are not about violations occurring to other people somewhere else. Human rights concern the right of all people, in all their diversity, to achieve “the full development of the human personality” in a “social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in [the Universal] Declaration can be fully realized” (**UDHR, articles 26 and 28**).

Encourage students to consider how they might best use what they have learned to promote and protect human rights in their own communities. Such action would build upon many of the activities in this booklet that provide for practical application of human rights principles in the society at large. It would consolidate those lessons and guide students in building the skills they need to make a contribution outside the class and school, both now and in adult life.

