My involvement with Human Rights Education started way back but it had more meaning just recently.

Why? Because Human Rights in the Philippines is currently under attack.

Just to contextualize, here are some of the facts:

1. 27,000 people were killed due to the “War on Drugs” as estimated by human rights groups.
   1. Official police estimate is 5,500.[1]

But people are not reacting. Yes, they agree that it is regrettable and that human lives have value. But they don’t care. Because it’s not their life or the life of their loved ones.

To this end, we created the MOLD program. MOLD stands for Millennials PH Orientation on Leadership Development which is a simple and replicable school-hopping activity.

Our aim is not just make the youth understand the value of Human Rights but for the youth to have ownership. And we specifically target the Filipino youth because we now comprises more than 60% of our total population.

Our primary targets are senior high school and college students.

First, we do RTR or room to room talks and provide a very basic orientation of human rights and ask them for ideas on how to effectively promote those in their school. Then we get a list of the names and contact of those interested.

Then we organize a MOLD seminar in that school for all those who signed up. It’s a whole day event with the following modules:

1. WHAT IS OUR POINT A? WHAT IS THE POINT B WE WANT?
   1. What is the current state of Human Rights in their community? In the national level?
   2. What are the changes we want?
2. ACTION PLANNING 1 – HOW WILL WE GET TO OUR POINT B?
   1. We divide them into several groups and task them to come up with a great plan on how we can change the current realities.
   2. At this point, we let their imaginations go wild. They can plan whatever they want. Sky is the limit.
   3. Then we let them present and defend their ideas. Then experts in project management will ask questions.
   4. Most of the time or should I say, all of the time, the youth will arrive at the conclusion that their idea is great but not viable as of the moment.
   5. They will get discouraged. But then, the next module.
3. KNOWING AND EMBRACING OUR BOX
   1. This is more of an introspection. We let them think of an imaginary box. In it are their current talents, skills, and resources that are at their disposal including their current frustrations and fears.
   2. After knowing the contents of their box, we again ask them to rethink their POINT B plan of action. What are the necessaries?
4. ACTION-PLANNING 2 - DETERMINING THE “MVP” (MINIMUM VIABLE PROJECT)
   1. This is the part where they will be able to determine the minimum viable project that they are capable of starting based on the current contents of their boxes. First, we allow them to think big. Now, we facilitate them to determine how to start small and yet be effective.

We designed the program and the modules to be simple adjustable and replicable. It’s more facilitative. Our mindset whenever we go to a particular community is that we, the facilitators don’t know what’s best for them. Only the people in the community knows that. Our job is just to extract those ideas and refine them and let them implement those ideas in the most effective and viable way. And that gives them ownership.

One of the challenges we usually face is the school administration not being accommodating with regards to human rights education because they are afraid of the possible backlash of the government. In case of this kind of situation, we partner with a local organization and we try to do the activity outside of the school premises.

Another challenge is that now harder to monitor all of the activities now that it has grown by itself. We are trying to develop now an online monitoring system so we will be able to know all the activities that are happening and how effective they have been.

I believe the MOLD program has been effective so far because ever since we started on 2017, it has been replicated so many times that we were able to produce more than 3000 advocates that are now in active defense of Human Rights through different localized Human Rights Education related projects.

And we were able to feel the force of those youth on several national Human Rights Issues. One of which is that of Kian Delos Santos.

* + Kian Delos Santos was a 17-year old boy who was killed because of the war on drugs. The war on drugs system is this. The government gives a quota for the number of “drug suspects” to be killed per month.
  + The cops need to reach this quota to qualify for promotions and monetary rewards as promised by the president himself.
  + During the night of Aug. 16, 2017, Kian, in his boxer shorts, was just closing their small family store when the cops arrived. He was not a drug suspect. But since the cops need to reach their quota, he was dragged into a dark alley and summarily executed. According to the witnesses, his last words were, “Sir, please don’t kill me. I have an exam tomorrow…”
  + The official police report is that Kian fired shots at the police that’s why they killed him.
  + But Kian tested negative for gun powder burns.
  + At first, there is an apparent whitewash of the case.
  + We need the public to be angry at this because this is simply unacceptable. We organized our advocates to reach out to their communities and explain why the case of Kian Delos Santos was important and that we should hold the police accountable and that this is just the tip of the iceberg.
  + We asked them to create online campaigns in the language that their community understands that explains the Kian Delos Santos issue and why we should all be angry.
  + Some made designs, some made plays, some made songs. It was organic and creative.
  + We were able to create a national noise because of this. It made the nation angry for the first time against EJKs. It created so much noise that the government had no choice but to back down from supporting the cops and place them on trial.
  + It was the first time that policemen were tried in connection with the war on drugs of the president.
  + After a year, we succeeded in getting the first conviction ever of policemen involved in the killings.

This is just one of the examples of the successes that was accomplished because we didn’t create human rights geniuses who can just recite all the 30 Human Rights word per word. We created human rights owners who will fight for something meaningful to them. And that made all the difference.

PART II:

• Based on your experience, why is human rights education important, particularly for youth in situations of exclusion or vulnerability?

We have done a lot of work with the youth in places of vulnerability and exclusions across the Philippines. Do you know what’s common with them aside from they are the most abused?

They lack hope. And because of that they lost the ability to dream.

Human Rights Education is important especially for the youth in situations of exclusion or vulnerability because a proper understanding of human rights gives every human hope which results to a sense of dignity which is a key ingredient to make us move and fight for progress not just for self but for the community.

More so, the youth in situations of exclusion or vulnerability are the people who have the greatest potential to come up with effective solutions on how to help their community.

• What do you think are important factors to ensure effectiveness of human rights education with youth, in terms of really empowering them to engage in the realization of human rights in their communities and society at large?

In my experience, the youth today don’t like to be told what to do. If we approach the youth with all the technical concepts and ask them to do this and to do that, it is doomed to fail.

The most effective way we discovered for our context is for Human Rights Education to be facilitative. Let them discover the concepts based on their experiences and let them design the projects based on their creativity and nuances. That way, it will have more meaning to them because they will have a sense of ownership. And growth will be organic.

Another important factor is the language on how human rights is communicated. It is very important to be able to effectively translate the technical concepts of Human Rights into a narrative that is understandable and relatable to the target audience such as the youth.

• What can the UN do to encourage more young people to get involved in human rights education work? Please refer to relevant UN documents when answering this question (see the Terms of Reference for Speakers).

One way is create niche-based trainers for Human Rights Education. The trainers will create modules localized to the specific interest of their niche. That approach will attract more youth and has more potentials of creating organic and creative activities.