

# **Input for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)'s Progress Report on the Implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education**

## **Introduction**

There are several specific initiatives taken by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) to complement the World Programme for Human Rights Education over the past years. However, there is no formulation of overall national strategy for implementing the plan of action.

Among the initiatives by the Commission involves the school community (administrators, teachers and students), higher education, law enforcement agencies and marginalised communities like the indigenous peoples.

This input covers the programmes implemented by SUHAKAM mainly in year 2010 and 2011.

### **(a) Human Rights Education in Schools**

In June 2009, the Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, embarked on a pilot project called 'Human Rights Best Practices in School'. The main purpose of the 'Human Rights Best Practices in School' programme was to integrate human rights values and principles into school life. This aims to shape an environment in which human rights are not only taught and learned, but practised, respected and promoted. It takes a 'whole school' approach focusing on four main areas – the curriculum; extracurricular activities and the school environment; school governance; and student affairs. The ultimate objective is to produce young people who can be effective activists on human rights issues. In short, it promotes a culture of human rights. The programme started with five pilot schools and has been expanded to another twelve schools.

In order to carry out the programme effectively, the school administrators, teachers and students were exposed to Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), Universal Declarations of Human Rights and other relevant documents.

### **(b) Right to Education for Orang Asli Children**

There are many issues facing the indigenous communities that have hampered their right to education. Among the problems identified are transportation, poor infrastructure and equipments in school, teaching and learning environment, lack of identification documents, lack of basic amenities like electricity and clean water, financial issues, attitude of school administrators, teachers, students and parents and curriculum. The Commission found out that although the Government has taken steps to address some of these issues, there is a major problem in the delivery system.

The Commission has been also advocating for alternative curriculum for indigenous children which recognises the cultural aspects of the community.

The Commission in March 2010 has published a report on the status of Orang Asli education which contains recommendations addressed to the Government and relevant stakeholders.

### **(c) Human Rights Training for Higher Learning Institutions**

The Commission organised the first in a series of human rights workshops for students from public universities in 2009. Then the Commission expanded its human rights awareness programmes by engaging student leaders in polytechnic institutes throughout Peninsular Malaysia. Workshops were conducted in the northern, central and southern regions respectively. The participants were familiarised with concepts of human rights, and their responsibilities as student leaders. They were also

exposed to international human rights treaties and the responsibilities of governments.

Besides that, the Commission and the National University of Malaysia (UKM) signed a three year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2011 to enhance human rights awareness and knowledge among students and academicians. Several activities will be implemented under this joint venture, which will include a 'Study on Human Rights Knowledge among Final-year Students of Law Schools at Public Universities'. Other programmes are awareness-raising seminars/conferences, internship for staff and students, exchange of information and establishing a human rights unit in UKM's Faculty of Law.

#### **(d) Human Rights Education for Enforcement Agencies**

In June 2009, Malaysia's human rights track record came under scrutiny when the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva conducted a review on Malaysia under the HRC's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. One of the recommendations accepted by Malaysia was that the Malaysian Government should ensure regular training for representatives of the Police Force and other law enforcement agencies so as to educate them on human rights and the legally binding nature of international law, and the need to avoid discrimination.

This makes the human rights training conducted by SUHAKAM more important to the enforcement agencies. In 2010 and 2011 the Commission continued to conduct workshops for the police officers, prison officials, People's Volunteer Corps (RELA), Anti-Drug Agency, Immigration Department and the local authorities. The workshops were aimed at raising the officers' awareness of the need to promote and protect human rights.

The Commission moved a step forward by engaging the Police Department and Prison Department in introducing a permanent human rights curriculum for prison

officials. Both the agencies welcomed the move and currently the Commission and the agencies are in the midst of drafting the curriculum.