

# Human Rights Education: Safeguard in Tackling the Current Global Challenges

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## ***Abstract***

Human rights education has been a part of international human rights law since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The objective of this paper is to express how Human Rights Education (HRE) impacts and safeguards the current challenges and issues in worldwide spectrum. The importance of including Human Rights Education in our educational institutions: primary, secondary schools and colleges focus on empathy and respect. Human rights are the consequences of humanity's growing and continual demand for self-respect, admiration, righteousness, safeguard and freedom which all needs for a decent human existence. Human rights education has evolved as a tool for local change as well as global change in every aspect of our lives. Human rights education is not about entering a classroom and delivering information about international standards and norms, but it has to engage learners in a way that is personally meaningful in order to motivate them to promote and protect human rights ideals. Human right education helps to resolve the border conflicts, child labour, and women exploitation so as to promote conflict management, citizenship, democracy and good governance. It specifically focuses on the fight against terrorism and human rights for the peace and harmony of the mankind. Thus, Human rights education is defined as education about the human rights, through the human rights and for the human rights.

**Keywords:** Human Rights; Human Rights Education; Global; Challenges; Safeguards; Freedom

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Human rights education is much more than a lesson in schools or a theme for a day; It is a process to furnish people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity.”

.....Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations & Nobel Peace Prize winner

What is human rights education? According to Preamble of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual and every organ of our society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms.

Human rights education means more than educating about human rights. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training was adopted in 2011. It establishes that human rights education encompasses three critical concepts: (a) Education about human rights includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that emphasize them and the mechanisms for their protection, (b) Education through human rights includes teaching and learning in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners, (c) Education for human rights also includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. Education in human rights is human right and also a responsibility: the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) exhorts "every individual and every organ of society" to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) declares that a government "may not stand in the way of people learning about [their rights]." To create rights-respecting learning environments and educating individuals in ways that empower them as human rights actors are as important as transmitting knowledge of human rights norms<sup>1</sup>.

It is critical that human rights education receive greater attention and be incorporated more broadly in teaching curricula elsewhere. Research on human rights education demonstrates its capacity to produce numerous positive outcomes for children and adolescents, including an improved sense of self-worth, increased empathy, and a reduction in bullying and harmful

<sup>1</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979), *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiences by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

behaviour in classrooms. In the end, if people are not taught about their rights and the rights of others, how will they be able to realize their own rights or effectively advocate same for others?

*“The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms that States are duty-bound. It ensures that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and this should be integrated in the educational policies at the national as well as international levels.”* Human rights education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. It develops an understanding of everyone's common responsibility to make human rights a reality in each community. Human rights education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in an attempt to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected. As the world's only true universal global organization, the United Nations has become the foremost forum to address these issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone. Human Rights Education helps to its initial goals of safeguarding peace, protecting human rights, establishing the framework for international justice and promoting economic and social progress, in the eight decades since its creation the United Nations has added on new challenges, such as climate change, refugees and AIDS. Although conflict resolution and peacekeeping continue to be among its most visible efforts, the United Nations, alongwith its specialized agencies, are also engaged in a wide array of activities to improve people lives around the world – from disaster relief, through education and advancement of women, to peaceful uses of atomic energy.<sup>2</sup>

Nelson Mandela quoted that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Therefore, human rights education is a key to addressing the underlying causes of injustice around the world. The more people know about their rights and the rights of others in society, the better equipped they are to protect them. The effects of human rights education can be dramatic in awakening people to the value and power of their own lives. Thus, education is the master key to unlocking other human rights.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thilagavathy, T. (2016), Human Rights Education in India: Importance, Present Status and Future Actions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Research* Vol. I. 120–125.

The essential elements which can provide general objectives for human rights education:

- a. To strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- b. To value human dignity and develop individual self-respect and respect for other.
- c. To develop an attitude and behaviour that will lead to respect for the rights of others.
- d. To ensure genuine gender equality and equal opportunities for all (men or women).
- e. To promote respect, understanding and appreciation of diversity, principally towards different national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minorities and communities.
- f. To empower people towards more active citizenship.
- g. To promote democracy, development, social justice, communal harmony, solidarity and friendship among people and nations.
- h. To further the activities of international institutions aimed at the creation of a culture of peace, based upon universal values of human rights, international understanding, tolerance and nonviolence.

However there are so many other factors as well which depend upon the human rights education like African human rights, ageing, viral diseases, children, big data, women, climate change, food, health, shelter, law and order maintenance, democracy, decolonization, refugees, water, population control, peace and security *etc.* These global challenges will change the society, development and protect the social animals from sufferings.

## 2. CURRENT GLOBAL CHALLENGES

### 2.1. Protection of African Human Rights

The UN system plays a crucial role in coordinating assistance of all kinds — to help Africa help itself. From promoting the development of democratic institutions, to the establishment of

<sup>3</sup> *ABC: Teaching Human Rights Education*: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004:  
[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/abc.htm#1](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/abc.htm#1).

peace between warring nations, the UN is present on the ground supporting economic and social development and the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>4</sup>

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) links environmental development and human rights education, highlight that education is essential for people to have the skills and capacities they need to address environment and development issues.

## 2.2. Ageing

The world's population is ageing and almost every country in the world is going to experience growth in the number as well as proportion of older persons in their total population. The number of older aged people of 60 years or above has increased substantially in recent years and the growth is projected to accelerate in the coming decades in most countries and regions.<sup>5 6</sup>



## 2.2. AIDS

New HIV infections have fallen by 34% since 2000 (by 57% among children) and AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 40% since the peak in 2004. The global response to HIV has prevented almost 30 million new HIV infections and nearly 8.2 million AIDS-related deaths since 2000. The UN family has been in the forerunners of this progress.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.3. Atomic Energy

<sup>4</sup> Source: African Commission on Human and People's Rights <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/>

<sup>5</sup> Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons, Statement to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on Human Rights United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Martha, P. Marcela, F. (2001), Public Health and the Human Rights of the Elderly. *Acta Bioetica*.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS: International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. Geneva, Switzerland, 2002

More than thirty countries of the planet are operating 450 nuclear reactors for electricity generation and 75 new nuclear plants are under construction. In 2017, 15 countries relied on nuclear energy to supply at least one-quarter of their total electricity.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2.4. Big Data for the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs)

The volume of data in the world is ever-increasing exponentially. New sources of data, new technologies, and new analytical approaches, if applied sensibly, can allow better monitoring progress toward the achievement of *Sustainable Developmental Goals* (SDGs) in a way which is inclusive as well as fair enough.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.5. Children

Every child is a future of tomorrow and indeed they have the right to health, right to education and right to protection. Every society has a stake in expanding children's opportunities in life. Yet, around the world, millions of children are denied a fair chance for no reason other than the country, gender or circumstances into which they are born, which will surely inhibit the growth and development of a nation.<sup>10</sup>

A special UN project for children CyberSchoolBus is a global web-based teaching and learning project of the United Nations that aims to engage children in human rights issues. It collects inspiring stories of classes defending and promoting human rights in their own communities, neighborhoods and cities. Eventually, these stories become part of a global atlas of student actions compiled and published on the Internet by the UN CyberSchoolBus.<sup>11</sup>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had always played a key role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the projects foreseen during the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. UNESCO contributes to the development of national strategies in human rights education, develops learning materials and

<sup>8</sup> Taylor J. W. and Morgan, B. (1951), Education for Human Rights in an Atomic Age *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 33(2), 105-108.

<sup>9</sup> Bernal, B. (2016), Data Gathering, Surveillance and Human Rights: Recasting the Debate, *Journal of Cyber Policy*, 1:2, 243-264.

<sup>10</sup> Save the Children, *Ending Physical and Humiliating Punishment of Children: Making it Happen*, International Save the Children Alliance, Stockholm, 2005, pp. 16–17.

<sup>11</sup> O'Malley, C. J., Blankemeyer, M., Walker, K. K., & Dellmann-Jenkins, M. (2007), Children's Reported Communication with their Parents about War. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(12), 1639–1662

works on advocacy and networking. UNESCO continues to have a key role in the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education from 2005 onwards. UNESCO's work on human rights education was confirmed in the *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000-2015), a new global priority programme developed at the *World Education Forum* in 2000. The Framework affirms the need to implement 'quality education' internationally, which is defined as going beyond the traditional school curriculum to include a human rights approach and to address new areas such as cultural diversity, multilingualism in education, peace, non-violence, sustainable development and life skills.<sup>12</sup>

For the last sixty five years UNICEF has been a global force for children, and today it is present in 191 countries of the world. It works in partnership with a broad coalition of UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and local grassroots organizations to help build a world where the rights of every child are realized. UNICEF's work is guided by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. A special session of the UN General Assembly in May 2002 produced *A World Fit for Children*, which sets a new agenda for the world's children for the next decades. It recognizes that governments, NGOs and children and adolescents themselves all have a key role to play to ensure that all children enjoy the rights guaranteed them in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). To this part, educational programmes, materials and the learning environment itself should "reflect fully the protection and promotion of human rights and the values of peace, tolerance and gender equity". UNICEF has many programmes that contribute to furthering human rights education internationally, regionally and in individual countries. Voices of Youth is a child-friendly website of UNICEF which provides information about questions related to children's life on global level and interactive games to promote children's rights. The UNICEF *Innocenti Research Centre* develops and produces research on children's situation internationally in the belief that awareness and understanding of children's rights improves children's situation everywhere in the world.<sup>13</sup>

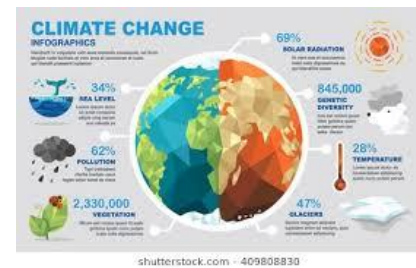
<sup>12</sup> Bhan, S. and Rodricks, S. (2012), Indian Perspective on Child's Right to Education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 69, 367–376.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF / UNESCO (2007). A human rights-based approach to education for all – A Framework for the Realization of Children's Right to Education and Rights within Education, 146 p.  
(See [www.unicef.org/publications/files/A\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Based\\_Approach\\_to\\_Education\\_for\\_All.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/A_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Education_for_All.pdf)).



## 2.6. Climate Change

Climate change is one of the foremost challenges of recent times from shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.<sup>14</sup>



## 2.7. Decolonization

The wave of decolonization, which changed the face of the planet, was born with the UN and represents the world body's first great success. As a result of decolonization many countries became independent and joined the United Nations.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.8. Democracy

Democracy is a universally recognized ideal and is one of the core values and principles of the United Nations. Democracy provides an environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. Human Rights Education surely helps to build up a better democratic environment.<sup>16 17</sup>

## 2.9. Food

About 800 million people in the world were undernourished in 2016–17. That means one in nine people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Hunger and malnutrition are in fact the number one risk to health worldwide — greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Human Rights Education allows the individuals about the food security in the country.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Berkey, B. (2016), Human Rights, Harm, and Climate Change Mitigation. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 47:2–3, 416–435

<sup>15</sup> Ecke, J. (2010), Essay-Reviews: Human Rights and Decolonization: New Perspectives and Open Questions. *Humanity: Fall* 111–135

<sup>16</sup> Lee, S. E. (2013). Education as a Human Right in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Democracy and Education*, 21 (1). 1–9

<sup>17</sup> Ryu, Y. and Ortuoste, M. (2014), Democratization, Regional Integration, and Human Rights: The Case of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. *The Pacific Review*, 27:3, 357–382.

<sup>18</sup> Pérez-Escamilla, R. (2017), Food Security and the 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals: From Human to Planetary Health: Perspectives and Opinions, *Current Developments in Nutrition*, 1:7, e000513, <https://doi.org/10.3945/cdn.117.000513>





## 2.10. Health

The United Nations, since its inception, has been actively involved in promoting and protecting good health worldwide. Leading that effort within the UN system is the World Health Organization (WHO), whose constitution came into force on 7 April 1948. WHO play an important role to diminish the standards of health among women and children. Furthermore, the Human Rights Education provides an insight, initiatives and knowledge about the programmes run by WHO for the betterment of society and fitness of individual.<sup>19</sup>



## 2.11. Human Rights

Promoting respect for human rights is a core purpose of the United Nations and defines its identity as an organization for people around the world. Member States have mandated the Secretary-General and the UN System to help them and achieve the standards set out in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Jovic Vranes, A. Mikanovic, V. B. Vukovic, D. Djikanovic, B. and Babic, M. (2015), Education on Human Rights and Healthcare: Evidence from Serbia, *Health Promotion International*, 30:1, 101–105, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dau093>

<sup>20</sup> Chapman, A. R. (2009) 'Towards An Understanding of the Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress and its Applications', *Journal of Human Rights*, 8 (1), 1-36.

## 2.12. International Law and Justice

The UN continues to promote justice and international law across its three pillars of work: international peace and security; economic as well as social progress and development, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>21</sup>



## 2.13. Oceans and the Law of the Sea

Life itself arose from the oceans. The ocean is gigantic, covers some 72% of the earth's surface. The oceans has not only been a prime source of nourishment for the life, but from earliest recorded history it has also served for trade, commerce, adventure and discovery. Thus Human Rights Education plays an important role for maintaining the trade laws of the oceans and sea.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.14. Peace and Security

Saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war was the main motivation for creating the United Nations, whose founders lived through the devastation of two world wars. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3 says that '*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*' Human Rights Education helps to build a sense of peace and security among each other.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.15. Population

In 1950, five years after the founding of the United Nations, world population was estimated at around 2.6 billion people. It has reached to 7 billion in October 2011. Human Rights Education helps to build a sense of responsibility towards the ever growing population.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Buchanan, A. (2008), Human Rights and the Legitimacy of the International Order. *Legal Theory*, **14** 39–70.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.oceanfdn.org/resources/human-rights-and-ocean>

<sup>23</sup> Tao-Tze, H. Realizing Peace and Security, Human Rights, and Development upon the Foundation of Conscience. Vice-President of Association of World Citizens, Federation of World Peace and Love September 21, 2017

<sup>24</sup> Claude, R. P. (2005), The Right to Education and Human Rights Education. *Sur, Rev. int. direitos human.* 2:2, 36–63.

## 2.16. Refugees

The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 59.5 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 20 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.<sup>25 26 27</sup>

## 2.17. Water

Fresh water sustains human life and is vital for human health. There is enough fresh water for everyone on Earth. However, due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, millions of people (most of them children) die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene. Only Human Rights Education helps the individuals to sustain the need of fresh water.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.18. Women

UN support for the rights of women began with the Organization's founding Charter. Among the purposes of the UN declared in Article 1 is: "To achieve international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."<sup>29</sup>



## 2.19. Non-governmental Organizations

<sup>25</sup> Fong, V. (Ed.). (2004), *Culturally Competent Practice with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Families*. New York: The Guilford Press.

<sup>26</sup> Hamilton, R., & Moore, D. (Eds.). (2004), *Educational Interventions for Refugee Children: Theoretical perspectives and Implementing Best Practice*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

<sup>27</sup> *Play it Right! Human Rights Toolkit for Summer Camps in the City of Montreal*: Equitas, International Centre for Human Rights Education, 2006: [www.equitas.org](http://www.equitas.org)

<sup>28</sup> Cahill, A. (2006), 'The Human Right to Water – A Right of Unique Status': The Legal Status and Normative Content of The Right to Water, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 9:3, 389–410, DOI: 10.1080/13642980500170840

<sup>29</sup> Farrior, S. (2009), Human Rights Advocacy on Gender Issues: Challenges and Opportunities, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 1:1, 83–100, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/hup002>

Non-governmental organisations have an inimitable role in the development of a universal culture of human rights, particularly at the national and local level. Usually, the governments do not live up to the expectations for the well being of people when it comes to the integration of human rights education into the curriculum. Highly committed groups with special expertise, have contributed to the development of the human rights legislation and are careful watchdogs of the apprehension of human rights at the national level. Some global human rights organisations like *Amnesty International* work systematically on rising awareness on human rights education and produces frequent educational programmes across the globe. People's Decade of Human Rights Education (PDHRE-International) develops programmes and provides a website on human rights education relevant to people's daily lives in the context of their struggles for social and economic justice and democracy. Some organisations such as the *Human Rights Education Associates* (HREA), *Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe* (DARE) and many youth based concentrate on human rights education: they support human rights learning and the training of activists and professionals, develop educational materials and seek to raise the profile of education for democratic citizenship and human rights. Some organisations concentrate on educating about children's rights. For some such as *Save the Children* or *Fondation Terre des homes* (TdH) is key to their worldwide mission; some like the *Children's Rights Information Network* serve hundreds of child-related NGOs by collecting and disseminating information. At the local and national level, many non-governmental organisations organize human rights education programmes and projects involving children and young people.<sup>30</sup>

31 32

### 3. CONCLUSION

"Human rights education should involve more than the provision of information and should constitute a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels in development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring

<sup>30</sup> Bajaj, M. (2011). Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 33, 481–508.

<sup>31</sup> Panda, P. (2001), Human Rights Education in Indian Schools: Curriculum Development. *School Education—A Discussion Document*. Vol. I. New Delhi: NCERT, Vol. IV, 85–96.

<sup>32</sup> Heinz, W. S. and Calnan, S. (2010), The Effectiveness of Domestic Human Rights NGOs. A Comparative Study, *European Journal of International Law*, 21:2, 493–494, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chq035>

that respect in all societies."This type of education contains everything from education for children to profession groups or students in higher education. It started off within the civil society movement. In 1995 the UN took initiative and launched the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, and in 2004 the international community launched the permanent World Program for Human Rights Education to advance the implementation of HRE programs in all sectors. In 2011 the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights Education and Training was adopted by the General Assembly, calling for all countries to implement HRE in all sectors. Hence, it is a direct consequence of the fact that human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and they cannot be treated in isolation as citizenship, democracy, discrimination, education and leisure, environment, family and alternative care, gender equality, health and welfare, media and internet, participation, peace and human security, poverty and social exclusion and violence *etc.*, all are connected to one another in various ways. This has contributed to greater awareness of the importance of human rights education to all sectors and groups of society.