



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



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ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS



The 2009 Lisbon Forum

CONCLUSIONS

AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

*“Creating a culture of human rights
through education”*

13-14 November 2009

Aga Khan Development Network
(Ismaili Centre), Lisbon

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These conclusions¹ are based on observations and reflections on the presentations and discussions that took place at the Lisbon Forum on 13-14 November 2009. They identify potential areas of future action for both the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and the Alliance of the Civilizations of the United Nations, as well as other agencies and actors represented at the Forum.

AREAS WHERE THERE APPEARS TO BE AN UNDERLYING CONSENSUS

There is the prospect that quality human rights education (HRE) can be a tool of prevention in reducing incidences of human rights violations and conflict. If HRE contributes to “real” enjoyment of human rights, as Thomas Hammerberg challenged us to consider, then we can consider that there is a relationship between HRE and sustainable peace, as proposed by Jorge Sampaio.

HRE should be **integrated meaningfully within the formal schooling sector**; youth and other members of the public can at the same time be successfully reached through non-formal and informal learning; HRE should be a **lifelong process**; **governments have a formal responsibility to promote HRE within their own institutions and professional groups**, such as law enforcement officials, the judiciary, social and health workers, and teachers; and evidence of success will be in the closing of the gap between policy and practice of human rights (including concrete access to justice).

We value the dialogue and sharing of experiences and approaches among actors - within and across national and regional contexts – as was emphasised by both Maud de Boer-Buquicchio and Deborah Bergamini. An important dimension of this sharing, however, is to **understand the contexts within which HRE is taking place**. The speakers representing regional initiatives have identified specific contexts for the HRE that have influenced opportunities for and choices that have been made in regard to HRE, such as the history of mass violence/systemic human rights violations, current attitudes (government and citizens) in relation to the concept of human rights, pressing problems (such as poverty or inter-cultural tensions, the latter of which can be overcome through “good governance for cultural diversity”) that might be in part be addressed through knowledge and actions promoted through HRE.

The intrinsic value of quality education is promoting human development and fundamental freedoms, as pointed out by the Representative of UNESCO. **Enjoyment of the right to education** should not be forgotten and was identified as one of ways in which “modernity” is being brought to some regions, according to Mohamed-El Aziz Ben Achour. At the same time, we should be dedicated to a parallel but separate endeavour in promoting HRE. Schools and schooling systems that integrate human rights values into their culture and ways of working are also more successful in achieving elements of their mission related to attendance, achievement, and reduced incidences of disciplinary problems. Part of this equation, however, is a balance between rights and responsibilities, which is potentially a subject for further discussion in another setting.

¹ The original draft was presented on 14 November 2009 by the General Rapporteur of the Lisbon Forum 2009, Ms Felisa Tibbitts (USA). The conclusions were finalised afterwards by the North-South Centre Secretariat.

AREAS OF HRE REQUIRING FURTHER THOUGHT AND EFFORT

HRE should promote the enjoyment of human rights. This means that we need to have a **clear understanding and appreciation of what human rights means in daily life** and how such values might regulate our interactions with one another, as Ana Maria Rodino pointed out. What might be concretely different if people internalized the standards and values of human rights? For HRE, this means bringing human rights norms into public discourse. It can also mean working in areas where human rights themselves are seen as controversial.

Several presenters emphasized **the importance of prioritizing human rights education with those groups that are most marginalized and vulnerable**, whose human rights have been grossly violated. Specific attention should be given to **promoting gender equality in HRE** and education for girls and women, as was emphasised by José Manuel Durão Barroso. This may also lead us into acknowledging and deepening HRE work that takes place in **communities and involves families**.

HRE is closely related to other educational practices such as education for democratic citizenship and global education and we still do not have clear definitions or concepts that would help others to understand the ways in which these approaches are distinct from one another and at the same time can share similar approaches and goals for learners. In the context of the Lisbon Forum, we discussed HRE in relation to the promotion of respect for cultural diversity inter-cultural understanding and dialogue. Several speakers also presented educational approaches, such as the teaching of religious facts that might aim for the same goal and therefore promote a culture of human rights. How to present these approaches in ways that demonstrate what is education for human rights, what is human rights education, and so forth is a task that remains largely undone. This is a matter of language, in part, but also one of **clarifying for ourselves conceptually what is HRE and what is education for a human rights culture**, which are probably not identical. We also need to turn to the question of what is quality education, and this brings us back to the matter of working harder on establishing an evidence base for our practices.

The presenters indicated that there has been progress in relation to HRE policies and operations at all levels: international, regional, sub-regional and national. **Yet more progress needs to be made in all regions**. The recommendations section of this paper present some of the suggestions made at this Lisbon Forum. It is important to mention here what many presenters illustrated for us: that **we cannot forget context**. Within each region, within each specific HRE learning environment, we must seek for the local problems and issues that are most pressing from a human rights perspective and use HRE to address these, while at the same time validating itself as a legal and normative framework. So this means that in some of our contexts we will want to look at the issue of religious diversity, or we might need to address problems such as poverty, as it has been the case in Latin America over the past few years, as depicted by Margaret Crahan, or gender inequality. In some of our contexts, the government is a willing partner in HRE; in other contexts, governments may be uninterested or even hostile. This can be the case of national governments, but also local and municipal authorities, or even traditional authorities.

GOOD IDEAS PROPOSED IN THE LISBON FORUM AND AREAS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Human rights educational efforts should make use of treaty obligations in promoting HRE (e.g., in relation to the right to human rights education). These obligations provide a mandate for state actors and other duty bearers to take up their responsibilities to carry out HRE and for civil society to urge them to do so. Once the treaties, agreements and recommendations are adopted, they need to reach the citizens, and measures need to be taken for the latter to become aware of their existence and relevance. The forthcoming second phase of the World Programme for HRE, which will focus on the training of professional groups, and the ongoing need to continue the focus on the schooling sector that was emphasized in the first phase, provides a renewed effort to encourage government and duty bearers to fulfil their obligations.

In this regard, **HRE stakeholders might actively engage in the context of the “Marrakesh initiative”, giving input to the draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training** that will be presented to the Human Rights Council in its session in March 2010. Beyond the coordinating role that is already played in Europe by the Council of Europe through the draft charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights, the North-South Centre might help to facilitate information sharing about how such inputs could be provided and to encourage the use of the Declaration in promoting HRE in the future.

Inter-governmental agencies and regional institutions such as those represented in the Lisbon Forum have a role, not only in promulgating policy documents and declarations, but in actively promoting the practice of HRE. The presentations clearly demonstrated such commitments. IGOs and regional institutions have been actively involved in the development of HRE tools, in research and measurement, and in the promotion of HRE with governments and civil society members through partnerships and resource support. In some cases, these activities have already been carried out collaboratively and this is highly valued. **Several ideas proposed in this Forum for enhancing the operational work and support provided by these international and regional agencies were:**

- **Enhanced sharing of educational tools, knowledge and practices between regions.** This sharing would be most meaningful if the contexts for the evolution of these regional practices were also understood, and the ways in which HRE processes and decisions took place and evolved. The evolution of HRE in Latin America is directly related to the overthrow of the political shifts towards democracy that took place at the beginning of the 1980s, to the many years of popular education that took place during the period of dictatorship, and to special concerns such as poverty and discrimination. The evolution of HRE in Africa is characterized by a well developed community empowerment approach that has allowed for an elaboration on pedagogical approaches related to individual and community transformation.
- **Enhanced sharing of policy tools and institutional efforts to promote HRE**, such as the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights, and the recommendation on global interdependence and solidarity (global education) that are being developed by the Council of Europe and its North-South Centre, as well as the creation of the European Wergeland Centre whose mission is to cultivate the infusion of EDC/HRE within teacher training institutions throughout the continent. An institution such as the North-South Centre could easily play a role in sharing information about such policy tools and key institutions and actors across regions. Again, these policy documents and institutional approaches are particular to one region but illustrate

regional mechanisms that have been undertaken that could be considered in other regions as well. One question that emerged in discussion was whether cross-regional relationships might be more sustainable if there were inter-institutional co-operations established as opposed to project-specific collaborations.

- **Identifying and facilitating the involvement of non-governmental actors and new approaches for promoting a culture of human rights through education.** The deep and long-standing role of NGOs in carrying out HRE is already well established. The role of youth was explored in the Lisbon Forum. Discussions also highlighted the importance of working with education for intercultural understanding and dialogue, education about religion and beliefs, the media and education for media literacy, making better use of ICTs in HRE. Many international, regional and national and sub-national organizations have recognised the value of working in non-formal and formal education and of making use of the reach and creative prospects of the ICTs. Yet in these areas one could say that a great deal of work remains to be done and ongoing, concerted efforts are very worthwhile.

- **Co-operation and interaction between international (OHCHR, UNESCO, AOC) and regional organisations (Council of Europe, OAS, African Union, ALECSO, Anna Lindh Foundation) is crucial in the process of adopting a UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training but also, and perhaps more importantly, in its follow-up and implementation.** Other international organizations such as OIC/ISESCO, OIF and CPLP have also an important role to play. The participation of almost all of these organisations has been a unique feature of the Lisbon Forum and has provided the opportunity for them to express their commitment for common work.