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**National Human Rights Institutions and Human Rights Education**

*Human Rights Education and Formal Education Program*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

To begin this presentation, I would like to cite from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which contains the 57-year old classic definition of human rights education.

“... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace...”

Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A number of international human rights documents subsequent to this important and historic declaration addressed human rights education in a variety of ways including its importance. For example, we could refer to the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (Article 13), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 7), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 10), Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 29), Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (Section 1, 33-34, Section 2, 78-82), and the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and Program of Action (Section 1, 33-34, Section 2, 78-82).

Human rights education must strive to build basic values in students and to develop a strategy that can assist to protect their rights and freedoms. Human rights education must include equal opportunity and non-discrimination which paves the way to recognition of and tolerance towards differences of cultures, traditions, languages, religions, sexual orientation and gender, harmony between majorities and minorities and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. On the other hand, better human rights education of individuals means they are better equipped to stand for their rights and in the long run this will lead to peace and highest attainable development of individuals.

Once individuals are better equipped to stand for their rights, they would also respect the rights and freedoms of others and would be more interested in human rights protection mechanisms in the societies of individuals with equal rights and freedoms which would require active participation in decision-making. These abilities all require quality knowledge and their full realisation is contingent on complex abilities including knowledge, ability, action and existence. At the end of the day, these can only be achieved through education.

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna acknowledged the importance of human rights education to all in order to make progress in protection and provision of human rights. To ensure human rights education to all, the Governments are obliged to provide human rights courses at all levels including pre-school institutions and universities in accordance with the needs of each audience, specifics of their age and psychology. The Governments are also obliged to train and re-train teachers and strengthen informal training in the field.

The Human Rights Education Decade proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations from 1995 to 2004 was an important step forward in advancing human rights. After discussing the outcomes of the Human Rights Education Decade, the General Assembly adopted the World Program on Human Rights Education. The first phase of the Program from 2005 to 2007 focuses on human rights education in secondary schools. The Program would definitely have important outcome on integrating human rights education into the formal education system.

This report is aimed at presenting about measures Mongolia has been taking to integrate human rights education into the formal education system and their progress. The report is based on the findings of some of the research and studies on human rights education. The education system of Mongolia is the synthesis of formal and informal education. The formal education system consists of pre-school education, primary, secondary and tertiary education.

In case of Mongolia, human rights and freedoms are ensured in the genuine sense and in light of international human rights standards only since the democratic revolution of 1990's and following the new democratic Constitution of 1992. Therefore, the challenge is now provision of human rights education to all and to specific target groups. Although there are some good developments in Mongolia such as establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (2001) and adoption of the National Human Rights Action Program (2003), there are still much more needs to be done to reinforce the success of integrating human rights education into the formal education program, to assess and evaluate this success for even better outcomes.

The Government is obliged to provide human rights education to its citizens through formal and informal education. As to the formal education system, the good news is that legal education curriculum of secondary schools was revised under the "Street Law" program implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in cooperation with the Mongolian Foundation for Open Society. The program renewed the content of human rights course in a much more different way than it was studied previously and it was made much more compliant with international standards relating to human rights education. However, the quality of training is not satisfactory. Moreover, there is no human rights course in the programs and curricula of universities and vocational training centers except a few law schools where human rights is among either compulsory or optional courses.

As to Mongolia, there is still no principal human rights education policy. The failure of the recently adopted National Human Rights Action Program to address the human rights education shows that there is a strong need to advance this issue in the future. In such context, I would like to present about human rights education in Mongolia within the framework of secondary and tertiary education only.

## ***Secondary education***

A significant action carried out by Mongolia within the timeframe of the UN Human Rights Decade is the comprehensive revision of legal education curriculum of secondary schools. As mentioned above the revision of the legal education curriculum of secondary schools were carried out under “Street Law” program of the Mongolian Foundation for Open Society in 1998-2003. The program attached great importance to the human rights education of the youth and children: curriculum for each grade contains human rights components and in the 6th grade students study human rights as a separate subject. The objectives of the human rights course taught since 2003 under the revised legal education curriculum are improve human rights knowledge of the students, develop their abilities to take use of prevention mechanisms, and build an attitude in them respectful of the rights and freedoms of others. Certainly, these complex abilities cannot be developed solely through conventional methods of teaching; application of various teaching methods by teachers, physical and psychological setting for teaching human rights are very important.

The evaluation of human rights education in secondary schools identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The human rights education standards aim at developing complex abilities;</li><li>• The human rights course was revised;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schedules are not fully followed in teaching, in other words, the human rights subject is easily replaced by other subjects; significant difference in teaching human rights as a compulsory and an optional course;</li><li>• Lack of teachers who are specialised in teaching human rights; no significant support to teachers in terms of content and methodology;</li><li>• Teachers are constantly changed or on move;</li><li>• Reliant on conventional methods of teaching;</li><li>• Failure of training managers to maintain regular supervision over the education standards and plans</li></ul>

The education standards have been revised and renewed in connection to the transformation from 10-year secondary education to 11 years starting from the academic year of 2005-2006. Accordingly, human rights are taught from 1st to 11th grade in relation to age and psychological specifics of students. This is an important step forward.

Without being limited to teaching human rights, the secondary schools must:

- Ensure that all other subject studied in secondary schools are based on human rights;
- Everyone including the management of the schools and other teachers should be accountable for human rights education progress in their schools in addition to the teacher of human rights;

- Provision of human rights education is not only contingent on the classroom but also on the environment outside the classroom. An important objective of human rights education is to create human rights environment in the communities and the society. On the other hand, human rights education cannot be attained fully where there is no human rights atmosphere. Human rights atmosphere or environment is a vital condition for children to learn about human rights. Therefore, everything in the school starting from the rules and regulations should be based on human rights.
- The school management should take into consideration the principles of human rights for evaluation of the work of teachers, equality of opportunity among students, accountability and discipline mechanisms that ensure respect for human dignity and reputation. Democratic school environment is the most favorable condition for the advancement of human rights education.

Unfortunately, there are no specific research and studies that look into human rights based education and human rights environment in schools. The recent study by the NHRCM shows that human rights and the rights of the child are subject to abuse quite often. Due to the lack of resources, the physical environment of schools cannot meet the rights of children to study in healthy and safe environment, access to adequate training materials and teachers. Sadly, the remoter the worse is the situation.

### *Tertiary education*

There are a few research and studies that explored about human rights education in universities and other higher education institutions. The current research and studies are carried out in different ways to study human rights education in law schools and other universities and colleges. There is an essential need to integrate human rights education into the curriculum of universities and colleges. A number of research and studies demonstrate that it is common for employees both in public and private sectors to violate human rights and freedoms.

Human rights have been studied in law schools since 1997 following a joint decree by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Enlightenment for 36 hours a year. However, very few law schools offered human rights as a compulsory course whereas majority offered it as an optional course which is not adequate to educate lawyers about human rights. There are still views among the university managements to undermine importance of teaching human rights as a separate subject and to try to squeeze human rights into other courses of legal education. Currently, the legal education curriculum of universities and colleges is being revised with the support of the World Bank and specialists are showing hard efforts to make human rights one of the compulsory courses. The pilot curriculum includes 40 hour optional course of Human Rights Law and 48 hour optional course of the Rights of the Child for specialising.

As to other universities and colleges, although they claim that they teach human rights it is taught only within the Constitutional Law and there is no link between human rights and specific professional courses. Moreover, a number of university management, lecturers and students regard human rights as a subject that is relevant only to lawyers. Only from very recently, some teacher training universities started developing and piloting human rights curriculum for law and social science professions. This is an important step forward.

## *The Role of the NHRCM*

The next part of the presentation takes you through what the NHRCM is doing to integrate human rights education into the formal education system.

According to the law, one of the main duties of the Commission is to promote human right education. Thus, the Strategic Plans of the NHRCM (2000 and 2004), state that promotion of human right education is one of the main objectives of the NHRCM. Accordingly, the Commission has developed and implementing a Human Rights Education Plan. The main objective of the program is to apply the human right principles to all social norms and actions. The plan targets three main groups:

- All levels of schools
- Specific social groups
- The general public

Let me reflect more in detail on what have been done in terms of all levels of schools:

The Strategic Plan of the Commission sets up to cooperate with relevant Ministries and agencies on development and implementation of a principal policy to integrate human right education into the curriculum of secondary schools and colleges. The NHRCM has had active participation in development of human right education programs since it was established. For instance, the Chief Commissioner and the staff contributed into creation and editing of a human rights textbook for the students of the 6th grade of secondary schools.

One of the largest work that the Commission has been running is a project on “Human Right Education in Secondary School” with the support of UNESCO since 2005. The objective of this project is to evaluate how human right education is taught in secondary schools, develop proposals and recommendation to the relevant authorities, and to develop minimum qualification standards for the teachers of human rights. The report of the research is at completion followed by next activities.

Furthermore, the Director of the Commission has contributed into development of a teachers’ handbook on human rights in secondary schools funded by HURISTMON project. In the current situation of lack of specialised teachers, this handbook will definitely make difference in improving human rights education and be very useful to the teachers in rural areas.

One of the significant activities that the Commission carried out to integrate human rights education in formal education was the project on “Human Rights Education” supported by Canada Fund. Within the framework of this project, we developed a Model Human Rights Curriculum law schools. It is essential to prepare lawyers who have advanced human rights knowledge and human rights approach in the society that has proclaimed in the Constitution to build a humane and democratic society and where human rights and freedoms have acquired totally new and genuine meaning. The reason is that there is a strong conviction in the public to regard the justice institutions as state spear to investigate and punish individuals. Research and studies carried out by the Commission and other organizations show that there are serious violations of human rights and freedoms in administration of justice.

Goal of the Model Human Rights Curriculum for law schools was defined as building complex abilities in students including advanced human rights knowledge, ability to use the human rights protection and provision mechanisms, and attitude to value the human rights and freedoms.

The objectives of the Model Human Rights Curriculum are to:

- Provide knowledge and understanding of human rights and freedoms, national and international human rights mechanisms;
- Learn from new trends in human rights study;
- Learn using all national and international human rights mechanism in order to identify, investigate and eliminate human rights violations;
- Develop balanced and critical approach, learn to make decisions based on abilities to listen to and cooperate with others;
- Develop human rights approach.

The Model Human Rights Curriculum is a comprehensive document that suggests a number of modern participation methods; it contains an information part for the reference of lecturers and a methodology part suggesting commonly used participatory teaching methods. To make the Model Curriculum more realistic and effective, it was piloted in three universities for a summer course involving 20 students. Using those programs, we held 3 training of 60 professors from 20 universities (in duplicated number). At the end, we held a conference to bring to the knowledge of all the stakeholders the importance human rights course in law schools.

Moreover, NHRCM staff shared their experience with a team developing human rights curriculum for teacher training universities.

All the above mentioned activities have been carried out by the NHRCM with the purpose to integrate human rights education into the formal education system and we will maintain hard efforts to reinforce our work.

We appreciate the significant financial contribution of Canada Fund and UNESCO and other donors, professional and methodological contribution of all the professors, teachers, and specialists for supporting our endeavours to integrate human rights education into the formal education system.

Based on the suggestions reflected in the report, the following conclusions can be reached:

- Considering the lack of a principal policy for human right education in Mongolia, it is important to develop it in the future;
- In order to improve the quality of human rights education in secondary schools, it is important to re-train the teachers, improve the training facilities, upgrade training management and create human rights environment in schools;

- It is important to reinforce the current level of human rights education in law schools, and immediately start developing and introducing human rights curriculum in other educational institutions;
- Assistance of the UN and other international donor organizations is highly needed for the integration of human rights education into the formal education system considering the lack of resources faced by the country.

We call on all national, regional and international organizations to cooperate for integrating human rights education into the formal education system and introducing human rights education in all sectors and fields as this is the way to maintain peace in the world and to eliminate all forms of discrimination, violence and human rights violations.

Thank you for paying attention