
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia Pacific Region

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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Foreword

From its early days, the Human Rights Sub-Committee, of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, has played a direct role in promoting human rights education.

Good human rights education is a key to ensuring that the concept of human rights underpins our legislative framework, our social policies and the way we think about others and ourselves.

The protection of human rights depends on them being accepted, observed and protected by each and every member of our society. This requires that people are educated and informed about human rights principles, the relevant international human rights instruments, and the impact of human rights on their daily lives.

Similarly, it is increasingly recognised that the way a society is governed has a direct correlation to the success of social, political and economic development, including the protection and promotion of human rights. Examples of the failure of governance, and consequent human rights abuse, can be seen around the world.

Australia is involved in human rights and good governance education across a broad spectrum of activities. As one of the world's oldest democracies, and arguably as one of its most successful, Australia is in a strong position to make a contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and the development of good governance in the Asia Pacific region through its efforts in human rights and good governance education.

The decade 1995-2004 was designated as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. As a contribution to achieving the goals of the Decade, and to address the increasing recognition of the importance of good governance to development and the promotion and protection of human rights, the Committee decided to review and take stock of Australia's contribution, not only to the Decade, but in the broad promotion of human rights and good governance in the region. This is the report of that inquiry.


Senator M A Payne
Chair
JSCFADT Human Rights Sub-Committee

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	Hon L J Brereton, MP (<i>ex-officio</i>)	Mr C P Thompson, MP



Terms of reference

The decade 1995-2004 has been designated as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. As a contribution to achieving the goals of the decade, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will examine and report on human rights and good governance education in the Asia Pacific region.

The Committee will examine:

- the role of human rights and good governance education in the promotion of fair and sustainable social, political and economic development;
- Australia's involvement in human rights and good governance education in the Asia Pacific region identifying achievements and obstacles to further progress;
- the involvement of the UN and other international and regional government and non-government organisations in promoting human rights education and good governance in the Asia Pacific region; and
- progress made in the Asia Pacific region towards the realisation of the goals of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

Referred by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 3 September 2002



List of abbreviations

ACFOA	Australian Council for Overseas Aid
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AI	Amnesty International Australia
ALRI	Australian Legal Resources International
ANCP	Australian NGO Cooperation Program
APF	Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CDI	Centre for Democratic Institutions
DFAT	(Australian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GOLD	Governance for Livelihoods and Development programme
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HREA	Human Rights Education Associates
HREOC	(Australian) Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
HRTC	China-Australia Human Rights Technical Cooperation
Hurist	Human Rights Strengthening project
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

Komnas HAM	Indonesian Human Rights Commission
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NGO	Non-government organisation
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
Oxfam	Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Australia
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RA	Radio Australia
SCA	Save the Children Australia
TI	Transparency International
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
UN	United Nations
UNAA	United Nations Association of Australia
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VCA	Vietnamese Community in Australia



List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the National Committee for Human Rights Education undertake a baseline survey of human rights attitudes and understanding in Australia, as indicated in its mission statement and in the guidelines for the Decade for Human Rights Education

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that human rights education be incorporated into all levels of civics and citizenship education initiatives

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education, in collaboration with state and territory Ministers on the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, develop a coherent and consistent approach to human rights education, and to providing human rights education with a formal role in the education system.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence ensure that pre-deployment training includes a specific human rights education programme, focusing on international human rights law.

Recommendation 5

That human rights education be provided to all Commonwealth public sector employees, particularly those whose work is affected by International Human Rights agreements.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the NCHRE convene a forum specifically focusing on human rights education in the workplace.

Recommendation 7

That Committee recommends that funding be provided to the NCHRE to work with professional bodies and tertiary schools of communication to:

- develop and implement a specific human rights awareness programme for the media; and
- incorporate human rights into the core curriculum of journalism and media courses taught at tertiary schools of communication.

Recommendation 8

That AusAID, in its provision of aid both directly and through contractors, provides an increased focus on institutional strengthening and capacity building of regional human rights education organisations, particularly in regard to basic infrastructure.

Recommendation 9

That AusAID quantify the current level of human rights and good governance education training for government officials and NGO representatives, and increase efforts to provide training in this area.

Recommendation 10

That AusAID ensures that access to culturally and socially relevant basic education is integrated and prioritised throughout its governance programme.

Recommendation 11

That AusAID actively promote the inclusion of human rights and good governance education in the work done by NGOs, and that AusAID review the criteria by which NGOs access funding available specifically for human rights and good governance education.

Recommendation 12

That non-government organisations directly engaged in human rights and good governance education be considered as deductible gift recipients (DGRs) so that they can receive income tax deductible gifts.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the services of Radio Australia be more extensively utilised by the Government to support human rights and good governance education efforts in the region.

Recommendation 14

That AusAID review its definition of 'good governance' to include a reference to the role of the media.

Recommendation 15

That Committee recommends that the Pacific Media Initiative be expanded to include media professionals from countries in East Asia, including East Timor.

Recommendation 16

That human rights and governance education be clearly identified as a key component and outcome in the strategies and objectives of AusAID's governance programmes and projects.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that AusAID enter into a three-year funding commitment with the APF, to enable the APF secretariat to undertake effectively its future development, management and planning needs.

Recommendation 18

In line with the National Action Plan, the Committee recommends that Australia continues efforts to promote and assist in the establishment of national human rights institutions in the region as the most effective way to meet the objective of a regional human rights instrument and associated mechanisms.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that, through the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, Australia works towards developing consensus on definitions of human rights and good governance with the aim of promoting the development of a regional human rights education agreement.

Recommendation 20

That the Government consider providing the National Committee for Human Rights Education with base funding, adequate to establish a modest full-time secretariat and fulfil the 1998 work-plan, on the basis of production of appropriate budgetary and appointment guidelines.

Recommendation 21

That the development of a discrete National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education be a priority for government, HREOC and NCHRE and that adequate funding be made available for this task.

Recommendation 22

That a National Policy Consultation, involving Federal and State government and civil society, be convened by HREOC and supported by the Attorney General's department. The consultation should be centred the issue of education, and aim for agreement on goals, strategies and responsibilities to advance human rights education in Australia and the region.

Recommendation 23

That the Australian government call for the United Nations to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of achievements of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) at the earliest possibility. This evaluation should be conducted prior to further discussion on an additional Decade