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YOUNG GLOBAL CITIZENS: BUILDING INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Human Rights issues must not only be debated actively among governments; we must establish a shared global culture of human rights that is rooted in the realities of daily life and based on unflinching and uncompromising respect for human dignity.

(D. Ikeda)

Introduction

Across the world, the increasing number of people suffering in conflict, and from discrimination, isolation, racism, xenophobia and hate speech, shows the urgent need to take bold action to establish an authentic culture of human rights, and to place respect for people's dignity at the centre of society. Considering an often seemingly lack of hope reality, this paper argues that human rights education can play a key role in fostering young global citizens who can contribute to building inclusive societies based on an authentic culture of human rights which is ultimately crucial to create a lasting culture of peace.¹

¹ D. Ikeda, F. Unger, *The Humanist Principle on Compassion and Tolerance*, I.B. Tauris 2016.

The paper explores ways and tools to promote human rights education with, for and by youth, through qualitative analysis of data, including dialogues and observation gathered from the direct experiences of young human rights educators and activists in their own authentic voices. This data was collected through i) insights from a workshop organized during the Social Forum in October 2019 by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations Office Geneva, Switzerland and ii) storytelling as a tool to promote HRE used within a workshop conducted in 2018 which focused on Human rights Education with young people during the 9th International Conference on Human Rights Education at Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia in December 2018 iii) dialogues with the young people mentioned and observations.²

The paper begins by introducing the institutional frameworks for human rights education with a focus on youth. It will then examine the practice of human rights education aimed at young people, providing insights into the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Fourth Phase that will be focusing on youth. It will conclude by highlighting the challenges and opportunities for human rights education as the Fourth Phase of the World Programme is implemented.

HRE and young people: an emergent priority

In recent years, human rights education with, for and by youth has been increasingly identified as a strategy for preventing and tackling current global challenges. According to the Council of Europe, human rights education with young people benefits not only society, but also the young people themselves.³ Data from the United Nations suggest that there are around 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world today: the largest youth population ever. There is however no consistent definition of young people reflecting the fact that youth is a fluid and non-homogeneous category, made up of individuals with evolving capacities, rather than a fixed age group. Unlike other forms of identity, it is a transitory period of life, which differs according to different sociocultural settings.⁴ In addition, young people face human rights abuses specific to their age, interweaving with their nationality, race, ethnicity, place of origin, sex and

² The young people stories shared in this context gave their permission to use their stories for the purpose of this paper.

³ Council of Europe, *Compass: manual on human rights education with young people*, Strasbourg, France 2015, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

⁴ OHCHR, Plan of Action of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/227/36/PDF/G1922736.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability and economic and social status. The great majority live in countries where violence and conflict are still a daily reality.⁵ Many are forced to leave their own country, embarking alone on dangerous routes and facing enormous challenges to start a new life in a completely different, and sometimes hostile place.

It is not only their personal socio-cultural characteristics that effect the life chances of young people. Many work in exploitative and dangerous conditions, sometimes akin to slavery. They are denied adequate access to good quality education, and their voices are almost always under-represented in the decision-making processes that concern them. The denial of the chance to realize their full potential, causing frustration and isolation, is often at the root of the failure of efforts to promote peace. According to the Council of Europe, human rights education addresses these issues and can help people to make sense of the different beliefs, attitudes and values, and the apparent contradictions of the modern multicultural societies that they live in.⁶

At the international level, several frameworks and commitments offer an opportunity to engage with young people in a different and more meaningful way. These include, inter-alia, the Sustainable Development Goals and specifically SDG 4.7 which aims at ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for human rights [...] and the cross cutting focus on youth; the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020–2024) devoted to youth; the UN strategy fourth priority (2018) to increase the UN's efforts to promote human rights education and sustainable development education as well as the appointment of Jayathma Wickramanayake; Youth Envoy of the Secretary General at the United Nations.

Among these initiatives, this paper particularly focuses on the role of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, an ongoing initiative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning which brings together civil society organisations involved in supporting UN HRE initiatives, was actively engaged in advocating for the fourth phase to target young people at the United Nations Office in Geneva Switzerland. In 2018, the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 39/3 (27 September 2018), decided to make youth the focus group of the fourth phase, “with special emphasis on education and training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination, and inclusion and respect for diversity with the aim of building inclusive and peaceful societies, and to align the fourth phase with

⁵ United Nations, *Youth, Peace, Security Agenda Starting to Make Difference for Young People in Conflict Zones, But Much Work Remains, Advocates Tell Security Council*, 17.07.2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13886.doc.htm> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

⁶ Council of Europe..., *op. cit.*

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically with target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals”.⁷

In September 2019, during the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council, States adopted without a vote, the Plan of Action for this fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, starting in 2020.⁸ It enjoyed broad support with over fifty States co-sponsoring it. While offering States a concrete framework of implementation at the national level, the Plan of Action can also constitute an advocacy tool for all relevant stakeholders including civil society to promote human rights education with, by and for young people.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently stated that “The hopes of the world rest on young people. Peace, economic dynamism, social justice, tolerance – all this and more, today and tomorrow, depends on tapping into the power of youth.” A society that deprives young people of hope cannot expect to achieve sustainability or build a culture of human rights.⁹ Only when every young person truly lives the reality of their universal human rights, can the lofty objective of the UN of “leaving no one behind” be said to be achieved.

In conclusion, in realising their own potential and self-worth, youth represent a vast and often untapped contribution to immediate and long-term community development efforts.¹⁰ When young people have a sense of ownership of their own and others’ rights, they can firmly stand up to demand their rights and protect those of others, thus becoming a driving force in their own environment. They are receptive to new ideas and are willing to invest more in change. When young people are able to access opportunities that spark their creativity and dynamism, they become a potent force for positive change in their communities.¹¹ Greta Thurnberg raising a voice for climate change in Sweden; Alaa Salah claiming women’s rights in Soudan; and Carola Rackete, protecting migrants’ lives at sea, are such examples. Similarly, looking back in history, many human rights struggles have been initiated and sustained through the power and passion of youth. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., among the world’s greatest champions of human rights, both became active in their twenties.

⁷ OHCHR, Fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/WPHRE/Fourthphase/Pages/FourthPhaseIndex.aspx> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

⁸ World Programme for Human Rights Education – fourth phase, 4.10.2019, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/42/7> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

⁹ D. Ikeda, *Value Creation for Global Change: Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies*, Soka Gakkai International, 2014, <https://www.sgi.org/about-us/president-ikedas-proposals/peace-proposal-2014.html> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

¹⁰ Youth Organizing, Ruwwad website, <https://ruwwad.ngo/areas/youth> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

Human rights education and young global citizens: an institutional framework

This section outlines initiatives on Human Rights Education and young people, carried out in the framework of the United Nations and regional human rights bodies and provides a definition of “young global citizens” in connection to human rights education.

Firstly, at international level, the importance of human rights education for youth was emphasized since the early years of the United Nations history. In fact, the 1965 Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples and resolution XX titled “Education of youth in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” adopted by the International Conference on Human Rights, held in Tehran in 1968, stressed the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of young people and their role in shaping the future, hence the importance of human rights education to enable them to promote human rights and peace.¹²

The earliest UN documents recognized HRE as essential to maintaining rights, freedoms and democracy, but the United Nations started to actively promote HRE only with the establishment of the UN decade for HRE (1995–2004).¹³ In 2011, this was followed by another important initiative in the field of HRE by the UN when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the first instrument in which international standards for human rights education were officially proclaimed by the United Nations.¹⁴ Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training (2011) is not a binding document, it remains a milestone in the HRE field. However, young people are not specifically mentioned as a target group as the Declaration per se remains quite general and applies to all individuals. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights Education and training (2011) emphasizes that human rights education comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and

¹² A/HRC/42/43 Draft plan of action for the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education – Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/23 D. Ikeda, *Value Creation for Global Change: Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies*, Soka Gakkai International, 2014, <https://www.sgi.org/about-us/president-ikedas-proposals/peace-proposal-2014.html> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

¹³ Human Rights Education Theory, Research, Praxis, ed. M. Bajai, *Leveraging Diversity to Become a Global Citizen* PENN. Pg. 318, Afterword, Nancy Flowers.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

promotion of a universal culture of human rights.¹⁵ It encompasses education *about, through and for* human rights. This last specifically includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.¹⁶ Moreover, article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training (2011), states that Human rights education and training “comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.”¹⁷

Recently, human rights education for youth has been increasingly identified as a strategy for preventing and tackling current global challenges.¹⁸ In its resolution 2250 (2015), the Security Council, affirmed the important role that youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the Secretary-General encourages “teaching respect for human rights and diversity, fostering critical thinking [...] and developing the behavioural and socioemotional skills that can contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance” as elements of related national plans of action. In addition, the *United Nations Youth Strategy, Youth 2030: Working With and For Young People*,¹⁹ launched by the Secretary-General in 2018, commits the United Nations to increase efforts to promote human rights education and training for youth, as well as global citizenship and sustainable development education, non-discrimination, to foster civic awareness and participation, volunteerism and a culture of peace and non-violence among young people.²⁰

Youth empowerment is also a priority commitment of States at the regional level. For instance the African Union and the Council of Europe are committed to recognize young people as rights-holders and key actors in realizing human rights, achieving sustainable development, securing peace and preventing

¹⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, 2011, [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/UnitedNationsDeclarationonHumanRightsEducationandTraining\(2011\).aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/UnitedNationsDeclarationonHumanRightsEducationandTraining(2011).aspx) [accessed: 7.12.2019].

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹⁸ See A/HRC/35/6 in the draft plan of action for the for the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education – Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/23 [accessed: 7.12.2019].

¹⁹ Office of the Secretary’s General’s Envoy on Youth, *Youth 2030*, 2018, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

²⁰ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training..., *op. cit.*

violence and conflict.²¹ Further in General Comment N.20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, paragraph. 24 affirms that human rights education empowers young people to understand, recognize and fulfil their role as active citizens.²²

In September 2018, in its resolution 39/3 (27 September 2018), the Human Rights Council decided to make youth the focus group of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, with special emphasis on education and training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination, and inclusion and respect for diversity with the aim of building inclusive and peaceful societies, and to align the fourth phase with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically with target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

During its 39th session, the Human Rights Council, adopted a resolution drafted by OHCHR in consultations with different stakeholders including young people to focus on youth in the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which was.²³

This Plan of Action, provide an opportunity for States to take steps towards improved implementation of Human Rights Education at the national level, building on previous commitments. Also, it represents an opportunity for civil society as a whole, including youth led organizations and young people themselves, to operate in a solid framework, actively working for their rights and those of others.

Educational methodologies

Despite growing attention on the “millennials” and on the need to protect and respect the rights of youth, so much more needs be done to ensure that each young person can truly feel empowered, have a space to make their voice listened to and a sense of ownership of their rights, and can develop the courage to make concrete change in their environment.

When speaking about Human Rights Education for, with and by young people, although the ultimate goal may be the same, there are many different learning methodologies,²⁴ which may differ not only if it is carried out in formal, non-formal and informal settings, but also in the approach an organization is taking.

²¹ *Ibidem*

²² OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, para. 24 in the Plan of Action of the fourth phase for the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

²³ United Nations Human Rights, A/HRC/42/43 Draft plan of action for the fourth phase (2020–2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education – Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/42/23 [accessed: 7.12.2019].

²⁴ Council of Europe..., *op. cit.*

In this regard, the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education outlines that:

[...] varied and engaging educational methods and settings such as sport, film, arts, culture, games, storytelling, drama and role playing which can engage collaboratively learners of all backgrounds and are useful in developing knowledge and leadership skills, supporting intercultural competencies and providing safe spaces to engage women and girls and promote female leadership. These can challenge societal gender norms, foster youth-led programming regardless of identity, promote understanding across different identities to build peaceful, inclusive and equitable societies and foster team-building, empathy and respect.²⁵

In this sense, Human Rights Education is perhaps best described in terms of what it sets out to achieve: the establishment of a culture where human rights are understood, defended and respected²⁶ and where all individuals can truly uphold the respect of human dignity for everyone. This I argue is a form of transformative Human Rights Education and Learning, that encompass and goes beyond “knowing about human rights” (education *about* human rights) and that can lead young people to transform their own lives and actively engage in their immediate environments as active young global citizens and agents of change (education *through* and *for* human rights).

The concept of “young global citizen” is significant here as it indicates the sort of shift in personal orientation that engagement in transformative human rights education can achieve in the lives of young people. Global citizenship is not attached to nationality, but rather, it constitutes an identity; of individuals concerned for others and their environment, who uphold respect for the dignity of all people and act accordingly. Such individuals, can gain the experience of seeing the world through the eyes of others, discover and clarify what is necessary in order to build a society where we can all live together and collaborate to give birth to a space of security in their immediate surrounding.²⁷

As Osler and Starkey have argued, “citizenship can be understood as a *status*, a *feeling*, and a *practice* [...] feelings of belonging depend on an individual’s sense of security and on an atmosphere of non-discrimination”.²⁸

In this sense, transformative human rights education is the foundation and practice for developing the identity, status or feeling of global citizens.

²⁵ A/HRC/42/43 Draft plan..., *op. cit.*

²⁶ Council of Europe..., *op. cit.*

²⁷ D. Ikeda, *Education Proposal*, Soka Gakkai International, 2000, <https://www.daisaku-ikeda.org/main/educator/edu/edu-09.html> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

²⁸ A. Osler, *Human rights and schooling: An ethical framework for teaching for social justice*, Teachers College Press, New York 2016.

Human Rights Education and young global citizens in practice

In my work with Human Rights Education and young people I had the fortune to meet inspiring young global citizens that are creating a positive shift in their own immediate environment, changing the course of their lives and those of others, and building truly inclusive societies.

In October 2019, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights convened a Social Forum that took place at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland 1–2 October 2019. This annual meeting provided a unique space for an open and interactive dialogue between all stakeholders on the year’s theme titled “the promotion and protection of the rights of children and youth through education”. In this occasion, the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning organized a workshop titled: “Youth as Ambassador of Human Rights Education: Implementing the next Plan of Action of the World Programme”. Three young human rights educators: Victoria from Nigeria, Guillermo from Uruguay and Aunell from Philippines actively participated, leading the conversation on HRE in their own countries, offering their views on the implementation of the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and suggesting ways forward. In addition, in December 2018, during the 9th International Conference on Human Rights Education titled “Unleashing the Full Potential of Civil Society” a workshop titled: “Building inclusive societies: empowering youth to foster global citizenship” through human rights education was organized. The workshop, using storytelling as a technique for empowerment and education, engaged two young people Arash from Iran and Apajok from South Sudan to share how through human rights education they were able to steer their lives into a positive direction, and become fully-engaged actors in their communities.

Based on these activities, in the following sections I highlight the views of these young people in order to shed light on their stories of how they are concretely acting as global citizens in their own communities informed by their interaction in human rights education. The aims of this section are: i) to share their views on implementation and lessons learned from their experience ii) demonstrate the interconnection between human rights education and the development of young global citizens, and iii) show the value of story-telling as a tool to promote HRE.

Youth voices through stories and storytelling: the key to implementation of the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020–2024)

The following are summaries of each of the participant’s experiences. These are included verbatim as the integrity of research process requires that they can use their voices unmediated by others to convey their own story and message.

Victoria emphasized that raising awareness for all and by all to promote HRE is necessary, to close the gap between local and national level. How does a child who does not have the right to go to school know that they have the right to education?

She highlighted that youth ownership of human rights can be achieved through consultations and advocacy. Everyone should ask themselves: “what part of this Plan of Action is actionable and applicable to me?”. She called for a platform for youth to be consulted and better involvement should be created. And then, it is necessary to work at local level to take it forward. Young people should move from “receivers” to people that can share their learning. Young people should be engaged in evaluation, in reporting and monitoring and must be enabled to speak and share their experiences at each possible opportunity: they should not be just observers. They should be engaged precisely because of their experience they can bring at the table.

The Plan of Action could also be integrated in informal learning environments such as prisons and correctional facilities. Young people that are often excluded should be brought to the fore front of activities. Collaboration between all stakeholders, government, NGO’s, teachers, students, civil society should also be facilitated in this sense. Youth should also be engaged as consultants and those who understand better the situation at the local and community level should share their view and experiences. Success stories also should be shared.

Guillermo stressed that in Uruguay there are many young people promoting human rights education and looking to improve other people situations, combating against injustice and discrimination. However, most of the time these good practices are not recognized enough and are not understood in the human rights framework since young people do not have structured tools to frame the experiences they carry out, or they are not part of organizations that coordinate and manage human rights policies at the public or private level. A great challenge, for the fourth phase of the Plan of Action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, is to reach out to young people, providing them with trainings to recognize that what they are doing are actions to enhance human rights and that with necessary trainings they can become educators in human rights, further scaling up the actions they carry out.

The Plan of Action should lead to the explicit establishment of human rights education as a daily living reality among young people, sending out loud the message that human rights education is a key tool in everyday life to change societies. Through this Plan of Action, each young person can frame their own action through the lens of Human Rights Education, recognizing their own experience of human rights, better understating the theoretical elements to improve their practices. The training for young people should be, as explicitly stated in the Plan of Action “student-centered, practical and action-oriented”. It should be linked to “specific human rights issues applicable to youth”, considering young

people's needs, listening to them and including them in the planning: they are the real protagonists of this Programme.

In the education strategy of Uruguay, Human Rights' teachings are ensured at all levels. Nevertheless, it is necessary to encourage young people that Human Rights Education is not only limited to the knowledge of declarations. In order to lead young people to become actors of change in their own community, it is necessary to go beyond the "theoretical" aspect of HRE and focus on human rights' implementation. It is important to empower young critics that can read their reality and commit themselves as proactive citizens. Human Rights need to make sense for young people in everyday life, in the relationships established and in everyday actions to ensure that they are universal. If young people are not able to recognize that human rights are related to daily life and think they are something far away, they will never be able to be protagonists of all the changes needed to ensure their own rights and those of others. It is important to propose training itineraries for young people who are engaged in social actions, beyond the curricular spaces of formal education.

Aunell emphasized that one of goals the of the Plan of Action for the fourth Phase of the World Programme should ensure that Human Rights win in the hearts and minds of people. He stated that if companies use branding to get the attention of people quickly and help them to see the value and to love their product, why not use it to "sell" human rights to the target audience?

He highlighted that when addressing human rights, finding the essential truth is important. What are the most meaningful concepts for the target audience? What is the "foot on the door" that can trigger their interest for Human Rights Education? How will it make people do something for it?

Human rights education must not invoke a sense of entitlement. It must invoke a sense of ownership. Because only in that context, will it create a sense of responsibility. And the best way for the youth to have ownership of human rights is for them to create projects that espouses the concepts. According to Aunell stories have a power to touch people's hearts and to inspire them to do something about it. For Aunell human rights have meaning for those that own them. In order for HRE to be effective, people must have ownership of Human Rights. HRE must not only speak to the minds but also to the hearts. It must not invoke a sense of entitlement but it must invoke a sense of ownership.

Storytelling as a tool to inspire action: stories of young educators, activists and global citizens

All the participants in both workshops highlighted the role of story-telling as a tool to promote HRE with young people and inspire them to act in the immediate surrounding.

Storytelling has historically been used as an educational tool.²⁹ Specifically, in the Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, in the section dedicated to “teaching and learning processes”, storytelling is listed as one of the tools to promote Human Rights Education.³⁰ Moreover, during the workshop on the implementation of the Plan of Action, participants expressed that programs and tools where young people can express their voices are crucial in the HRE field. Storytelling can be listed together with arts and drama as a powerful such tool. Story telling regards stories as having the power to change behaviour and reinforce values,³¹ humanizing people.³² Through sharing ones’ own personal journey others can connect and be inspired to do the same, taking action. In qualitative analysis, stories could also be also utilized as a methodology to evaluate the impact of human rights education in people’s behavioural change.

Victoria had difficulty reading and issues with comprehension. Later, she realized that she had dyslexia when she was a child. The curricula were not adapted to address these challenges and she started to develop low self-esteem. Thanks to the difficulties she experienced, she decided to start her advocacy work and do something to change the situation. She said: “When talking about HRE many people think that HRE is an abstract concept. Human Rights are not abstract: they are related directly to people’s life. Human Rights Education should inspire individuals to take action.” In 2013, when she was a student, Victoria founded and became the director of her own organization, One African child, a youth led organization that focuses on children and young people teaching Human Rights Education and values such as global citizenship, using participatory methodologies often based on games and sports, engaging them in practical ways that relates to their personal life. For instance, they talk about injustices and lack of respect for human rights in their communities and then they tackle how to address them

²⁹ B. Küntzel, *The Learners Journey – storytelling as a design principle to create powerful learning experiences*, Books on Demand, 2019.

³⁰ Draft Plan of Action for the fourth phase, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/227/36/PDF/G1922736.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed: 7.12.2019]. Varied and engaging educational methods and settings such as sport, film, arts, culture, games, storytelling, drama and role playing which can engage collaboratively learners of all backgrounds and are useful in developing knowledge and leadership skills, supporting intercultural competencies and providing safe spaces to engage women and girls and promote female leadership. These can challenge societal gender norms, foster youth-led programming regardless of identity, promote understanding across different identities to build peaceful, inclusive and equitable societies and foster team-building, empathy and respect.

³¹ K.D. Deardoff, *Manual for developing intercultural competencies – Story circles* [UNESCO publishing], Routledge 2019, open access.

³² Young Thinker Opinion Piece, *Keeping children and young people safe from abuse*, 2019, https://gallery.mailchimp.com/61efdfe9e3c03ed2d6188fdb1/files/3981e9e2-b555-492d-8849-23f8c6d2035e/Young_Thinker_Opinion_Piece_Keeping_children_and_young_people_safe_from_abuse.pdf [accessed: 7.12.2019].

using games such as lego, designing possible solutions. Young people are at the centre of the learning process so that they can question things, reflect themselves and then generate results that matter for them. As a member of the SDG steering committee she works in conveying the voice and interest of young people through youth consultations. She advocated that youth should be consulted and that young people themselves must be able to contribute, to be equally engaged and to be leaders. Youth engagement needs to go beyond consulting young people but rather engage them as partners and leaders. She quoted Wangari Maathai: “It is the little things that citizens do. That’s what will make the difference”. Everyone has responsibility to promote human rights.³³

Guillermo became aware of the importance of promoting human rights through his own experience of living in a city of slums and thanks to the educational experience received in school he Guillermo is now a young human rights educator of thirty years old and lives in Las Piedras, Uruguay. Guillermo participated together with a group of his university classmates in a Human Rights Education project in a Detention Center for Persons Deprived of Liberty in Montevideo, Uruguay. Strong tensions among prisoners and lack of knowledge of their human rights were the starting point for the implementation of a non-formal education project on human rights education. Initially twenty-five people deprived of liberty, the majority of whom were under thirty years old, participated in the training. Thanks to this experience he then continued to work on HRE and now he became a managing member of the educational institution where he studied, coordinating the youth movement with children and youth from early childhood to 25 years. He works in generating and promoting solidarity and volunteer projects living Human Rights in everyday life. Through pedagogical tools such as “service-learning”, they combine solidarity projects with academic reflection, generating significant learning in all dimensions.

One of the activities they carried out was with young students between 15 and 25 years old around the training in communities of young volunteers. They developed together a training itinerary to be able to come to understand and recognize that human rights can be alive on a daily basis and in each action. These trainings take place in summer and last a week: every day workshops are held where training spaces are developed for children and young people in the area, taking as themes: coexistence, tolerance, equality, respect for diversity and non-discrimination, solidarity, justice and education; in reflective, recreational and artistic formats.

The young people who are part of these groups are committed to their training, sharing these educational opportunities with those who need it most. Through experience all those involved could become more humble, going beyond their

³³ OHCHR, *Maximizing the transformative power of education*, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Maximizethetransformativepowerofeducation.aspx> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

own ego and becoming empowered youth promoters of human rights. Through these two experiences Guillermo understood that one of the greatest challenges he had encountered when carrying out these projects was to move out of his comfort zone and face his own prejudices, in order to approach realities differently. But precisely that challenge is one of the most significant lessons he never had. Now he understands human rights education as an opportunity to challenge bias, empathise with others and find new ways of thinking. The exchange experience generated by these processes enables people to free themselves from prejudice. The educational experience becomes a life experience, in a liberating sense.

Aunell became involved with human rights education during his first job which gave him several opportunities to visit and engage with diverse communities across the Philippines. Through this experience he saw first-hand the issues surrounding the most vulnerable sectors of the population, such as people who were left behind, who often can't exercise their basic rights and that have no knowledge of those basic rights in practice. That job also gave Aunell opportunities to meet inspirational young leaders who are truly changing the landscape on whatever creative ways they can.

One of the great examples was a young man living in Basilan which was an area of conflict in the Philippines. After stability was brought back to that area, the challenge for the youth of Basilan was how they could help in rebuilding the community and promote an environment of hope, dignity and equality. They found out that many children in Pansul Basih have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). To add more to their hardships, they needed to walk hours to school through mountains and cross two rivers.

Since many of their members are interested in art, the youth started simple art and drawing sessions with the children. The succeeding assessments and interventions were drawing-based. After some time, the parents got more interested and involved. The next phase they did was a Children Management Seminar for the parents. The whole community became engaged in the projects. When more and more people took notice of this initiative and the plight of the people of Pansul Basih, they gained enough political capital to advocate with the government which eventually recognized their activities. They were selected by the Office of the Vice President of the Philippines as one of the top organizations and received support for their project. And now, the town of Basih Pansul has cemented roads. The children no longer have to walk for hours going to school because sponsors provided them with a vehicle to ferry them to school. All of these because they were able to solidify the community and sell their ideas to many people.

Arash fled Iran when he was fifteen years old and arrived in Malaysia in 2010, his new home for more than five years before being resettled in Australia. He described that time as the hardest of his life when he had no right to education or employment. He had a strong desire for learning and working and therefore he enrolled himself a course on human rights education, which mainly focused on

what human rights are, how to know when there are human rights violations and how people could become human rights defenders. At the same time, he engaged in practical work and started to volunteer with several NGOs.

In May 2015, Arash and his family received the news that they were going to be resettled in Australia. They were ecstatic, but their excitement soon turned into fear because after more than five years in Malaysia, they had to start all over again, going through the process of being resettled, not knowing anyone, being in a place that they had never been before. When they arrived in Sydney they immediately started the process of settlement. In short time Arash enrolled himself into an institute to learn English in preparation for University. Thanks to his own personal experience and the human rights course he took, he could easily see injustice around him. He decided to continue his work to advocate for human rights and be a voice for those that were left behind and could not speak for themselves. Soon he started volunteering with some organizations that helped him build a better understanding of his new country. Thanks to all his hard work and determination he was selected to represent young people from Australia at UNHCR Annual NGO consultation in June 2016 and could speak in various international conferences. He used this opportunity to utilize his voice to defend the rights of refugees. Today, he has finished a Civil Engineering degree at the Western Sydney University as a full-time student. He works with the Community Migrant Resource Centre as a Youth Worker supporting people that have recently arrived in Australia to get education and find employment. He is the Co-Chair of the UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council, Chair of Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and volunteer for Refugee Council of Australia, and the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. This all led him to win the Young Australian Human Rights medal and Australia day ambassador without even being Australian Citizen.

Apajok Apajok twenty-four years old, was born in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya and today is a youth advocate in Alice Springs, Australia. She and her family arrived in Australia under a Humanitarian visa when she was two years old in 1997.

From very early childhood she remembered observing her parents supporting those around them most in need as much as they could, even when they did not have much to give. In school, she was very active in sports within her team. At that time, she used to believe that only adults could make real improvement and that for any real change to happen, she should have waited to be old enough so that people would have listen to what she had to say.

When she was seventeen years old, she had a turning point in this belief. One day, Apajok was appointed by the school principal as representative of her school to attend a student conference on human rights. Initially she lacked confidence and she did not want to participate. Eventually, after being encouraged by her supervisor, she participated in a conference on Human Rights Education with

over 200 young people. The symposium focused on how Human Rights Education can be implemented by young people of her own age. During this workshop, she was reminding that human rights encompass freedom of opinions, and non-discrimination based on any ground including of race, sex, language, religion, political view and so on.

Not long after she took this course, she experienced a racial abuse at the train station. Angered by what had happened she thought more about racism and the cause of it and was able to conclude that racism and xenophobia are born from the fear of the unknown. From then on, she started to raise awareness and advocate on the experience of people with a refugee background, working on bridging the gap between them and host communities, ensuring that the voiceless can have a voice and a seat at the table. This wave of empowerment lead her to start many initiatives to fight discrimination and racism and now she works full time with CREATE foundation as the Senior Community Facilitator where she works with ensuring that young people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to have a say in decision that affect them and the young people voices is listened to and respected at all levels. She is strongly committed to speaking up against any forms of injustice and discrimination and especially racism.

Common threads, challenges and opportunities

These five stories can provide an opportunity to reflect on how young people can become truly global citizens and actors of changes in their communities and positively contribute in their immediate environment through human rights education.

Overall, a common thread among all these stories, reveals that a combination of several elements was important for these young people to become active agents of change. For instance, all of them experienced human rights violations directly or witnessed abuse with their own eyes. Similarly, all of them identified gaps and limitations in their environment recognizing that something was lacking. They all had the idea, the feeling, the opinion, that something was wrong. This was in most cases the starting point. Through courses and projects on human rights they began to be able to frame their experience and were able to act on this, not only shifting their lives in a positive direction but creating something new, something that could also have an impact on their immediate environment and that could help to improve other's people lives.

These stories also show other keys elements that these young people developed: courage and resilience that led them to the decision to act, to do something to change their situation and became fully engaged actors of change in their local communities.

Examining these stories through a gender lens, it is quite immediate notice that only the two young women expressed the feeling of insecurity at first,

“lack of self-confidence due to what was perceived as a disease” and lack of self-confidence on why she was selected as the one to attend the human rights course. However, overcoming their fear and discomfort, they could make a change for themselves and their environment.

What most of them believed in is crucial is a type of human rights education that can speak to the mind and hearts of people, going beyond the mere knowledge of human rights, declarations and treaties. It is a kind of HRE that can inspire and hope for a change and that is deeply rooted in society, that can make sense to young people.

The kind of HRE that these young people advocated for and wanted is an education that can develop the quality of empathy and instil in youth ownership of their rights. If young people feel they own their rights (beyond entitlement) they can feel empowered to make a change.

The paper has focused on story-telling, but many participatory approaches can be useful in this sense to promote and value the sharing of personal knowledge and experience of human rights and encourage critical reflection on individual beliefs and values. It enables people with different backgrounds, cultures, values and beliefs to learn effectively together and learn from each other. A participatory approach encourages social analysis aimed toward empowering learners to develop concrete action for social change that is in accordance with human rights values and standards.³⁴ Tools such as art including music, films and storytelling in this sense could be a very powerful tool: moving people’s hearts inspiring others to take action in their own communities and environment. Many young people often feel the importance of using creative teaching methods, of organizing peer groups and engaging youth in creating spaces and giving them responsibilities.³⁵

In this sense, the focus of the fourth phase of the World Programme on HRE is a great tool, to frame the experience of all those youth that carry out human rights education, to feel an ownership of their rights and to bring human rights closer to people hearts and mind.

Conclusion

There are of course limitations to such a small sample and how far their transformation in outlook can be attributed to participation in human rights education programmes. However, their stories can offer an initial step towards understanding the relationship between human rights education and its contribution to fos-

³⁴ OHCHR & Equitas, *Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities. A Handbook for Human Rights Educators*, Montreal 2011, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/EvaluationHandbookPT18.pdf> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

³⁵ Based on last year workshop titled: “Building inclusive societies: fostering global citizens through HRE” held during the 9th International Conference on HRE in Western Sydney University, Sydney Australia.

tering young global citizens. Further research, using larger data sets and methodologies would be a valuable next step in developing our understanding of the relationship between HRE and young people's empowerment.

The international frameworks mentioned in this paper, which emphasise the crucial role of Human Rights Education for, with, for and by youth to tackle global challenges provide an opportunity for young people themselves and for the whole society to take a step forward towards building inclusive societies.

Specifically, the Plan of Action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education for the fourth phase offers concrete steps for States to implement Human Rights Education at national level and a comprehensive tool for other actors, including civil society to advocate for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of human rights education. As Guillermo suggested, the Plan of Action provides a great opportunity for young people that promote HRE to frame in a meaningful way all their activities and contribution on human rights education.³⁶

In the same way, it also offers a tool to close the gap between the formal international support that states often offer at the international level and the actual implementation at national level.

It could support efforts in measuring the impact of Human Rights Education. Evaluating the impact of human rights education is a complex undertaking, as this type of education, whose ultimate goal is greater respect for human rights leading to social change, is difficult to measure in isolation from political, economic and social factors.³⁷

Unless implemented at the national level and taken seriously by the different parties to ensure that what is written in the Plan of Action can become a daily living reality for each and every young person, including and above of all those in the most desperate situations, these international frameworks will remain empty words. In this sense, it is necessary to ensure a real political will which includes a serious monitoring and evaluation framework of HRE implementation at national level, coordinated through the work and efforts of others stakeholders such as of National and Human Rights Institutions, and through the Universal Periodic Review.

However, this paper has shown that these frameworks are necessary but insufficient tools and that besides advocacy at the international and national level, it is also necessary to reach young people mind and hearts, to evocate a sense of ownership of their human rights and to advocate for their rights. As Aunell said, only when human rights education invokes a sense of ownership can create a sense of responsibility. For this, the plan of action for

³⁶ Draft Plan of Action for the fourth phase <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/227/36/PDF/G1922736.pdf?OpenElement>.

³⁷ OHCHR & Equitas, *op. cit.*

the fourth phase offers a concrete tool, both to bring it at the local level and also identifying methodologies and tools that can be successful in promoting HRE, such for instance story telling.

As expressed in this paper and shown through these stories of the young global citizens introduced here, storytelling, as well as other participatory approaches, is a powerful educational tool that can reach the heart and mind of young people and can encourage others to act and create a change in their environment.

To say it with the words of Aunell, Victoria and Guillermo, this Plan of Action for the fourth phase of the World Programme for HRE should lead to the explicit establishment of human rights education as a daily living reality among young people, sending out loud the message that human rights education is a key tool in everyday life to change societies. Young people should move from “receivers” to people that can share their learning. Young people should be engaged in evaluation, in reporting and monitoring and must be enabled to speak and share their experiences at each possible opportunity: they should not be just observers. They should be engaged precisely because of their experience they can bring at the table. This Plan of action should speak to the hearts and minds of people, inspiring them to have ownership of their rights.

The work of establishing universal human rights starts with a transformation in the awareness and behaviour of each individual. And persistent efforts in human rights education and learning can, as they develop into a broad-based grassroots movement, lay the solid ethical foundations of a flourishing culture of human rights.³⁸

As Eleonore Roosevelt said,

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood (s)he lives in; the school or college (s) he attends; the factory, farm, or office where (s)he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seek equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.³⁹

Aunell, Apajok, Arash, Victoria and Guillermo, are examples of truly young global citizens and a real hope for the future. As expressed in the definition I gave at the start of this paper, they gained the experience of seeing the world

³⁸ D. Ikeda, *Toward a World of Dignity for all: The Triumph of the Creative life. Peace Proposal*, Sokka Gakkai International, 2011

³⁹ Excerpt from a speech by Eleanor Roosevelt at the presentation of “In your hands: A guide for Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Thursday, March 27, 1958. United Nations, New York.

through the eyes of others, discovered and clarified what is necessary in order to build a society where we can all live together and collaborated to give birth to a space of security in their immediate surrounding.⁴⁰

To conclude, as the young people introduced in this paper emphasised, all young people, including those in the most desperate situations, have the right to voice their opinion, to be listened to, to see their dignity respected and to be involved as equal partners in all the decision-making that concern them and in all programmes that see them as a “target”. This must not be a ticking box exercise, but rather a process to “establish a shared global culture of human rights that is rooted in the realities of daily life and based on unfailing and uncompromising respect for human dignity”.⁴¹

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⁴⁰ D. Ikeda, *Education Proposal*..., *op. cit.*

⁴¹ *Idem*, *Humanizing Religion, Creating Peace*, Soka Gakkai International, 2008, <https://www.sgi.org/about-us/president-ikedas-proposals/peace-proposal-2008.html> [accessed: 7.12.2019].

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Młodzi obywatele świata: budowanie społeczeństwa integracyjnego poprzez edukację praw człowieka

Edukacja w zakresie praw człowieka w formie współpracy z młodzieżą, dla młodzieży oraz przez młodzież jest coraz częściej identyfikowana jako strategia mająca na celu dostosowanie się do globalnego wyzwania współczesnej cywilizacji. Dane statystyczne ONZ wskazują, że populacja młodych ludzi w wieku od 10 do 24 lat wynosi ok. 1,8 mld. Jest to największa populacja młodzieży w historii, choć nie ma jednolitej definicji tej grupy wiekowej. Większość młodych ludzi żyje w krajach, gdzie przemoc i konflikty stanowią znaczący element życia codziennego. Okoliczności te przyczyniają się do masowych wyjazdów z kraju w poszukiwaniu lepszego życia, częściej jednak młodzi ludzie są konfrontowani z wyzwaniami i niebezpieczeństwami, którym nie są w stanie sprostać. Na płaszczyźnie międzynarodowej opracowano liczne projekty obliczone na tworzenie struktur pomocy młodym ludziom. Należy do nich Światowy Program Edukacji Praw Człowieka (World Program for Human Rights Education) na lata 2020–2024. Na podstawie doświadczeń młodych aktywistów na rzecz praw człowieka autorka przedstawia zadania i możliwości edukacji praw człowieka w zakresie tworzenia społeczeństwa integracyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja praw człowieka, młodzi ludzie (młodzież), społeczeństwo integracyjne, społeczeństwo globalne

Young Global Citizens: Building Inclusive Societies Through Human Rights Education

In recent years, human rights education with, for and by youth has been increasingly identified as a strategy for preventing and tackling current global challenges. According to the United Nations, there are around 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world today: the largest youth population ever, although there is no consistent definition of young people. The great majority live in countries where violence and conflict are still a daily reality. Many are forced to leave their home country, embarking alone on dangerous routes and facing enormous challenges to start a new life in a completely different – and sometimes hostile – place. At the international level several frameworks that place young people at the centre have been adopted, such as the fourth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2020–2024) which will focus on

youth. Based on the direct experiences of young human rights activists and educators, this paper aims to demonstrate the critical role that human rights education can play in fostering young global citizens who can contribute to building inclusive societies, and pave the way to establishing an authentic culture of human rights.

Key words: human rights education, young people, inclusive societies, storytelling, global citizens