



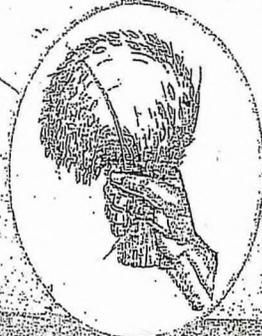
# HUMAN RIGHTS

## EDUCATION

### MANUAL FOR TEACHERS

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**MOE**



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## EDUCATION



**MANUAL FOR TEACHERS**

HRE/ED/CR/39

## Table of Contents

Preface.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
<b>Part I: Introduction to Human Rights Education.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Organization of this manual.....	3
Human Rights Education.....	3
Activities: skills, knowledge and attitudes.....	4
Creating a human rights climate in your classroom.....	5
Dealing with difficult issues.....	5
Common questions about human rights education.....	6
Integrating human rights into all parts of the teaching curriculum.....	8
Teaching methods.....	10
Role play.....	10
Small group discussion.....	11
Brainstorming.....	12
Large group discussion.....	13
Questioning.....	13
Songs and stories.....	14
Drawings.....	15
Cartoons, pictures and photographs.....	15
Newspapers.....	16
Interviews.....	16
Outside speakers.....	16
Projects.....	17
<b>Part II: Human Rights Themes.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Theme 1: What are human rights?.....	19
Theme 2: Rights and responsibilities.....	22
Theme 3: The rights of the child.....	26
Theme 4: Appreciating similarities and differences.....	30
Theme 5: The right to education.....	34
Theme 6: Economic, social and cultural rights.....	37
Theme 7: Human Rights and the law.....	40
Theme 8: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression.....	42
Theme 9: War, peace and humanitarian law.....	46
Theme 10: The United Nations.....	49
<b>Part III: Human Rights Standards.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Universal Declaration of Human Rights.....	51
Simplified Version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.....	56
Simplified Version of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.....	58
Simplified Version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	61
Summary of Rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	66

## Preface

The desire to produce teaching guides for peace, human rights and citizenship education in Liberia, spread from the quest of the Ministry of Education to ensure that a culture of peace and human rights replaces the culture of violence which engulfed Liberian society in the past. To achieve this goal, the concepts of human rights, peace and citizenship must be taught to every student in every classroom of Liberia, as well as in the non-formal sector.

The introduction of peace, human rights and citizenship as separate subjects in our schools provides the opportunity for students to develop and practice skills for life. The subjects focus on creating attitudes and behaviors to enable people to participate in their communities and society in a constructive and respectful way. This is a comprehensive and lifelong process, which will make peace, human rights and citizenship a culture and a matter of daily practice. Students should learn about these principles by seeing them implemented in practice in the classroom, the home and the community.

This manual is for teachers of human rights in Liberia's primary and secondary schools. It is designed as a basic introduction, with advice on methodology, and activities for students at the primary and secondary levels. The approach stresses the practical rather than the theoretical. The intention is that teachers can take this material and adapt it to suit their own circumstances and context.

## Acknowledgements

This teacher's guide builds upon many years of experience of Liberian activists who have taught human rights in schools. Activists who provided contributions and invaluable advice throughout the development of the teacher's guide were Anthony L. M. Boakai of Focus, Momolu Kandakai of the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), Patrick Jagba Nah, Movement for the Defense of Human Rights (MODHAR) and Adolphus Woods, of the Foundation for International Dignity (FIND).

The manual draws on a number of human rights education guides that have been adapted to the specific Liberian context. In particular, a number of exercises are based on those found in the Amnesty International publication *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*<sup>1</sup>, *ABC: Teaching Human Rights* published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>2</sup> and *Peace and Human Rights Education* which was part of the Rapid Response Education Programme in Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup>

This Teacher's Guide was published as part of a project led by the Ministry of Education to introduce peace, human rights and citizenship in the Liberian primary and secondary school curriculum. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provided technical and financial assistance to implement the project.

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<sup>1</sup> *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999, (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International.

<sup>2</sup> *ABC: Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>3</sup> *Peace and Human Rights Education*, 2003. Unicef, Norwegian Refugee Council and Ministry of Youths, Education and Sports of Sierra Leone.

## PART I: INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

### Organization of this manual

This manual has been organized in three sections.

- The first section provides information about ways of teaching **for** and **about** human rights.
- The second section provides “themes” about specific human rights topics and lessons / activities that can be used by teachers in the classroom.
- The third part contains simplified versions of relevant human rights standards.

The first section contains background information about human rights education and advice on approaches that can be used in the classroom. It is essential that teachers using this guide read and understand this section, as the techniques described in the section are used in the exercises in section two of this manual. In addition, when going through the different themes, teachers will want to refer back to this section frequently for advice on how to conduct the class.

The second section contains “themes” about specific human rights topics and exercises to allow students to learn the lessons. Within each theme, the exercises have been organized from the least to the most complicated: The first exercises will be more suitable for students at the primary level, while the last ones will be more suitable for secondary level students. However, teachers should keep in mind the specific needs of their students when they plan their lessons. Older children can benefit from some of the easier games to build trust or foster cooperation. Likewise, it may be possible to involve younger children in adaptations of other exercises.

Teaching of human rights in the Liberian post-war environment, where many students or their families may have witnessed human rights abuses or become victims themselves, presents particular challenges and opportunities. It is important that the teacher considers composition of the class, such as gender balance, social divisions, ethnic groups, whether there are disabled children, or (present or former) displaced persons, refugees, or child soldiers in the class. The teacher should monitor the effects of exercises, adjust them whenever necessary, and emphasize that human rights principles apply equally to all students at all times.

### Human Rights Education<sup>4</sup>

Human Rights education is the teaching of the set of rights that are inherent to all human beings. It involves helping teachers and students to understand human rights and to feel that these are important and should be respected, defended and taught to all students everywhere regardless of age, gender, ethnic background or the educational setting.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999, (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 7.

All human rights education should teach **about** and **for** human rights. For example:

- Teaching students **about** the rights they have, is teaching **about** human rights
- Teaching students **how to** respect and protect rights, is teaching **for** human rights.

Education about and for human rights includes the development of skills such as critical thinking, communication skills, problem-solving and negotiation, all of which are essential for effective human rights activism and participation in decision-making processes.

Teaching for and about human rights involves the use of participatory methodology. Although this approach is not always used in schools, educators have found the participatory, interactive methodology to be the most effective way to develop skills, attitudes, and knowledge, in both children and adults. Such methodology involves students fully in their own learning and encourages them to develop knowledge about human rights and take active steps to integrate the concepts in their daily lives.

In addition, the participatory approach allows students to explore the many different points of views that exist on various human rights topics. This encourages them to use critical thinking skills and form opinions rather than memorizing one "correct" answer. As such, the participatory methodology is particularly appropriate when dealing with human rights issues, where there are frequently many different points of view on an issue, rather than one "correct" answer.

### **Activities: Skills, knowledge and attitudes<sup>5</sup>**

The activities connected to each of the themes in part two of this guide are aimed at giving students in Liberia **skills, knowledge and attitudes**, which they will need to work towards a world free of human rights abuses.

**Skills** that must be learned include listening to others, critical analysis, cooperating, communicating and problem solving. These skills help students analyze the world around them, understand that human rights are a way to improve their lives and the lives of others and take action to protect the rights of individuals and the community.

**Knowledge** involves knowing that human rights documents exist and which rights they contain. Students should understand that these rights are universally applicable to all human beings. It also involves understanding the consequences of violating human rights. This knowledge helps students protect their own rights, the rights of others and the rights of the community.

**Attitudes** involves an understanding that human dignity is important, that we all have equal rights and responsibilities, that cooperation is better than conflict, that we are responsible for our actions, and that we can improve our world if we try. These attitudes help students develop morally and prepare them for positive participation in society.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999, (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 8.

## **Creating a “human rights climate” in your school**

One of the main challenges for teachers of human rights is to teach in a way which respects human rights in the classroom and the school environment itself. For learning to have practical benefit, students need not only to learn about human rights but to learn in an environment that models them.

If teachers do not act as they teach, students will learn little about human rights. A teacher who behaves unjustly or abusively will have little positive effect. Often, because of a desire to please, students may try to mirror a teacher’s personal views without thinking for themselves. This may be a reason for teachers, at least in the beginning, not to express their own ideas.

The “human rights climate” within the schools and classrooms should rest on reciprocal respect between all the actors involved. Accordingly, the way in which decision-making processes take place, methods of resolving conflicts and administering discipline and the relationship among all actors are key contributing factors.

Ultimately teachers need to explore ways to involve not only students and school administrators, but also parents, and the whole community. In this way, teaching for human rights can reach from the classroom into the community to the benefit of both.

## **Dealing with difficult issues**

Sometimes controversial issues and sensitive subjects come up when students begin to examine human rights. Teachers need to remain constantly alert to students’ discomfort and potential disagreements. Teachers should acknowledge that human rights sometimes involves conflicts of values. Students will benefit from understanding these conflicts or disagreements and seeking to resolve them in peaceful ways which respect the rights of all.

## Common questions about Human Rights Education <sup>6</sup>

Whenever a new subject is introduced in a teaching curriculum, both teachers, students and members of the community will have many questions about the subject. This is particularly the case with human rights, which focuses on the development of values and skills, in addition to knowledge. The questions below are among those commonly asked when human rights education is introduced. The answers are intended to help address these questions.

**Question:** *"Children need to be taught responsibility, not rights."*

**Answer:** This teachers' guide places equal emphasis on rights and responsibilities. The activities are designed to show that the relationship between an individual's rights and other people's rights is not always clear cut, and that everyone has a responsibility to respect the rights of others.

**Question:** *Is it the government's responsibility to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about human rights?*

**Answer:** Member countries of the United Nations have an obligation to promote human rights education in all forms of learning. In addition, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights declares that, "States Parties of the present Charter shall have the duty to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of the rights and freedoms contained in the present Charter..."<sup>7</sup>

In Liberia, the Government, through the Ministry of Education, is fulfilling this commitment by introducing human rights in the school curriculum. This teaching manual has therefore been developed under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

**Question:** *"Won't human rights topics frighten students?"*

**Answer:** Teaching human rights is positive, not negative, because young people learn about their own value as human beings and about the importance of human dignity.

Of course, providing information about human rights violations alone can be distressing for students. This is particularly a concern in Liberia, where students may have experienced or witnessed abuses during the years of war or in the post-war period. Although learning about human rights is sometimes based on the knowledge that bad things happen, it should also give students the skills that they need to be able to do something about these realities and should develop in them the attitude that it is possible for them to act to change a bad situation.

**Question:** *"What if my students ask a question I can't answer?"*

**Answer:** When teaching human rights, answers are rarely simple. Complex moral questions cannot be answered with "yes" or "no". Raising the question is more

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Siniko: *Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 9-11.

<sup>7</sup> African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 25.

important than finding one "correct" answer. By introducing these complex issues to students and allowing them to think about them, teachers can equip students to respond to them in a constructive manner. The teaching methods used in this Teachers' Guide help teachers and students explore human rights issues together, without the teacher having to have the "correct" answer to every question.

**Question:** *"What is the purpose of using participatory activities?"*

**Answer:** We learn and remember things better by doing them rather than just by hearing about them. Although the activities in this manual are fun, they have serious aims, usually the explanation of a human rights concept/value. These aims are explained at the start of each activity.

**Question:** *"We don't have a photocopier, or enough materials"*

**Answer:** The activities in this manual are designed so that teachers do not need expensive materials or a photocopier. It is also relevant to note that in Liberia, there are a number of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who have carried out human rights programs in schools. If any organizations are working in your area, you may be able to coordinate activities with them.

**Question:** *"Will parents, teachers, and school heads not oppose the teaching of human rights as political indoctrination, which will lead to rebellious behavior?"*

**Answer:** Human rights make students better able to participate in society and in the development of their country. Human rights are about rights and also about responsibilities. Respect for the rights of themselves and others will ensure responsible behavior and attitudes from students. An understanding of human rights will encourage them to develop critical enquiring minds and make them question, discuss and behave rationally. This is critical both for re-building Liberia, and for sustaining a just peace.

**Question:** *"Should we also introduce human rights in the teaching curricula of non-formal education programs?"*

**Answer:** Most children in Liberia do not have access to formal education. Moreover, the difficult environment some children live in makes them vulnerable to human rights abuses. As a result of this reality many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have developed non-formal educational programs to provide learning opportunities for those children who are excluded from the formal education system.

## **Integrating human rights into all part of the teaching curriculum<sup>8</sup>**

In Liberia, human rights is being taught as a separate subject in primary and secondary schools. However, it is important that human rights education is not only seen as a separate subject, but is integrated into the entire curriculum over time. Below are some ideas for how to integrate human rights into other core subjects.

### **History**

When teaching history, human rights can be introduced around various themes and historical events.

Students can study historical documents relating to human rights such as the US Declaration of Independence, The Liberian Declaration of Independence, the Liberian Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Teachers can also introduce major events such as Liberian independence, slavery, and the civil war in Liberia, with special attention to human rights aspects of these events. International events such as genocide in Rwanda, or apartheid in South Africa also provide opportunities to teach about human rights.

Study of well-known figures – for example Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Martin Luther King (USA) and Mahatma Gandhi (India) – and their struggle for rights, can be undertaken. This can lead on to study of "ordinary" people who have had their rights violated or who have fought for human rights and peace at the community level.

### **Civics**

This subject is an opportunity to teach students about the responsibilities, as well as the rights, which living in peace and participating in decision making processes involves. It can emphasize the positive effects when leaders act in accordance with the law and for the good of the people. It can also show the negative effects of violence, corruption and lack of transparency in government.

Teaching from a human rights perspective also includes teaching about the responsibility of the Liberian Government and of citizens to uphold national and international human rights law. The subject also lends itself to teaching about the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution of Liberia, and comparing these to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

This subject could include studying poverty, and ethnic and religious discrimination, as well as the mechanisms by which these injustices can be ended. Also, the functions and responsibilities of the police, trade unions, education and mass media could be looked at. A study of how societies deal with dissent can be particularly useful for bringing up issues of human rights, such as freedom of expression, movement, association and assembly.

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 18-21.

**Literature**

Books and poems are excellent resources for vivid accounts of human rights violated or defended. Historical literature is an opportunity for history and literature teachers to work together to make human rights vivid for students.

**Art**

When students have art lessons, there may be opportunities to create posters or artworks which express a commitment to human rights. Several exercises throughout this guide makes suggestions for artistic activities.

**Science**

Health issues are a good way to introduce human rights in this subject. For example, children have a right to health care, but also the responsibility to respect their own and other people's health. Where appropriate, reference could also be made to traditional health practices and customs affecting health. The subject could also explore the right to food, water and shelter, and the effects when these are denied to certain groups of people.

## Teaching methods<sup>9</sup>

All activities in this Teachers' Guide are based on the methods explained in this section. The methods are simple, and practice will make them easier. In the beginning, you should go back to this section and review each of the methods before attempting them in your class.

The techniques have proved to be especially appropriate for human rights education because they encourage critical thinking, respect for differences, and active engagement of all participants.

When using these teaching methods it is important to give clear instructions about the activity itself. It is also important to work out appropriate time frames for each activity so that students know how much time they have to complete the tasks.

### Roleplay

A roleplay is a short drama played by the participants. It is mostly improvised, although students draw on their own life experiences to roleplay the situation. It aims to bring to life circumstances or events. Roleplays can improve understanding of a situation and encourage empathy towards those who are involved in it. For example, in a roleplay about a child who is not allowed to play or rest, the students, by acting the part of the child, can gain insight into what it is like to be the victim and begin to think about solutions for how to solve the problem.

#### How to do it:

- Identify the issue which the roleplay will illustrate, for example, the right of the child to play and rest (Article 31, Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- Decide on the situation, the problem, and who the characters are. For example, if the class is studying the right of the child to play and rest, they could think of a situation where a child may not have time to play or rest because he or she comes from a poor family and has to work all day long.
- Decide how many students will do the roleplay, how many will be observers, whether to do the roleplay simultaneously in small groups, or all together as one group. Encourage shy children to be involved.
- Decide how the roleplay will work. For example, it could be:
  - told as a story, where a narrator sets the scene and others act out the rest of the story from the point of view of "their" character.
  - a drama, where the characters interact, inventing dialogue on the spot.
- Now allow a couple of minutes for the students to think about the situation and their roles. If the furniture in the room you are working in needs to be rearranged to make space, do it now.

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 22 – 41.

- The students perform the roleplay.
- During the roleplay, it might be useful to stop the action at a critical point to ask everyone what is happening. For example, in a roleplay where the child has to work all day long, ask the children if they can think of ways that the situation could be resolved, then ask that the different endings be played out.
- After the roleplay, it is important that students think about what just took place, so that it is not just an activity, but is also a learning experience. When planning the roleplay, be sure to leave time at the end to reinforce the purpose and learning points of the activity.
- If the roleplay worked badly, ask the students how it could be improved. If it went well, maybe it could be performed for the whole school or community, with an explanation of the subject it illustrates.

**Remember:**

Because roleplays imitate real life, they may raise questions to which there is no simple answer, for example, about the right or wrong behavior of a character. Do not give the impression that there is one answer for every question. It is very important that teachers and students accept different points of view. Teachers should not impose their view on controversial matters, or try to get consensus at any price. However, they should summarize the points where agreement seems to have been reached. During the process teachers should make sure to list all viewpoints and leave it to students to draw their own conclusions.

Roleplays need to be used with sensitivity. The teacher needs to respect the feelings of individuals and the social structure of the class. For example, a roleplay about ethnic minorities needs careful handling if there are ethnic minorities in the classroom, so that those belonging to them will not feel exposed or marginalized. Role-plays about serious abuses which some students may have experienced should also be undertaken with great care.

**Small group discussion**

Dividing the class into pairs or groups gives students an opportunity to participate actively and to cooperate. It allows all students to express their views. This can be particularly important in classes with a large number of students.

Small groups can be useful to generate a lot of ideas quickly, or to help the class to think about human rights concept in terms of their own experience. For example, if the class is studying the right to life, the teacher could give pairs or groups five minutes to decide "Is it ever right to kill someone?", before returning to the whole-class plenary for further discussion.

In order to ensure that small group discussions are effective and that everyone has a chance to participate the groups should generally consist of not more than four or five students.

### How to do it:

- When organizing the groups, ask questions like: Do I want to divide the group according to ability? Do I want to combine the sexes? Do I want friends to work together? Sometimes groups can be chosen at random. For example, by the first letter of students' names.
- Organize the groups: Explain the task clearly. Seat participants where they can see each other. Tell the group how long they have for the task.
- If the group needs to write something, ask each group to appoint someone to write notes or report back.
- While the pairs or groups are working the teacher should:
  - Stand back, but be available.
  - Not interrupt, unless a group has misunderstood the instructions.
  - Spread his or her attention between groups.
  - Allow group and pair discussions to flow, only intervene if asked to.
  - Groups sometimes need encouragement to get them going at the start of an exercise.
- Reporting back: It might be necessary for groups to report their work to the whole class. This might involve reporting a decision, summarizing a discussion, or giving information about how the group functioned. If the groups will need to report back, they need to know this at the start so that they can select someone for this task.
- Evaluation: Ask the students whether the activity was useful, and what they learned. If there is a negative response, ask how they would improve the activity. Use their ideas.

### Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way to encourage creativity and to generate a lot of ideas very quickly. It can be used for solving a specific problem or answering a question. It is often a good idea to brainstorm when introducing a new subject. This allows the class to find out what they already know. Brainstorming can also be used to solve problems. For example, after an "incident" involving conflict between individuals, ask the group to brainstorm all the possible nonviolent solutions.

### How to do it:

- Decide on the issue you want to brainstorm. Formulate it into a question, which has many possible answers. Write the question where everyone can see it. For example: "In what ways can we improve our community?"
- Ask students to contribute their ideas. Write the ideas where everyone can see them. These should be single words or short phrases.
- Tell students that in a brainstorm they can not comment on each other's ideas until the end. They also can not repeat ideas which have already been said.

- Encourage everyone to contribute, but do NOT move around the group in a circle, or force students to think of an idea - this is likely to discourage creativity.
- Do not judge the ideas as you write them down. If possible, ask a student to write them. Only give your own ideas if it is necessary to encourage the group.
- If a suggestion is unclear, ask the person to clarify it, or suggest a clarification and check that they agree to it.
- Write down EVERY new suggestion. Often, the most creative suggestions are the most useful and interesting!
- Stop the brainstorm when ideas are running out. NOW, you can go through the suggestions, asking for comments.
- Ranking or organizing by theme can sometimes be used to prioritize ideas or solutions after a brainstorm has taken place in order to focus the discussion.

### Large group discussion<sup>10</sup>

Discussions are a good way for the teacher and the students to discover what their attitudes are to human rights issues. This is very important for teaching human rights, because as well as knowing the facts, participants also need to explore and analyze issues for themselves.

Discussions are also an opportunity to practice listening, speaking in turn and other group skills, which are important for respecting other people's rights. To allow everyone to participate, it is important that the class is of a manageable size. If your class is more than 15 or 20 students it might be better to break into smaller groups for the discussion. Bear in mind that the seating arrangement should encourage interaction and participation. It would be preferable to seat participants in a circle or semi-circle where they can see one another.

In order to have an open discussion, it is important to have an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the class. One way to help create a "safe" environment is to have the students develop "Rules for Discussion". This is best done at the beginning of the school year, when standards of behavior are normally being established, but these rules can be created at any time.

### Questioning

All teachers already use questions every day. Sometimes, they are questions such as "what did I just say?", which are used to control the class or to ridicule students. Other questions sometimes used are so-called "closed" questions. They have only one correct answer and are used to test knowledge. Participatory teaching encourages the teacher

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<sup>10</sup> Based on the essay "Establishing Rules for Discussion" by Felisa Tibbitts

to use open questions that will encourage the students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information.

Here are some examples of "open" questions that teachers could use. If you practice using them, they will become easier. The key point to remember is: "What do I want from this class? 'Yes' and 'no' answers, or an open, interesting exchange where students learn actively?"

- Hypothetical questions: "What would you do/think if...?" These help students to imagine situations and stimulate thought.
- Speculating: "How might we help to solve this problem?"
- Encouraging/supporting: "That's interesting, what happened next?" These draw out the student's own experience and views.
- Opinion seeking: "What do you think or feel about...?" This tells the class that the class-members opinions are important and interesting.
- Probing: "Why do you think that?" If asked in a non-aggressive way, this can help the group to think deeply and justify/analyze their opinions.
- Clarifying/summarizing: "Am I right to say that you think that...?" Summarizing what a student said and checking if you understand it will help others to think about whether they agree with what is being said.
- Identifying agreement: "Do most of us agree that...?" This can provoke discussion or can come at the end, where, by using a question like "Have we finished that part...?", you can agree to move on to the next topic.
- Try to remember to avoid leading or trick questions such as "X is correct, isn't it?" These discourage participation. Asking too many questions at once or asking unclear questions should also be avoided. And remember, an occasional nod, a smile or even just sitting on the same level as the class, will improve the responses you get!

### Songs and stories

Throughout Liberia, songs and stories are used as a way of preserving and transmitting social values. They arouse interest, recall experiences and reinforce learning. They can be used as vehicles to convey diverse historical, cultural and social realities. Many of them include human rights concepts and values.

Effective stories are those which are lively, well-illustrated and which do not preach. The informal nature of songs makes them very appealing to the community and the messages they carry tend to live on in people's hearts and minds.

### **How to do it:**

- Divide the class in small groups. Each group can be assigned with different topics to explore through songs or stories. Give the students time to ask parents, grandparents and other people in the community and to collect and write up texts.
- Then give time for the group to present their findings to the class. This could be done through presentations, or performances of a song or story.
- Ask students to discuss what the main messages of the stories or songs are. What can students learn from them, and what do they say about the past and present life in Liberia.
- Teachers can also ask students to write their own songs or stories on themes related to human rights in their community.

### **Drawing**

Drawing can be used to develop observation, imagination, and feelings of empathy for people in the pictures. Drawing is useful when teaching human rights because the work of the students can be exhibited in the school or community to communicate human rights values to others.

Drawings can be made on almost all human rights themes. For example, the right of the child, the right to education, the right to food and shelter, and the right to freedom from torture or ill-treatment.

### **Cartoons , pictures and photographs**

Cartoons are powerful influences on young people. They can entertain and inform or encourage prejudices and stereotypes. They can be used in a schools in many different ways. For example, cartoons drawn by students can be used as a way to communicate human rights issues to the rest of the school or community.

In some cases, teachers may be able to take cartoons or pictures with human rights themes from newspapers or magazines and share these with the class. The teacher may want to ask students to discuss the pictures of cartoon in groups. Then ask the students:

- What is the message of the cartoon / picture?
- Are the images effective in telling the story?
- Does it criticize an idea, or a group of people?
- Does it include stereotypes or prejudices towards a particular group of people, such as women, ethnic groups, refugees, people with disabilities?

## Newspapers

Freedom of the press is guaranteed in Liberia, and the media is essential for circulating information. However, sometimes papers include subjective reporting using stereotypes and prejudices. Identifying and analyzing prejudice in newspapers prepares students to identify it and oppose it in everyday situations. This activity also improves communication skills.

Teachers may be able to bring some old or new newspapers to class. Students can be asked to work in small groups and look through the newspapers to identify human rights issues (such as stories about discrimination, right to education, right to food etc). After the students have had time to read the papers, they could select one article and answer some of the following questions:

- Does the title of the article suggest its view on the issue?
- What is your first impression of the situation described?
- Does anyone seem to be at fault? If so, who?
- Are direct accusations made against anyone? If so, list them.
- Is any proof offered to support the allegations?
- How much of the report criticizes someone?
- How much supports or defends them?
- Are there any direct quotes from the people who are being criticized?
- Which words do you think are the most important in creating your impression of the report?
- What impressions, if any, are given of ordinary people's views on the issue?
- What is the attitude of people in authority?

## Interviews

When learning about human rights, teachers and students can look in their own communities for concrete examples of human rights issues.

For example, if the class is learning about the rights of the child, the students' parents and grandparents will be an important source of information about how the lives of children have changed over the years.

Interviews are a good way to bring the wider community into the school, to tie learning to real life, and to improve young people's skills in talking to all kinds of people.

## Outside speakers

It is always interesting to have an expert come and talk about his or her work. When discussing a difficult ethical issue or a subject where it is clear that there is more than one answer, teachers may want to invite two or three different people to speak to the class and in so doing show them the different views and approaches that exist on this one issue.

### How to do it:

- The teacher will need to identify the most appropriate speaker(s). The students can also be consulted for ideas for who to invite to speak to them.
- Contact the person you want to speak to the students in advance to invite them to speak on the relevant subject. Set a day and time and organize the room before the speaker arrives. Make sure that there is drinking water for the speaker to make them feel comfortable. (Please note that you should not have to pay people to talk to the class. Instead, try to find individuals who are genuinely interested in sharing their experiences with the students).
- If you are inviting more than one person you may want to invite them to come at the same time or on different days, depending on the time and space available and which way is going to be more appropriate. It is up to the teacher to plan and decide this.
- Give students a brief introduction in advance of the presentation to get them thinking about any questions they may want to ask the speaker(s). You should also ask students to prepare questions before the presentation.
- After the presentation(s) have finished and the teacher and students are alone, the teacher can ask if students found it interesting and review with them the issues that transpired from the presentation(s).

### Projects<sup>11</sup>

Projects are the independent investigation of topics over an extended period, ending in a final product. Projects are useful for teaching human rights because they can help students to see links between the taught subjects and the outside world. They also give students an opportunity to learn to organize themselves for action, plan their own time and work to a schedule. They allow the students to take control of their own learning, with the guidance of the teacher.

#### How to do it:

Projects have distinct stages. Throughout, the emphasis is on allowing students to take responsibility for their own study.

- The topic or problem.

These can be identified by the teacher, and presented to the students as choices, or chosen directly by the students. It is good to have a direct question on an issue of interest to the students. For example, "Are disabled persons in our community treated well?" The question needs to be specific to avoid getting lost in the subject.

- Planning.

The teacher and the class need to decide when the project will begin, how long it will take, what resources will be used, whether each student will work alone or in groups, on the same or different topics, and so on. It is very important to discuss at this stage how the project will be concluded.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on advice from Hugh Starkey

- Research / action.

Project work builds a lot of skills very quickly. For example, a project about how disabled persons are treated in a community might involve interviews, reading, making drawings, collecting statistics, and analyzing data. The best projects combine academic, social and creative skills to involve all the students' abilities. The teacher can help during this stage by answering questions or offering advice, but the students are responsible for doing the work.

- The product.

The outcome of a project might be a report, an exhibition, an oral presentation, a painting, a poem, etc. It is a good idea if the product records not only the students' findings but also the different stages of the project and the students' own feelings about the topic being studied.

## PART II: HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES

### Theme 1: What are Human Rights?

#### Specific objective:

Students should be able to identify their basic rights and familiarize themselves with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

#### Core messages:

1. We already know a lot about human rights
2. Human rights are inherent, universal, inalienable and indivisible
3. Human rights are written down in documents

#### What are human rights?

Human rights are those basic rights without which people cannot live in dignity as human beings. They allow individuals and the community to use our human qualities, our intelligence, talents and conscience. Human rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. The denial of rights is not only an individual tragedy, but also creates conditions of social and political unrest, sowing the seeds of violence and conflict within and between societies and nations.<sup>12</sup>

The basis of human rights - such as respect for human life and human dignity - can be found in most religions and philosophies. In addition, world history has been shaped by the struggle for human rights, such as the struggle for freedom from slavery and the right to practise ones religion.

Human rights are written down in documents. Two important human rights documents are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. All members of the United Nations, including Liberia, should respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Liberia has also committed itself to respect the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. These and other documents set out what governments *must do* and also what they *must not do* to respect the rights of their citizens and others in their country.

Of particular importance to anyone involved with schools is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is international law that lays down guarantees of the human rights of children. The Constitution of Liberia also includes a chapter on fundamental freedoms (Chapter 3), which guarantees respect and protection of many rights.

#### Characteristics of human rights<sup>13</sup>

Human rights are inherent: They do not have to be given, bought, earned or inherited. They belong to people simply because they are human. Human rights are inherent because we are born with them.

<sup>12</sup> ABC: *Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, p. 9

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 2-3.

Human rights are universal: They are the same for all human beings regardless of race, sex, religion, ethnicity, political or other opinion, national or social origin. We are all born free and equal in dignity and rights. Human rights are universal because they apply to everyone in the world. They are the birthright of every member of the human family. Your rights as a human being are not determined by where you live. You have the same human rights as those who live in other parts of the world. The rights you have as a child are not different from the rights of other children, no matter where they live.

Human rights are inalienable: They cannot be taken away. No one has the right to deprive another person of his or her human rights for any reason. People still have human rights even when the laws of their countries do not recognize them, or when they violate them. For example, when slavery is practiced, slaves still have rights even though these rights are being violated.

Human rights are indivisible: To live in dignity, all human beings are entitled to enjoy the full range of rights. For example, people have the right to freedom, security, education and decent standards of living concurrently.

## Activities

### **1. Treasure hunt<sup>14</sup>**

*This activity helps familiarize students with the articles in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.*

- Before the class starts, write down some articles from the simplified version of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (see Part III) on pieces of paper and cut them into separate pieces.
- Before the students arrive, hide the articles in different places in the room.
- When the students arrive, ask them to look for one piece of paper and then sit down.
- When all the articles are found, ask the children to read out their articles one by one and discuss in class what the right means.
- If there is time, ask the children to draw pictures illustrating the rights they have found.

### **2. Imagination game<sup>15</sup>**

This activity introduces the concept of universal and inalienable rights. It also raises awareness about similarities and differences.

- Before the class starts collect some objects, for example sticks, stones, objects that have been thrown away, empty tins, plastic bags, rags etc.
- Ask the students to sit in a circle
- Pick up one object and suggest an imaginary use for it. For example, an empty packet could be a hat, a shoe, a water container etc.

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<sup>14</sup> Based on an exercise in *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 75.

- Pass the object around the circle. Ask each student to suggest an imaginary use for the object. Encourage imaginative suggestions. If they don't have an idea, they can pass the object on.
- When ideas run out, pass another object around.
- Ask the students what imagination is? What do we use it for?
- Explain to the group that we all have brains but our thoughts and ideas are sometimes different, sometimes similar, but never identical. Even though we have different ideas, we all have the same rights. Our rights cannot be taken away from us. They can be ignored or violated by people, but we still have them, just as we all have ideas.
- Pick up one of the objects that were passed around and ask students to agree on what the object is (for example, a packet).
- Point out to the students that just as they have agreed that the object is a packet, even though it can be used for many different things, the nations of the world have agreed that even though everyone is different, they still have basic rights.

### 3. The imaginary country<sup>16</sup>

*This activity helps students think about rights and where they come from, and which rights are more important to them.*

- Divide the class into groups of four or five students.
- Read out the following scenario to the class:  
"Imagine that you have discovered a new country, where no one has lived before, and where there are no laws and no rules. You and the other members of your group will be the settlers in this new land. You do not know what position you will have in the new country":
- Ask each group to give their country a name. Ask the students to think about the name "Liberia", and what that name means. Explain to the students that "Liberia" comes from the word "liberty" or freedom, and that the country is unique in the world in that it carries the name of a fundamental right!
- Ask each group to list ten rights which they think should be guaranteed for everyone in the new country.
- Ask each group to write the name of their country and their ten chosen rights on a large piece of paper or a blackboard where everyone can see them.
- A representative from each group introduces the list to the whole class.
- When the students have completed their presentations, compare the lists with the simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Discuss with the class what the similarities and differences are.
- In your discussion with students, you may want to ask some of the following questions:
  - Did your ideas about which rights are most important change during the activity?
  - How would life be if we excluded some of these rights?
  - Why is it useful for us to be aware of what we need to live in dignity?
  - Are there any rights which you now want to add to the final list?

<sup>16</sup> Based on an exercise in *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 95-96.

## Theme 2: Rights and responsibilities

### Specific objectives:

Students should be aware of the fact that every right has corresponding responsibilities. They should be able to state and understand some of their rights and responsibilities

### Core messages:

1. Every right has corresponding responsibilities
2. It is essential to know ones rights and responsibilities to be a positive member of society.

### Rights and responsibilities

For every right that individuals have, they also have responsibilities to respect the rights of others. When exercising their rights, individuals must make sure that their actions do not mean that other people's rights are being denied. For example, even though there is a right to freedom of speech, people must not say things which could harm other people such as yelling "fire" when there is no fire, but may cause people to hurt themselves when they run to escape.

The balance of rights and responsibilities to respect the rights of other people means that people usually have to exercise their rights within certain restraints.

### Activities

#### 1. Talking stick<sup>17</sup>

*This sharing activity helps students develop listening and communication skills. It also shows that children have a right to meet and express their views, and a responsibility to listen to the views of others*

- Before the students arrive, find a stick which can be passed around as a "talking stick".
- Explain to the students that the Native American People ("Indians") had a way of listening to each other so that everyone got a chance to talk. They used a talking stick. Whoever has the stick has the power to speak and everyone else has the power to listen. The stick is passed around in a circle. Anyone who doesn't want to speak simply passes it on. The talking stick can be used in different ways. For example to tell news or to give opinions.
- To start the activity, the teacher can show the students the "talking stick" and say something he or she likes. Then pass the stick to a student.
- The student says something he or she likes, and then passes the stick on. If he or she does not want to speak, he or she can simply pass the stick on. Encourage students to speak, but make sure not to force anyone to speak.

<sup>17</sup>Based on an exercise in *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 72.

- After the activity, ask the following questions (you can continue to use the talking stick if this is helpful, passing it to the student who answers the question):
  - What was it like to speak? What was it like to hear others speak?
  - Did you like to speak without being interrupted?
  - What is the advantage of letting others speak without interrupting them?
  - What responsibilities did you have in this exercise? (The responsibility to be quiet and listen when others were speaking)
  - Did you learn anything new?

## 2. Blind trust<sup>18</sup>

*In this activity students take on roles of responsibility and discuss how they felt holding such roles*

- Divide the students into pairs.
- Give each pair a blindfold (a piece of cloth) and ask each pair to blindfold one student.
- The sighted partner leads the blindfolded partner around the room for about five minutes. After this they reverse roles.
- Ask the students to sit down and discuss the exercise in a big group:
  - How it felt to be blindfolded?
  - How it felt to have responsibilities as a leader?
  - Were there any pairs where misunderstandings occurred? Why?
  - What does this exercise tell us about our responsibilities when we take on responsibilities?
- During the discussion, the teacher may want to point out to students that the "leader" in the exercise has a responsibility to make sure that the blindfolded student does not hurt him or herself, to give clear instructions etc. The blindfolded student has a responsibility to listen to the leader and follow instructions etc.

## 3. Zeanzue village

*This activity helps students use critical thinking skills to determine the connection between rights and responsibilities. It also provides practice in finding solutions to complex problems*

- In class, read out the following story:

### Zeanzue village

In Zeanzue village, the teachers did not get their salary for six months. The school was closed, and the children could not attend classes. Instead, they started working in the rubber plantations with their parents.

After a few weeks, the children started getting sick. Their parents took them to the hospital, but the nurses could not help because there was no medicine.

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<sup>18</sup> ABC: *Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, p. 41.

The teachers and the parents discussed their problem. They decided to take the problem to the district officer. He said that the teachers had not been paid because the parents had not paid taxes for two years.

- In a big group, ask the students to list which of the children's rights were violated (for example, the right to education, health, and rest).
- Discuss with students what the responsibilities are of
  - The teachers
  - The parents
  - The children
  - The owner of the rubber plantation
  - The nurses

(The teacher should highlight the fact that the parents, teachers and nurses have a duty to pay taxes. They have a right to be paid. The parents have a duty to make sure that children do not have to carry out work which is dangerous and makes them ill. The children have a duty to attend school).

- Divide the class into groups of approximately 5 students and ask each group to write a role-play in which they show the problem and find possible solutions.

#### **4. Responsibilities and rights<sup>19</sup>**

*This activity helps students to understand the connection between rights and responsibilities.*

- Ask students to form pairs. Each student should write down five important rights which they think they should have in the school or at home.
- Ask each student to swap their list with their partner.
- Each student should think of responsibilities that correspond with each right that their partner listed (for example, the right to education might have a corresponding responsibility for students to not be disruptive in class).
- Each pair reports back to the large group. The teacher should write the rights and responsibilities on the board or on large pieces of paper stuck on the wall.
- After each pair has reported back, start a discussion about the rights and responsibilities listed during the exercise.

#### **5. Creating Classroom rules<sup>20</sup>**

*This activity emphasizes the importance of participation and cooperation in the classroom. It demonstrates the teacher's willingness to involve the class in how the classroom is run, and makes students think about their responsibilities as members of a class.*

- Divide students into groups of approximately five.

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR/01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 106-107

<sup>20</sup> *ABC: Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, pp. 41-42.

- Ask each group to come up with a list of what they “want” in their classroom (this list might be quite long and might include things such as chairs, desks, quiet time, no violence, helping each other, clean water etc).
- From this list, ask the groups to choose the items they think are really needed. This list should be shorter, and more essential.
- Write each groups needs on the blackboard or on large pieces of paper for all to see.
- Ask the students to choose from their “needs” which they have a “right” to expect as members of society. List these on a chart labeled “Our Classroom Rights”.
- After the students have created the list of classroom rights, ask them to rephrase each right to terms of responsibilities and list these in a separate chart labeled “Our Classroom Responsibilities” (For example, “everyone should feel safe in this room” might be revised as “everyone has the responsibility not to insult anybody or hurt anyone’s feelings”).
- Once the lists of rights and responsibilities have been created, these can be displayed in the classroom and referred to. The rules can be amended as necessary over time.

## Theme 3: The rights of the child

### Specific objectives:

Students should be aware of the fact that all children have rights. These rights are written down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other documents. Students should be able to state and understand some of their rights.

### Core messages:

1. Every child has rights that are written down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. It is essential to know ones rights and to help others fulfill their rights.

### The Rights of the Child

Children's rights are protected by all international and regional human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, it has been recognized that there are certain rights and responsibilities that apply specifically to children. Children's rights are based on what all children need to live a healthy, happy life, to participate in their communities, and to grow up to be responsible adults.

### The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The specific human rights to which all children are entitled, are listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is the first treaty of international human rights law specifically concerned with the rights of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person under 18 years old.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child seeks to defend children against neglect and abuse. It also states that the child has a right to participate in decisions affecting his or her life. The most important consideration in the Convention is the best interest of the child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children, regardless of who they are, what they look like, where they live and what their beliefs are. A child living in a small village in Nimba County has the same rights as a child living in Monrovia. Children in Liberia have the same rights as children in other countries. However, at the same time the Convention also allows for different cultures, as well as different situations in different countries.

Almost every country in the world – including Liberia - has formally agreed to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child by signing and ratifying the law. This means that the Government of Liberia has made a commitment to protect, enforce and apply the rights in this Convention.

Children's rights cover every aspect of the lives of children. Some of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are:

- The right to a name
- The right to a nationality

- The right to health care
- The right to education
- The right to rest and play
- The right to be protected from dangerous child labor that is harmful to the physical and mental development of the child.
- The right to be protected from involvement in war, which includes the prohibition of child soldiers.
- The right to be protected from sexual exploitation such as child prostitution.
- The right to be protected from physical and mental abuse
- The right to participate in decisions affecting his or her own life
- The right to participate in cultural and religious activities

### **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child contains many of the same rights as those that have been guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was written by Africans, with particular knowledge of the situation of children in Africa. In addition to many of the rights listed above, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child:

- Emphasizes the responsibilities of the child to his or her community.
- Provides protection of children against those cultural practices that might hurt the child's right to health or life and that discriminate against certain children because of their sex and others status.
- Prohibits child marriage and establishes 18 years of age as the minimum age for marriage.

### **Activities**

#### **1. Drawing our rights**

*This activity promotes creativity and allows students to explore particular rights of the child.*

- Give each student a copy of the simplified version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or write it on a large piece of paper or the blackboard.
- Ask each student to draw a picture showing one of the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- After students have finished drawing, put the pictures on the classroom wall. Ask students to explain to the class which right they chose to illustrate and why they feel this right is important.

## 2. What are our rights?<sup>21</sup>

*This activity helps students think about their rights, and introduces the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

- Ask the students to brainstorm things they want, for example, a football, clothes, education, time to play, sweets, biscuits or a plum.
- On the blackboard or on a large piece of paper, make a list of the items.
- Divide the class into groups of approximately five students. Ask the students to discuss which of the 'wants' are 'needs'. Ask them to think of other things they need (for example, clothes are a need, sweets are a want).
- Ask the groups to report back. Write down all the needs, to produce a class list of 'needs' on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper.
- Ask the students to decide which of these are needs shared by all children, in order to live, and for their basic well-being. These should be human rights. This may include food, shelter, love, and education.
- Give the students the simplified version of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, or write it on a big piece of paper or the blackboard. Discuss how the Convention of the Rights of the Child is similar or different from the list created by the students themselves.

## 3. What are our responsibilities?

*This activity encourages students to think about the responsibilities that go along with their rights*

- Ask the students look at the simplified version of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and write appropriate responsibilities alongside each right. For example:
  - We have the right to a home - and the responsibility to help care for it.
  - We have the right to learn - and the responsibility not to disrupt class.
  - We have the right to feel safe - and the responsibility not to hurt others, either physically or emotionally.
- Ask the students whether the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be right for other groups of children, for example children in Ghana, Sierra Leone or the United States. Would there be any differences?  
(The teacher may want to point out that although in some countries children may have more resources, more access to education etc. the basic rights of all children are the same, because their basic needs are the same.)
- Ask the students whether the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be able to uphold the rights of children with a disability.  
(The teacher should emphasize that disabled children enjoy the same rights as other children. Therefore, we must take steps to ensure that they are provided with these rights. For example, the right to education, in accordance with their abilities and dignity, might be achieved by making schools accessible to disabled students and including them in class activities).

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<sup>21</sup> Adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, p. 45.

- Ask the students whether the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be able to uphold the rights of children living in a country in which there is war. (The teacher could discuss with students that in countries where there is war or lack of resources, the rights of children may be violated: they may not receive sufficient food or medical care, or may be forced to work in dangerous conditions or become child-soldiers. Education may be disrupted. However, their basic rights are still the same, and the government has an obligation to protect these rights).

## Theme 4: Appreciating similarities and differences

### Specific objectives:

Students should be aware that we are all different yet everyone has the same basic needs and rights. They should have an understanding of the need to cooperate and appreciate each others differences.

### Core messages:

1. We all belong to different groups and communities.
2. Every right applies to every person and cannot be taken away.
3. We should respect each other and not discriminate against others.

### Similarities and differences

No person is more of a human being than any other person, and no person is less. We are all equal, and all equally entitled to our human rights. \*

Yet we are all different and unique. Differences between people may be because they belong to different groups and communities. They may have different gender, ethnic background, religion, opinion, or attend different schools.

For example, Liberia has more than ten ethnic groups, with different languages, traditions and religions – but all are Liberians, and all have the same rights as human beings. Likewise, the United Nations comprises 192 different countries with different languages, traditions and religions, but all have agreed to work together to promote peace and basic human rights.

When people believe that one group is superior or inferior simply because of race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion or national or social origin, this leads to discrimination. Discrimination has been outlawed in many human rights treaties.

We should learn to respect each other, and work together. In the school setting, it is important that every child feels welcome and appreciated as a valued member of the class. It is wrong to tease others because of differences such as race, disability, religion or gender.

### Activities

#### 1. “We are one”

*This game teaches students to recognize and show respect for similarities and differences. It also helps them learn about the things that make up their own identities.*

- All students stand in a large circle, either outside or inside the classroom.
- The teacher calls out: “Come into the circle and join hands if you like cassava leaves”. Those students who like cassava leaves come into the circle and join hands in a smaller circle. Afterwards they return to the larger circle.
- The teacher repeats the exercise by calling out a number of different statements. The teacher can prepare the statements based on the class, but they might include: “Come into the circle and join hands if you:”
  - Like palm butter and fufu

- have a long hair / short hair
- have long socks / short socks
- favorite color is red / green / blue / yellow etc.
- If your favorite subject is math / English / history
- If you can speak another language
- If you know it is wrong to tease someone because they are different
- The teacher ends the game by calling out: “come into the circle if you are in grades 1-3 (depending on grade levels). Everyone steps into the circle together and the game ends.

## 2. Role play

*In this exercise, students learn to express themselves, and respect others while they give their opinions.*

- Divide the class into groups of around three to five students.
- Ask each group to make a list on a piece of paper of things that make them feel sad at school, for example, being left out of a game, being teased, etc.
- Ask each group to discuss what they would do if someone made fun of them or their family.
- Ask each group to write a short play about a situation where someone gets teased at school. In the play, ask the students to show how the situation can be solved, for a happy ending.
- Each group should perform the play in front of the class.
- After each group has performed, ask the class to discuss things that can be wrong at school, for example, teasing someone. It is important for the teacher to emphasize to students that we all are unique members of our class and communities, and that we must not hurt each others feelings.
- To end the exercise, the teacher could ask the class list things they could do to make someone happy, for example, sharing jokes, conversing with classmates who feel lonely, or including everyone in games at play times.

## 3. Boima’s Story

*In this exercise, students think about whether their classroom, and their community treats everyone equally, and what we can do to ensure that some students or members of the community are not discriminated against.*

- Read the following story to the class:

“Boima, who is 12 years old, lives with his mother in a small house. His father was killed during the war, and his family is very poor. When he was a small child, Boima suffered a serious illness and became blind”.

- The teacher should discuss Boima’s situation with the class. Try to focus on ways in which Boima might face discrimination. The teacher may want to ask the class the following questions.
  - Do you think Boima attends school? Why or why not?
  - Does Boima have a right to attend school?
 (The teacher should emphasize that Boima has a right to attend school and to learn in accordance with his abilities, just like other children.

This might be in a special school for blind children or in a regular school together with sighted students).

- What problems might Boima have if he attended your school?
  - What would you do to help Boima if he joined your class?
  - Are there different types of discrimination among children? (for example, bullying, violence, teasing)
  - Are all children treated the same? (for example girls/boys, children with different religions, orphans, or others)
- To finish the exercise, you may want to ask the students what their responsibilities are if they know another child is being treated unfairly. Who would they speak to if they knew that there was such a problem?

#### 4. "She doesn't work"<sup>22</sup>

*One of the groups that frequently face discrimination is women and girls. This exercise encourages students to think about stereotypes and discrimination against women.*

- Read the following story to the class, or have two students act it out:

"Have you many children?" the doctor asked.  
"Sixteen born, but only nine live" the man answered.  
"Does your wife work?"  
"No, she stays at home"  
"I see. How does she spend her day?"  
"Well, she gets up at four in the morning, fetches water and wood, makes the fire and cooks breakfast. Then she goes to the river and washes clothes. After that she goes to town to get corn ground and buy what we need in the market. Then she cooks the midday meal."  
"You come home at midday?" the doctor asked.  
"No, no. She brings the meal to me in the fields, about three kilometres from home."  
"And after that?"  
"Well she takes care of chickens and pigs. And of course she looks after the children all day. Then she prepares supper so that it is ready when I come home."  
"Does she go to bed after supper?"  
"No, I do. She has things to do around the house until nine o'clock."  
"But you say your wife doesn't work?"  
"No. I told you. She stays at home."

- In a big group, ask students to brainstorm all the things women do at home and list them on the blackboard.
- After the list is completed, brainstorm reasons why some people think that household work is not "work". (For example, because this work is unpaid, or because the man thinks his work is harder).
- Next, brainstorm reasons that household work is work. (For example, the work is hard, and the woman has a longer working day).

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 126-128.

- Emphasize to the students that Articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically mention sexual equality, as does Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- To end the exercise the teacher can emphasize that women in Liberia have taken on important roles both in the home and outside the home. Among other things, they have taken up positions of leadership in Liberia including as President; Minister of Justice, and Director of the Liberian National Police).

### **5. Real life situation: Outside speaker**

*This activity allows students to hear from role models who have overcome prejudices or limitations. It also creates a link between human rights in the class-room and in the community.*

- Invite a speaker to talk to the students about his or her personal experiences of prejudice, discrimination or unfair treatment. The speaker could be someone who is disabled, or a woman who has succeeded in a job which is more often carried out by men (for example, a female police officer or local government official). It is important to emphasize to students that everyone faces obstacles, but that it is possible to succeed in spite of these.
- Before the speaker arrives, explain to students who will be visiting the class, and ask them to prepare written questions to ask the speaker.

## Theme 5: The right to education

### Specific objective:

Students should be aware that they have a right to primary education, and be aware of the importance of this right in order to fulfil other basic rights.

### Core messages:

1. All children have a right to primary education, and this is written down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. The right to education is necessary in order to guarantee the fulfilment of other rights.

### The right to education

All children have a right to receive primary education. This right is written down in international documents, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28).

In spite of this, millions of children across the world never have the opportunity to attend school. This may be for a variety of reasons. In some countries, the government does not provide free schooling to everyone. Sometimes children have to work to survive, or to help their families. In countries where there is war, education may be disrupted when schools are destroyed, or when teachers and students are forced to flee their homes.

The right to education must be provided without discrimination. Girls and boys, and rich and poor, have the same right to education. Disabled children must also be provided with education that fulfils their needs.

### Right to education in Liberia

In Liberia, the right to education was disrupted during the war. Tens of thousands of children were displaced and were unable to attend school. In other cases school buildings were destroyed, or schools closed after communities were displaced. Many children were recruited as child soldiers and therefore denied their right to education, as well as many other rights such as the right to life, dignity and security of person.

The conflict has now ended, and an increasing number of children are able to attend school. However, many schools have been destroyed, or lack basic items such as desks, chairs, blackboards and books. In some communities there may also be a lack of teachers. In addition, some families do not have the financial means to send children to school. In some cases, girls are denied the right to education because of traditional beliefs or customs.

## Activities

### 1. Advert for the right to education

*This exercise allows students to explore the importance of the right to education through a creative activity.*

- Explain to students that in some countries, governments or organizations that promote the right to education place advertisements in newspapers or on posters to show why education is important.
- Ask students to make an “advertisement”. They may choose simply to draw a picture or to write a key message (for example “education is a human right” or “Girls have a right to education”). Encourage students to be as creative as possible.
- Display the pictures on the wall of the classroom, or somewhere in the community where they can be seen by all.

### 2. Education as a human right

*In this activity students consider how going to school can help them fulfill other basic rights. It shows that rights are interdependent and indivisible.*

- Divide the class into groups of approximately five students.
- Ask each group to list the things they learn in school, for example maths, writing, reading, history etc.
- Give each group a copy of the simplified version of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, or write it on the blackboard.
- Ask each group to consider how their ability to enjoy the rights listed would be different if they had no education. (For example: Everyone should be treated equally by the law – reading enables you to know the law, to participate in elections, etc).
- Ask students what people need to know about human rights. Do human rights have to be taught in school? Why or why not?  
(The teacher should explain that education for and about human rights is itself a human right. It has been recognized that knowing human rights help people protect themselves and others against violations and helps to promote the principles of human rights).

### 3. Who is not in our school?<sup>23</sup>

*This activity encourages students to use critical thinking skills to consider whether everyone has a right to education in their community, and to think of possible solutions which will allow access to primary education for all.*

- Ask students to consider what young people are not represented in their school. The teacher should be sensitive to the various kinds of students in the class, and not point out individuals. To start the exercise, the teacher may ask the students:
  - Are there an equal number of boys and girls?
  - Are there students who have to work to earn money outside of school?

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, pp. 80-81.

- Are there students with physical disabilities?
  - Are there older students?
  - Are there students who have been in trouble with the law or the school authorities?
  - Are there students who are orphaned?
  - Are there students with only one parent?
  - Are there homeless students?
  - Are there students who are parents?
  - Are there students who are married?
  - Are there students who are refugees?
  - Are there students from minority (ethnic or religious) groups in the community?
- On the blackboard, write a list of the groups of students mentioned as being absent from the school.
  - Ask students why these groups of children do not attend the school? Should they? Why or why not?
  - Ask the students what would be the difficulties if a student from any of the groups mentioned attended your school? Do some of them attend school elsewhere?
  - Ask if they have a right to an education? Affirm that all children have a right to basic education.
  - Ask students how the right to education can be made available to those children who do not attend school (for example, poor children who have to work or girls who are married and have children but are still young).

## Theme 6: Economic, social and cultural rights

### Specific objective:

Students should be aware that they have social, economic and cultural rights, and be able to state some of these rights

### Core messages:

1. Social, economic and cultural rights are a broad group of rights that relate to the conditions which are necessary for the well-being of all human beings.
2. They are written down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other international human rights standards.

### Social, economic and cultural rights

Economic, social and cultural rights relate to the conditions necessary to meet basic human needs. These include:

- The right to food
- The right to shelter
- The right to education
- The right to health care
- The right to participate freely in cultural activities
- The right to gainful employment and good working conditions
- The right to form independent workers organizations to promote and protect workers rights

In international human rights law, these rights have been written down in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). They are also guaranteed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and are included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### Child Labour

One important issue when teaching students about their social, economic and cultural rights is child labour. Children in Liberia work for a variety of reasons in differing cultural, social and economic circumstances. Not all forms of child labour are outlawed. However, some forms of child labour have clearly been identified as harmful and are often referred to as the "worst forms of child labour". These include sexual exploitation, military recruitment and other forms of labour which may deny the child the right to life, security of person or dignity.

Whether work is defined as exploitative will depend on a range of factors including the work itself, the work environment, the presence of particular hazards, the perceived benefits of work and the nature of the employment relationship. Gender also plays a role as girls and boys may be subjected to different forms of exploitative labour. Another important consideration is how work interferes with the right of a child to education.

## Activities:

### 1. Tanneh's Story

*This exercise encourages students to apply what they have learnt about rights so far. It encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills.*

- Read the following story to the students:

Tanneh was 10 years old when her uncle brought her to stay with him in Monrovia. Her uncle told Tanneh's parents that he was bringing Tanneh to Monrovia, so that she could attend school.

When Tanneh arrived to Monrovia, she discovered that her uncle's wife is a pastry-cook, who bakes bread and cakes for sale. The wife told Tanneh that she had to sell bread every day except Sunday.

When she is selling bread, Tanneh has to stay on the street all day. She has to move between cars to sell bread to the drivers. If she does not sell all the bread she is given, her uncle's wife beats her when she returns home.

Because she has to sell bread, Tanneh is not able to go to school. She does not have time to play, and has very little time to rest.

- At this point, stop reading, and ask the students the following questions:
  - Are Tanneh's rights being protected by her uncle?
  - Which of her rights are being denied?
  - Name some of the dangers Tanneh is exposed to as a result of the work she is carrying out.
  - What do you think can be done about Tanneh's situation?
  - Is there anything Tanneh herself can do to improve her situation?
- After the class has discussed the questions, continue reading the story:

One day after selling bread, Tanneh told her uncle that she wanted to speak to him. She said to her uncle, "Uncle, when are you going to send me to school? All my friends are in school". She told her uncle that if he could not send her to school, he should send her back to her parents.

- Stop reading and ask the students the following questions:
  - Which right was Tanneh exercising when she talked to her uncle? (The teacher should emphasize children have a right to express opinions and participate in making decisions about matters that concern their well-being).
  - What do you think happened after Tanneh talked to her uncle?
- To end the exercise, ask students the following questions:

- Are there children in your community who are in a similar situation as Tanneh?
- How does it make you feel when you hear about or see children who are in Tanneh's situation?
- What might happen to Tanneh if she stays with her Uncle and his wife?
- What might happen if she returns to her parents?
- Do children everywhere need the same protection against this kind of treatment? Do all children have the same rights?

Affirm to the students that all children have the same rights, but in some cases these rights can be violated. It is important to know what our rights are in order to make sure they are protected.

### **Activity 2. Role Play**

*This activity builds on activity 1, and encourages students to apply their problem solving skills.*

- Read Tanneh's Story (from the box in activity one) to the class.
- Divide the class into groups of approximately five students. Ask each group to create a role-play based on the story. The students should think about what kind of ending they want to have in their role-play in order to generate ideas for how to solve Tanneh's problem.
- If some groups prefer to do so, they may also want to write a song or a poem about Tanneh and how her rights are being denied.
- Ask the groups to perform their work in front of the class, or at a community meeting.

### **Activity 3. Tanneh's Rights**

*This activity allows students to increase their familiarity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and shows that it is directly relevant to children's lives.*

- Read Tanneh's Story (from activity one) to the class.
- Give the students a copy of the simplified version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (from part III of this Teachers' Guide), or write it on a large piece of paper, or on the black-board for all to see.
- Ask the students to work individually or in small groups. Students should look at each of the points in the simplified version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and consider which of Tanneh's rights are being denied.
- When Tanneh decided to speak to her uncle about her situation, which right did she exercise? Emphasize that the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for children to be able to have a say in decisions which affect them. Encourage students to discuss what the limits of this right might be. (For example, although children have a right to play, rest and education, they also have responsibilities in their home).

## Theme 7: Human rights and the law

### Specific objective:

Students should gain a basic understanding of the meaning of the rule of law and human rights law and its importance in upholding human rights

### Learning points:

1. Everyone is equal under the law
2. International and national laws can help in the protection of human rights

### Laws

Laws are a body of rules which are to be obeyed and followed by the people of a country, and by governments of different countries. Domestic laws are passed by members of a national government, and apply only within the boundary of that country.

Laws passed by international bodies, such as the General Assembly of the United Nations, apply in many countries. These laws are referred to as international law.

Laws are enforced by the police, and they are applied by the courts.

### Rule of law

Rule of law means that the law is the highest authority in the country. This means that:

- All people are equal before the law. This includes government officials, powerful businessmen, and members of the military.
- The courts are independent in carrying out their duties. They do so in a way that protects all people in a country.

Respecting and implementing the rule of law properly and sufficiently, can help a country to attain sustainable economic, political and social development.

### Human rights and the law<sup>24</sup>

Human rights are inherent in every human being. They are inherent whether or not they are laid down by law. For example, all human beings have a right to life, whether or not a law has been passed to endorse that right.

Laws can protect and promote the human rights of people by giving human rights legal force. Those who break the law can be brought to justice before a court. Laws can also have an important educational effect. They explain what a society thinks it is proper to do and not to do. They are there for all to see, and they apply equally to all, regardless of color, race, religion, tribe position, age, political affiliation and economic status.

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<sup>24</sup> Adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, p. 57.

Many countries, including Liberia, have national laws that protect many human rights of its citizens. For example, Chapter three of the Liberian Constitution guarantees the right not to be held in slavery, the right to freedom of expression, equality under the law and many other rights.

There are also international human rights laws (sometimes called “covenants” or “conventions”) that are agreed on by the international community. The government of a country has the right to decide whether or not to become a party to such conventions. If a government becomes a party to human rights conventions, the government must make sure they are respected and implemented. Liberia is a party to many conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Activities<sup>25</sup>

### 1. The name game

*This game enables students to think about what is fair, and how we can create rules that make things fair or unfair.*

- The students sit or stand in a circle.
- The teacher says that all boys must put their right hand behind their back.
- The teachers says that everyone who has at least two older sisters must put their left hand behind their back (These categories can be changed depending on the composition of the class).
- The teacher throws the ball to a student, calling out the name of the “catcher”. If the name is correct, the student throws the ball on to another student, calling out his or her name.
- The teacher should affirm the students who might otherwise be left out by purposely throwing the ball to them when it is his or her turn.
- After playing for a few minutes, ask the following questions:
  - Did everyone have the same chance to catch the ball? Why? Why not?
  - What was it like to have your left / right / both arms behind your back? Was it fair?
  - What can we do to make sure we play fairly next time?
  - Can you think of a time when something unfair happened to you?
  - How can we avoid unfairness in our class, school or family?

### 2. What is fair?<sup>26</sup>

*This exercise helps students to develop their natural sense of fairness.*

- In a big group, brainstorm with the students on the question “what is fair / unfair?”
- Write a list of the answers on the blackboard or on a big piece of paper.
- Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Ask each group to write a definition of what “fairness” is on a piece of paper.

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<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Siniko: *Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 81-82.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

- Display the results on the wall. If some of the definitions are different, ask the students why the definitions are different. See if the class is able to come up with one common definition for what is fair.
- Ask the students the following questions:
  - Is fairness important? Why?
  - Can you think of a time from your life when something was fair and a time when something was unfair?
  - What makes things unfair? Can things always be made fair?
  - How did you feel when you were treated unfairly?
  - How can we try to make things fair in our school / community?

### **3. Visit to courthouse or outside speaker**

*This activity allows students to gain an understanding of how the justice system works in their community.*

- Arrange a visit to a court to see how laws are being administered and decisions are being made.
- Before the visit, try to contact judicial officials to arrange for them to meet and speak with the students.
- Ask students to prepare written questions to ask the judge, judicial officers they meet.
- After the visit, ask students to write a report about what they saw and what they learnt.

## Theme 8: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression

### Specific objective:

Students should be aware that they have a right to express themselves freely, participate in decision making, hold opinions and choose their own religion.

### Core messages:

1. The right to express one-self freely, participate in decision making, hold opinions and choose ones religion, are basic human rights.
2. These rights are important for the protection of other fundamental rights, such as the right to life and protection from discrimination.

### Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression are human rights. They are central to the creation of a human rights culture. These rights are referred to as civil and political rights. Civil and political rights mean that people have a right to:

- Vote in elections.
- Hold opinions and express those opinions freely.
- Associate with others and join a group, for example a political party or an organization.
- Freely choose ones religion and practice it.

In international human rights law, these rights are guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Liberia ratified the ICCPR in 2004. Therefore, the rights enshrined in the ICCPR must be protected and upheld by the Government of Liberia. This is done, for example, by holding free and democratic elections, by guaranteeing freedom of assembly and association, and by guaranteeing freedom of the press by having independent newspapers, radio and television.

The Constitution of Liberia guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, speech and religion. The media has the right to publish information freely. The Constitution also states that, in exercising such rights, laws may be created to promote a balance between human rights and responsibilities. For example, although there is a right to freedom of the press, newspapers should not publish information which incites people to commit violence.

One way for a community to maintain itself and flourish, is by having its members meet and organize their affairs. The rights and freedoms in the ICCPR allow communities to do so. Their denial would deprive a society of one of its richest resources: the skills and talents of its own people. One way in which people can be part of decision making is by running for office, by voting in elections, or organizing and participating in independent community organizations and associations that could promote human rights protection and hold public officials and the business community accountable to the law.

## **Civil and political rights of children**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion “according to their growing maturity”. Children have a right to have a say in decisions that affect them. However, certain rights may be restricted until the child reaches an age when he or she is able to make informed and independent decisions. For example, voting in national elections is limited to people of 18 years of age and over.

### **Activities**

#### **1. Chinese Whispers**

*This game is played by children in many countries of the world. In the context of the exercise below, it shows students the importance of being able to communicate freely in order to give and receive accurate information.*

- Ask students to sit in a circle.
- The teacher whispers a sentence to the student sitting on his or her left side (for example “All children have human rights that must be respected”).
- The student whispers the same sentence to the student next to him or her. In this way, the sentence is whispered from one student to the next around the circle.
- The student who whispers, may do so only once. He or she may not repeat the sentence. If the next student cannot hear it he or she must guess.
- The last student says the sentence that was whispered to him or her out loud. The teacher then tells the student which sentence he or she whispered in the beginning of the round.
- Discuss the following questions with the students:
  - Did the sentence go through the circle correctly all the way? Why or why not?
  - What happens when people are prevented from communicating freely with each other? What kind of misunderstandings could happen?
  - Why is it important to communicate clearly?  
(The teacher should emphasize that open and clear communication helps people get clear and true information. It is necessary to be able to disseminate information about issues that can help improve people’s lives, such as decisions by the government or information about health).

#### **2. Participating in elections**

*This activity encourages students to consider the importance of political freedom, and in particular of elections.*

- Read the following story to the students:

Moiwulo Blama, the Chief of his village, assembled all 350 citizens of the village two weeks before the presidential election. At the meeting, Chief Moiwulo Blama said to his people,  
“You must vote only for J. Rudolph Johnson because he is the son of the Gbandi Land and victory for him will be victory for the Gbandi people”.

The Chief also told the people that the women in the village should not talk to any member of political parties, and should vote for the same candidate as their husbands.

- After you have finished reading the story, ask the students the following questions:
  - Were the political rights of the people in the village respected?
  - Which political rights were not respected?
- Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to re-write the story in a way so that all rights are respected. (For example: At the meeting, Chief Moiwula Blama said to his people, “You should all vote for whoever you believe would be the best person to lead the country....women should also vote for whomever they think is the best candidate...etc).
- Ask two or three the pairs to read their revised stories to the rest of the class. Did everyone come up with the same changes? Why or why not?
- Does everyone have the right to vote, or are there certain groups of people who do not have the right to vote?  
(for example, children or people who are not citizens of a country are not able to vote).
- What can be done to ensure that the following groups are able to participate in elections?
  - Children.  
(The teacher could emphasize that although children cannot vote, they can be aware of and discuss issues).
  - Disabled people.  
(Special arrangements can be made, such as ensuring access to buildings or helping blind people to vote, to ensure that the disabled are able to exercise their right to vote and have a say in the leadership of their country).
  - People who cannot read.  
(In some countries, politicians and political parties use symbols or photos so that people are able to identify the candidates they want to vote for).
  - People in remote villages.  
(Polling stations should be established in places so that they are within reach of all people in a country, not just those living in big cities).

### 3. Freedom of expression: creating a school newspaper

*This activity encourages students to use their creative and writing skills to exercise their freedom of expression, and to think about the importance of a free press.*

- Explain to the class that one of the signs of freedom of expression in a country, is that newspapers are able to write freely about issues that concern the community.
- Explain that the class will create a newspaper about issues affecting their class, school and community.
- Brainstorm with the class for a name for their newspaper. Write all the ideas on the blackboard, and select a name through voting.
- Brainstorm with the class what kind of issues they would like to write about in the newspaper. (for example, games, academic subjects, school-events, sports, interviews with teachers/students, problems at school, ideas for improving the school environment etc.)
- Ask whether there are other things they would like to have in the paper, for example pictures or cartoons.
- Divide the class into groups of approximately five students. Ask each group to write a contribution to the paper. The teacher should walk around the classroom to make sure that groups are working on different topics. After approximately 45 minutes ask the students to hand in their contributions.
- If some students prefer to work on a cartoon or picture related to the topics in the paper, allow them to do so.
- The contributions can be posted on the wall, or can be put in order to create a "newspaper".
- End the class by asking the students the following questions:
  - Why is it important to have newspapers?  
(The teacher could emphasize that papers allow people to know what is going on, to learn about decisions by the government and to discuss problems in their community).
  - What was difficult about creating the paper?
  - Would you get in trouble for writing certain things? Why?  
(for example, students might face difficulties if they criticize teachers or the way the school is run, or if they write things that are not true).
  - Do you think journalists in real life face similar difficulties if they criticize people in positions of power?

## Theme 9: War, Peace and Humanitarian Law

**Specific Objectives:** Students should know that even in war there are international standards that must be respected. The laws that apply to war are known as humanitarian law.

**Learning Points:**

1. The Geneva Conventions are the most important conventions of humanitarian law.
2. These laws set standards for how those involved in war must behave, and limits the ways in which war can be carried out.

### War, peace and human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. In spite of this, armed violence has continued to be used since the United Nations was established.

When a country is at war, the situation can become chaotic. Civilians, who do not take part in the war are often persecuted and become victims. In fact, in recent wars, most of those who have become victims are civilians – not soldiers.

Even in wars, there are rules for what countries can and cannot do. The rules of war are known as humanitarian law. They are written down in the Geneva Conventions. Among other things, these rules state that:

- o No one must be tortured or raped.
- o Ambulances must not be targeted by the fighting parties.
- o Wounded soldiers should receive medical treatment
- o Soldiers who have been captured by the enemy should be treated as prisoners of war

Military forces in many countries train their personnel in the Geneva Conventions. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) takes a lead in educating about international humanitarian law as well as in supplying humanitarian relief during armed conflict.

### Liberia

In Liberia, the 14 year long war led to numerous abuses of humanitarian and human rights law. All sides to the conflict were guilty of abuses. Among the abuses documented were unlawful killings, torture, including rape, recruitment of child soldiers, displacement of communities from their homes, looting, and many other abuses.

As the situation in Liberia is returning to normal following the end of the conflict, many of these abuses are being exposed. One way in which Liberia is addressing past violations is through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where individuals have a chance to tell what was done during the war, and to find ways to move forward.

## **Child soldiers**

In some parts of the world, boys and girls are recruited to serve as soldiers, or to play other roles such as spies, cooks or carriers for the warring parties. The recruitment into the armed forces of anyone under the age of 18 is outlawed in international law. When children participate in war, this violates their right to life, education, development and other fundamental rights.

## **Activities**

### **1. Conflict and Reconciliation**

*This exercise shows students that the effects of war are long-lasting, and that reconciliation requires time and patience. The teacher should ensure that students are left with a positive message that reconciliation and restoration is possible.*

- Give each student a piece of paper and ask them to make a quick drawing of a village on the paper.
- After a few minutes, ask the students to tear their drawing into six pieces.
- Now ask the students to put the pieces together again by placing the pieces in front of them.
- After the students have put their papers together, lead a discussion asking the following questions:
  - How did it make you feel to tear up your drawing?
  - Was it easy to put the village (drawing) together again?
  - Were some parts of the drawing intact? Were some parts destroyed?
  - Does your drawing look the same after you put it back together as before you tore it up?
  - What do you think happens when villages try to re-build and return to “normal” life after a conflict?
- In the above discussion, the teacher can emphasize that it is easier to sustain peace than to put communities together after a conflict, and that it is possible to achieve peace and reconciliation, but it takes time and can be a difficult process.

### **2. Role-play about conflict**

*This activity allows students to explore the root causes of conflict and to develop possible solutions.*

- Ask students to brainstorm in a large group about things that can cause conflict in school (for example, not sharing equally, teasing, lack of chairs and desks, poverty, different opinions etc).
- Divide the class into groups of five students. Ask each group to write a role play about a conflict at school, showing how it can be resolved in a peaceful and fair way.
- Ask each group (or some of the groups) to perform their role-play in front of the class. After each role-play, ask students which basic human rights are involved (for example, the right to own property, respect, dignity, equality, discrimination etc).

## Theme 10: The United Nations

**Specific objective:** Students should be aware of the United Nations as an organization of governments, which works globally to ensure that human rights are upheld and promoted

**Learning points:**

1. The United Nations is made up of governments of the world, who agree to work cooperatively towards peace and human rights
2. Liberia is a member of the United Nations.

### **The United Nations<sup>27</sup>**

The United Nations (UN) is an organization which works to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well-being of all people. It allows individual countries to balance global considerations and national interests when addressing international problems.

The UN came into existence in 1945, when the UN Charter was signed by 51 original member states. The UN Charter outlined the principles and goals of the UN. Liberia was among the original member states of the United Nations.

There are currently 192 member states of the United Nations. Representatives of these countries meet in the General Assembly, which is the closest thing to a world parliament. Each country, large or small, rich or poor, has a single vote. The General Assembly's decisions become resolutions that carry the weight of world opinion.

The United Nations headquarters is in New York City in the United States of America, but the land and buildings are international territory. It has offices in many countries of the world. The United Nations has its own flag, its own post office and its own postage stamps. Six official languages are used at the United Nations - Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The person who is the top leader of the United Nations Secretariat is the Secretary-General.

### **The Aims of the United Nations:**

- To keep peace throughout the world.
- To develop friendly relations between nations.
- To work together to help people live better lives, to eliminate poverty, disease and illiteracy in the world, to stop environmental destruction and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms.
- To be a centre for helping nations achieve these aims.

### **The Principles of the United Nations:**

- All member states have sovereign equality.
- All member states must obey the Charter.
- Countries must try to settle their differences by peaceful means.
- Countries must avoid using force or threatening to use force.

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<sup>27</sup>United Nations Cyberschoolbus, <http://cyberschoolbus.un.org>

- The UN may not interfere in the domestic affairs of any country.
- Countries should try to assist the United Nations.

## Activities

### 1. Aims of the United Nations (UN)

*This creative activity helps students understand and think about the aims of the UN through a creative activity.*

- Write the aims of the UN (from page 47) on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper.
- Ask students to draw a picture showing one of the aims of the UN.
- Display the pictures on the wall of the classroom and ask each student to explain their picture and which goal they have chosen to illustrate. Why is the aim they have chosen important?

### 2. Solving problems together

*This exercise helps students gain an understanding of how the UN works and encourages critical thinking skills.*

- Ask students to name some problems/issues of international importance, which are also relevant in their community. This can be any of the topics covered so far, for example, poverty, right to education, refugees, child labor, discrimination etc.
- Write the suggestions on the blackboard for all to see.
- Divide the class into groups of between four and six students.
- Ask each group to select one of the topics on the blackboard and write down ideas for how the UN, other countries, the Liberian Government and other organizations can work together to solve the problems.
- The students should also consider what they themselves can do to address the problem they have selected.
- Have each group present their problem and solutions to the class.

### 3. Outside speaker

*This activity allows students to interact with individuals who work for the UN, and to learn about how the UN works to implement its aims.*

- If the UN is working in your community, invite a speaker from the UN to give a presentation to the class. The speaker could talk about the kind of work they do, how they got involved in working for the UN, and other relevant issues.
- You could also invite someone working for an international or Liberian organization to speak to the class about their work.
- Before the presentation, explain to the students who is coming and what they will be speaking about. Ask students to write down questions they would like to ask the speaker.

## Part III: International Human Rights Standards

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

#### *Preamble*

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in all the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the people of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

#### Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs whether it be independent, trust, now, self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

(1) Men and Women of full age without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom whether alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion of belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) Everyone has the rights of equal access to public service in his country.

Article 21.

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23.

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) 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.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

#### Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

#### Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

#### Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

#### Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

## Simplified Version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>28</sup>

### *Summary of Preamble*

The General Assembly recognizes that the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world; human rights should be protected by the rule of law, friendly relations between nations must be fostered, the peoples of the UN have affirmed their faith in human rights, the dignity and the worth of the human person, the equal rights of men and women and are determined to promote social progress, better standards of life and larger freedom and have promised to promote human rights and a common understanding of these rights.

### A summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1. Everyone is free and we should all be treated in the same way.
2. Everyone is equal despite differences in skin color, sex, religion, language for example.
3. Everyone has the right to life and to live in freedom and safety.
4. No one has the right to treat you as a slave nor should you make anyone your slave.
5. No one has the right to hurt you or to torture you.
6. Everyone has the right to be treated equally by the law.
7. The law is the same for everyone, it should be applied in the same way to all.
8. Everyone has the right to ask for legal help when their rights are not respected.
9. No one has the right to imprison you unjustly or expel you from your own country.
10. Everyone has the right to a fair and public trial.
11. Everyone should be considered innocent until guilt is proved.
12. Every one has the right to ask for help if someone tries to harm you, but no one can enter your home, open your letters or bother you or your family without a good reason.
13. Everyone has the right to travel as they wish.
14. Everyone has the right to go to another country and ask for protection if they are being persecuted or are in danger of being persecuted.
15. Everyone has the right to belong to a country. No one has the right to prevent you from belonging to another country if you wish to.

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<sup>28</sup> *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp.147 - 149.

16. Everyone has the right to marry and have a family.
17. Everyone has the right to own property and possessions.
18. Everyone has the right to practice and observe all aspects of their own religion and change their religion if they want to.
19. Everyone has the right to say what they think and to give and receive information.
20. Everyone has the right to take part in meetings and to join associations in a peaceful way.
21. Everyone has the right to help choose and take part in the government of their country.
22. Everyone has the right to social security and to opportunities to develop their skills.
23. Everyone has the right to work for a fair wage in a safe environment and to join a trade union.
24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.
25. Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living and medical help if they are ill.
26. Everyone has the right to go to school.
27. Everyone has the right to share in their community's cultural life. 28. Everyone must respect the 'social order' that is necessary for all these rights to be available.
29. Everyone must respect the rights of others, the community and public property.
30. No one has the right to take away any of the rights in this declaration.

## Simplified Version of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights<sup>29</sup>

### *Summary of Preamble:*

African States who are members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) recognize that freedom, equality, justice and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples; pledge to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa and to strive for a better life for the peoples of Africa; emphasize the importance of their historical tradition and the values of African civilization and that everyone has responsibilities and duties to society as well as rights; underline the need to pay particular attention to the right to development and the fact that civil and political rights cannot be dissociated from economic, social and cultural rights; emphasize the rights of peoples as well as of individual human beings; are conscious of their duty to achieve the total liberation of Africa and to dismantle all forms of discrimination; and reaffirm their adherence to the principles of human and peoples' rights and freedoms contained in international declarations and standards.

### A summary of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights:

Article 1. States which belong to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and which agree to this Charter must recognise the rights, duties and freedoms in the Charter and make them effective by law.

Article 2. Each person is entitled to the rights and freedoms in this Charter, no matter what his/her race, tribe, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

Article 3. Each person is equal before the law and must be protected equally by the law.

Article 4. Every human being is entitled to respect for his/her life and to safety.

Article 5. Each person has the right to respect for his/her dignity and legal status. No form of exploitation or degradation is allowed, especially not slavery, torture, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment.

Article 6. Each person has the right to liberty and to safety. No one's freedom may be unlawfully taken away. In particular, no one may be arrested or detained without a lawful reason.

Article 7. Each person has the right to a fair hearing and a fair trial in a proper court. No one may be punished until he/she is proved guilty of breaking the law. No one may be punished for another person's crime.

Article 8. Everyone is free to hold his/her own beliefs, and is free to practice his/her own religion, as long as it is with respect for others.

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<sup>29</sup> *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, pp. 150-152.

Article 9. Each person has the right to give and receive information freely, and to express his/her opinion, within the law.

Article 10. Each person has the right to mix freely with others, within the law. Each person is free to mix with others as long as he/she follows Article 29.

Article 11. All people have the right to meet or assemble freely, as long as they do not break the law and do not disturb the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 12. Each person has the right to move freely inside and outside his/her country as long as he/she follows the law. Any person may get lawful asylum in other countries if he/she is persecuted.

Article 13. Every citizen has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. Each citizen must have equal use of the country's public service and public property.

Article 14. Each person has the right to own property, except when it is against the law because of public need or the general interest of the community.

Article 15. Each person has the right to work under good conditions and to equal pay for equal work.

Article 16. Each person has the right to health and medical care when sick.

Article 17. Each person has the right to education and cultural life. The State has the duty to protect and promote morals and traditional values recognized by the community.

Article 18. The family is the natural unit and basis of society. The State has the duty to protect and assist the family, especially women, children, the aged and the disabled.

Article 19. All groups of people must be equal and have the same respect and the same rights. Nothing can justify the domination of one group by another.

Article 20. All peoples have the right to exist and to determine their own future. All people have the right to political, economic and social development. Any people struggling to free themselves from any kind of foreign domination have the right to help from member States.

Article 21. All peoples have the right to their country's natural resources and wealth without foreign exploitation.

Article 22. All peoples have the right to their economic, social and cultural development. States have the duty to ensure these rights.

Article 23. All peoples have the right to national and international peace and security. The principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the OAU must govern relations between States.

Article 24. All people have the right to a satisfactory environment in which they can develop.

Article 25. States have the duty to promote and teach respect for the rights and freedoms in this Charter. States must make sure their citizens understand the rights and freedoms as well as the obligations and duties of the Charter.

Article 26. States must make sure that the law Courts are independent. States must protect the rights and freedoms of this Charter.

Article 27. Each person has duties towards his/her family and society, the State, other communities and the international community. Each person must exercise his/her rights and freedoms without disturbing the rights of others.

Article 28. Each person has the duty to respect others, no matter who they are.

Article 29. Each person has the duty to preserve and respect his/her family, parents and nation. Each person must protect the security of his/her State and work for national solidarity and independence. Each person must work and pay lawful taxes, and promote positive African values and African unity.

The remainder of the Charter (there are 68 Articles in all) deals primarily with the establishment of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the manner in which it will operate.

## Simplified Version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>30</sup>

### *Preamble*

In the Preamble, the major UN texts which precede the CRC and which have a direct bearing on children are mentioned. The Preamble also emphasizes the importance of the family for the harmonious development of the child, the importance of special safeguards and care, the need for legal protection, and the importance of the traditions and cultural values.

### Article 1: Definition of the child

A child is recognized as a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.

### Article 2: Non discrimination

All rights apply to all children, without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.

### Article 3: Best interests of the child

All actions concerning the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care, when parents or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.

### Article 4: Implementation of rights

The State must do all it can to implement the rights contained in the Convention.

### Article 5: Parents, family, community rights and responsibilities

The state must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and the extended family to provide guidance for the child which is appropriate to her or his evolving capacities.

### Article 6: Life, survival and development

Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.

### Article 7: Name and nationality

The child has the right to a name at birth. The child also has the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, to know his or her parents and be cared for by them.

### Article 8: Preservation of identity

The State has an obligation to protect, and if necessary, reestablish basic aspects of the child's identity. This includes name, nationality and family ties.

### Article 9: Non-separation from parents

The child has a right to live with his or her parents unless this is deemed to be incompatible with the child's best interests. The child also has the right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both.

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<sup>30</sup> ABC: *Teaching Human Rights. Practical activities for primary and secondary schools*, 2004, Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, pp. 112 – 133.

Article 10: Family reunification

Children and their parents have the right to leave any country and to enter their own for purposes of reunion or the maintenance of the child-parent relationship.

Article 11: Illicit transfer and non-return

The State has an obligation to prevent and remedy the kidnapping or retention of children abroad by a parent or third party.

Article 12: The child's opinion

The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 13: Freedom of expression

The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.

Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.

Article 15: Freedom of association

Children have the right to meet with others and to join or form associations.

Article 16: Privacy, honor, reputation

Children have the right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, and from libel or slander.

Article 17: Access to appropriate information

The State shall ensure the accessibility to children of information and material from a diversity of sources, and it shall encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social and cultural benefit to the child, and take steps to protect him or her from harmful materials.

Article 18: Parental responsibilities

Parents have joint primary responsibility for raising the child, and the State shall support them in this. The State shall provide appropriate assistance to parents in child-raising.

Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect

The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programmes for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 20: Protection of a child without family

The State is obliged to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available in such cases. Efforts to meet this obligation shall pay due regard to the child's cultural background.

#### Article 21: Adoption

In countries where adoption is recognized and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interest of the child, and then only with the authorization of competent authorities, and safeguards for the child.

#### Article 22: Refugee children

Special protection shall be granted to a refugee child or to a child seeking refugee status. It is the State's obligation to cooperate with competent organizations which provide such protection and assistance.

#### Article 23: Disabled children

A disabled child has the right to special care, education and training to help him or her enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration possible.

#### Article 24: Health and health services

The child has a right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable. States shall place special emphasis on the provision of primary and preventative health care, public health, education and the reduction of infant mortality. They shall encourage international cooperation in this regard and strive to see that no child is deprived of access to effective health care.

#### Article 25: Periodic review

A child who is placed by the State for reasons of care, protection or treatment is entitled to have that placement evaluated regularly.

#### Article 26: Social security

The child has a right to benefit from social security including social insurance.

#### Article 27: Standard of living

Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that the child has an adequate standard of living. The State's duty is to ensure that this responsibility can be fulfilled, and its State responsibility can include material assistance to parents and their children.

#### Article 28: Education

The child has a right to education and the State's duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity. School discipline shall be consistent with the child's right and dignity. The State shall engage in international cooperation to implement this right.

#### Article 29: Aims of education

Education shall aim at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others.

Article 30: Children of minorities and indigenous children

Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.

Article 31: Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

The child has the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

Article 32: Child labor

The child has the right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development. The State shall set minimum ages for employment and regulate working conditions.

Article 33: Drug abuse

Children have the right to protection from the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs, and from being involved in their production or distribution.

Article 34: Sexual exploitation

The state shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography..

Article 35: Sale, trafficking and abduction

It is the State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

Article 36: Other forms of exploitation

The child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare not covered in articles 32, 33, 34 and 35.

Article 37: Torture and deprivation of liberty

No child shall be subjected to torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offences committed by persons below 18 years. Any child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interests not to do so. A child who is detained shall have legal and other assistance as well as contact with the family.

Article 38: Armed conflicts

States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that children under 15 years of age have no direct part in hostilities. No child below 15 shall be recruited into the armed forces. States shall also ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict as described in relevant international law.

Article 39: Rehabilitative care

The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

Article 40: Administration of juvenile justice

A child in conflict with the law has the right to treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her

reintegration into society. The child is entitled to basic guarantees as well as legal or other assistance for his or her defence. Judicial proceedings and institutional placements shall be avoided wherever possible.

#### Article 41: Respect for higher standards

Wherever standards set in applicable national and international law relevant to the rights of the child are higher than those in this Convention, the higher standard shall always apply.

#### Article 42 - 54: Implementation and entry into force

The provisions of articles 42-54 notably foresee:

(i) The State's obligation to make the rights contained in this Convention widely known to both adults and children.

(ii) The setting up of a Committee on the Rights of the Child composed of ten experts, which will consider reports that States Parties to the Convention are to submit two years after ratification and every five years thereafter. The Convention enters into force – and the Committee would therefore be set up – once 20 countries have ratified it.

(iii) States Parties are to make their reports widely available to the general public.

(iv) The Committee may propose that special studies be undertaken on specific issues relating to the rights of the child and may make its evaluations known to each State Party concerned as well as to the UN General Assembly.

(v) in order to “foster the effective implementation of the Convention and to encourage international cooperation”, the specialized agencies of the UN – such as the international Labor Organization(ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – and UNICEF would be able to attend the meetings of the Committee. Together with any other body recognized as “competent” including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the UN and UN organs such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), they can submit pertinent information to the Committee and be asked to advise on the optimal implementation of the Convention.

## Summary of Rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>31</sup>

- Children have the right to be with their family or with those who will care for them best.
- Children have the right to enough food and clean water.
- Children have the right to an adequate standard of living.
- Children have the right to health care.
- Disabled children have the right to special care and training.
- Children have the right to play.
- Children have the right to free education.
- Children have the right to be kept safe and not hurt or neglected.
- Children must not be used as cheap workers or as soldiers.
- Children must be allowed to speak their own language and practice their own religion and culture.
- Children have the right to express their own opinions and to meet together to express their views.

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF-UK), from *Siniko: Towards a Human Rights Culture in Africa*, 1999 (AI Index: AFR 01/003/1999) London: Amnesty International, p. 158.

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