

## Examining the Significance and Controversy of Human Rights Education in Developing Countries

M. Dziva<sup>1</sup>, S. Bhebhe<sup>1</sup> and C. Maphosa<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*University of Venda, South Africa*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Fort Hare, South Africa*

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**ABSTRACT** The world has become a global village and values such as the upholding of human rights are shared globally. Human rights education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. It develops an understanding of everyone's common responsibility to make human rights a reality in each community. One way of ensuring awareness of human rights is the introduction of human rights education in schools. In this paper the researchers explore the issue of human rights and its importance in modern society. The significance of human rights education is explored. The researchers discuss the ways in which human rights could be incorporated in the school curriculum. Reasons why governments in developing countries in Africa do not seem to embrace the introduction of human rights education are discussed. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are given.

### INTRODUCTION

Since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations sixty-five years ago, ordinary people in most developing countries are still suffering from denial and abuse of the rights. Ignorance of many people's rights results in this denial and abuse. Human Rights were first articulated in 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). According to Flowers et al. (2000: 3) human rights are those rights that belong to every individual man, woman, boy, girl, infant or elder simply because he or she is a human being. Human rights are the rights a person has simply because he or she is a human being. The UDHR has a complete statement that covers economic, social, cultural, political and civic rights. These rights apply to all people everywhere. Humans are all homo sapien species: men, women and children, whilst rights are entitlements or the freedom a human being is guaranteed (Donnelly 2003). In the same vein, Arbour and Johnson (2005: 1) refer to human rights as the sum of individual rights and collective rights laid down in state constitutions and international law. Human rights are based on the principles of respect, dignity and equality. These rights are

enshrined in many international human rights treaties such as the UDHR.

The principles of human rights are that they are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated (Nickel 2010). Human rights are universal, meaning that no one has to earn or deserve human rights. The universality comes about from the realisation that everyone is born with and possesses the same rights regardless of race, country, colour, gender, religious, cultural or ethnic background. Human rights are inalienable in the sense that they can never be taken away from an individual, that is, by virtue of being a human being one cannot lose these rights. Thus, no person may be divested of his or her human rights save under clearly defined legal situations. Indivisibility means, one cannot be denied a right because one decides that it is less important or non-essential.

The interdependence of human rights is because all rights: political, civil, social, cultural and economic, are of equal importance and none can be fully enjoyed without others. Human rights are interdependent in that, all human rights are part of a complementary framework because each human right entails and depends on other human rights (Flowers et al. 2000: 3). Violating one such right affects the exercise of other rights. For example, the right to life presupposes respect for the right to food and good standards of living.

The defence of economic and social rights presupposes freedom of expression, assembly

*Address for correspondence:*

Prof. C. Maphosa  
University of Fort Hare  
East London Campus  
East London, 5201  
South Africa  
*E-mail:* maphosacos@yahoo.com

and association. In this regard, all human beings should enjoy all rights and they should not be denied any right. Despite the documentation of the need to respect and uphold human rights, Amnesty International (2009) reports that there is still gross violation of human rights in most parts of the world. Amnesty International (2009) reports that there is torture and abuse in at least 81 countries, unfair trials in at least 54 countries and restrictions in freedom of expression in at least 77 countries. This paints a gloomy picture of the upholding of human rights; as such violations are inconsistent with contents of the UDHR, which many countries have ratified. Vulnerable groups such as women and children are also marginalised in many ways, further showing violation of their rights.

A sure way of ensuring that people are aware of their rights so that they can stand for them is to teach them about their rights. Teaching of human rights also ensures the nurturing of appropriate values consistent with the promotion of human rights.

### **History of Human Rights**

Eckeman et al. (2009: 178) declare that human rights are historical in nature. The notion that human beings have a set of inviolable rights simply on the grounds of being human beings began during the era of the renaissance (Eckeman et al. 2009). Originally, people had rights only because of their membership to a group, such as a family. Early principles of human rights were established in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC under Cyrus the Great (Ishay 2004). In 539BC, after his conquest of the city of Babylon the king, Cyrus the Great issued the Cyrus Cylinder, by which he freed all slaves to return home and he declared that people should choose their own religion. The Cyrus Cylinder, a clay tablet containing his statement has been seen by many historians as the first human right document (Ishay 2004). The idea quickly spread to India, Greece and eventually Rome. Some of the documents which assert individual rights and are the written precursors to many of today's human rights documents include Magna Carta of 1215 which gave people new rights and made the king subject to law, the 1628 Petition to Rights which set all the rights of people, the English Bill of Rights of 1689, the United States Declaration of Independence of 1776 which proclaimed the right to

life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizens of 1789, a document of France stating that all citizens are equal under the law and the US Constitution and Bill of Rights, 1791 (Ishay 2004).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the idea of human rights lay at the core of the American and French Revolutions which initiated the era of democratic revolutions paving way to universal suffrage (Ishay 2004). The French Revolution's guiding principles of equality, liberty and fraternity formed the basis of the modern version of human rights. Ishay (2004: 359) notes that the four pillars of the declaration of human rights which are "dignity, liberty, equality and brotherhood" were drawn from these driving principles behind the French Revolution. The world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century acted as a catalyst to propel human rights into the global stage and into global conscience, which had until then just developed within the states.

The idea of human rights as we know them today emerged stronger after the Second World War. As a result of the experiences of the Second World War, the international community vowed not to allow atrocities and turmoil that had been witnessed in the war to occur again (Eckeman et al. 2009: 189). So the world leaders decided to complement the United Nations (UN) Charter on a roadmap to guarantee the rights of individuals everywhere. Contemporary international human rights were marked with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which led to the codification, at international level, of human rights (Flowers 2003).

The UN has played a leading role in defining and advocating human rights. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations declares "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" (United Nations Charter, 1945; article 1 paragraph 3). The UDHR was the first document listing 30 rights which are entitled to everyone. The first preamble of UDHR reflects the "recognition of the inherent and inalienable rights of all member of the human family..." The UDHR emphasised a set of standard rights for all people, everywhere, whether male or female, black or white, communist or capitalist, victorious or vanquished, rich or poor, for members of the minority or majority community. According to Ishay (2004), the UDHR can be regarded as the most important

document created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and as the accepted world standards for human rights. As a result, the human rights have been codified in various international and regional treaties and instruments that have been ratified by most countries and represent today the only universally recognised value system (Arbour and Johnson 2005: 3). Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (UDHR Article 1).

At the world Conference of Human Rights held in Vienna, Austria in 1993, 171 countries reiterated the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. They reaffirmed the importance of promoting respect for human rights through education and recommended a framework for action (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, paragraph 33, part I). They adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of action. Since 1994, the United Nations Decade for Human Rights (HRE) has urged all UN nations to promote “training, dissemination and information effort aimed at building of a universal culture of human rights.” This precipitated the development of human rights education.

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

THE Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was one of the first major achievements of the United Nations. The declaration of the instrument was aimed at exerting a massive impact on people’s lives all over the world. Adoptions of the (UDHR) were done on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December in 1948 (Horn 2004).

THE Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on the belief that human rights are common to every being. According to Vieira de Mello (2004: 6) the declaration recognises that the “inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and is connected to the recognition of the fundamental rights to which every human being aspires, namely the right to life, liberty and security of persons, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, the right to own property, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to education, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to freedom from torture and degrading treatment.

The rights outlined in the declaration are meant to be enjoyed by all inhabitants of the global village that encompass women, men, children and all groups of people in the society. Eleanor Roosevelt, chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in its early years delivered a speech entitled “In Our Hands” on the tenth anniversary of the (UDHR) in 1958 where she emphasised both the universality of these rights and the responsibility they entail when she asked,

*Where after all, do universal human right begin? In small places, close to home-so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world (Vieira de Mello 2004: 6).*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become a universal instrument and has been translated into more languages than any other. On the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, Mary Robinson the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called the UDHR “one of the great aspirational documents of our human history.”

Following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a number of human rights instruments were produced and these constitute the international law of human rights. Vieira de Mello (2004: 7) reveals that these instruments are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. A combination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two Covenants constitutes the International Bill of Human Rights.

Osiatynski (2008) posits that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasises the universality of human rights, and has seen the two covenants being further elaborated in other treaties such as the International Covenant on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965 and the Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against

Women of 1979. The Covenant on the Rights of the Child of 1989 has two protocols, namely the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Option Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict of year 2000.

According to Horn (2004: 53) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted with the aim to promote and achieve “universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.” The UDHR emphasises the importance of human rights education as an element that is essential to developing a human rights culture.

### **Other Important Human Rights Instruments**

Some of the most significant treaties and conventions on human rights include the following:

#### ***The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPCG)***

The CPCG was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948 as General Assembly Resolution 260. The Convention entered into force on 12 January 1951. All participating countries were advised to prevent and punish actions of genocide in war and in peacetime. The number of states that ratified the convention is currently 143. Article 2 of the Convention defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group such as killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (CPCG 1948). This shows that through this instrument the United Nations does not condone mass killings in any part of the world. It is therefore imperative for nations that ratified this convention to sensitise their citizens and dangers of genocides and ways to avoid them.

Article 3 of the CPCG defines the crimes that can be punished under the convention as genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt

to commit genocide, and complicity in genocide. In a human rights education curriculum, learners should be exposed to issues regarding genocide, the dangers involved and the importance of maintaining sound human relations to avoid such problems.

#### ***The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR)***

The CRSR is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. Article 1 of the Convention as amended by the 1967 Protocol provides the definition of a refugee:

*A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it..* (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2012).

Such an instrument calls for countries that are signatories to understand and appreciate the plight of refugees and accommodate them within their borders.

#### ***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)***

The CERD was adopted and opened for signature and ratification by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1969 and entered into force on 4 January 1969. Article 1 of CERD defines racial discrimination as,

*...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life* (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1966: 1).

The above definition reiterates the fundamental position of human rights, that all human beings deserve equal treatment by virtue of their humanness. Therefore, there should be discrimination based in race or any other factor.

Article 5 of CERD notes the commitment by signatories to eliminate forms of racial discrimination and guarantee the right of everyone before the law. It also indicates the need to ensure rights to security and protection, political rights, civil, economic, social and cultural rights for everyone. In social rights, human rights education has to sensitize citizens from a young age of the right to housing, public health and education as well as equal participation in cultural activities (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1966). It is therefore imperative for signatories to CERD to put in place measures to ensure the elimination of forms of racism and teaching human rights in schools is one sure way. Such a view is in line with calls for responsive curricula, that is, curricula that take into account student diversity.

***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)***

The CEDAW was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and it entered into force on 3 September 1981 (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1988). In line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the CEDAW reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights and the dignity and value of the human being and in the equal rights of men and women (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1988).

The countries that are signatories to CEDAW undertake to ensure equal rights of men and women and to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. The promotion of equality of rights of men and women becomes the main thrust of CEDAW. The introduction of Human Rights Education in schools ensures the conscientisation of students on the need for equality. Children should not just be taught about equality but equality should be embedded in the curriculum by making it gender sensi-

tive. This calls for serious consideration of gender equality in curriculum content, instructional materials, assessment, co-curricular activities and all forms of hidden curriculum.

There are also other important treaties and conventions of human rights such as the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) which was adopted in 1984 and entered into force in 1987, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which was adopted in 1989 and entered into force in 1990, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) which was adopted in 1990 and entered into force in 2003, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which entered into force on May 3, 2008) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (adopted in 2006 and entered into force in 2010). All these conventions and treaties draw from the UDHR and all serve in different ways to show the importance of human rights for all.

**United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training**

The teaching of human rights education (HRE) is informed by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011). The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training states that,

*...human rights education comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights education contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding, and by developing their attitudes and behaviours to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights (United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training 2011: paragraph 1).*

The United Nations, therefore, has deliberate plans for all signatories to the UDHR to put in place educational measures to sensitise the populace on human rights. Awareness of rights allows common people to defend their rights and of importance is the inculcation of a culture of human rights as part of social, political and eco-

conomic life. Similarly, according to Flowers et al. (2000: 7) human rights education is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills and values of human rights.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training also asserts that human rights education encompasses education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection, through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners, and for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others” (United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education 2011, Article 2 paragraph 2). This shows a multi-pronged approach to the teaching of human rights, with the most important objective being to empower learners on human rights.

The teaching of human rights in schools is very important in sensitising the young on human rights. In buttressing the importance of the schools in the promotion of human rights, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (2012: 13) states that:

*School systems play a central role in preparing young people to understand, cherish and claim human rights. In conjunction with this responsibility, teachers and all associated educational personnel need to be educated in human rights and the ways in which human rights can be carried out in schools.*

Of importance is ensuring that the teachers themselves are effectively prepared to facilitate human rights education (Panda 2001). Once teachers understand and appreciate the issue of human rights, they will be in a position to effectively facilitate learning that promotes human rights. The school should not just teach knowledge on human rights but it should be a place ‘where the dignity of every child is upheld ...’ (ODIHR 2012: 9). Teachers should therefore be able to incorporate human rights in both formal and hidden curricula.

### **Importance of HRE**

The aims of a HRE curriculum could enhance knowledge and understanding of human rights, foster attitudes of tolerance, respect, solidarity

and responsibility, develop awareness of how human rights can be translated into social reality as developing skills for protecting human rights (Panda 2001). The most important one is the inculcating in students values and attitudes of human rights resulting in the promotion and protection of the rights.

According to Eckmann et al. (2009: 1785) Human rights education does not simply aim to teach students – whether children, adolescents, or adults about human rights norms and laws. It also tries to promote appreciation for human rights as a fundamental ethical and legal basis of society and teach the value of human rights enforcement. Human rights education also fosters the attitude and behaviour to uphold human rights for all members of society. Effective human rights education not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanism that protects them, but also develop the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life (UN Decade for Human Rights Education 1995-2004).

Eckeman et al. (2009: 190) assert that HRE sheds light on the important protections achieved by human rights, and documents the tragic outcome when the ideal was largely absent or abandoned. Thus, human rights education is important in as far as it contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding, and by developing their attitudes and behaviours to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights (United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education 2011, Article 2 paragraph 1).

In this sense, HRE contributes to the long term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and enhancement of participating in decision making process within a democratic system (Commission on Human Rights resolution 2004/71 (21 April 2004), preamble paragraph 4). HRE promotes an understanding of the complex global forces that create abuses, as well as the ways in which abuses can be abolished and avoided. Eckmann et al. (2009: 166) highlight that there is little evidence that studying the history of the worst human rights violations teaches students how to intervene against or prevent human rights violations in the present day. Human rights education en-

gages the heart as well as the mind. It challenges students to ask what human rights mean to them personally and encourages them to translate caring into informed, non-violent action. In this respect, one can say human rights education facilitates peace and development.

Today's societies are socially and culturally diverse. They are confronted with crises and conflicts linked to increasing globalization. As a result of the heterogeneity of contemporary societies, traditional religious, philosophical, and national narratives can no longer guarantee a normative consensus. Within this context, human rights education also aims to create a baseline consensus that enables students and citizens to engage with controversial social and political issues. It provides multicultural and historical perspectives on the universal struggle for justice and dignity. Human rights education aims at developing an understanding of our common responsibility to make human rights a reality in every society. Human rights education helps to develop the communication skills and informed critical thinking essential to a democracy.

According to Bokova and Pillay (2012), human rights education activities should be practical, relating human rights to learners' real-life experience and enabling them to build on human rights principles found in their own cultural context. Through such activities, learners are empowered to identify and address their human rights needs and to seek solutions consistent with human rights standards. Moreover, human rights education develops their capacity to have the responsibility for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of others (Plantilla 2002). What is learned and the way in which it is learned should reflect human rights values, encourage participation and foster a learning environment that is conducive to personal growth.

Even though the implementation of human rights education continues to lag behind the goals envisioned by international human rights programs and initiatives, human rights education has assumed an unprecedented importance on both the national and international level (Eckmann et al. 2009). It examines human rights issues without bias and from diverse perspectives through a variety of educational practices promotes democratic principles. Moreover, human rights education itself is now recognized as a fundamental human right (Bokova and Pillay 2012).

### **Ways of Incorporating Human Rights Education into the Curriculum**

There are a number of ways in which HRE can be incorporated into the school curriculum.

#### *Separate Approach*

The separate subject approach is in line with the discipline based approach to curriculum organisation, which is a traditional approach to curriculum (Scott 2008). In this approach HRE is offered to learners as a stand-alone discipline alongside other disciplines. The advantage of teaching HRE as a separate discipline is that it will be timetabled and allocated time, be taught and examined like any other discipline in the school curriculum.

#### *Integrated Approach*

In an integrated approach, human rights are taught in combination with other subjects. Rivet and Krajcik (2008) argue that in an integrated approach, students are afforded the opportunity to look at issues from different viewpoints not bound by disciplines. Wallace et al. (2007) are however sceptical of an integrated curriculum which may 'water down' the curriculum. This is true of HRE that if it is taught through other subjects, it may not be given due and adequate attention.

#### *Human Rights through Co-curricular Activities*

In this approach HRE is taught through other equally important co-curricular activities such as exhibitions, displays, debates, clubs, sport, music and drama. Such an approach may go a long way in nurturing and developing a human rights culture (Vieira de Mello S 2004). An example is when girls in a school may be encouraged to participate in traditional male sporting activities such as soccer. This promotes equality and respect of different genders.

#### *HRE through the Hidden Curriculum*

Human rights education can be unintentionally taught to students through the hidden curriculum. Hidden curriculum is the covert curriculum, in which issues such as values and appro-

priate behaviour are taught to students (Jerald 2006). Hidden curriculum has great impact on students. Therefore, the school system, structures, culture and overall ways in which teachers and students relate should be consistent with the promotion of human rights. An example is the way a teacher in the classroom respects students and consults them in decision making. Such unwritten things convey great messages to students.

There are, therefore, different ways in which HRE can be incorporated in the curriculum. Some governments, especially in Africa just pay lip service to the teaching of HRE. The next section discusses some of the reasons for this.

### **Why Some African Governments are Often Against Human Rights Education**

Some African governments are against human rights education and this has placed Africa far from being a beacon of human rights conduct. A lack of knowledge and information is still a barrier preventing African people from claiming and exercising their human rights (Horn 2004).

Maathai (1995) reveals that Africa has suffered from lack of enlightened leadership and a bad style of political and economic guidance. While African leaders could have excused themselves for being unable to protect their people from the exploits of colonial empires in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, they can hardly escape blame for allowing neo-colonial exploitation which continues to reduce many of their people into paupers in their own countries. Therefore, human rights education would not be an appropriate subject in Africa as some governments still exploit their people.

Schlein (2010: 3) highlights the fact that "...too many countries continue to abuse the rights of their people." In view of this abuse, the teaching of human rights will only serve to enlighten the people who may end up empowered to resist abuse. Maathai (1995) discloses that during the past three decades, Africa suffered lack of farsighted and unselfish leaders committed to the welfare of their own people. They were persuaded to accept the development model of the West, borrow capital from the West and be guided by experts from the same West. With that bad beginning, leadership in Africa became characterised by opportunism, personal ad-

vancement and enrichment at the expense of the masses (Maathai 1995). The new black administrators and the burgeoning elites enjoyed the same economic and social life-styles and privileges which the imperial administrators enjoyed. This means that African people are still oppressed by their own government that is why African governments are against human rights education.

According to Schlein (2010: 3) many people are excluded from the benefits of their societies and denied their rights on the basis of their sex, disability or religion. There are various cultural practices in African countries that African governments allow to be practised, that violate human rights. For example, in Ghana and Togo the traditional practice of Trokosi is a gross violation of rights of a child and women. Trokosi is the pledging of girls, sometimes from infancy as payments for crimes committed by male members of the family. The girls serve traditional priest, work on their farms and bear their children in a slave like manner. This takes away freedom of choice; she is in slavery and made to pay for another person's crime. In such circumstances that community needs to be educated to use the court system and get justice for whatever offence or the adequate compensation. The State also needs to take legislative measures of prohibiting such practices (Kofi 2010).

Another example is the Almanjiri practice in Northern Nigeria. This is the process of giving up children as young as 4 years old to the *Iman* or spiritual leader. They are taught the Koran, and made to beg for alms in the street. They carry bowls and beg for food, sometimes eating leftovers from people's plate at restaurants. This practice takes away the essence of childhood, is a form of slavery and against the dignity of the human person (Alkali 2001).

Maiese (2003) is of the view that the African governments are against human rights education because there is still a lot of political oppression in African countries. When there is political oppression in a country, basic rights may be denied on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, or gender. Apartheid, which denies political rights on the basis of race, is perhaps one of the most severe forms of discrimination. The system of apartheid in South Africa institutionalised extreme racial segregation that involved laws against interracial marriage or sexual relations and requirements for the races to live in

different territorial areas. Certain individuals were held to be inferior by definition, and not regarded as full human beings under the law. The laws established under this system aimed at social control, and brought about a society divided along racial lines and characterized by a systematic disregard for human rights.

Makei (2012: 3) is of the opinion that “criticisms in the area of human rights first and foremost target developing countries,” for example, in African countries women are uniquely vulnerable to certain types of human rights abuses, in addition to sexual abuses, entrenched discrimination against women is prevalent in many parts of the world and leads to various forms of political and social oppression. This includes strict dress codes and harsh punishments for sexual “transgressions,” which impose severe limitations on women’s basic liberties. In addition, women in some regions in Africa for example suffer greater poverty than men and are denied political influence, education, and job training.

### CONCLUSION

In this presentation the researchers have shown that in line with global citizenship, the issue of Human Rights is very important, the world over. Human rights are very important human entitlements as enshrined in the UDHR. Most countries in the world are signatories to their UDHR and several other treaties that promote and safeguard different forms of rights. All human beings should be aware of their rights in order to defend them and be aware of instances where these are violated. Educating the general populace, particularly the young, on human rights is critical in establishing a human rights culture in the world. Sadly, some governments, despite being signatories to various UN treaties and conventions on human rights deliberately violate people’s rights and do not promote the teaching of HRE.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) HRE education should be taken seriously in schools from primary to tertiary levels. Deliberate HRE curricula should be in place and teaching of HRE done.
- b) Teachers should be trained and retrained in HRE in order to adequately equip them

with knowledge, skills and values necessary for the facilitation of HRE.

- c) School systems and cultures should be consistent with the promotion of human rights.
- d) There is need for concerted efforts for community outreach programmes on the teaching of human rights in ways clear even to the illiterate people in African societies.
- e) The United Nations should have measures to hold governments accountable for programmes meant to ensure the teaching of HRE in and out of schools.
- f) The media should also assist governments in correctly informing people of their different rights and how to uphold and preserve such rights.

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