



unrwa policy on education for human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) simplified version

What is the HRCRT Policy about?

UNRWA has been integrating human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) in its schools for more than ten years. Recently, UNRWA's work in HRCRT was analysed. This was done to identify what had been achieved and to learn what students, teachers and other UNRWA staff, parents, and additional stakeholders expected from a human rights education programme. The result is an Agency-wide HRCRT Policy which applies to all schools in the five Fields where UNRWA operates.

What is the HRCRT Policy based on?

The HRCRT Policy is based on the successes of the current HRCRT programme and grounded in international human rights standards. These international standards include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which is a programme from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

What is human rights education?

The HRCRT Policy takes the definition of human rights education that was developed for the World Programme for Human Rights Education (HRE), which began in 2005. The World Programme for HRE has provided a framework for countries around the world to successfully integrate human rights education in the classroom and in the overall learning environment of the school.

The definition of human rights education is: education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and minorities;
- The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- The building and maintenance of peace;
- The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.

Why teach about human rights?

UNRWA is part of the United Nations and a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly. As such, UNRWA is mandated to promote respect for human rights. Education for HRCRT empowers Palestine refugees to enjoy and exercise their rights and uphold the rights of others, be proud of their Palestinian identity, and contribute to their society. This is why UNRWA has taught human rights education in its schools in all five Fields for years.

What is the HRCRT vision?

The HRCRT Policy and programme are guided by the vision, statement of commitment, and strategic objectives of the Policy:

Vision:

To provide human rights education that empowers Palestine refugee students to enjoy and exercise their rights, uphold human rights values, be proud of their Palestinian identity, and contribute positively to their society and the global community.

Statement of Commitment:

UNRWA is committed to providing quality human rights education in its schools and educational facilities in line with its education vision, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the related instruments in the international human rights system, and the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Strategic Objectives:

The strategic objectives of the HRCRT programme will:

- Build on the human rights principles embedded within the cultural context of Palestine refugees;
- Develop a human rights education environment in UNRWA education facilities that is conducive to promoting a culture of human rights;
- Equip UNRWA students and youths with human rights knowledge and skills in an attempt to positively influence their attitudes and behaviour in order to contribute positively to their society and the global community.



What are the components of the HRCRT Policy?

The HRCRT Policy is divided into three main parts, each contributing to the overall vision of the Policy and programme. These components are:

Teaching and learning:

The HRCRT Policy sets out a common approach for all UNRWA schools to teaching and learning about human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance. In some schools the teaching of human rights is a separate subject, while in others it is integrated into existing lessons in social sciences or other subjects.

Teacher preparation and professional development:

Teacher training is recognised as an important factor in improving the quality of education that students receive in schools. The HRCRT Policy provides for training for teachers to integrate human rights more effectively in their teaching and in the school as a whole. Apart from this, teacher training can reinforce teaching practices that are respectful of human rights and further strengthen all teachers to be positive role models in the classroom.

The learning environment:

Human rights education strives towards the creation of an environment where human rights are practised and lived in the daily life of the whole school community. As well as learning about human rights, human rights education therefore includes the social and emotional development of all those involved in the learning and teaching process.

A rights-based environment respects and promotes the human rights of all school actors and is characterised by mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life, and offers them opportunities for interacting with the wider community.

UNRWA is committed to ensuring a safe and motivating school environment where students learn, enjoy their rights and respect the rights of others. This environment is hazard-free, violence free, healthy and accessible to all, thereby ensuring physical and mental safety.

Which human rights principles form the basis of the Policy?

The HRCRT Policy and its programme components are based on a core set of human rights principles. These principles are based in part on universally accepted human rights principles. The core principles are:

Human dignity:

Human dignity is a principle that asserts that all human beings, by virtue of being human, deserve to be respected and treated well.

Universality:

Human rights are universal. All people everywhere in the world are entitled to them.



Equality and non-discrimination:

All individuals are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person. No one should therefore suffer discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status as established by human rights standards. The meaning of "other status" has evolved over time and it is

now widely agreed that grounds such as disability, age, gender identity, ethnicity and geographical origin are included in this definition.

Participation and inclusion:

All people have the right to participate in and access information relating to the decision-making processes that affect their lives and well-being. This implies a high degree of participation by communities, civil society, minorities, women, young people, children, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Tolerance:

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human.



How does a policy become a programme?

The HRCRT Policy reflects UNRWA's mandate to promote quality education for Palestine refugees. It is also part of the wider Education Reform that UNRWA launched in October 2011. In order for the Policy to become a reality, UNRWA is developing an implementation strategy based on discussions with stakeholders. Some of the first components of this strategy are:

- Assessing the current state of School Parliaments and strengthening them through resources and training of school staff.
- The creation of a "HRCRT Toolkit" that will provide guidance for all teachers on basic human rights principles, how to teach about HRCRT, and how to help create a school environment that is respectful of human rights, and promotes a rights-based approach to learning. This Toolkit builds upon past experiences and international resources to suggest HRCRT activities which can be integrated into other subjects.
- Regular teacher training will be an important component to ensure that the HRCRT Toolkit is used effectively.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to measure the effectiveness of the HRCRT programme.

What do students learn about?

The HRCRT Policy's approach is to teach students towards the full development of "HRCRT competencies." The competencies are divided according to:

- Knowledge and understanding of human rights;
- Attitudes and values related to human rights; and
- Skills to practice human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance.

The development of the competencies depends on the age of the child: younger children will learn about aspects such as respecting others and treating people equally, while older students also learn about certain rights such as the right to education or the right to health. At all ages, students will learn how to practically apply their knowledge of human rights to create a rights-based environment at school and to contribute towards positive social change in their communities.

How will the success of the HRCRT programme be measured?

The HRCRT programme is one component of UNRWA's Education Reform. As such, it will fit within the Reform's monitoring and evaluation framework. This will ensure that progress towards realising the HRCRT vision can be measured over time. In practical terms, this means that all stakeholders involved, from the students to teachers, head teachers, school supervisors and others, will take part in gathering the information required to make sure the programme is monitored and evaluated effectively.

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united nations relief and works agency
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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some [5,000,000] registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.