

EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP:

THE LIBERIA MODEL

THE CARTER CENTER



Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship:

The Liberia Model

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Foreword

by Jimmy Carter

For the last seven years, The Carter Center has been deeply involved in Liberia, which by 1996 was almost completely destroyed by a terrible civil war. After 14 failed peace agreements, 200,000 people—out of a population of 2.6 million—were killed, 670,000 were forced into neighboring countries, and more than 1 million were internally displaced.


The group of countries that formed the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) finally achieved lasting peace with the 1996 Abuja II Accord. This document provided a framework for a transitional government, established a timetable for disarmament and demobilization, and set a schedule for the July 1997 Special Elections. Despite some important problems, these elections, which I and more than 500 international monitors observed, represented an opportunity for Liberia to restore legitimate constitutional order and rebuild its future.

Since then, progress has been arduous and difficult. Although flagrant violations, apparent at the end of the war, have not been as frequent, obstacles remain for media freedom, responsible operation of security forces, and representative democracy. Also, the pace of refugee repatriation and reintegration has been slow.

However, signs of hope exist. For example, Liberian civil society has played a significant role in promoting reconciliation, human rights, and peace and has sought to establish a credible, independent human rights commission. In addition, Liberia's Ministry of Education (MOE) is exploring ways to foster a human rights culture.

Consensus continues to grow that human rights education is essential for building a free, just, and peaceful society and can reduce human rights abuses. Under the MOE's constructive leadership, The Carter Center has helped develop a national strategy for incorporating human rights education

into Liberia's schools. Urgent priorities for the MOE were to rehabilitate schools and get students into classrooms. Unfortunately, due to inadequate financial and human resources, only less than 10 percent of schools have been reopened. General education is important, but equal priority should be given to establishing human rights curricula. Civics and social studies courses can be expanded to teach students at an early age concepts of tolerance and respect for others' rights. In this way, schools can play a critical role in helping Liberia lay a foundation for permanent peace and eventual prosperity, which everyone desires for their children. ■



Preface and Acknowledgments

by Gordon Streeb

The Carter Center has worked to facilitate peaceful resolution of Liberia's civil conflict since 1990. Most recently, it initiated several activities to support the country's struggle to consolidate democracy, improve governance, and strengthen the rule of law.

In 1991, heads of state from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) endorsed an invitation by the ECOWAS Mediation Committee and Liberian political parties for The Carter Center

to "assist ... in monitoring the electoral process." Thus, Center staff participated in a series of negotiations in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, which designed a peace process and laid out conditions for elections.

Later that year, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited Liberia

to meet with faction leaders in hopes of advancing the peace process. In spring 1992, The Carter Center joined other U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), in presenting a

proposal to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to help Liberia with its national elections. USAID decided to allocate \$1.3 million to The Carter Center and the project's partners. The government of Germany provided additional financial support.

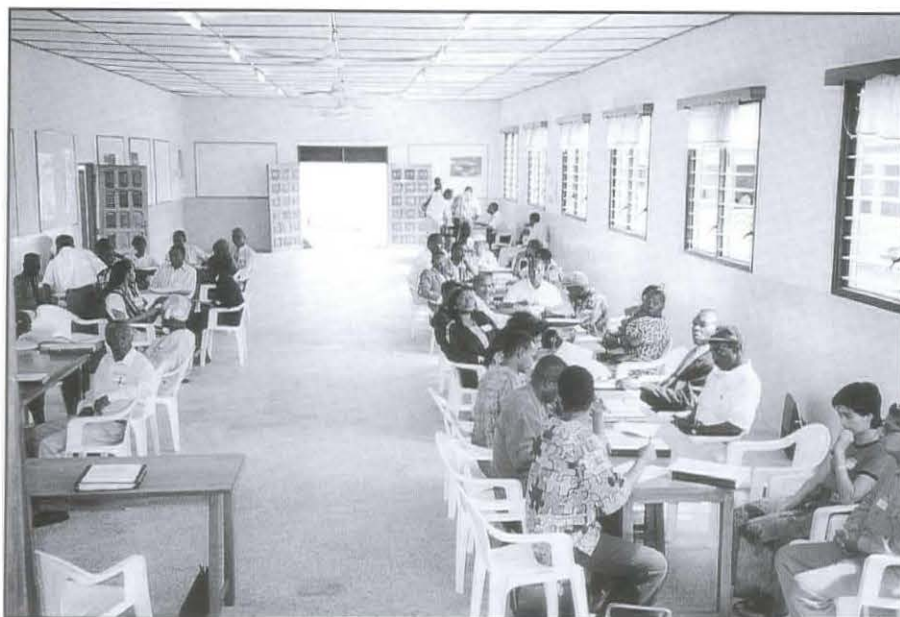
Hoping to add momentum to the project, the Center began staffing an office in Monrovia—Liberia's capital—in April 1992. Initially, the office served as the Independent Elections Commission's base of operations. Later, it would support all delegations from The Carter Center's Atlanta office. With this office as a base, the Center monitored and undergirded various peace and electoral activities for Liberia in close cooperation with ECOWAS.

For example, the Center has promoted growth of civil society by supporting the Liberian Network for Peace and Development. It held workshops to

build conflict resolution skills among leaders of factions and in civil society. To develop institutional structures and hone NGOs' skills, the Center sponsored a session in 1995, which trained major human rights groups in Liberia to monitor, investigate, and report human rights abuses.

Since it opened the Monrovia office,

The Carter Center has fielded multiple delegations of experts in elections, conflict resolution, and human rights. President Carter led several of the missions. Eminent people, such as South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Lisbet Palme, head



Participants in the three-day consultation on human rights education gather at St. Teresa's Convent in Monrovia on Dec. 15, 1998, for opening activities.

The Carter Center

of the Swedish Committee for UNICEF, led the other delegations. The Monrovia office continued operations until fighting in April 1996 forced its closure.

One year later, in anticipation of Liberia's Special Elections, the Center reopened its Monrovia office. It then coordinated all Carter Center activities leading up to the election, including facilitating dialogue between parties and the Independent Elections Commission and monitoring political developments such as regulations for electoral observers and human rights conditions. Subsequently, President Carter, President Nicephore Soglo of Benin, and former U.S. Sen. Paul Simon co-led a 40-member election observation team. Delegates concluded that "in the face of tremendous challenges, the Liberian people have conducted a peaceful and orderly election" and "overall, the election represents a very important step forward for Liberia and its long-term prospects for lasting peace and democracy."

The post-election period presents challenges as well as opportunities for Liberia and the international community. To advance democratic consolidation, The Carter Center recently proposed a multifaceted program to monitor governmental actions, advise on political reforms for national institutions, support development of civil society, and promote human rights. An important component of this goal is the Center's human rights education (HRE) initiative, which began in December 1997.

The Carter Center based this project on input from a variety of Liberians including human rights leaders—notably Archbishop Michael Francis—Ministry of Education (MOE) officials, and others. From the outset, these players viewed incorporation of human rights into Liberia's educational system as a critical means of national healing, an approach the Center already has implemented in Ethiopia.

Design for the HRE project evolved with direct input from Liberia's Minister of Education Evelyn Kandakai, who highlighted the MOE's need to foster a human rights culture through education. The Center hopes this project will have long-term impact. However, the short-term programmatic objective, including the Center's collaborative December consultation, was to help the MOE design

a national strategy for integrating HRE into the school system.

The Carter Center has plans for numerous future activities as well. These include capacity building for the Liberian Commission on Human Rights, the media, and the judiciary; helping government ministries design and implement a participatory process for preparing a national economic development strategy; finding ways to increase agriculture production; and helping the MOE implement HRE programs as part of the national strategy, which was designed at the Center's December 1997 consultation.

The report that follows presents various thoughts raised during the December 1997 consultation with the MOE. We would like to thank USAID, who provided through IFES generous support for the project and this report's publication. The HRE project also benefited from a generous grant from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Ozong Agborsangaya, program coordinator of The Carter Center's Democracy Program and Human Rights Committee, designed and coordinated the project and oversaw this publication. We wish to acknowledge the editorial assistance of Laina Wilk of the Center's Office of Public Information. We also extend thanks to intern Seth Kornfeld and to Deanna Congileo, senior associate director of Public Information. ■



Program

Consultation on a National Strategy for Human Rights Education
Through the School System: A Collaboration with Liberia's Ministry of Education
St. Teresa's Convent, Monrovia, Liberia
Dec. 15-17, 1997

Day One: Dec. 15

Theme: A Framework for Human Rights and Democracy Education

- 8:30 a.m. Registration
- 8:45 a.m. Invocation: The Rev. Ramberlee Yarnley, Director for Religious Coordination, Ministry of Education (MOE)
- 8:55 a.m. Welcome Address: James Jallah, Assistant Minister of Instruction, MOE
- 9:00 a.m. Keynote Address: Isaac Rolland, Deputy Minister for Planning and Development, MOE
- 9:15 a.m. Clarifying Needs, Objectives, and Expectations: Ozong Agborsangaya
- 9:45 a.m. Defining Human Rights and Human Rights Education: Felice Yeban, Philippine Normal University
- 10:15 a.m. Coffee Break
- 10:30 a.m. Exploring the Link Between Human Rights, Democracy, Development, and Peace: Clarence Dias, Executive Director, Center for Law and Development
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Exploring the International Bill of Rights—Methodologies, Concepts, Social Activities, and Forces: Clarence Dias and Felice Yeban
- 3:00 p.m. Coffee Break
- 3:15 p.m. The Liberian Constitution and Other Human Rights and Democracy Issues in Liberia: Conmany Wesseh, Executive Director, the Center for Democratic Empowerment in Liberia; Kofi Woods, Director, Justice and Peace Commission; and Hall Badio, Chair of the Liberian Commission on Human Rights; Session chaired by H.M. Sesay, Professor at the University of Liberia
- 4:45 p.m. Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Contextualizing CEDAW in Liberian Society: Juanita Jarrett, Association of Female Lawyers; and Ozong Agborsangaya, The Carter Center
- 5:30 p.m. Wrap-up and Evaluation: Ozong Agborsangaya

Day Two: Dec. 16

Theme: Exploring Best Practice Precedents and Problems in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

- 8:30 a.m. Convention on the Rights of the Child and Children's Rights Issues in Liberia: James Torh, Director, Forerunners for Children's Rights; and Felice Yeban

10:15 a.m. Coffee Break
 10:30 a.m. Understanding the Liberian System of Education: Jacob Tarlowoh, Assistant Minister of Curriculum, Textbooks, and Research
 11:30 a.m. Understanding Tertiary Education in Liberia: H.M. Sesay
 12:15 p.m. Lunch
 1:30 p.m. Exploring Africa, Asia, and Latin America Models: Ozong Agborsangaya, Clarence Dias, and Felice Yeban
 3:30 p.m. Coffee Break
 4:30 p.m. Toward a National Plan—Staging: Ozong Agborsangaya
 5:15 p.m. Wrap-up and Evaluation: Ozong Agborsangaya

Day Three: Dec. 17

Theme: Strategy Development—How Can Human Rights Education Be Institutionalized in Formal Education

8:30 a.m. Exploring Guidelines for National Plans of Action: Clarence Dias
 9:00 a.m. Opportunities for Best Practices in Liberia: Ozong Agborsangaya
 10:00 a.m. Coffee Break
 10:15 a.m. Working Groups: Ozong Agborsangaya; Clarence Dias; Felice Yeban; Desmond Parker, U.N. Human Rights Officer; Jacob Tarlowoh; and John Nwankwo, U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

- 1) School Administrators
- 2) Elementary School Teachers
- 3) Teacher Training Colleges
- 4) Secondary School Teachers
- 5) Library Development
- 6) NGO Community

12:15 p.m. Lunch
 1:30 p.m. Working Groups, continued
 3:30 p.m. Coffee Break
 3:45 p.m. Plenary: Ozong Agborsangaya
 5:15 p.m. Wrap-up and Evaluation: Ozong Agborsangaya
 6:30 p.m. Closing Dinner

Developing a National Strategy for Human Rights Through Formal Education

by Ozong Agborsangaya

The July 1997 Special Elections represented an important step in Liberia's transition from war to peace. Equally important is the pressing need to consolidate democracy by ensuring that all segments of society have a strong voice in newly established government structures and that those structures actively promote and protect all citizens' human rights.

The end of Liberia's civil war brought much needed security, but human rights abuses remain. After Samuel Doe's repressive regime¹, followed by seven years of internal strife, Liberia's state institutions² were destroyed, and a culture of violence and impunity took root. Today, problems continue regarding press restrictions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, lack of judicial independence, and nonrepresentative democracy.

According to Human Rights Watch, the current transition period provides a rare opportunity to develop state institutions that integrate strong human rights components into their structures and mechanisms that guarantee, secure, and enforce respect for human rights throughout society. Liberian President Charles Taylor committed the government to strengthening its mechanisms responsible for protecting human rights. Indeed, in October 1997, the legislature passed a bill establishing a human rights commission to reassure the political opposition and the international community that human rights would be respected. Further, the Ministry of Education (MOE) expressed an interest in seeking ways to build a human rights culture through education.

To foster these government efforts, The Carter Center conducted a consultation on a national

strategy to incorporate human rights education (HRE) through the school system. Because schools likely are the most important agencies for transmitting information, the education infrastructure is an appropriate place to start.

Goals

The Carter Center's Dec. 15-17, 1997, consultation aimed to:

- Introduce Liberian teachers and MOE officials to HRE's value as a tool to build a human rights culture and a strategy for conflict prevention.
- Provide an opportunity for various sectors of society to help the MOE generate a comprehensive strategy to incorporate HRE through the school system.

Project Activities

The consultation brought together 80 participants including MOE officials, elementary and secondary school teachers, instructors from teacher-training institutes, and representatives from civic and human rights organizations. Teachers' attendance provided a chance to bring classroom realities into the discussions and process. Local human rights groups that were represented included the Justice and Peace Commission, the Center for Democratic Empowerment, the Center for Law and Development, the Association of Female Lawyers, Forerunners of Children's Rights, Human Rights Monitor, Liberia Human Rights Chapter, the

Ozong Agborsangaya (right) takes notes during a panel discussion on Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Clarence Dias (center) speaks while Felice Yeban listens.



Liberia Watch for Human Rights, and the Movement for the Defense of Human Rights. Their representatives provided key input, given their unique understanding of the scope of the country.

Participants each received a manual, designed by The Carter Center's Democracy Program, which contained all relevant international, regional, and national human rights documents including the Liberian Constitution. It also outlined various HRE methodologies and strategies from different continents and authors, numerous sample exercises to teach a wide range of human rights issues, and documents illustrating the experiences of South Africa, Albania, Guyana, the Philippines, and other countries in HRE. Participants could therefore adapt these materials to their specific needs in their different institutions. Human rights representatives observed that the materials also could be used in informal education and that many were similar to other national cultural mediums of expression and could be easily translated into local languages. The workshop was conducted in English, but working groups and exercises allowed participants to work in the local vernacular.

Several high-level MOE officials, including Assistant Minister of Education for Secondary Schools James Jallah and Deputy Minister of Research and Planning Isaac Rolland, focused on human rights' role in consolidating democracy and

education's importance in empowering and liberating people. Minister of Education Evelyn Kandakai assured participants that the MOE would take seriously workshop recommendations.

The consultation used a participatory methodology. To ensure that Carter Center expectations complied with those of both the MOE and participants, Center staff asked working groups to help clarify the workshop's needs, objectives, and expectations. Subsequently, working groups aimed to establish a framework for human rights and democracy education by brainstorming on the following issues:

- 1) Define human rights.
- 2) Based on your understanding of human rights, define peace, democracy, and development.
- 3) From a human rights' perspective, what links peace, democracy, and development?

During the working group sessions, participants decided peace could be achieved only by maintaining the integrity of the human person. They agreed peace is a dynamic concept, and society cannot be promoted or protected in its absence. They concluded that any government's sole basis of authority is the will of the people to participate in grassroots decision-making and that development involves constant improvement of the human person.



Minister of Education Evelyn Kandakai (center) listens with other participants to a presentation by a working group of elementary school teachers.

Panel discussions proved useful due to their participatory nature. For example, University of Liberia Professor H.M. Sesay chaired one session in which he gave an overview of the evolution of human rights standards. He pointed out that the horrifying atrocities committed by Nazi Germany provided the primary impulse for development of an international system for protecting universal human rights. Participants responded with excellent feedback about how best to implement HRE in Liberia.

Overall, the panel discussions and working groups provided an opportunity to achieve a common understanding of Liberia's educational system. Given this, participants could generate a collaborative vision for implementing HRE. By learning from best practice precedents, they also could identify an appropriate strategy specifically for Liberia.

Other techniques included songs, storytelling, and drama. These helped participants place everyday situations in a human rights framework. Using a common Guyanese HRE exercise, participants sang and compared the lyrics of Jamaican artist Bob Marley's song "War" to the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They used skits to explore issues concerning domestic violence, access to equal education, equality before the law, and inheritance rights.

The final session focused on strategy development. Participants divided into categories of school

administrators, elementary school teachers, teacher training college instructors, secondary school teachers, and civil society members. Then, each group generated a vision, mission, goal, and objectives for a national strategy. This exercise resulted in a 10-year plan of action for a national strategy for HRE through the school system (see pages 14-15):

■ **Vision:** A society where a culture of peace and human rights reigns, which is free from any form of oppression and which upholds justice and equality.

■ **Mission:** The educational system serves as an agent in evolving this culture in Liberian society.

■ **Goal:** Development and implementation of HRE curriculum in Liberia's school system from 1998-2008.

At the end of the workshop, a Task Force—composed of representatives from civil society, the MOE's Curriculum Development Department, and the United Nations—was set up to identify possible next steps to oversee implementation of the strategy.

Evaluation Results

At the end of each workshop, participants completed evaluations. Below are some of the questions and answers:

■ **Question 1: The Carter Center may run similar workshops in other countries. Which topics should be added?**

How to mobilize citizens to advocate HRE in their countries.

Commonalities and differences between constitutions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mobilization of resources for HRE in Liberian schools.

Overcoming traditional practices that obstruct human rights.

Issues regarding disabled people, refugees, and the displaced.

Lobbying strategies to gain or build the government's political will or help the government develop will to support HRE programs.

Formation of local country and national parent-teacher associations to promote HRE in Liberia.

Review of existing human rights practices/documents on the national level.

Explain any differences and similarities between human rights practices in Africa and the Western world.

A session on basic curriculum development skills/techniques.

HRE for parents of school children.

■ **Question 2: Do you have any other suggestions for improving the program?**

Sponsor media programs such as newspaper and radio commentaries and features, which I believe will serve as captivating methods for promoting HRE.

Extend the program to the grassroots level such as to those living in other counties besides just Monrovia.

The Carter Center should do a follow-up program. Increase the number of participants.

■ **Question 3: Which aspects of the workshop were especially useful?**

It made me want to listen better to common songs to realize their messages.

Drawing a national HRE plan of action in Liberia. Working groups' reports helped identify strategies for implementing HRE in Liberia.

Getting to know my inherent rights.

The flow of thought and research materials made available by the workshop.

The trend of HRE being introduced in Asian countries.

The formation of goals, objectives, strategies, and other approaches made the workshop more practical.

I am better equipped to talk about HRE in our school system.

Comparative human rights practices between and among different cultures.

Presentation of materials and resources by experts involved in the workshop.

It enhanced my capacity to understand issues of HRE and democracy from a different perspective.

It will enable me to better answer teachers' and students' questions on human rights, if HRE is included in the curriculum.

It helped upgrade my understanding of our educational system through human rights.

■ **Question 4: What would be the most appropriate or useful follow-up to this workshop?**

Set up a monitoring committee to work with target groups.

Reconvene educators in early 1998 to assess what has been implemented and formulate a plan of action to help those lagging behind.

Conduct a similar workshop for personnel who will develop HRE curriculum.

Use workshop participants to help implement future workshops.

Identify funds to train MOE personnel to inspect schools where HRE will begin and report the outcome to The Carter Center.

Adapt Liberia's plan of action for all of Africa.

Provide necessary materials for immediate implementation of our final resolutions.

Implement everything we discussed. ■

Ozong Agborsangaya is program coordinator for The Carter Center's Democracy Program and Human Rights Committee. She has designed and implemented technical assistance projects to promote human rights in Ethiopia, Liberia, and Rwanda.

Endnotes

¹ Samuel Doe ruled Liberia from 1980-90.

² Liberia's education system suffered extensive damage during the seven-year civil war. The dilapidated appearance of most public schools reflects the status of education in the country on the whole. Out of 1,440 public and self-help community schools that functioned before the war, an estimated 500-800 currently operate. In addition to poor physical infrastructure, under-qualified, untrained teachers manage classes without textbooks or chalk.

Works Cited

Human Rights Watch/Africa, Liberia. *Emerging from the Destruction: Human Rights Challenges Facing the New Liberian Government*. Vol. 9, No. 7A, November 1997.

Ten-year Plan of Action for National Strategy

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
1) Form a pool of human rights educators who will train Liberian teachers nationwide.	Conduct human rights trainers' training.
2) Train all teachers at all levels and school personnel on human rights concepts and values.	1) Make a list of all schools in Liberia. 2) Make a schedule of HRE workshops to be conducted in each school. 3) Conduct HRE workshops.
3) Produce relevant and quality human rights instructional materials and resources.	1) Create a writers' pool composed of selected teachers and curriculum developers who will develop an HRE curriculum and who will write needed instructional materials and teaching aids. 2) Encourage each school to develop materials integrating human rights in selected courses. 3) Reproduce materials for teachers' mass consumption. 4) Allot necessary funds to produce the materials.
4) Build up human rights library collection and structures.	1) Make an inventory of human rights materials available in Liberia. 2) Make a list of human rights resource foundations who could donate materials to the Ministry of Education for distribution. 3) Each school should construct a library with a human rights section.
5) Develop evaluative mechanism to assess success indicators.	1) Conduct research to develop an evaluation instrument to assess the effectiveness and impact of the workshops and materials. 2) Administer evaluation instruments at every workshop.
6) Create coordinating mechanism at all levels to systematize HRE efforts.	1) From the participants of the December 1997 workshop, identify people who could serve as members of a coordinating body who will monitor the plan if implemented. 2) Identify the function and responsibilities of the monitoring committee.
7) Involve civil society in HRE initiatives.	1) Involve groups--such as the PTA, village-based organizations, and religious groups--in developing and implementing HRE in the school system.
8) Develop relevant methodologies to effectively deliver HRE in the school system.	1) Organize and create public awareness on human rights through dramas, plays, cultural performances, debates, audiovisuals, use of media, etc. 2) Encourage each school to observe "Human Rights Day." 3) Use vernaculars to transmit human rights concepts and values. 4) Establish Human Rights Educators Awards for teachers who have developed methodologies in teaching human rights.
9) Make HRE in the school system a tool to reach out to communities.	Encourage schools to have human rights community outreach programs where both teachers and students will immerse themselves in the community to do HRE work.
10) Generate the necessary resources needed to sustain HRE efforts.	1) Develop proposals to be sent to funding agencies to encourage them to fund any of the activities in the HRE plan. 2) Organize fund-raising projects for human rights.

*Numbers correspond to opposite page.

for Human Rights Education in Liberia

PERSONNEL IN CHARGE	TIME FRAME	SUCCESS INDICATORS
1) Ministry of Education	Once every three months, starting 1998-99.	Trainers' group for elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels.
2) Ministry of Education, Commission on Human Rights, private schools, NGOs	Target of three workshops a year, starting 1998-2008	Three workshops a year, starting 1998-2008
3) Ministry of Education, Commission on Human Rights, NGOs	Planning and writing to be started in 1998 and finished by 1999 or early 2000.	Actual materials produced by late 1999 or early 2000.
4) Ministry of Education, NGOs, all schools	A library structure by 1998. A list of human rights resource foundations by 1998. An inventory by 1999.	A human rights collection in every library in every school in Liberia by 2008 or earlier.
5) Ministry of Education, teacher-training institutions, NGOs	To commence in 1998.	An evaluative mechanism is produced and used.
6) Ministry of Education, Commission on Human Rights, NGOs	To be formed in 1998.	A coordinating body is formed, and the HRE plan is implemented.
7) Ministry of Education, individual schools, NGOs	To commence in 1998.	Joint HRE projects between schools and community organizations.
8) Ministry of Education, individual schools, NGOs	To commence in 1998.	New methodologies developed.
9) Ministry of Education, individual schools, individual teachers	To commence in 1998.	Established human rights community outreach program.
10) Ministry of Education, Commission on Human Rights, NGOs	To commence in 1998.	Enough funds to sustain the HRE and succeeding plans.

* Numbers correspond to opposite page.

The Relationship Between Human Rights, Democracy, and Education: An Invitation

by Isaac Rolland

On behalf of the government, I am grateful to The Carter Center for its continuous efforts in promoting peace and democracy in Liberia. Undoubtedly, the Center is well-renowned for its activities here and elsewhere as evidenced by strong commitment to human rights, alleviation of human suffering, conflict prevention and resolution, and promotion of freedom and democracy. Before reflecting on the significance of this consultation to develop a national strategy for formal human rights education (HRE), I will analyze its three major focuses. Specifically, I will explore the relationship between human rights, democracy, and education and share the vision of the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Human Rights

In a civic culture, the state does not evolve from divine will, family, or force. Instead, it results from a social contract founded on consent and voluntary agreement among the people. If a state fails to fulfill the purpose for which it was created, then the masses have the right to dismantle it and institute another one, which *would* deliver “the goods.” As the signatories to the U.S. Declaration of Independence wisely averred, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the law of the people to alter it and institute another government laying its foundation on such principles as to them shall seem to effect its safety and happiness.”

Articles 11-26 in Chapter 3 of the 1986

Liberian Constitution also address “recognition and protection of fundamental human rights of the individual.” Thus, the state is obligated not only to promote the individual and public welfare but also to defend the people against foreign aggression and to instill respect for human rights.

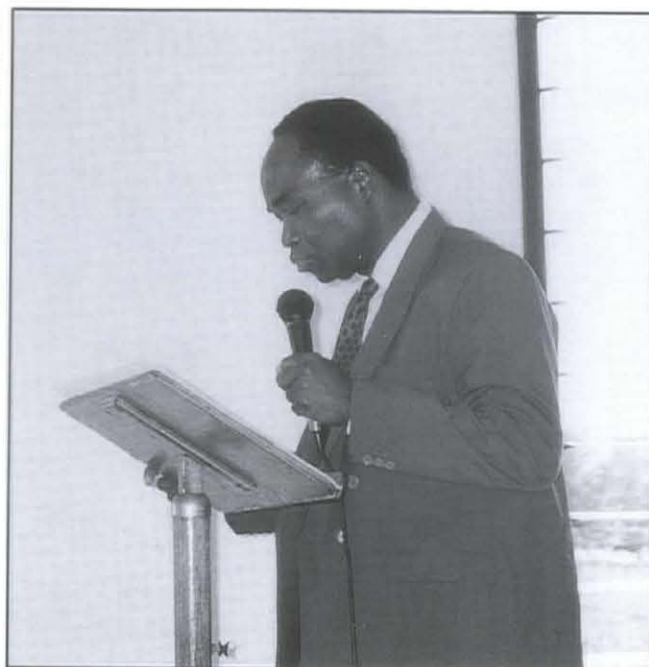
The notion of fundamental human rights emanates from John Locke’s concepts of “natural rights.” Locke said every individual is endowed at birth with certain rights by virtue of his/her status and dignity as a human being. No state can deny these basic freedoms—the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

As an essential component of civic culture, the United Nations defined these rights in its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as “the right to life, security of the person, the protection of law and unimpeded access to the courts of law; freedom from slavery, forced labor, and inhuman treatment; protection from deprivation of poverty; freedom of science and religion; freedom of expression and association and freedom of movement; and the right to a private family life.”

As its name implies, the UDHR is an international document dealing with rights of all humans. In his 1996 article, “Democracy and Human Rights: An Overview of the African Continent,” Derrick Marco clarified the UDHR as a widely accepted framework but said the concept is not a body of knowledge defined by experts. Rather, it is a continuously evolving principle generated from people’s cumulative experiences.

Democracy is a fundamental prerequisite for establishing and maintaining a human rights culture. However, values espoused through this culture have more impact on citizens’ responsibility to respect others’ dignity and self-worth.

Isaac Rolland delivers the workshop's keynote address about the connection between human rights education and democratic development.



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Democracy

Simply put, democracy is governance by election that uses the rule of law to ensure a nation's constitution is upheld. The constitution promotes democratic values and protects citizens against undue state power. Principles, values, and procedures should be enshrined in the constitution to ensure government can function properly, as indicated in the Liberian Constitution and other relevant documents.

As a system of government, democracy is the way state functionaries come to power and reign between elections, using the constitution and rule of law to maintain order. Citizens have the right to demand a democratic state, but they also then have the responsibility to maintain it. Thus, the question remains: How does education affect democracy?

Education

Education is a social phenomenon through which values, beliefs, cultural heritages, new ideas, and other key assets are transmitted from generation to generation. It also provides a significant tool for development, since its promotion undoubtedly influences a society's political, cultural, social, economic, scientific, and technological thought.

Education for democracy should serve as an instrument of critical and realistic approaches to issues such as gender and cultural equality; pursuit of education; freedom of speech, press assembly, transportation, conscience, and religion; the right to vote, work, receive a pension, and travel; protection of children; personal security; and the right to life.

The Right to Education

Education not only serves as a yardstick to promote human rights and democracy, it is an end itself. In emerging democracies such as Liberia school systems should be able to teach human rights and civil education, both of which are viewed as strategies to foster good citizenship, prevent human rights violations, and empower people to meet their own needs based on their knowledge and use of rights.

Richard Pierre Claude writes, "If respect for human rights is the means of achieving peace, then teachers are peacemakers. If teaching human rights enhances democracy and development, then teachers are architects of democratic development and of tomorrow's world. Therefore instructors must teach students not only to read and write but also to be human and to respect others' human dignity," ("Human Rights Have Wings," 1996).

Charles Taylor, president of Liberia, views human rights as "the cornerstone of democracy." Hence, one of this workshop's major objectives is to achieve incorporation of HRE into Liberia's school system.

The Liberian Government's Position

The Liberian government has expressed high commitment to protecting and defending human rights. However, the human rights situation in post-war Liberia needs serious improvement. Major steps in this direction include the legislature's passage of the act for creating the Liberian Commission on Human Rights and President Taylor's subsequent signing of the act into law. Liberia's government will do all it can to protect and preserve human rights by allowing the Commission to work independently. Also, it will strive to take stringent measures by bringing to justice through an independent judiciary perpetrators of human rights violations.

Because the issue of violations is so critical and controversial, one must exercise caution in dealing with it. Promoting human rights and democracy education will provide a clear signal in minimizing human rights abuses in Liberia.

The government and the MOE strongly endorse and welcome incorporation of human rights and democracy education in the school system as another important measure toward improving the human rights situation.

We are indebted to The Carter Center for facilitating this important initiative. The Center's consultative process to develop a national strategy for such education is timely, and we pray that positive results emerge from it. ■

Isaac Rolland is deputy minister of Research and Planning for Liberia's Ministry of Education.

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Human Rights, Development, and Democracy

by Clarence Dias

The U.N. Charter emphasizes three interdependent goals: peace, development, and human rights. Peace cannot exist where human rights are systematically violated and there is no development to eliminate poverty. The absence of peace creates conditions that render development impossible and breed massive, widespread human rights violations.

On the other hand, respect and promotion of human rights creates an environment favorable to both peace and development. The U.N. World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) reiterated this interrelationship and added another element—democracy.

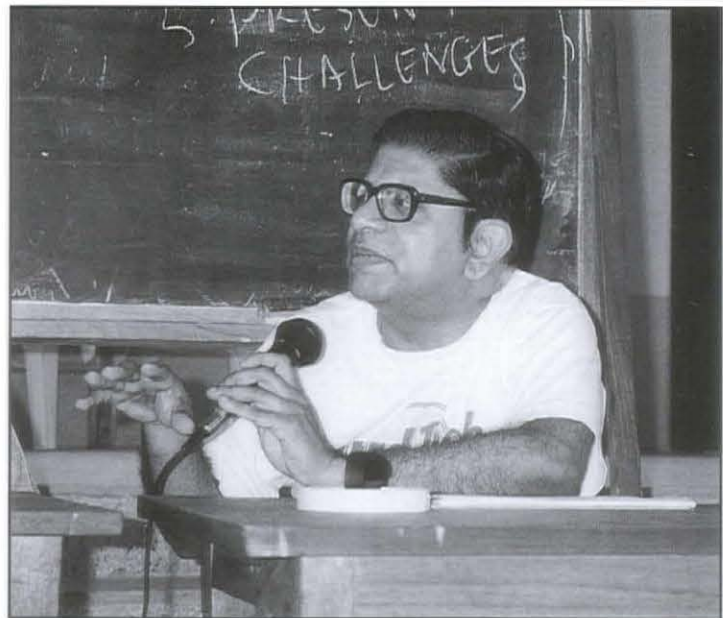
Democracy has been defined in various human rights instruments, most notably the International Bill of Human Rights, which comprises the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights. These documents establish democracy's key components including:

- The people's will shall be the sole basis for government authority.
- Everyone has the right to participate in governing the country, both directly and through freely chosen representatives.
- Everyone has the right to rebel against tyranny.

Democracy thus encompasses the right to effective, accountable, and responsive governance of, by, and for the people. It mandates transparency, freedom of information, and the right to know.

The link between democracy and human rights is self-evident, as democracy is essential for promoting and protecting human rights. Participation—a means and end of democracy—is a basic, fundamental human right.

The connection between democracy and development also is crucial. Only by democratizing development processes can we ensure development is not lawless but rather truly equitable in sharing



Clarence Dias explains why democracy is integral to development of countries in transition to peace.

benefits and burdens and in securing intragenerational and intergenerational justice.

As it has come to be practiced over the past 50 years, development has become a cause rather

than a cure for human rights violations. Due to development, indigenous peoples have been forcibly evicted from their ancestral homes and their resources have been plundered. Certain agricultural practices have left a legacy of exhausted soil, chemically poisoned water, and an eroding biodiversity, leaving monocrops, which are vulnerable to megablights. Reckless and ultrahazardous industrialization has destroyed the global environment, creating climatic change and damage to the ozone. It also has produced nuclear tragedies like Bhopal and Chernobyl, in which thousand of lives were lost and horribly mutilated across generations. For too long, development has been equated with economic aggrandizement alone. In actuality, it has evolved to mean *having* more rather than *being* more.

The paradox "more may be less" has too often been proven. In fact, less may be more in terms of environmental sustainability. Linking human rights to development has helped redefine the norm of development as sustainable human development. Indeed, development's *raison d'être* is to promote people's well-being and progressively realize their

human rights. Moreover, the right to development—as detailed in a 1986 declaration by the U.N. General Assembly and reaffirmed in a series of U.N. conferences during the 1990s—clearly affirms the fundamental right of participation. This link to participation is essential to ensure development no longer displaces people, destroys communities, and devastates the environment.

Human rights are inherent to the very nature of the human person. They ensure freedom from fear and want. They also keep human life human and guarantee the most precious right of all—the right to be human. Human rights in their totality—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social—provide a holistic vision. They are the spirit of our time and must become the reality. Only then will this millennium truly deserve to be remembered with pride as the "Age of Rights." ■

Clarence Dias is executive director of the Center for Law and Development in New York.

Convention on the Rights of the Child and Children's Rights Issues in Liberia

by James Torh

I commend this meeting's organizers for including on the agenda child rights, with focus on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and child rights issues in Liberia. Its inclusion recognizes the unpopular yet fundamental concept that respect for human rights begins with guaranteeing youths their rights. As the foundation of every life, childhood is the common thread linking all human rights. Therefore, child rights should be regarded as everyone's rights.

The CRC: An Overview

A global effort to offer a common place for protecting children worldwide resulted in the U.N. General Assembly's unanimous adoption of the CRC in November 1989. This document codified child rights in a formal international agreement, detailing rights of those under age 18 to develop to their full potential free from hunger, want, neglect, exploitation, and other abuses. On Sept. 2, 1990, a follow-up gathering of 70 heads of states at the U.N. World Summit for Children reaffirmed hope in the CRC and incorporated in the Summit's mid-decade goals its universal ratification.

Barely a year later, the CRC—the only international human rights document to include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights—was widely accepted and came into effect as an internationally binding document with 40 nations' ratification, twice the number required for this status. To date, all U.N. member states have ratified the CRC, except for a few who have legal problems with certain provisions.

The CRC contains 54 articles, with provisions for the main areas of child rights survival, development, protection, and participation.

■ **Survival:** The first specific right cited is the inherent right to life (Article 6). States must ensure "to the maximum possible, the survival and development of the child." The CRC recognizes the right of access to health care services and to an adequate standard of living including food, clean water, and housing.

■ **Development:** To allow everyone the chance to develop to his/her full potential, the CRC provides for a child's right to education, rest, leisure, and engagement in cultural activities.

■ **Protection:** Several provisions protect youths in a variety of circumstances. Some deal with the mentally or physically disabled, others with refugees or children who do not have parents or have been separated from them. The CRC also covers child labor, sexual exploitation, and adoption. It requires appropriate measures to be taken to protect young people from the use and sale of drugs, and it sets out rights for children in armed conflict and in trouble with the law.

■ **Participation:** The CRC underlines a child's right to freedom of expression, information, thought, conscience, and religion. It also calls upon parents and caregivers to give "due weight" to children's views, in accordance with their age and maturity, and to raise them to play an active role in society.

The Liberian Context

Liberia was the 85th U.N. member state to ratify the CRC, thus legally binding her to fully respect the provisions of this Magna Carta of child



James Torh (center) meets with Jappah Nah, representative of the National Human Rights Center (left), and Ozong Agborsangaya.

rights. While the CRC became a symbol of recovery and growth for many African states and several state parties made significant strides toward implementing it, an unfortunate political situation prevailed in Liberia. Eruption of armed conflict and the subsequent upsurge of what appeared to be blatant defiance and resistance to the basic tenets of human decency and sanity shattered the world's dream for Liberia's children.

The level of human degradation was painfully evident. Arms-toting, underage children were turned into killers. Young girls suffered raped and harassment. Parents were tortured, sometimes to death, while their children were forced to look on, and other extreme cruelties were committed.

Specific Rights Issues

Current issues related to child rights in Liberia have deep roots in the situation that prevailed prior to the civil conflict. Socioeconomic indicators of child survival and well-being before the war reveal a trend of neglect and violations, which children continue to suffer today.

Government response to these silent emergencies has been unfavorable, because gross inadequacies of basic social services, occasioned by the government's insufficient budgetary allocations,

have aggravated conditions of malnutrition, poor child development, and disease affecting women.

■ **Health:** Before the war, primary health care services were not adequate to effectively meet demand and reduce disease and death burdens. For example, available data shows the mortality rate of children under age 5 (U5MR) as being very high in Liberia. A 1986 survey put the U5MR at 220 per 1,000 live births, implying that more than one of every five children died before reaching age 5. This figure placed Liberia among the nine developing countries with the worst U5MRs.

■ **Education:** Despite a constitutional provision for compulsory education, access to schooling already was limited prior to the war, with only 50 percent of youths attending. Prewar estimates show that of every 100 Liberian children, only 14 would complete primary school in six years, and only two would complete secondary school in 12 years. Even though budgetary streamlining resulted in poor educational quality and declining enrollment, government expenditures on education declined dramatically, from 20.1 percent in 1988 to 13.2 percent in 1989. Interestingly, the military budget almost doubled over the same period.

■ **Water and Sanitation:** Access to water sanitation services in urban and rural areas was very low before the war broke out. Of the 2.5 million population, only 30 percent had access to safe drinking water, posing a severe threat to children's survival.

■ **Other Rights and Protection Issues:** Children suffered other direct abuses in the prewar period, reflected by the number of street children, juvenile delinquents, child prostitutes, working children, abandoned children, and child prisoners. Sadly, few Liberians realized the extent and consequences of these violations until exposed by the conflict's conditions.

Thus, the civil war provided an eye opener to the gross abuses that Liberian children continue to suffer. The proliferation of child rights advocacy groups immediately following the cessation of hostilities bespeaks the new level of awareness and concern for child rights.

Several other issues arose as a result of the abuse and misuse of children during the conflict. Recruitment of underage children—some as young as age 9—as combatants, which exposed them to violent, traumatic conditions, coupled with an increased prevalence of youths in especially difficult circumstances—disabled, orphans, refugees, etc.—militate against the CRC's dictates.

The Challenges

Stark challenges confront human rights advocates in the face of past and present governments' lack of political will. This has hindered the survival, protection, and development of Liberian children and their active participation in matters that affect them and their communities. Hence, any effort (from inside or out) geared toward ensuring child rights in Liberia should:

■ Empower civil society through education of rights set forth in the CRC and other human rights standards.

■ Strengthen existing human rights groups' capacity to disseminate information at all levels of society.

■ Build coalitions to monitor and report human rights violations.

■ Secure government's commitment to fulfill its obligation as a signatory to the CRC by reaffirming and implementing it.

■ Prioritize children by putting them at the center of the new national agenda of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

■ Influence the formulation of policies and laws to protect children.

■ Harmonize the CRC with existing laws.

■ Influence budgetary appropriation in favor of health, education, and other basic social services.

■ Involve formal sectors such as educational institutions in designing and developing curricula to teach human rights in schools. ■

James Torh is director of Forerunners for Children's Rights in Liberia.

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Contextualizing CEDAW: The Liberian Situation

by Juanita Jarrett

In the era when William V.S. Tubman ruled Liberia (1948-59), women were granted suffrage. Unlike in other African countries, Liberian women could hold high government positions of trust. For example, Angie Brooks Randall was the first African woman president of the U.N. General Assembly. Doris Banks Henriens and Ellen Mills Scarborough held influential government positions. In its interim transitional government, Liberia boasted its first female chief justice. Now, with the advent of a democratically elected government, the present chief justice is female, and the minister of planning and economic affairs has been a female

for the past seven years. Furthermore, a notable percentage of legislature delegates are women.

Despite some positive attempts by previous and present governments to give equal rights to women, the legal system continues to abuse their rights. Certain laws should be studied, amended, or abrogated. For example, there is a legal dichotomy regarding property rights, specifically those of inheritance through marriage. Currently, a woman

marrying under customary law does not enjoy the same legal rights as a woman marrying under statutory law. If she became a widow, she would have no right over her children, and more often than not, any property would revert to her husband's family.

In contrast, a statutorily married widow has the

right to apply to a court for Letters of Administration to manage her husband's property and maintain custody of her children. Under customary law, husbands are chosen for girls, who at times are forced to marry at age 16 or younger, usually to an older man with property to enhance her family's wealth. These customary laws wittingly or unwittingly



Ozong Agborsangaya (right) consults with Juanita Jarrett (center) and other members of the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia.

contravene Part IV, Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In 1994, in an attempt to give equal legal protection to all Liberian women, a bill—An Act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and Establish Rights of Inheritance for Spouses of Both Statutory and Customary Marriages—was submitted to Liberia's Transitional Legislative Assembly. With an

elected legislature now in place, advocacy continues to ensure this bill becomes law sooner rather than later.

Some laws do protect women's rights. Under the New Domestic Relations Law of Liberia, Chapter 13, a woman may seek redress from the appropriate legal forum for wife beating or similar injury to wife or child. However, most women are not aware of these protective laws, which underlines the importance of educating females to their rights.

Since Liberia accepted CEDAW on July 17, 1984, there has not been sufficient dissemination of information or education to advance women's rights. Because CEDAW is the international bill of rights for women, it is important to discuss it, particularly through schools, and implement it throughout Liberia.

Women are more vulnerable than men and more often discriminated against due to sex, religion, or culture. CEDAW requires states to eliminate discrimination against women in enjoying all rights, whether civil, political, economic, or cultural. Because CEDAW protects women's legal status and equality before and under the law as a fundamental right, Liberia must ensure CEDAW's effectiveness not only through ratification but also implementation.

CEDAW also protects females' reproductive and sexual rights. CEDAW Recommendation 19 (1992) affirms that "gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on the basis of equality with men." Specifically, it noted "the right to equal protection according to humanitarian norms in time of international or internal armed conflict." With Liberia in transition from war to peace, implementation after ratification also could help prevent future conflict.

Because CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) both promote development of women and children, it is almost impossible to discuss one without the other. Women's and children's rights complement each other, with the CRC emphasizing girls' needs.

In general, Africa is male-dominated. A female child is regarded almost as a nonentity, and women are considered chattel. Though often protected by traditional laws or customs, such treatments are abuses in themselves. In many African societies, girls are not sent to school, and if they are, boys have priority for educational opportunities. CEDAW and the CRC try to protect against such discrimination. Today, several groups advocate and network for absolute protection of women's and children's rights in Liberia.

As the country moves toward the 21st century with a broad-based educational system, it is hoped that more emphasis will be placed on protecting human rights, with definite plans to promote more positively the well-being of women and children. ■

Juanita Jarrett is a private lawyer in Liberia and secretary-general of the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia.

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The Liberian Constitution and Other Human Rights and Democracy Issues

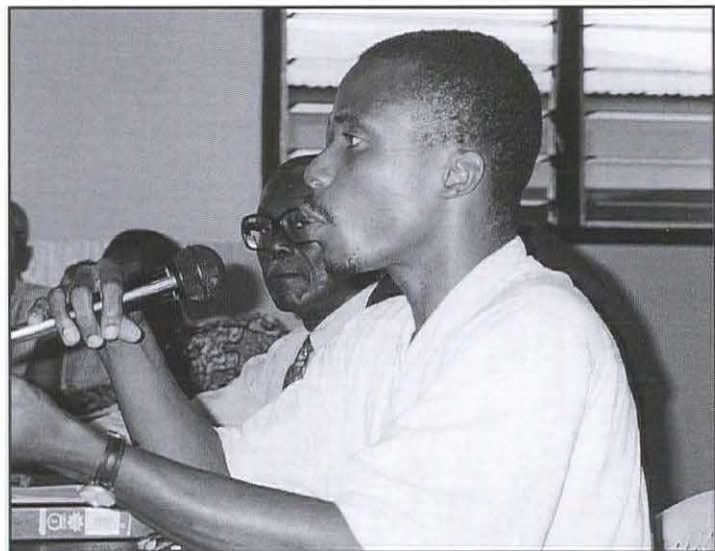
by Alphonso Nyenuh

The Liberian Constitution, like many other constitutions, is the organic law of the land. It is a landmark document in that it seeks to promote and guarantee democratic principles and human rights standards.

As a democratic instrument, the Liberian Constitution guarantees every citizen's right to participate fully in the country's affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives. It sets out an electoral system with universal suffrage—one person, one vote—which grants every Liberian age 18 or above the right to have a voice in choosing their leaders. The Constitution guarantees citizens' right to remove from office those leaders if they cease to fulfill people's aspirations. Citizens also have the right—and I think an obligation—to closely monitor and check their leaders' policies and actions.

Born out of Liberia's forefathers' deep conviction in respecting human rights, the Constitution contains a Bill of Rights, which guarantees several basic freedoms, the enjoyment of which gives meaning to democracy. The Bill includes the right to freely associate, assemble, and consultate on the common good. It also specifies the right to freedom of movement, speech, and a free and independent press. To ensure proper safeguarding of these rights, the Constitution provides for an independent judicial system.

The nation's design grew out of the bitter experiences of the founding fathers, who were denied their rights and freedom by slavery. Having suffered and bled in the bondage of servitude for



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Alphonso Nyenuh explains to workshop participants Liberia's democratic design.

many years, they made a commitment to found a country built on democratic principles and respect for human rights, where all would be free and equal, and liberties for all would be guaranteed.

Liberia has an almost perfect democratic design. It subscribes to the majority of democracy's rights, principles, and ideals—rule of the people; their right to determine their leaders; their right to remove from office those leaders if public safety and happiness so require; a free and independent press; and freedom of expression, association, movement, thought, conscience, and religion.

With this almost ideal framework, the question remains: Did we or do we now have a functioning democracy? For me, the answer is a resounding no!

The reason is simple; people do not know their rights and obligations, nor do they know how to make democracy function.

If democracy is defined as the rule of, by, and for the people, then the people must know how to ensure that they rule and how that rule can be for the general good.

If the masses are not conscious enough of the importance of participating in state affairs and running their communities; if they do not know their electoral choices are crucial to survival and progress; if they do not know their leaders are their employees, not their masters and all-powerful chiefs; if they are not prepared to make demands on leaders to perform; then democracy is doomed, and the society is in danger.

Such is and has been Liberia's situation since its founding. Even though the forefathers envisioned a democratic society where all would enjoy equal opportunity and public participation as well as universal freedom and justice, they soon became slave masters themselves, ruling as autocratic, dictatorial leaders.

For 133 years, what became known as the Americo-Liberian hegemony—composed of less than 5 percent of the population—presided over the country and its resources at the exclusion of most of the indigenous population. This was possible because most citizens were ignorant of their civic rights and responsibilities to ensure their government worked for and not against them. This ignorance resulted in a bloody military overthrow on April 12, 1980, by the Armed Forces of Liberia, led by then Master Sgt. Samuel Doe. The military promised a new day of justice, freedom, democracy, and equal opportunity. But, like their predecessors, they betrayed their vow. Ten years of violence by the hegemony led to a bloodbath from 1989-97, in which more than 200,000 people were killed. This also was made possible by public ignorance of rights and responsibilities.

Liberia's history has taught us that when people are not adequately informed of their rights and responsibilities, nor are inspired to insist on participating in running their state or to demand that their leaders perform, dictatorship and violence will thrive.

The Way Forward

To progress, we must implement a vigorous human rights and civic education program that creates an informed citizenry, adequately inspired to overcome apathy and take state affairs into their own hands. This citizenry also should insist on equal opportunities for all in political, economic, cultural, social, and other domains. Knowing this, Liberia's Justice and Peace Commission set in motion an education program targeted toward all sectors of society—literate, illiterate, young, old, rural, and urban.

To get our messages across, we at the Commission have used both formal and informal methods. As a trial, we are engaged in lectures in schools. The questions students ask and the experiences we gain from interacting with them will enrich any future program that develops human rights curricula.

Until fighting broke out in Monrovia in April 1996, we were involved in developing a curriculum to introduce human rights into Liberia's school system as a core subject. To do so, we collaborated with the Catholic education system's In-service Teachers Training Program. However, the fighting disrupted our efforts. Now, with the war over and the Catholic Polytechnic School opened, plans are being made to resume the program with the Teachers College of the Polytechnic.

Schools present ideal places for planting the seeds of democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. Educating young people is the best guarantee for a democratic, peaceful future. Former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali noted, "Since it is in the minds of human beings that wars are planned, it is in the minds of human beings that the seeds of peace must be planted at an early age." Early education presents an opportunity for forming the entire person and his/her approach to issues.

When we plant seeds for human rights in young minds, we lay pillars for a culture that respects human rights, freedom, and justice—the foundations of durable peace. We cannot talk about peace, unity, or development until we consider the things that bring about and sustain peace.

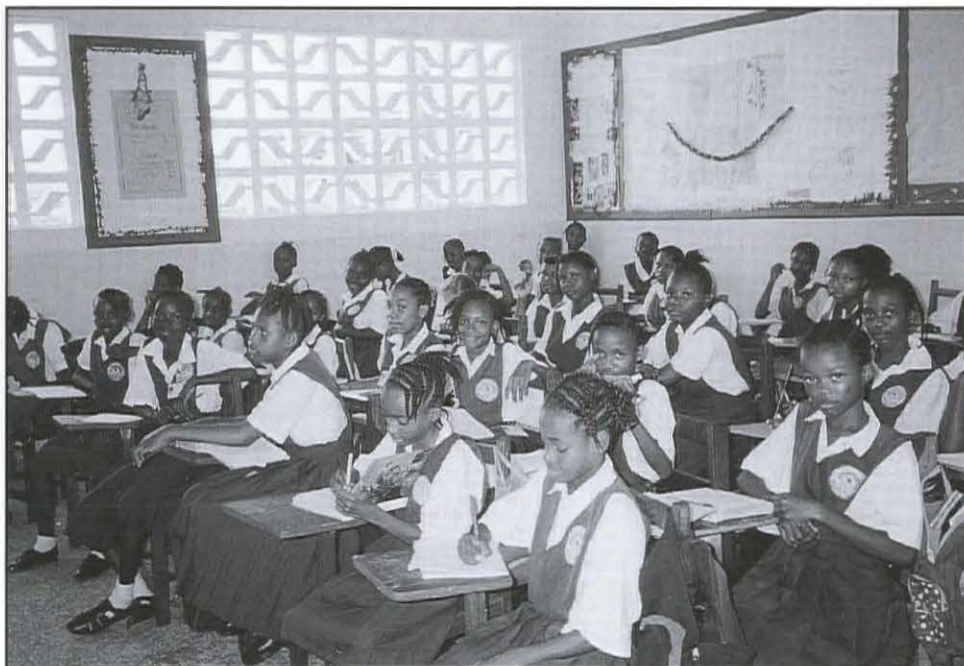
We should praise and support The Carter Center and its partners in their great task to promote human rights education (HRE), which to me is the most secure way toward a better future. The Liberian government must commit to this cause if it desires peace and development. Also, the Liberian human rights community should be a partner in this process. Human rights and pro-democracy nongovernmental organizations must help design and develop the curriculum for HRE in schools, for they have expertise in that area.

The curriculum's contents must be crafted to inform and inspire action. Without a component that emboldens people to rise above apathy, silence, and fear, and that leads them to action, information is meaningless. This conviction to act could lead to violence and more rights violations if

it is not inspired by the requisite education. This is indeed what education entails: giving people information that will lead them to act to better their lives and the lives of others.

Liberia recently emerged from war with the holding of elections. However, the peace and semblance of democracy currently enjoyed will not last without a human rights culture in which all are

seen in light of their human nature rather than social status. The country needs a society that recognizes all human beings as free, equal, and entitled to certain basic inalienable rights, and that knows respecting these rights is the basis of peace. ■



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Girls attend class at the Monrovia Catholic Elementary School. Such religious-based institutions exemplify the current educational system in postwar Liberia.

Alphonso Nyenuh is the information and education officer for the Justice and Peace Commission in Liberia.

The Liberian Constitution and Other Human Rights and Democracy Issues in Liberia

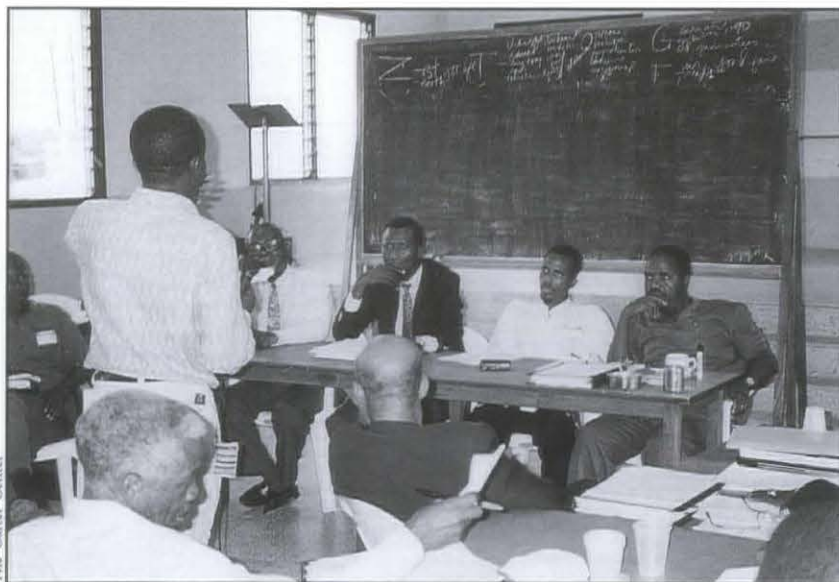
by Conmany Wesseh

The Carter Center and Liberia's Ministry of Education should be applauded for organizing this important and necessary consultation to design a national strategy to integrate human rights education (HRE) through the school system. Exploration of the Liberian Constitution, human rights, and democracy raises numerous issues regarding this strategy.

First, the Liberian Constitution of 1986, which replaced that of 1848, makes clear in its provisions the primacy of human rights—referred to as fundamental rights—in building a democracy and durable peace. The Constitution places the provisions of these rights only third to state structure (Chapter I) and the National Policy's General Principles (Chapter II). It reserves 16 articles for fundamental rights, second only to the chapter on the legislature.

Evidence exists throughout the Constitution that the drafters were influenced by Liberia's history of often violent conflicts, which resulted from lack of democracy and attendant gross human rights abuses. This history also told of widespread political exclusion and alienation, economic deprivation, educational inaccessibility and imbalances, and social injustices.

It was hoped that those to whom the document was bequeathed would read the signposts and strive honestly, diligently, and with commitment to "support, uphold, protect, and defend the Constitution and Laws of the Republic of Liberia, and bear true faith and allegiance to the Republic." Faithfully, consciously, and impartially, this person would discharge the duties and functions in whatever spheres of life to the best of his/her ability.



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Conmany Wesseh sits on a panel at the Liberian workshop with H.M. Sesay, professor at the University of Liberia. Here, a participant asks a question about the media's role in human rights.

Unfortunately, the Constitution soon after was put aside. This was the catalyst for a seven-year war, which erupted in December 1989 and formally ended on July 19, 1997, with a set of Special Elections.

Now, we assess how best to interpret and apply our country's experiences since 1822, when the first freed slaves landed on these shores to plant seeds for a modern state. Now known as Liberia, it became in 1847 the first independent republic in Africa and the second republic worldwide (after Haiti) composed of African descendents.

In this analysis, we cannot avoid raising to the fore the most tragic, violent, destructive, heinous, and divisive event in our history: the seven-year civil war. During this time, we saw the worst of man's inhumanity to man. We witnessed massive destruction of lives and property. As if that was not enough, in applying democracy to end the conflict, we voted into office those who had the most to answer for the war's excesses. Be that as it may, Liberians have accepted the electorate's verdict with hopes that the new government, inaugurated Aug. 2, 1997, will genuinely support, uphold, protect, and defend the Constitution and the laws of the land.

Today, 104 days after President Charles Taylor's inauguration, we still see grim reminders of the past. For example, mere lip service is given to the Constitution, especially noncommitment to fundamental human rights. Note in particular the act establishing the Liberian Human Rights Commission. It appears that the government passed the act to establish the Commission in name only, because international opinion—especially that of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter—extracted its establishment as a promise from President Taylor. In actuality, the act created a "toothless bulldog," a commission that investigates a human rights abuse only when instructed to do so can not be very serious. A commission whose work involves substantial reading and writing but whose members sometimes cannot read or write in the official language of business—English—must be regarded with suspicion.

Another terrible sign of what may come is the gruesome murders of opposition politician Samuel Dokie, his wife, sister, and stepson. The family was last seen in the hands of Liberian police and President Taylor's personal bodyguards on Nov. 28, 1997. To date, the investigation shows no hope of justice.

When creating a strategy for introducing HRE into our schools, we must bear in mind that a culture of impunity is taking root in favor of those who've committed abuses.

In the recent past, Liberia has done nothing to properly, accurately record developments. For instance, no proper accounts exist of the years when William V.S. Tubman reigned, especially the events of 1955 that led to opposition leaders' death or imprisonment and President Tubman's one-man rule for 27 unbroken years. Furthermore, the April 14, 1979, Rice Riots have yet to be investigated, and no records exist of the April 12, 1980, coup, the 1985 coup attempt, and others, all of which led to death and destruction. The seven-year war, the many massacres, the elections, the murders of opposition leader Dokie and others must be investigated, recorded, and published. It is such record keeping, information dissemination, and in some cases, prosecution of wrongdoings that will reduce or prevent human rights abuses and make HRE comprehensive and meaningful. Difficult as the task may be, HRE is not impossible. ■

Conmany Wesseh is executive director for the Center for Democratic Empowerment in Liberia.

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Human Rights Issues and The Liberian Commission on Human Rights

by Hall Badio

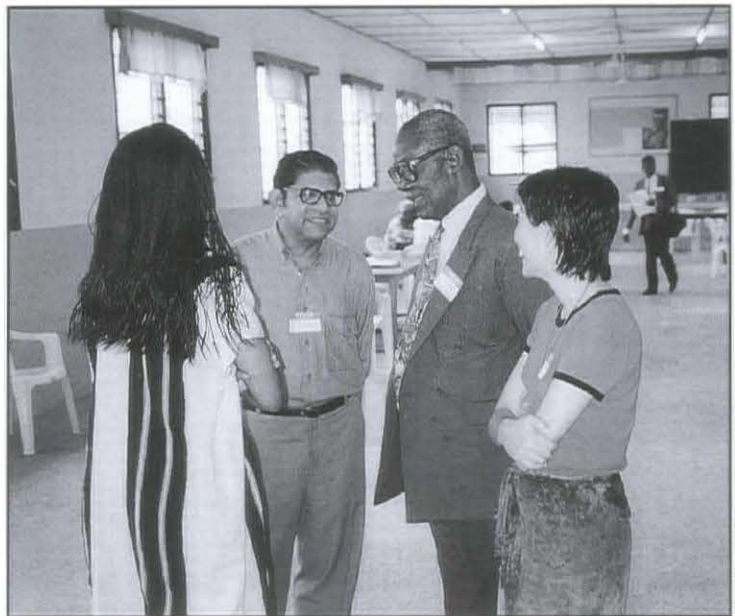
The enactment into law of the Liberian Commission on Human Rights reaffirms the Liberian government's faith in human dignity and the concept of defending and protecting all people's rights.

With roots in Liberia's founding, the history of human rights here is fascinating. Our forefathers declared in Article I, sections 1 and 3 of the 1847 Declaration of Rights "All men are born equally free and independent and have certain natural, inherent, and inalienable rights; among which, are the rights of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property and pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness."

The revised Liberian Constitution of 1986 states, "All persons, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, creed, place of origin, or political opinion, are entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual subject to such qualifications as provided for in this Constitution. All persons are equal before the law and are therefore entitled to the equal protection of the law."

These documents set common standards of achievement for all Liberians and all aliens within our borders. The Constitution's fundamental principles sought to increase and protect the right for life, inherent human dignity, and respect for rights of all people.

Liberia changed during the 1990-97 civil uprising. Although at one point the conflict became seriously agonizing, faction leaders decided to respect people's rights and unite efforts to induce harmony. Thus, reconciliation was born. The public well



(L to R) Ozong Agborsangaya, Clarence Dias, Hall Badio, and Felice Yeban chat between workshop sessions.

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recognized and welcomed the magnitude of the leaders' resolve. Already implicit in this reconciliation effort was the idea central to human rights, which the current administration continues to maintain—the concept of human dignity. Indeed, President Charles Taylor embraced the bill that the legislature presented to establish the Commission.

Human rights are the fundamental, basic freedoms inherent in all human beings. Every individual has a right to life and liberty as well as the freedom to choose, think, and move around peacefully. Therefore, the Liberian Constitution strictly prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, and political or other

opinion. It also prohibits restriction of thought and movement and discrimination against economic and cultural security.

Several small Liberian human rights organizations have united to reduce the wave of human rights violations, which I see as part of the great pattern of change of our times. These organizations' joint efforts will help this nation recognize that the fundamental unity of all people, based on justice, freedom, and love, remains the hallmark of true democracy.

The Liberian Commission on Human Rights

During the civil uprising, many human rights violations occurred, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances, assaults, and acts of vandalism. By 1997, such violations had been reduced.

In his August 1997 inaugural address, President Taylor advanced a vision of a new industrialized economy featuring great growth. He established an index of administrative reform, which sought to establish respect for human rights including nondiscrimination against sex, religion, color, race, language, political or other opinions, free speech, and freedom of movement.

President Taylor realized that Liberia remains beset with human rights violations. Given this context, he openly and publicly approved the legislature's human rights bill.

When the bill was approved, many asked whether the Commission was in fact needed. We in Liberian civil society believe the Commission is important and necessary. We need it to be a quasijudicial organ empowered to investigate or ascertain the existence of facts, hold hearings, and determine the basis for official action, either by the executive government or the courts. It also would be a constructive mechanism to help resolve disputes and human rights breaches.

The Commission is young, and we can learn from other similar bodies in Africa and abroad to strengthen ours and make it internationally acceptable. Because we sincerely believe human rights standards are grounded in a state's culture, we will endeavor to develop the concept of human dignity to maintain justice and protection of human rights in Liberian society. ■

Hall Badio is chair of the Liberian Commission on Human Rights.

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Human Rights Education in Asia

by Felice Yeban



Felice Yeban leads a workshop session on human rights education methodologies.

their own governments has yet to be won. In this context, educating for and about human rights becomes imperative.

HRE in Informal and Formal Sectors

HRE in Asia constitutes a range of activities from poster making to theater, radio programs, training, and classroom teaching.

Informal education takes place outside the school setting and is incorporated into citizens' daily routine as an entry point for teaching them about human rights. Villagers look to local news or rumors as sources of human rights issues and to community organizers as grassroots human rights educators.

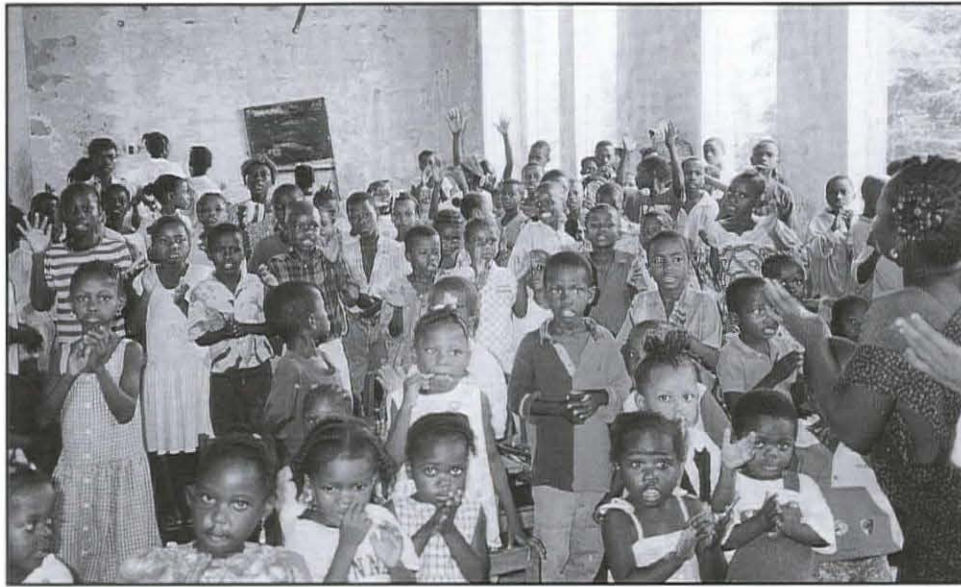
Formal HRE occurs in more structured settings of classes and conference rooms. Curricula integrate human rights concepts and values, which often are developed into training programs for people intending to study human rights more extensively.

Regional HRE practitioners and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly recognize HRE as one area where governments and NGOs can identify common and safe ground. NGOs also are realizing that to reach the most people in the least time, HRE efforts must be

Human rights education (HRE) is not a new phenomenon in Asia. However, it is difficult to accurately describe initiatives in the region because Asia is so vast and multicultural. The following offers an overview of ongoing efforts in South Asia, East Asia, Indochina, and Southeast Asia.

It is important to note these initiatives resulted from the region's socioeconomic/political dynamics. Asia is home to some of the world's most infamous totalitarian regimes and thriving democracies. Various applications of competing economic paradigms of protectionism and free trade complicate the present political current. Within this interplay of economics and politics, social forces cause a considerable portion—if not the majority—of the population to live in abject conditions, deprived of basic, fundamental human rights.

Asian peoples have fought many wars, but the battle against human rights violations committed by



The Carter Center

Elementary school students in Monrovia sing a Filipino freedom song. Participants in The Carter Center's workshops visited the school to see interactive human rights education methodologies in practice.

institutionalized. Schools are the most far-reaching and lasting institutions in this day and age. By standardizing HRE through the school system, efforts to teach people about rights can be sustained, because governments are now called on to provide resources needed to deliver HRE to everyone.

HRE as Issue- and Sector-Based

HRE is not based solely on teaching international human rights instruments. As stated earlier, HRE is determined by citizens' personal struggles against socioeconomic and political forces, which are unjust and oppressive. Thus, HRE contains the stories generated from the experiences of those forces' victims.

HRE can address general rights or specific rights of any sector. Therefore, it should educate indigenous peoples about ancestral domains, peasants about land rights, women about gender equality, youths about child rights, urban poor about housing, and workers about labor practices.

Every sector with legitimate human rights issues should be provided with relevant HRE programs,

because every human rights concern is legitimate HRE content. Indeed, in Asia, HRE has developed into an array of issue-based educational programs addressing concerns of every marginalized sector.

HRE's Nomenclatures

Depending on whether a supportive environment for HRE exists, the strategy for implementation takes on many forms and names. In several places in Asia, HRE is not controversial. For example, in the Philippines, teaching of human rights is constitutionally mandated. In Sri Lanka, a human rights teaching program began in 1983. In Japan, the government adopted an education policy stressing the importance of equality and nondiscrimination. India's and Cambodia's governments also support HRE.

In the above countries, HRE is as common as any educational program. However, when a government feels threatened by any mention of human rights, let alone educate its citizens about human rights, HRE takes on various other names such as citizenship education, gender education, values

education, peace education, AIDS education, and literacy education. In other words, in Asia, HRE is present in almost every educational program governments espouse.

The Question of Methodology

Human rights often is deemed a body of esoteric knowledge that must be learned by people to understand their rights, as enshrined in international instruments. With such a myopic and elitist orientation, HRE becomes positivistic or legalistic. Educators frequently use the "banking" methodology, where human rights are reduced to technical knowledge, and lecture prevails. Because of this, human rights educators have, in some circles, become synonymous with lawyers.

The growing trend in Asia is to veer away from this traditional, elitist approach. Demand increases for experiential, interactive methodologies such as games, simulation activities, poetry, film, jokes, song, and dance. These tools draw on people's experiences, so knowledge is continuously reinvented as different strategies for teaching human rights.

Indeed, human rights pedagogy has witnessed a paradigm shift. Instead of international instruments merely being deposited into people's minds, students' experiences are drawn out and analyzed as human rights issues. In this pedagogy, people's experiences provide the human rights language so that the educational process takes off from people's lives, not from standardized documents.

Subregional Initiatives

■ **South Asia:** Governments in this subregion have been deemed supportive of HRE. However, their support has not been transmitted into official inclusion of HRE in curricula. However, NGOs have amassed vast experience doing HRE and other educational work for the grassroots sector. South Asia has strength in its considerable level of production of human rights materials and its experience in training police and security forces.

■ **Indochina:** Cambodian NGOs deserve commendation in this region. For example,

ADHOC trains police in human rights. Also, international government organizations infuse human rights in their literacy and gender programs. Of particular interest is Cambodia's electoral/voters educational programs, which are used as entry points for HRE.

Little is being done in Vietnam and Laos, due to their governments' attitude toward HRE and a lack of trainers experienced in Freirian pedagogy¹.

■ **North Asia:** Amnesty International has an HRE program in Mongolia. However, for the most part, HRE programs are based in the formal sector and have not been fully developed yet.

■ **East Asia:** In Japan and Korea, HRE programs are mostly based in schools. There is a problem of methodology, which is mostly traditional, but efforts are under way to create an experiential approach.

■ **Southeast Asia:** The Philippines has the most developed HRE program. Filipino HRE trainers have started sharing their pedagogy in the subregion, and HRE is becoming institutionalized via the school system and training of police and security forces. Thailand is strong in training border police in cross-border human rights, and Malaysia has some HRE experience. However, due to political tensions, restrictions have slowed many of their efforts. Thus, national human rights institutions have taken on some of the workload.

Asia needs a comprehensive inventory of who is doing what and how. Many HRE resources are being produced in the region, but no effective mechanism exists to facilitate their flow. Asia also has a dearth of trainers, but due to funding agencies' reprioritizing, it is difficult to organize them.

HRE Trends

Asia has witnessed several regional trends. First, HRE is being institutionalized in the school system, governments are more open, and NGOs seem more willing to work with governments on this issue.

Second, NGOs more frequently have access to government funds, thereby deloading HRE responsibility on governments' shoulders. Seemingly, Asian governments have been more accepting of this initiative.

Third, education is increasing for strategic government agencies such as the police, military, Foreign Affairs Office, and Civil Service. Issues surrounding migrant workers, children, and women probably set the pace for this trend.

Fourth, because conflicting groups more willingly find common ground via human rights, HRE more often is serving as a venue to dialogue on cultural relativism and human rights' universality.

Finally, resource sharing continues to rise, as more HRE practitioners exchange experiences regionwide.

Because of the above reasons, Asia is ripe for an HRE network, with the intent of creating a genuine Asian HRE Institute. This indicates that the region has amassed considerable HRE experience and infrastructures enabling countries to look outward and share. Indeed, the region is beginning to assert its own brand of HRE vis-à-vis Western experience.

The Role of Regional HRE Organizations

Regional HRE networking has three main players. HURIGHTS-Osaka focuses on HRE in the school system. Asia Forum-Bangkok has set up an Asian Human Rights Training Institute of NGO workers as well as the Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education (ARRC)-Bangkok, which serves as a clearinghouse for human and material resources. AARC deals with pedagogy and methodology and works to develop a pool of regional human rights trainers as well as a compilation of materials produced there.

HRE Needs

Asian HRE practitioners have identified the following as priority needs:

- Regional inventory of HRE initiatives.
- Compilation and directory of regional human rights resources and materials.
- Training of a pool of trainers in each country both for formal and nonformal HRE.
- Establishment of an Asian Human Rights Training Institute.

Final Thoughts

Although 1998 marks the third year of the U.N. Decade for HRE, nothing substantial has been done from the top. Still, much is happening on the ground toward fulfilling these U.N. objectives. Needs have been identified, but efforts more often get deflected, depending on funding agencies' priorities. HRE should not merely receive lip service; it is a universal right.

National efforts now can take off, due to access to government funds, but regional HRE work will depend on funding. HRE work in Asia has taken a defined shape. It is now a matter of pushing it further. However, I wonder (and worry) if the politics of the purse will not get in the way. ■

Felice Yeban, coordinator of the Peace and Human Rights Unit of the Philippine Normal University in Manila, is a human rights educator and faculty member in the University's Department of Social Science.

Endnotes

¹ Pablo Freire, a Brazilian educationalist, wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), which greatly impacted informal education. He believed in liberatory education, which derives from collegiality and uses a dialogical process to achieve a mutually supportive environment between teachers and students. Freirian philosophy asserts that social change is achieved by unity and that strength is in numbers.

Human Rights Education for Citizenship: The Case of Guyana

by Merle Mendonca

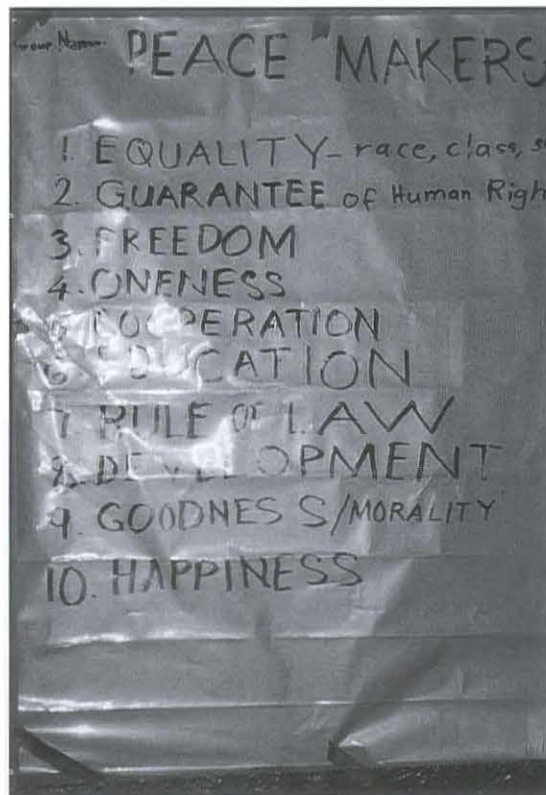
Human Rights Education (HRE) for Citizenship, the Guyanese program targeting the school system, was launched in 1993, a significant year for HRE worldwide. That year, the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization adopted its World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy. In addition, the United Nations held its World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, and its General Assembly endorsed the launching of the Decade for HRE.

The Guyanese program had the following objectives over a three-year cycle:

- 1) Devise a human rights curriculum.
- 2) Produce curriculum materials.
- 3) Train instructors to teach the program.

The ultimate goal is to incorporate HRE for Citizenship as a core subject in the national curriculum.

The program was crafted during three cycles of national workshops, each followed by a period to test materials. The first two workshops introduced



In one workshop activity, working groups generated lists of the 10 rights they valued most. This group's list gives top priority to equality of race, class, and sex.

some 55 teachers and administrators of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Cultural Development to the major human rights documents around which course work would be structured, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In addition to local teachers, curriculum development specialists from four Caribbean territories—Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago—also attended the first workshop. HRE specialists from the United States and Ethiopia served as resources for all workshops. A curriculum expert from the Trinidad and Tobago MOE attended the workshops and continues to follow the process closely.

The third workshop in August 1995 integrated the program's goals with existing primary-level and early secondary-level curriculum objectives as well as with those of the Family Life Education syllabus to ensure no duplication.

A task force of teachers and MOE officials, established at the end of the third workshop, began finalizing production of curriculum materials. To do

so, the group determined objectives of subtopics within each theme and wrote sample lessons. At its first meeting, the Task Force began developing a campaign to sensitize parents and the public about HRE.

The Task Force's draft text was tested in some 60 schools in Guyana's 10 regions from May 1996-January 1997. In addition, some nongovernmental organizations working with children, relevant government agencies, and PTAs tried the module. Approximately 65 percent of schools returned the evaluation form developed by the Task Force.

The program and its subsequent training manual, *Education for Citizenship*, resulted from a unique collaboration between Guyana's MOE, Amnesty International (AI)-Guyana, and the Guyana Human Rights Association. Following a grant from Save The Children-United Kingdom to fund the first workshop and supply materials, the program was sustained financially by AI's Norwegian Section of Teaching for Freedom. On a designated day, all Norwegian school children participate in Operation A Day's Work, in which they do chores to raise money. Funds are then accumulated nationally and designated for particular uses. In 1991, the Norwegian Section donated its proceeds to AI for its worldwide HRE program. This funding source—from children's efforts for other children's benefit—is particularly appropriate for the HRE endeavor. ■

Merle Mendonca is the coordinator of Human Rights Education for Citizenship in Guyana and works for the Guyana Human Rights Association.

Acknowledgments

The Task Force of teachers and MOE personnel includes Juliet Alexander, Catherine Archer, Sybil Blackman, Radika Boodram, Rita Brouet, Claire December, Ahwadram Kaulesar, and Grace Trotman.

Members of the Coordinating Team include Donna Chapman; Greta Welch, National Center for Educational Research and Development; Alim Hosein, AI-Guyana; and Merle Mendonca, Guyana Human Rights Association.

We also significantly relied on the work of:

The Whole Child Series-Save the Children and UNICEF-United Kingdom.

First Steps-International Secretariat AI.

Human Rights for All-South African Lawyers for Human Rights.

David Shiman. *Teaching Human Rights and The Prejudice Book.*

Betty Reardon. *Education for Human Dignity.*

Materials on Child Abuse-The Jamaican Social Studies Curriculum Unit.

Materials from Defense for Children International, Guyana Human Rights Association, and the Caribbean Initiative on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

Understanding Liberia's Educational System

by Jacob Tarlowoh

Liberia's educational system had passed the embryonic stage before our country's unfortunate civil crises. Now, we are merely holding together the shreds that remain. Our predecessors carved out an internationally laudable system, emphasizing our country's specific developmental background and heritage. The Liberian educational system was desperately forging toward a uniform subregional standard for all 13 counties, all of which had schools and other institutions of learning.

We in Liberia's ministries strove for adequate human resources, education for all, effective curricula for required needs, suitable instructional materials, and adequate training of personnel to implement our policies. Before the war, the Ministry of Education (MOE) had a relatively large number of qualified, competent staff in diverse areas. All educational policies emanated from the MOE, resulting in a central type of administration. Furthermore, curricula were uniform, and instructional

materials and practices were designed the same for all public and mission schools, with a standard evaluation of student learning and stratification. These policies were consistent with national educational goals and philosophies.

Prewar Educational Structure

The MOE has been responsible for education and training since Liberia's independence in 1847. At the same time, private groups and religious institutions have participated in educational endeavors with partial support through government subsidies and grants. Liberia's educational structure was composed of primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, following the "6-3-3-4" system.

Upon completion of the sixth grade, students were eligible to enter junior high, consisting of grades seven through nine. At the end of ninth grade, students took a national exam. Those who passed could move on to senior high, comprising grades 10 through 12. A second national exam was administered at the end of grade 12. The combination of scores from this second exam and 12th-grade coursework determined a student's graduation eligibility.

Before the war, Liberia had two state institutes of higher education—the University of Liberia, founded in 1862, and the



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Jacob Tarlowoh goes over his presentation with Ozong Agborsangaya.

W.V.S. Tubman College of Technology, founded in the early 1960s. There were several private/church-operated colleges/seminaries, the most notable being Cuttington University College, founded in 1889. Several other junior/community colleges also were church-run. The minister of education used to serve as a voting member on some of the colleges' boards of trustees, or as a member ex-officio. In addition, two postsecondary institutions under MOE management prepared teachers for primary and secondary schools. These admitted students with high school graduate certificates.

Special institutions provided vocational/technical education, primarily to teach entry-level industrial skills. These programs trained people between age 15 and 35 with a minimum of sixth-grade and above education.

Prewar Educational Planning and Implementation

The MOE's Department of Planning and Development was responsible for the design and direction of educational development in Liberia. It drafted a long-range plan in 1978 to serve as the conceptual basis for the country's many educational projects. Later, attempts were made to consolidate earlier planning activities, encourage expanded professional participation in educational planning, and provide fora for discussing and planning Liberian education. These efforts took several forms including national education conferences. A major planning document was produced at one such conference in 1984 titled *Toward the 21st Century—Development-Oriented Policies and Activities in the Liberian Education System* (Gongar, et al.).

The Department of Planning and Development ensured analysis and evaluation of government subsidies to nonpublic schools to design more equitable distribution of government funds.

The MOE supervised the plan's implementation. The country was divided into three regions (for administrative convenience), which were further sectioned into counties and districts. Education officers were responsible for implementing national policies at all levels. At the MOE's central office, several divisions accommodated special programs,

for which donor funds were made available regardless of existing units.

Immediate Postwar Experiences

The present chaotic, makeshift state of Liberia's educational system may in part be attributed to the civil crisis. However, prewar efforts described above also had some weaknesses including:

■ **Lack of centralized planning and management:** The concept of centralization may not altogether have been at fault. The system was run with insufficient means of communication, which resulted in a poor data base. The situation worsened with poor management of available records.

■ **Scattered and uneven distribution of schools:** As expected, the capital city of Monrovia had the highest density of schools, followed by other urban areas. Smaller communities were poorly catered to, and students sometimes had to travel long distances in search of education. This occurred because some schools, particularly those in rural areas, were substandard and managed by unqualified agents.

■ **Partially developed curriculum with insufficient facilities:** Many efforts strove to develop curricula in numerous areas, but not toward a complete curriculum for higher education. Liberia has never had a higher educational system in terms of a planned, structured pyramid, with junior/community colleges at the base, colleges/polytechnic institutes in the middle, and a university at the apex. In such a system, all schools would operate under a national body, such as a commission of higher education, with clearly defined divisions of labor for each level and institutions within levels.

Other key weaknesses included insufficient buildings, inadequate equipment, books, and other supplies. Consequently, delivery of educational packages designed and planned at the central office frequently was unsuccessful. Where equipment and general supplies were feasible, there often were problems of insufficient manpower. Also, many personnel were resistant to work in rural areas.



The Carter Center

Desmond Parker, a U.N. human rights officer (fifth from right), and Viama Blama, special assistant to the minister of education (sixth from right), observe a working group on incorporating human rights into Liberia's educational system.

■ **Inadequate training and supervision of poorly paid teachers:** Teachers were not adequately compensated. It appears to be a worldwide problem that when trained, qualified teachers are not available, programs are designed to orientate those available to fill the positions. Such programs generally need periodical review for better and long-lasting results, but funds in Liberia were hardly available to do so.

Furthermore, the centrally designed system required effective supervision to achieve desired results, but communication problems often posed the main hazard.

■ **Quasi-inexistent provisions for preservice technical education at basic education levels:** Technical education was in development before the war, and emphasis on vocational education was increasing. This may be accounted for by what was most desperately needed; vocational graduates were preferred in the job market over technocrats.

The Present Situation

While these weaknesses have been reported and were generally known, most efforts to come to grips with the situation failed. Instead of assistance for teachers at the school and grassroots level, the limited funds made available usually were diverted toward promoting central services in Monrovia.

The deplorable situation in which the basic educational system found itself prior to the civil war, with persistent inequalities resulting in high illiteracy rates, was one of the underlying factors of the war's outbreak.

The Reconstruction Program

The reconstruction program is a joint effort by a broad spectrum of Liberian education professionals and with help from the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the U.N. Development Program. By the time the program was in design, public education already had been suspended for more than five years in practically every part of Liberia. However, education never came to a complete halt. In particular, private schools continued operating in more-or-less secure, often urban environments.

Several national and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and associations made appreciable, ongoing efforts in this area. These included the Catholic Education Secretariat, as sustained by international NGOs such as the Lutheran World Service, the Adventist Relief Agency, the World Food Program, UNICEF, and UNESCO. This assistance to the education and training sector, including The Carter Center's workshop, helped pave the way to the reconstruction program, spearheaded by UNESCO.

Key Features and Benefits Envisaged

■ Significant improvement in the “school map” through classification of basic educational institutions into primary schools (formal education) and learning centers (nonformal education).

■ Significant change in education by introducing nationwide core curricula and complementary curricula for local adaptation.

■ Significant change in the teaching profession, which would be liberalized. Under negotiated contracts, teachers would arrange their services with local school boards. Government “salaries” would become “complementary incentives,” while the central MOE would intervene to adjust inadequacies for uniformity at the national level.

■ Significant change in the structure and running of government services by streamlining the MOE, strengthening County Education Offices (CEOs), and improving planning and administrative services.

■ Creation of 13 County Education and Training Councils (CETCs) and one National Education and Training Council (NETC) to mobilize the community, indicate ways and means, and propose adaptations required for reconstruction to be possible.

The program foresees early reintegration of former combatants and war victims in the regular educational system, rather than creating special programs. This participation in normal school life will be made possible by the proposed complementary curricula in schools and learning centers.

The program’s principal components would be executed through soon-to-be-created local school management boards, professional associations, and NGOs involved in education and training. Strengthened CEOs and a streamlined MOE will provide support and backstop services.

The reconstruction has been costed at several millions of U.S. dollars. Fifty-seven percent of this

budget would go toward rehabilitating physical facilities; 18 percent toward school books, educational materials, and supplies; 18 percent toward institutional reforms and capacity building; 7 percent toward unforeseen circumstances and running a monitoring program; and 1 percent toward special programs for women and girls.

The monitoring program will be entrusted to an MOE-created Project Implementation Unit (PIU). It will fall under the minister of education’s direct responsibility and will be supported by the CETCs and the NETC. UNESCO technical assistance to the PIU also is being solicited.

In quantitative terms, approximately 775 elementary schools will dispense primary education to some 225,000 students by 5,500 teachers. About 1,100 learning centers will teach nonformal basic education to some 5,500 school-age students and 40,000 adults, with 2,200 teachers. Approximately 40 general junior high schools will cater to 21,600 students with 720 teachers, and 20 technical junior high schools with about 7,200 students will have 480 teachers. There shall be two primary school teacher training institutions with about 720 students and 40 teachers. Finally, MOE employees will be scaled down to 160 staff members at the central level and 220 staff members at the county level.

In qualitative terms, the program will address:

- 1) Efficiency of administrative services at the MOE and CEO levels.
- 2) Promotion of access to education services nationwide.
- 3) Pertinence of educational programs to local realities and the reconstruction context, which includes specific requirements for former child soldiers, the traumatized, etc.

Transverse objectives seek to improve:

- 1) Consultative mechanisms between the educational system and general society.
- 2) Empowerment of local communities and associations.
- 3) Improvement of nongovernmental structures in the running of schools and learning centers.

4) Promotion of girls and women in educational programs and development.

5) Involvement of the media in education.

The program will address only selected, incremental objectives and first-priority activities. Most overhead costs, including partial recovery of the MOE's and CEOs' running costs, would at first have to be financed through some kind of direct taxation of local communities on products and effective benefits obtained at implementation levels. Outside help also would be indispensable in making the program work.

Liberia's reconstruction uses a bottom-to-top approach. It aims to motivate grassroots participation and generate spontaneous action toward attainment of the above objectives. Private initiatives not falling within the objectives would not be hindered, but the program also would not support their development.

Progressive implementation of the program is thought to be the best route to obtain an equilibrated deal. Broad consensus will be required, and strategies will have to be regularly adapted to accommodate changing realities. It is at this level that the NETC and the CETCs will advise. Extension of activities should be considered only after three operational years, when immediate objectives are partly completed and basic education and training facilities have been restored to all counties.

Civic and Human Rights Education

During the war and immediately after, some efforts were made to develop and include civic education in Liberia's schools. At a 1996 symposium at the former St. Patrick's High School, participants called for immediate revision of the national school curriculum and textbooks in light of current educational issues. Specifically, they recommended including gender balance, child rights, and peace education. Indeed, in the subsequent revision of materials, these calls were heeded.

Civic and human rights education were promoted in other ways too. For instance, local drama groups acted out playlets highlighting crucial mes-

sages about human rights. A few NGOs, such as Save the Children in conjunction with the MOE, added their voices by producing simple comics/cartoons, which were tested in select schools.

UNICEF must be particularly commended for its workshops to promote civic and human rights education.

Liberia's curriculum has potential to be expanded to include human rights education. The Bureau of Curriculum Development and Textbook Research is committed to ensuring realization of this important goal. ■

Jacob Tarlowoh is assistant minister of Curriculum, Textbooks, and Research in Liberia.

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Appendix I
THE
CARTER CENTER



September 19, 1997

Dear Mr. Jacob A.L. Tarlowah:

This letter is to follow up on discussions between Ambassador Gordon Strueb, Director of Programs for The Carter Center and Evelyn Kandaki, Minister of Education on a potential human rights education training project. I hope she passed on to you a copy of our publication 'Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship: The Ethiopia Experience' about our initiative with Ethiopia's Ministry of Education on human rights and democracy education.

The Minister expressed interest in our organizing a human rights education workshop for individuals from various parts of the education infrastructure and asked that we follow-up with you. The objective of such training would be to familiarize participants with international human rights standards and principles, as well as those contained in national and regional documents and how they apply in the Liberian context. We would also explore how human rights education could be incorporated into schools through the curricula.

I look forward to working with you on this important initiative. My direct phone number at The Carter Center is 404 420 3808.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ozong Agbesangaya'.

Ozong Agbesangaya
Program Coordinator, Democracy Program

Mr. Jacob A.L. Tarlowah
Assistant Minister for Curriculum
Monrovia, Liberia



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MONROVIA, LIBERIA



October 4, 1997

The Program Coordinator
Democracy Program
Carter Center
One Copenhill
453 Freedom Parkway
Atlanta, Georgia
30307
U. S. A.

Dear Ozong Agborsangaya:

Greetings to you and staff of the Democracy Program from our Liberian Ministry of Education family. Your letter of September 19, 1997 is hereby acknowledged, and we are pleased to inform you of our warm desire to cooperate with your proposal to do some work in Civic Education for our schools.

As you may know, the philosophical foundations of the Liberian Education system and practices are embedded in international democratic principles. The Civic Education aspect of training of our students however, needs quite a bit of development, and we shall appreciate your contribution in this area particularly. Specifically, therefore, we would like to submit the following as recommended areas from which our cooperation may start:

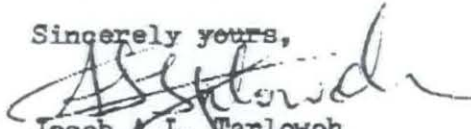
- a) Curriculum development in Human Rights
- b) Short-range Teacher Orientations in Human Rights Education
- c) Literature and Library development on Human Rights Education

We have a special Bureau at our Ministry for Curriculum and Text-books Research that will be happy to work closely with you whenever you are ready.

Kindly react to the above and let us know your plan.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,


Jacob A.L. Tarlowoh
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
& TEXTBOOK RESEARCH

Appendix 2

DAILY TIMES

MONDAY DECEMBER 15, 1997

Carter Center/MOE Consultation Starts Today

The Carter Center and the Ministry of Education (MOE) will today begin a two-day consultation to explore ways to incorporate Human Rights Education into the Liberian school system.

According to Ozong Agborsangaya, Coordinator of the Carter Center's Democracy Program, "The objective of this consultation is for Liberians from all sectors of society to work together to generate a strategy for integration of human rights education into the school system," said a Carter Center release last Friday.

Mr. Jacob Tarlowoh, Assistant Minister for Curriculum, Textbooks and Textbook Research, said, "It is the considered view of the Ministry of Education that we must teach the tenets of human rights in our schools to breed the kind of society for Liberia in the future."

Attending the consultation will be officials of the Ministry of Education, teachers from teacher training institutes and colleges, elementary school

teachers, secondary school social studies teachers, and representatives of civic organizations and human



JIMMY CARTER

rights groups.

Participants will attempt to identify best practices in human rights education by reviewing the experiences of teachers in the Philippines, Ethiopia, South Africa, Guyana and other countries who have struggled in recent years to institutionalize human rights during democratic transitions. They will also review key international human rights conventions and standards.

Guest speakers will

include Dr. Evelyn Kandakai, Minister of Education; Jacob Tarlowoh, Assistant Minister for Curriculum & Textbook Research; Felicia Yeban, a professor at Philippines Normal University; Clarence Dias, Director of International Law and Development; Atty. Kofi Woods, Executive Director, Justice and Peace Commission; Cllr. Bebedict Sannoh, Executive Director, Center for Law and Human Rights Education; Cllr. Hall Badio, Chairman, National Human Rights Commission; Attorney Juanita Jarret of the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia, and James Torh of Forerunners of Children's Rights (FOCUS).

According to the release, the Press is welcome to attend the closing plenary session of the consultation on Wednesday at 3:30 p.m., during which participants will summarize their consultation of findings and discussions.

DAILY TIMES

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 17, 1997

WORKSHOP

Carter Center and the
Ministry of Education for
bringing to the attention



OZONG'AGBORSANGAYA (L) CHATTING WITH JPC'S KOFI WOODS

of Liberians that human
rights should not only be
taught at university level,

but can begin at the
elementary level.

He said in any good

society, human rights
education is important in
order to ensure that no
one infringes on the
rights of others and
maintain an atmosphere
free of violence.

In a related, Mr.
Nyenor disclosed that the
Bishop of the Catholic

Archdiocese of
Monrovia, Michael K.
Francis, has mandated
Catholic schools
throughout the country to
include human rights
education in their
curricula beginning next
year; REPORTS TOGBA
TUWRAY.

The **NEWS**

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H'Rights Commission May Be Ineffective -Chairman Badio Admits Flaws

By: *W. Eric Davis*

By: *W. Eric Davis*

The Hall W. Badio chaired National Rights Commission which members were recently singlehandedly appointed by President Charles Ghankay Taylor to look into complaints of human rights abuses, may find it difficult to be as effective, *The NEWS* has learnt.

Already, several prominent citizens including the chairman of the Commission Cllr. Hall W. Badio, a seasoned lawyer and devout Christian, have expressed their reservations over the shadowy manner in which the act to establish the NHRC was drawn up and the public outcries which characterized the signing into law of the controversial document.

Cllr. Badio, at a recent three-day consultation on a National Strategy for Human Rights Education, sponsored by the Carter Center in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, declared that he's aware of the many flaws associated with the drawing up of the act and the wide spread public appeals to the president for the suspension of the signing of the act until it could be publicly deliberated on. President Taylor, inspite of several appeals from the people, went ahead and signed the instrument after a clever speech that was actually far from the reality and the expectations of the people.

Speaking further at the workshop on the topic "Liberian constitution and other Human Rights and Democracy Issues" in Liberia, the NHRC Chairman probably in an attempt to allay the fears and lack of interest in the commission on the part of the confused public, promised that his organization be effective and that it will seek to work in the overall interest of the Liberian people and therefore will not allow itself to be manipulated by any one individual or groups and even government.

But investigation conducted by *The NEWS* reveal that all members of the Commission who were appointed by the Liberian Chief Executive have not received their letters of appointment to further authenticate their noble national assignment and in fact they were not consulted prior to their appointment which was only published in the press.

Our investigation also gathered that since its constitution in last October by the President, the Commission has not been able to make its existence known, as to date it has not been officially inducted into office and further more, the chairman of the Commission is finding it rather difficult to solicit the active participation of some of his fellow commissioners.

Up till now we also learnt, the NHRC is still in the process of obtaining an office space and the acquiring of office equipments such as computers and furniture. The commission doesn't even have a single vehicle, a source close to confided in us. "Even now, the Papy (meaning the Commission's Chairman) is whole day begging the American and EEC people to help" our source said.

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Founded in 1982 by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter in partnership with Emory University, the nonprofit Center undertakes action-oriented programs in cooperation with world leaders and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In this way, the Center has touched the lives of people in more than 65 countries.

The Center's programs are directed by resident experts or fellows, some of whom teach at Emory University. They design and implement activities in cooperation with President and Mrs. Carter, networks of world leaders, other NGOs, and partners in the United States and abroad. Private donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and others support the Center's work.

The Center is located in a 35-acre park two miles east of downtown Atlanta. Four interconnected pavilions house offices for the former president and first lady and most of the Center's program staff. The complex includes the nondenominational Cecil B. Day Chapel, other conference facilities, and administrative offices. The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum, which adjoin The Carter Center, are owned and operated by the National Archives and Records Administration of the federal government and are open to the public. The Center and Library facilities are known collectively as The Carter Presidential Center.

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Paul Drigman

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