

# **SOCIAL ISSUES TEACHING KITS**

## **HUMAN AND CHILD RIGHTS**



Africa  
Educational  
Trust

50 Years Creating Opportunities  
Through Education

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## SUB-TOPIC 1: HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity. They are the rights that a person has simply because he or she is human. Human rights are held by all persons equally, everywhere and forever. They are “rights” because they are things you are allowed to be, to do or to have. They are there for your protection against people who might want to harm or hurt you. They are also there to help us get along with each other and live in peace. To advocate for human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected.

Human rights are based on the common needs of all human beings. Most of these needs are essential to stay alive. Examples of these needs include food, shelter, family, health care, personal security, freedom from torture and slavery. However people have rights to more than survival. Human rights include the things all people need to live in dignity and to develop their potential, such as education, access to fair laws and justice, freedom of speech, freedom from degrading treatment. Human beings are also entitled to have rest and leisure, freedom of thought, expression and choice of religion, and participation in government and society at large.



A person’s rights and needs are different from their ‘wants’. Wants are generally not necessary for survival, growth, development, respect and dignity.

Human rights are instinctively recognized by communities as deeply important. That is why ordinary people across South Sudan want to live in peace. Peace is like the rain. It waters your human rights and they grow like a tree and then everyone can harvest the fruit: justice, education, well-being, food, health. We are born with human rights. We should learn them, know them, and teach others.

## **SUB-TOPIC 2: BEGINNING OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Recognition of human rights has existed in varying forms through the ages of human kind. Human rights can be traced back in most of our cultures and traditions, and also in holy books like the Bible and the Koran. Examples of these include respect of human dignity and support to the poor which is included in both Christian and Muslim laws.

In December 1948 the United Nations (UN) proclaimed the document of human rights "the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (UDHR) which has as its core values non-discrimination, equality, fairness and universality. It was developed by the UN as a response to the bad experiences of people during World War II, as well as the poverty experienced by much of the world's population including the Sudanese.

During the war many people were killed, many were faced with hunger and starvation, and millions of people including children were dying of diseases. There was not much protection given to people against these abuses of their human rights. These were some of the reasons the UN adopted the principles on human rights in order to stop such problems facing human beings. The UDHR is there to protect everyone, to provide freedom from fear, and freedom from want.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was President of the United States from 1933 to 1945 believed these rights needed to be written down for everyone all over the world. She said:

*"Where, after all, do Universal Rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."*

## SUB-TOPIC 3: RESPONSIBILITIES



Human rights come with responsibilities. If we want other people to treat us well, and respect our human rights, we also have a responsibility to respect their rights. So human rights cannot be separated from the responsibilities of both individuals and authorities. As individuals we have to realise that our actions affect other people too. Human rights are universal, which means that we should inherently have access to them, they are not given to us by someone and they do not come from authorities. However authorities, for example, the police and government, are also responsible for ensuring that people's rights are respected. Authorities should not prevent people from accessing their rights.

When authorities fail to meet their responsibilities for human rights, people must hold them accountable. The UDHR sets the standard of achievement for all nations and all people, a list of which can be found later.

When we claim our rights, we must also acknowledge the rights of others and accept the responsibility of not only respecting their rights but also supporting and defending people whose rights are abused or denied. The whole of society has a responsibility to respect human rights.

Government institutions as well as local and international organizations all have the same responsibility in ensuring and protecting human rights.

There are several practices in South Sudan that are promoting human rights in society. For example there is new legislation which advocates for seats for women in Parliament; there is human rights training being provided for the police and other security agencies; senior state officials are talking about the importance of human rights; and the Southern Sudan Human Rights Commission has been established.

When there are incidents of violence in the community, and reconciliation is promoted, everyone involved in the conflict must participate in the reconciliation processes in the interests of peace and for the greater good of the community.

Human rights are entitlements; something that everyone is born with, they are a two-way street, and hence the emphasis on the individual's duties. That is why all traditional justice is restorative, because it aims to restore the person who was wronged as closely as possible to the position they were in before the unjust act was committed. For example, someone who has had their cattle stolen should have it replaced when the criminal is being brought to justice.



## **SUB-TOPIC 4: ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

There are different types of human rights abuses and there are different causes. Behaviours which create injustice do not promote human rights. Similarly those which create fighting and cause people to lose their lives, homes and property do not promote human rights. Everyone has a right to education but sometimes children do not go to school because their parents cannot afford to pay the school fees. Sometimes an innocent person is arrested and detained by the police because the police cannot find the actual person who committed a crime. Sometimes a person who is in detention is tortured and they suffer terribly.

Some human rights abuses take place at home. For example, because a man may hit or abuse his wife because he is angry, has difficulties at work or there is not enough money to look after the family. A mother, father or another relative or adult may hit a child and hurt them and make them cry. No adult would like to be treated in this way. Human rights abuses can also take place at school and frequently do, teachers may hit and hurt students and male teachers may physically abuse or rape female students.

### **Discussion**

1. What practices do you see that are promoting human rights in your society?
2. What practices do you see that are promoting human rights in your school?
3. What practices do you see that are demoting human rights in your society?
4. What practices do you see that are demoting human rights in your school?
5. Whose responsibility is it to make sure that human rights are respected and what responsibilities do different people / organisations etc have?
6. What are your own responsibilities in promoting human rights?

## **SUB-TOPIC 5: CHILD RIGHTS**

Some countries may have different definitions of who a child is, but most countries including Sudan have agreed that a child is a person who is below 18 years old. Like other people, children are human beings and deserve the same rights as adults. Children should be nurtured and prepared for adulthood. The child's life is divided into stages. At each stage there is a different set of responsibilities on the part of the parent and child to one another; and by the child to the family and to the community. So the child has the right to be fed, but in order for it to be possible for the child to be fed they may have to do some work on the farm.

It is realised that children around the world are the people whose rights are most frequently limited or violated. This is often because they cannot speak for themselves or defend themselves. Due to this problem, there are international agreements around the world which aim to protect the rights of the child and these are also relevant here in South Sudan. In November 1989 the UN adopted a set of laws especially intended to protect the rights of children, known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).



The convention covers a range of issues affecting children, but these are simply put into three main groups. There are issues falling under protection, provision and participation. For example, issues like drug abuse, sexual exploitation and child labour fall under protection because children should be protected from such activities. Values like education, fairness and equality fall under provision because they should be provided to children. And finally issues falling under participation include freedom of expression, participate in child duty and play because they are activities that children should be allowed to be involved in. These are given in the table below.

<b>Protection</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Participation</b>
Severe Punishment	Food	Decision making
Discrimination	Health Care	Freedom of expression
Drug abuse	Security	Child duties
Hard labour	Naming	Play
Involvement in war	Parental care	
Harmful cultural practices	Education	
Sexual exploitation	Care for handicapped	
Abuse and torture	Family reunification	

In South Sudan, as the society is materially poor, in transition between war and peace, and social services are limited or absent, children are not protected from many of the dangers which are listed in the Children’s Convention. For example, the right to education is denied to many children, particularly girls. There are incidents of children being detained and tied up in cells for days at police stations. Young people are often detained along with adults due to inadequate prison and detention facilities. Many children do not have access to proper shelter or food.

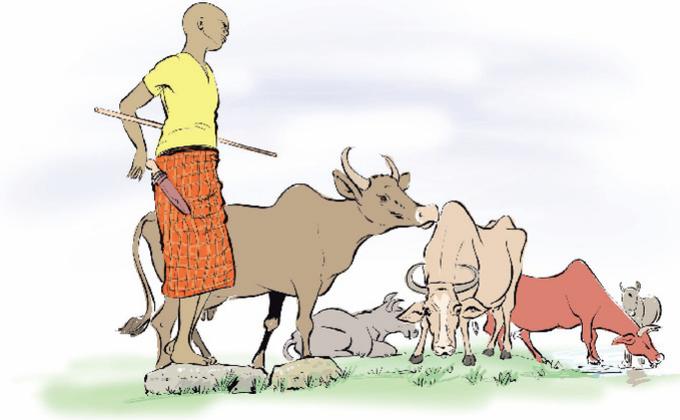
# **SUB-TOPIC 6: THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

## **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**

(An abbreviated version for children and young people, by Amnesty International UK)

1. *We are all born free. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.*
2. *These rights belong to everybody; whether we are rich or poor, whatever country we live in, whatever sex or whatever colour we are, whatever language we speak, whatever we think or whatever we believe.*
3. *We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.*
4. *Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.*
5. *Nobody has any right to hurt us or to torture us.*
6. *We all have the same right to use the law.*
7. *The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.*
8. *We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.*
9. *Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.*
10. *If we are put on trial, this should be in public. Those who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.*
11. *Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it has been proved that they did it. If people say we did something bad, we have the right to show this was not true. Nobody should punish us for something that we did not do, or for doing something which was not against the law when we did it.*
12. *Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family, without a very good reason.*
13. *We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.*
14. *If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.*
15. *We all have the right to belong to a country.*
16. *Every grown-up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.*
17. *Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.*
18. *We all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we want.*
19. *We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people wherever they live, through books, radio, television and in other ways.*
20. *We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.*
21. *We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown-up should be allowed to choose their own leaders from time to time and should have a vote which should be made in secret.*
22. *We all have the right to a home, to have enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill. We should all be allowed to enjoy music, art, craft, sport and to make use of our skills.*

23. *Every grown-up has the right to a job, to get a fair wage for their work, and to join a trade union.*
24. *We all have the right to rest from work and relax.*
25. *We all have the right to a good life, with enough food, clothing, housing, and healthcare. Mothers and children, people without work, old and disabled people all have the right to help.*
26. *We all have the right to education, and to finish primary school, which should be free. We should be able to learn a career, or to make use of all our skills. We should learn about the United Nations and about how to get on with other people and respect their rights. Our parents have the right to choose how and what we will learn.*
27. *We all have the right to our own way of life, and to enjoy the good things that science and learning bring.*
28. *We have a right to peace and order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.*
29. *We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.*
30. *Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.*



## **SUB TOPIC 7: PROMOTING HUMAN & CHILD RIGHTS IN SOCIETY**

We can promote human and child rights by developing a society which values human life and develops institutions which reflect those values. For example, this means that the resources in society should be shared in a way that enables all children to go to school. It means that there should be constant discussion about what people in society consider important.

Promoting child rights can be done in a number of ways. Firstly it is important not to create a situation where the child's rights are in competition with adult rights. Instead it should be recognised that child's rights exist and are equally important to adult rights and that progress and change are needed in several areas relating to child rights.

It should also be acknowledged that the fact that children themselves have very useful ideas about what they want and need. Child rights should be discussed by as many different groups, schools, organisations and government departments as possible. Every person has a duty to respect the human rights of other people.

### **Discussion**

- What can you do to make sure that the rights of children are respected?
- What can teachers, schools and communities do to pursue child rights?

## GLOSSARY

Abuse	The use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful
Accountable	Someone who is accountable is completely responsible for what they do and must be able to give a satisfactory reason for it
Advocate	To publicly support or suggest an idea, development or way of doing something
Authorities	The group of people with official responsibility for a particular area
Culture	The customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group
Discrimination	The practice of treating somebody or a particular group in a society less fairly than others
Declaration	Stated in an open way so that people know about it
Dignity	Calm, serious and controlled behaviour that makes people respect you
Degrading	Behaviour causing people to feel that they are worthless
Detain	To force someone officially to stay in a place
Entitlement	Something that you have right to do or have, or when you have the right to do or have something
Equality	The same in amount, number or size, or the same in importance and deserving the same treatment
Exploitation	A situation in which somebody treats somebody else in an unfair way especially in order to gain something
Handicapped	People who are suffering from physical or mental problems
Instinctive	The way people or animals naturally react or behave, without having to think or learn about it
Labour	Work especially physical work
Legislation	A law or set of laws suggested by a government and made official by a parliament
Nurture	To take care of, feed and protect someone or something, especially young children or plants, and help them to develop
Participation	When you take part or become involved in something
Potential	Someone's or something's ability to develop, achieve or succeed
Proclaimed	Publicly and officially told people about something important
Reconciliation	When two people or groups of people become friendly again after they have argued



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