

Evaluation Report Summary

22nd International Human Rights Training Program

June 10 to June 29, 2001

Introduction

This document is the summary of the Evaluation Report of the Twenty-second annual International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTTP) given by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation (CHRF). The Program took place at John Abbott College, in the town of Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Québec, from June 10 to June 29, 2001. This year's session brought together:

- 110 participants from 54 countries, most of which are developing countries;
- 25 resource persons (8 facilitators, 17 presenters and panelists);
- 13 CHRF staff members, 7 students on field placement and occasional workers; and
- over 20 volunteers who contributed time and services.

The participants were almost equally divided by gender (53 women and 57 men). Eighty-three (83) were English-speaking and twenty-seven (27) were French-speaking.

The IHRTTP is the cornerstone of the CHRF's activities. Held every summer for the last 21 years, this intensive three-week course is an intermediate-level program primarily intended for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) involved in the advancement of human rights. Each year, the Program brings together more than 100 participants from approximately 50 countries. The IHRTTP uses a participant-centered approach that allows for reciprocal learning through an exchange of experiences among participants, facilitators and resource persons. It is the CHRF's view that this approach is most appropriate for learning human rights content.

The four main objectives of the 2001 IHRTTP are to enable participants to:

- analyze the issues and situations encountered in the work of their organizations using a framework based on internationally accepted human rights values and principles;
- explore ways in which human rights education can increase the effectiveness of their human rights work;
- facilitate networking and partnership activities essential to furthering the cause of human rights; and
- increase their capacity to apply their learning within their organizations and their society.

The highly successful participant-centered curriculum model adopted by the CHRF is based on principles of adult experiential learning, where participants and facilitators commit themselves to engage in a process of mutual teaching and learning. The basic premise is that using the curriculum acts as a framework for drawing out content based on participants' experiences.

Evaluation Method

This Evaluation Report is based on results gathered from two sources:

- a comprehensive "Evaluation Questionnaire" which covered all aspects of the course;
- "End of Stream Evaluation Questionnaires" specifically aimed at assessing the content and the process of each of the eight Streams of the course.

Results and Conclusions

Course Objectives, Content and Methodology

The 2001 IHRTP proved to be a valuable learning experience for a great majority of the participants. On average, ninety-seven percent (97%) of the participants considered that the IHRTP enabled them to analyze the issues and situations encountered in the work of their organizations using a framework based on internationally accepted human rights values and principles; explore ways in which human rights education can increase the effectiveness of their work; facilitate networking and partnership activities essential to furthering the cause of human rights; and increase their capacity to apply their learning within their organizations and society.

On average, ninety-four percent (94%) of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the Stream objectives were relevant to their current human rights work and that they had been met.

While Open Space Technology (Stream 8) received a lower rating compared to the other streams (eighty percent (80%) of participants agreed that its objectives were relevant to their current human rights work and that they had been met), it was deemed a worthwhile activity and will be included in the Program next year. However, the format of this activity will have to be adapted to better meet the needs of the participants.

The IHRTP provides a very effective framework for sharing new educational methodologies, broadening knowledge of human rights and its related instruments, sharing experiences and networking. Of all the possibilities for learning, a large number of participants shared the following opinion, that:

The single most important thing I learned is the participatory methodology of human rights education.

Most participants mentioned the quality of the curriculum design, the participatory methodology and the case studies as major strengths of the IHRTP. They enjoyed the small group discussions and the opportunity to build upon the expertise of group members. The written documentation used during the IHRTP was appreciated by participants, with ninety-two percent (92%) rating the quality of the Participant's Manual and the Readings Manual as either good or very good. Despite this rating, the CHRF should review the language used in the manuals to increase accessibility to the content.

Overall, the revised curriculum was appreciated by participants, facilitators and resource persons. Since 2001 represented in essence a pilot session of the revised curriculum, certain adjustment in terms of timing will need to be made for the next session.

Participants valued their facilitators' competence to create and maintain group spirit and to respect cultural and linguistic differences. They highly appreciated the facilitators' knowledge of human rights, clarity of explanations and dedication to the participants. This is evidenced by the participants' rating of the quality of the facilitators. The CHRF should continue to engage facilitators that can consistently contribute this standard of professionalism in

subsequent sessions of the IHRTP.

Regarding the formal presentations, most participants were satisfied with the presenters' knowledge about human rights and the coverage of human rights instruments. There was more variability of opinions on issues such as: relevance of topics to participants' needs, presenters' use of relevant examples, and communication skills of presenters. These issues were rated good or very good by at least eighty-five percent (85%) of the participants.

Course Administration and Material Aspects

The food quality and variety remains problematic, with a rating of only thirty-seven percent (37%) of either "good" or "very good". In open comments, participants suggested including a variety of food that reflected their dietary needs and preferences. Although CHRF has continued to devote care, time and resources to addressing this issue, meeting the highly diverse needs of such an international group remains a challenge which CHRF will continue to address together with John Abbott College cafeteria services.

The communication services on-site present an issue of concern, in that they were rated satisfactory by seventy-two percent (72%) of participants. Participants voiced their dissatisfaction with the communication services in their open comments and felt that it was difficult to communicate with the outside world due to the lack of telephones to receive calls. It must be noted that a dedicated computer lab was available to participants during the 2001 IHRTP, with 16 computers for use outside of formal curriculum time. Participants of the 2000 session of the IHRTP had only 6 computers at their disposal during the same three-week period.

The adequacy of accommodations and sleeping quarters was rated as satisfactory by eighty-three percent (83%) of participants, a decrease of fourteen percent (14%) from the 2000 session. Comments from participants indicated some level of dissatisfaction regarding the housekeeping services provided by John Abbott College.

Discussions with John Abbott College have been on-going over the years and many positive changes have been made to accommodate the diverse needs of IHRTP participants. Financial and physical constraints continue to make some participant suggestions difficult to implement.

While a change of venue is not an option, the CHRF will continue communicating closely with John Abbott College staff in order to address possible improvements regarding food quality and variety, on-site communication services, accommodations and sleeping quarters. It is interesting to note that the menu, classrooms, accommodations and sleeping quarters were the same for the 2000 and 2001 sessions of the IHRTP. Yet the evaluation results show significant differences in levels of satisfaction. We can only conclude that they will continue to change according to the participants who attend and the weather conditions during the three weeks of the Program.