



de changement par l'éducation
of education for change

The Equitas Story: 40 years of bolstering human rights around the world

Paul-André Crépeau, an Emeritus Professor of Law at McGill University, was among the scholars, advocates and social activists who united to establish Equitas 40 years ago with a hefty mandate: "To advance democracy, human development, peace and social justice through education programs focused on human rights."

Yet Crépeau still marvels how Equitas has become a global leader in human rights education. "We never imagined it would take on such a big role internationally," Crépeau recalls.

An important part of the early success was the involvement of John P. Humphrey, a major architect of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Beatrice Bazar, Maxwell Cohen and Harry Batshaw joined together to convince Humphrey to return to Montreal and to join them in setting up the Canadian Human Rights Foundation – as Equitas was originally founded and known. Hence Equitas was born on April 25, 1967. Thanks to the groundwork of its founders, Equitas would emerge as a pioneer in the human rights movement in Canada and abroad, one education program at a time.

Evolving human rights

Although the United Nations had adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947, Canada did not ratify the UN International Covenants on Civil and

Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights until 1976. The Canadian Human Rights Act would not be adopted until 1976 and Canadians would not enjoy the protections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms until 1982.

As human rights evolved, so did Equitas. From small grassroots meetings at the McGill Faculty Club, the organization was transformed into an international force, with pioneering research, conferences and publications on human rights issues.

Shape of Equitas

In 1980, Equitas launched a new program that would shape the course of the organization: the International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTP). Originally, the program targeted mainly Canadian law students seeking to increase their knowledge of human rights but, by 1992, out of 90 participants, 19 hailed from Africa and Central and Eastern Europe.

Today, thanks to the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the annual IHRTP now welcomes 130 participants from over 60 countries including Canada.

The IHRTP has allowed Equitas to continuously hone its human rights education methodologies and experiment with innovative training programs. In 1994, Equitas replaced its traditional lecture-style



John P. Humphrey, one of the founders of Equitas



The International Human Rights Training Program, 2006

format in favour of a participatory model – placing the learner at the centre of the educational process. In 2000, the IHRTP was further refined to bolster participant knowledge and skills in human rights education.

Spreading the knowledge

With its novel educational approaches, increased contact with international human rights organizations and a global trend in human rights development, Equitas began offering programs overseas in 1995 with its first foreign workshop in Slovakia. Today, Equitas works in partnership with IHRTP alumni and select partners in Africa, Central, South and Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Haiti.

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Building a virtual community of human rights educators



Over a year ago, Equitas launched the Equitas Community, an online meeting place for program participants, facilitators, resource persons and Equitas staff. The purpose of this virtual Community is to provide a space to share lessons learned, to discuss human rights education experiences, to exchange information and to strengthen connections between members of the Equitas network.

The traditional definition of a Community is linked to geographic criteria, be it a neighbourhood or a village. But, Community can also be linked to what

people have in common. In the case of Equitas, the common bond is the transmission of human rights values.

Through the Internet, Equitas is making use of a Learning Management System (LMS) that allows for interaction through threaded discussion boards or forums. The Equitas Community uses one of the most sophisticated platforms, Moodle, to encourage the ongoing interaction of our alumni. This system was first developed for online training for universities. However, it has a multitude of other tools that facilitate exchanges between participants such as chat rooms and collaborative learning tools. Moodle also uses open source technology, meaning that it is free of charge and is continuously being improved by a community of programmers.

Since its launch, the Community has brought together human rights educators from around the globe, all former participants in our programs, discussing

topics such as political transformation in Nepal, the death penalty and International Women's Day. During the 2007 International Human Rights Training Program, participants will be encouraged to make use of the Community before their arrival, to share their expectations of the program and create links before the program. During the IHRTP, participants will also be encouraged to make use of the Community with blogs and other content. As the Community grows, future applications may include events such as video-conferences and online learning.



The Equitas virtual community interface

Equitas welcomes a new member of the team



Fotouh Younes
Regional Coordinator
Amman, Jordan

Equitas is happy to welcome Fotouh Younes, as Regional Coordinator for our program: *Human Rights Education: A Pathway to Building a Human Rights Culture in Iraq, the Middle East and North Africa*. Based in our new office in Amman,

Jordan, Fotouh is responsible for assisting Equitas in the implementation and administration of our activities in the region and contributing to the development of a regional network of human rights educators.

Fotouh has over ten years' experience as a human rights trainer and project coordinator, having worked with organizations such as the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank's Global Environment Fund and the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies.

In 2004, Fotouh was a participant in Equitas' International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTP) and an active member of the Middle East regional network that was formed by the participants themselves following the 2004 program and whose work contributed to the development our program in the Middle East.

40 years of excellence – thanks to our supporters!

Equitas owes its success to many people. However, over the years, certain individuals have made extraordinary contributions to our work.

Pearl Eliadis has been committed to Equitas for over two decades. Former President of the Board of Directors and currently an Honourary Board member, Pearl first became involved with Equitas as a law student in 1982 when she participated in the International Human Rights Training Program. Shortly thereafter, she began her service on the Board of Directors, where she was a member from 1987 to 1995, and President from 1990 to 1995.

“Our focus is on the meaningful value of people coming from different backgrounds and making them part of our global community.”



Pearl Eliadis, long-time Equitas supporter

In the early-1990s, Pearl was an active participant in the development and implementation of Equitas' shift to a participatory education approach. “This was a defining moment for the organization,” Pearl recalls. This recommitment to human rights education has become the foundation of Equitas.

Pearl has remained a steadfast and active supporter of our work for over twenty years because she feels that Equitas has a uniquely Canadian perspective of inclusiveness and respect for people from different countries that make their stories a real part of our lives. “Our focus is on the meaningful value of people coming from different backgrounds and making them part of our global community.”

Pearl encourages Equitas' friends, donors, corporate partners and any others who share our vision to join her in expanding Equitas' important work. “Maybe what we do is not as ‘sexy’ as getting political prisoners out of jail, but we are the only organization in the world that does what we do. We are involved in culture change. Our alumni feel they are part of something that is larger than themselves. In hard times, they have something extraordinary to fall back on – a global community.”

Equitas' goal is to create a universally accepted commitment to a way of life and living – politically, legally and morally. Join us and be part of the solution!

To make a donation or to volunteer, please contact:

Ian Hamilton, Executive Director
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or 514.954.0382 ext. 34

Donor recognition corner

EQUITAS WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS WHO MADE DONATIONS BETWEEN OCTOBER 2006 AND APRIL 2007:

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The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Development Program
Ville de Montréal

In 2003, Equitas re-established its human rights education programming in Canada with "Play it Right!", a program designed to sensitize children to human rights through games and interactive activities. Originally piloted in Montreal in partnership with the city, the program proved so successful that it is being expanded, in partnership with municipalities and community organizations, to Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Moncton, Fredericton and Dieppe.

True to its origins

While the Canadian Human Rights Foundation was renamed Equitas - International Centre for Human Rights Education in 2005, the organization has always remained true to its original mandate. Equitas engages in education rather than advocacy. This focus has allowed Equitas to develop expertise in human rights education promoting equality, justice and respect for human dignity.

40 years strong

At 40 years old, Equitas continues to grow the organization built by its founders, such as Paul-Andre Crépeau, Beatrice Bazar, Maxwell Cohen, Harry Batshaw and John P. Humphrey and remains committed to developing innovative educational programs to empower individuals and societies.

At 40 years strong, Equitas continues to play a vital role in supporting all those who struggle to overcome discrimination, intolerance and violence. Equitas continues in its goal to enable everyone to live by the values prescribed by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Program Activities

DECEMBER 2006 – APRIL 2007

International Human Rights Training Program (IH RTP)

- Regional Training of Trainers, Anglophone Africa
Nairobi, Kenya, December 2006
- China Alumni meetings
Beijing, China, January 2007
- Regional Training of Trainers, South East Asia
Nakornnayok, Thailand, February 2007
- Indonesian Annual Human Rights
Training Program, Consultation meeting
Jakarta, Indonesia, February 2007

National Human Rights Institutions Program

- Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting on
National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs
Bangkok, Thailand, December 2006
- Commonwealth Conference of
National Human Rights Institutions
London, England, February 2007

Middle East & North Africa Program

- Regional Training of Trainers
Amman, Jordan, February 2007
- HRE workshop for Iraqi NGOs
Amman, Jordan, March 2007

Canada - Human Rights Education in Summer Day Camps

- City of Montreal Program
Training of city staff
Montreal, March 2007
- National Program
National HRE workshop with program partners
Montreal, April 2007



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