

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COMMENTS ON DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE FOURTH PHASE (2020-2024) OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in Nigeria was established by the National Human Rights Commission Act, 1995 in line with the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly which enjoins all member states to establish a National Human Rights Institution for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission serves as an extra-judicial mechanism for the enhancement of the enjoyment of human rights.

The establishment of the Commission is aimed at creating an enabling environment for the Promotion, Protection and Enforcement of Human Rights. The Commission also provides avenues for public enlightenment, research and dialogue in order to raise awareness on human rights issues.

In 2010, the enabling Law of the Commission was amended, which further conferred on the organisation additional powers in terms of promotion and protection of human rights and enforcement of its decisions. Notably among these are:-

- The independence in the conduct of the affairs of the Commission'
- Express powers of investigation
- Establishment of the Human Rights Fund; and
- Recognition of and enforcement of the awards.

Since the signing into law of the NHRC (Amendment) Act in 2010, the Commission has reconfigured its institutional framework to build a formidable National Human Rights Institution. This amendment process has made possible the restoration of the Commission to 'A' status by the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institution after a rigorous integrity test on the operational processes of the Commission.

2.0 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT – A PLAN OF ACTION FOR FOURTH PHASE (2020-2024) OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME

A. SCOPE

The Commission welcomes the council's special emphasis on education and training and its decision to focus on Youths for the fourth phase of World Programme. The Draft Action Plan for phase four cuts across the core objective of Phases one, two and three as it

seeks to build an all-inclusive society where the respect for the culture of Human Rights is promoted through human rights education noting the role youths play in development. The Commission also believes that the draft action plan will help strengthen interventions it has put in place towards the realization of the objectives of phases one, two and three.

No doubt the World Programme on Human Rights Education has remained the most comprehensive panacea and approach towards the realization of human rights education across the globe in spite of prevailing challenges.

The scope of the fourth phase obviously is timely given the spate of killings, political thuggery, insurgences which are practical examples of violent extremism that have bedeviled the Nigerian state in recent times. The zeal and energy associated with youth should be harnessed for development through a coherent strategy for human rights education and training.

B. BACKGROUND

The Commission recognizes the importance of Human Rights Education for youths in view of their large number in Nigeria. Considerable percentage of these are unemployed or out of school and have been implicated in violent extremism and conflict (Boko Haram in Nigeria), political thuggery, cultism, oil bunkering, kidnapping and banditry. The Commission believes that Human Rights Education is the basic tool required to create the culture of respect for human rights among youth and reorient them towards productive ventures for national development.

C. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The Commission approves of the specific objectives outlined in the Draft Plan of Action for the fourth phase and in particular welcomes the highlight on contribution of Human Rights Education for youth towards achieving sustainable development in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and in preventing and tackling current global challenges, including violence and conflict. Also with regards to encouraging the development, adoption and implementation of sustainable national strategies for human rights education for youth, including all youth with youth in leadership roles as well as strengthening of existing ones. Nigeria is already moving in this direction with the recent passage into law of the “Not Too Young To Run” aimed at encouraging the participation of youth in government.

D COMPONENTS

The Commission agrees that for effective human rights education for youth, the four components outlined in the draft action will play a vital role in achieving the objectives of the Action Plan. The involvement of youths in the establishment, development and reviewing of policies is a welcome idea that will go a long way to ensure inclusiveness.

The Commission believes that Human Rights Education for youth is context specific and should address the specific learning needs of youths. With regards to context, the Commission would like to share its experience of collaboration with Nigerian Education Research and Development Council to review the Civic Education Curriculum for Senior Secondary in Nigeria (Human Rights is taught under civic education). The review provided the Commission with opportunity to infuse more human rights contents into the curriculum.

Another example is the Commission's participation in the pilot research on monitoring state implementation of human rights education. The research provided an opportunity for the Commission to monitor education; policy, curricular, teachers' education and learning environment, the research also helped to draw the attention of stakeholders to existing gaps. The Commission considers the idea of peer to peer learning a laudable idea. We believe that this learning process will provide safe spaces and encourage dialogue and understanding among youths.

The Commission has also been establishing human rights clubs in schools at National Level. The clubs have provided youths the opportunity to champion the course of human rights in their respective schools. Many teachers were also trained on human rights in the process of establishing these clubs.

E PROCESS FOR NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

With regards to the process for national implementation, the Commission agrees that significant commitment is required from member states. States should also ensure the development of a national strategy for adequate allocation of both human and financial resources for the implementation of the action plan.

- a. **Actors and Coordination:-** The Commission agrees with the draft plan of Action for the fourth phase that member states should designate a focal point responsible for taking or responding to initiative of other organisations and also establish a national coordinating body involving relevant government bodies, civil society and youth representatives. The Commission

also agrees with the constitution of the national coordinating body.

b. Steps for Implementation

The planned steps identified in the draft Action Plan for implementation (56, 58, 60) is ideal but there might be challenges with regards to funding.

F INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Commission agrees with the submission of mid-term report, to enable states identify gaps and challenges in implementation of the action plan. With regards to international support the Commission welcomes international cooperation and assistance {66 (a-j), 68 (a-f)}, this support will go a long way to actualize the objectives of the Action plan.

CONCLUSION

The World Programme has immensely supported, strengthened and equipped human rights institutions with robust action plan and policy framework to impact knowledge and skills for human rights in a developing democracy like Nigeria.

The Commission wishes to state that it is open for further consultation on the plan of action for the fourth phase of the World Programme on Human Rights Education and is also willing to collaborate towards achieving the objectives of the phase.