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**YOUTH ACTION COURSE ON THE UNITED NATIONS:
HUMAN SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Policy Report Submitted to the CCFPD
by
The United Nations Association in Canada

Ottawa, March 2000





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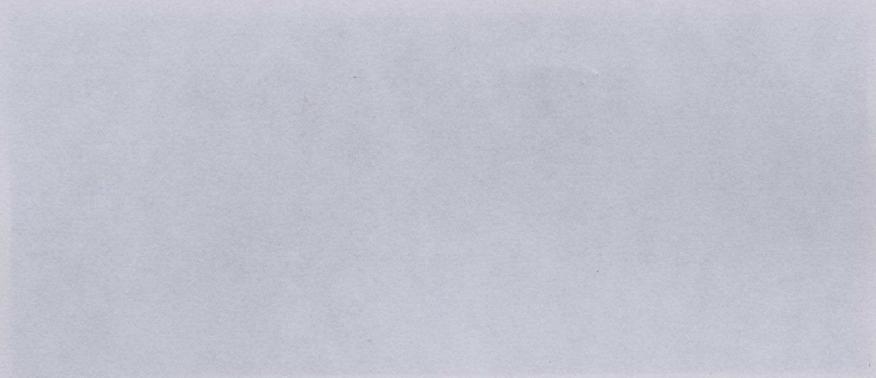
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Summary

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Context

The Course was a result of the priority status that both the United Nations and Canada have given human security and human rights in their international agendas. Moreover, the Course was held to be especially timely as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) reaches through its mid-point. One of the Course armchairs of the belief that educating young people on human rights is an important first step in creating a generation of citizens who are engaged in bringing about positive global change.

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The structure of the Course consisted of a series of interactive workshops on specific topics, each led by a specialist. Presentations came from the government, NGOs, the RCMP, and the academic community. The Course was complemented by two evening role-play activities in which the young people explored the realities and potential of international cooperation on human security issues. The first session of the Course was devoted to developing a plan of action to be followed up on by the youth in their home communities and schools.	Evaluation Form	6
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The primary objective of the Course was that participants were equipped with knowledge and skills to become active citizens in the strengthening of respect for human rights within Canada and abroad. The Course was a success as evidenced by the feedback received from the youth and the media. The Course was a success as evidenced by the feedback received from the youth and the media.	Sample Role Play Package	Enclosed
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Summary

General Overview

From March 16-19, 2000, the United Nations Association in Canada ran an extremely successful three-day Youth Action Course on the United Nations, Human Security and Human Rights. Twenty-three youth between the ages of 16 and 18, from a total of sixteen different high schools in the National Capital Region and beyond, participated in the intense experience. The Course took place at Merrywood Easter Seal Camp, a picturesque and fully accessible facility near Smith Falls, Ontario. The Course was offered free of charge to participants, exclusive of travel costs to and from central Ottawa. The Youth Action Course was developed, coordinated and facilitated by Ele Pawelski, Human Rights Project Officer, and Steve Mason, Educational Outreach Project Officer for UNA-Canada.

Context

The Course was held in the context of the priority status that both the United Nations and Canada have given human security and human rights on their international agendas. Moreover, the Course was felt to be especially timely as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) passes through its mid-point. The focus and structure of the Course arose out of the belief that educating young people on global human rights issues is an important first step in creating a generation of concerned, aware and involved citizens engaged in bringing about positive global change.

Structure

The structure of the Course was a series of interactive workshops on specific topics, each led by a specialist in the given field. The presenters came from the government, NGOs, the RCMP, and the academic sector. These workshops were complemented by two evening role-play activities in which the youth were able to explore the realities and potential of international cooperation on human security and human rights issues. The final session of the course was devoted to developing strategies for action to be followed-up on by the youth in their home communities and schools.

Results and Outcomes

The principal result of the Course was that participants were equipped with the knowledge and critical tools necessary to assist in the strengthening of respect for human rights within Canada and abroad. The specific outcomes that emerged from the Course were:

- a group of empowered and bonded youth educated about the UN, human security and human rights;
- enhanced links between the youth who participated in activities which demonstrated the benefits of working together to achieve common goals; and
- the establishment of a framework for action that enables youth to initiate programmes and activities in their schools and communities.

Preparation

Initial preparation for the Youth Action Course began in mid-December, upon confirmation of funding from the Centre for Foreign Policy Development. Preparations focused on the following areas:

Logistics

Several potential sites were assessed for the Course, and the Merrywood Easter Seal Camp was chosen for its accessibility, layout and comfort. A contract was signed with the caretakers to provide food and lodging for the Course. Arrangements were also made with a local bus company to provide transportation from Ottawa to the site on Thursday, and from the Camp back to Ottawa on Sunday. Necessary materials and supplies were bought in the week prior to the Course, and the facility was set-up and prepared on a preliminary visit to the site by the coordinators on Tuesday, March 14th.

Website Development

A website was immediately set-up to promote the goals of the Course and offer information on registering as a participant (www.unac.org/events/rights2000/index.html). This site is in the process of being modified to reflect the outcomes of the Course and to provide the opportunity for participants to maintain contact. As well, two of the participants have volunteered to develop an Action Website to facilitate communication and follow-up activities.

Recruitment of Speakers

Once the topics of the sessions were confirmed, the recruitment of speakers began. Care was taken in approaching speakers to ensure that they reflected a diversity of viewpoints (governmental, non-governmental, and academic) and were appropriate to the age group. In some cases, the themes of the sessions were modified slightly to accommodate particularly well-suited presenters. A Presenter's Package was sent to each speaker, subsequent to an initial confirmation (please see Appendix for sample). Follow-up phone calls and e-mails were made to each speaker in order to confirm participation and answer any questions on the given topic. Each presenter was required to make his/her own travel arrangements to the site and was offered a \$300 honorarium for his/her contribution.

Recruitment of Participants

Recruitment of the target twenty-five participants began almost immediately through a variety of methods. World issues and social studies teachers at a number of high schools were contacted and sent information and registration forms to distribute to interested students. Teacher advisors to all high school Amnesty International and Social Justice clubs in the Eastern Ontario area were also contacted. Information was distributed at student conferences in the Ottawa region and via SchoolNet (see Appendix) and UNA-Canada's website. The conditions for accepting participants were twofold: first, it was required that they had an interest in learning about the UN, human security and human rights, and, second, that they had registered of their own will. Once a Registration Form was received, a Participant's Package was sent out to each student (please see Appendix for sample). Follow-up phone calls and e-mails ensued to confirm participation.

Preparation of Role Play, Model Security Council and other sessions

Preparing for the two extensive evening activities, the Human Rights Field Mission Role Play and the Model Security Council, was the main research component of the Course. For the former, research was carried out on the current situation in Mozambique and the role of the nine represented organizations and agencies. For the latter, research was undertaken on the structure and operation of the Security Council, the current situation in Angola, and the political position of the fifteen represented member countries and one observer mission (the OAU). In each case, packages were put together for the participants to assist them in assuming their assigned roles (please see Appendix for sample packages). Other sessions which were researched and developed prior to the Course included the introductory and closing sessions, the General Overview of the UN System, the General Overview of Human Rights, and Action Strategies.

Preparation of Action Kit

Upon arrival at the Merrywood site, the participants were presented with personalized Action Kits to assist them during the workshops and aid them in follow-up activities after the Course. Each Kit contained carefully researched materials, including: fact sheets on six specific UN Days, the Course schedule, background information on the UN, human security and human rights, contact information for Ottawa area organizations active in human rights, tips for organizing an action event and dealing with the media, contact information of fellow participants and an evaluation form (see Appendix for sample Kit). Throughout the course, further materials for insertion into the Kit were distributed, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and detailed information on how human rights issues are dealt with in the UN system.

Sessions

Below is the Course schedule, annotated to include the names and organizations of the workshop leaders and the principal topics covered.

Thursday, March 16th, 2000

9:00 – 11:00 PM **Introductory Session** led by Steve Mason, UNA-Canada

Topics covered:

- Getting-to-know you activities
- Goals and outline of the Course
- Full Value Contract: determining behaviour and safety rules
- Cooperation and communication activities

Friday, March 17th, 2000

8:30 – 9:30 AM **Breakfast**

9:30 – 10:00 AM **Introduction to the UN** led by Harry Qualman, UNA-Canada

Topics covered:

- History, activities, structure and mandate of UNA-Canada
 - History of the UN, including its mandate and Charter
 - The role of Canada in the UN (past and present)
- 10:00 – 10:45 AM **General Overview of the UN System** led by Steve Mason, UNA-Canada
Topics covered:
- The role and structure of the UN's six organs
 - How the UN works
 - The role and structure of UN agencies and programmes
- 10:45 – 11:30 AM **General Overview of Human Rights** led by Ele Pawelski, UNA-Canada
Topics covered:
- Wants and Needs Activity
 - Defining human rights
 - Why some human rights are controversial
 - How human rights are protected
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - The two International Covenants on Human Rights
 - the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom
 - The UN and Human Rights protection
- 11:45 – 12:30 PM **International Human Rights Law** led by Madeleine Schwarz,
Department of Justice, War Crimes/Crimes Against Humanity Division
Topics Covered:
- Where international human rights law comes from
 - The international documents which deal with human rights
 - How international human rights law is enforced
 - Who can be held responsible for human rights violations
 - Steps that can be taken if there is a known human rights abuse
 - The role of the UN in establishing and enforcing human rights law
- 12:30 – 1:30 PM Lunch
- 1:30 – 2:45 PM **Voices from the Field (I)** led by Steve Loyst, Canadian Red Cross,
formerly with the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian
Affairs (OCHA) in Rwanda
Topics covered:
- Background on the situation in Rwanda
 - The role of OCHA in Rwanda
 - Cooperation between NGOs, UN agencies and the government
 - The role of the International Committee for the Red Cross
- 3:00 – 4:30 PM **Voices from the Field (II)** led by J. Paul Richards, RCMP War Crimes
Section
Topics covered:

- The role of the RCMP in international conflicts
- Background on the situation in Kosovo
- The RCMP in Kosovo: a Case Study
- Cooperation between the RCMP, the UN and NGOs

4:30 – 5:30 PM **Preparation for Human Rights Field Mission Role Play** led by Ele Pawelski, UNA-Canada

The students were divided into nine groups, and each group was assigned the role of either a UN agency or NGO working to repatriate refugees and hold a democratic election in Mozambique. The nine roles were field workers for the:

- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- World Food Programme
- World Health Organization
- Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- Médecins sans frontières
- Human Rights Watch
- Independent Expert on Mozambique
- Election Observation Mission

Each group was given an information package containing instructions, background information on Mozambique, information on each of the nine organizations, and a “classified” document on its specific objectives. Each group was given time to read over the documents and devise a plan of action.

5:30 – 7:00 PM Supper

7:00 – 10:30 PM **Human Rights Field Mission Role Play** led by Ele Pawelski, UNA-Canada

The aim of the role play was to show how UN Agencies and international organizations can work together to build and strengthen human rights. During the first hour and a half, the nine groups were asked to develop an action plan in consultation with and with the cooperation of as many of the other organizations as possible. During the second hour, each organization presented its agenda and strategy to the entire group and a discussion ensued on how the agendas of each organization would be achieved in actual practice. The role play was followed by a general debrief in which participants had the opportunity to discuss how they felt during the enactment, what the frustrations were, and things they might do differently if they had to do it again.

Saturday, March 18th, 2000

8:30 – 9:30 AM Breakfast

- 9:30 – 10:15 AM **Women's Rights** led by Ele Pawelski, UNA-Canada
Topics covered:
- Why women's rights are important
 - Why women are a group that needs special attention
 - The mainstreaming of gender in the UN
 - Women's Rights are Human Rights (Vienna Declaration, 1993)
 - Critical points for women in the history of the UN
 - Status of Women Canada
- 10:15 – 11:00 AM **The Media and Human Rights** led by Victoria Fenner, Communications Consultant, formerly with CBC-Radio
Topic covered:
- Why some events receive so much more coverage than others
 - How human rights issues are represented in the media
 - What we can do to ensure we are getting accurate information
 - How we can influence the media
 - The human rights of journalists
- 11:00 – 11:50 AM **Children's Rights** led by Kristie Kelly, Human Rights Internet, formerly with UNICEF
Topics covered:
- The UN definition of a child
 - Why children are given special rights
 - The rights of children and what they mean
 - How children's rights are protected internationally and in Canada
 - The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its signatories
 - The role and structure of UNICEF
 - How children can participate in the UN
 - Model community activity: Respecting children's rights
- 12:00 – 1:00 PM **Aboriginal Rights** led by Dan Berman and Ed Bianchi, Aboriginal Rights Coalition
Topics covered:
- The history of aboriginal rights in Canada
 - The UN and aboriginal rights
 - UN conventions and aboriginal rights
 - Controversial aboriginal rights issues
 - The culture of dependency: present day aboriginal issues
- 1:00 – 1:45 PM Lunch
- 1:45 – 3:00 PM **Human Rights NGOs** led by Hilary Homes, Amnesty International
Topics covered:
- Defining NGOs and how they are funded
 - Categories of NGOs

- The role of human rights NGOs
- How NGOs protect human rights and prevent abuses
- The relationship between NGOs, governments and the UN
- NGO effectiveness
- Getting involved in NGOs
- Activity: Creating an NGO

3:00 – 4:15 PM

Conflict and Human Security led by Vern Neufeld Redekop, Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution

Topics covered:

- Why and how conflicts arise
- Understanding deep-rooted conflicts
- Identifying and dealing with differences between individuals
- Identifying personal and group values
- How conflicts can be prevented and resolved
- The concept of human security

4:30 – 5:30 PM

Conflict Resolution in Everyday Life led by Kevin Friday, YouCAN! (Youth Organizing to Understand Conflict and Advocate Non-Violence)

Topics covered:

- Understanding and working with different cultures
- Thinking about tolerance and respect
- Cooperating to achieve common goals
- Dealing with frustrations and personality differences
- Transferring conflict resolution skills from local to global

5:30 – 6:00 PM

Preparation for Model Security Council led by Steve Mason and Geneviève Talbot, UNA-Canada

The youth were each assigned the role of a country or observer on the Security Council (some were paired up while others were left as individuals, depending on experience and background). Each group was given an information package to read over which contained participation guidelines, statistics and data on the particular country, a voting profile, a backgrounder on the situation in Angola, a draft resolution on Angola, and maps of the given country and of Africa. The youth were given the opportunity to read over the information and ask any questions.

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Supper

7:30 – 11:00 PM

Model Security Council led by Steve Mason and Geneviève Talbot, UNA-Canada

The goal of the Model Security Council was to debate, possibly change and then vote upon the Draft Resolution on Angola. Countries were initially given fifteen minutes to prepare their opening position statements, and then each group was given three minutes to present its statement.

Following this, the floor was opened for debate. A speaker's list was created, and each speaker was given one minute to raise an issue, after which other countries had the opportunity to respond. Halfway through the debate, a fifteen minute break was given in order for countries to informally discuss their positions and requests. After the break, the debate resumed and a vote was called at 10:15 PM. Each proposed amendment to the draft resolution was voted on individually and then the entire resolution with the passed amendments was voted on. The Model Security Council adhered to the rules and procedures of the real Security Council. Following the final vote, a debrief was held in order to discuss how the participants felt about the process, what they thought about the Permanent Five, and, more generally, their opinions on decision-making in the UN.

Sunday, March 19th, 2000

8:30 – 9:30 AM Breakfast

9:30 – 12:30 PM **Action Strategies** led by Steve Mason, UNA-Canada
Topics covered:

- Why take action and what are the intended results
- Needs for taking action in schools and communities
- Ideas to address those needs
- How to take action
- How to become personally informed
- How to find resources and people to help
- How to plan events
- How to alert and deal with the media
- UN Days/Weeks/Years
- Earth Summit III
- Starting a global issues group
- Activity: Planning and Action Event

12:30 – 2:00 PM Lunch

2:00 – 3:00 PM **Closing Session** led by Steve Mason, UNA-Canada

The closing session involved a debrief of the entire Course, allowing each participant to comment on what s/he felt was the most valuable part and offer an oral evaluation. The written evaluation form was also collected during this session.

Evaluation

Overall, the Youth Action Course was an unqualified success, as judged by the verbal and written responses of participants, the feedback of presenters and the environment of

empowerment observed by the facilitators. Several comments were heard along the lines of "I learn more here in five minutes than I do in a month of school." At the end of the Course, each participant was asked to complete a written evaluation of the weekend which included a series of questions and a space for recommendations on how the Course could be improved.

Below are some excerpts from the participants' evaluations:

- "Every part of this Course was my favourite part. We all found out what it means to have 'strength in unity'... we learned how to advance agendas set in groups."
- "I feel that I now have the knowledge to initiate fundamental changes in regard to social and economic issues. I feel more prepared to participate actively in the world and to make decisions for the future."
- "Learning about how the UN works and the politics involved is critical to understand if you want to start any groups or run any functions. You have to know how things work before you can know which is the best way to tackle an issue. This is one of the most important things I learned in this Course."
- "I loved all the sessions and being exposed to experts in their field and the knowledge they possess... I consider the info I learned invaluable. Thank you."
- "My favourite part of the Course was being able to meet and discuss REAL things with SMART young people."
- "I really feel honoured to have had the privilege of coming here. I was expecting something dull, dry and theoretical. But it was the exact opposite of that: it was absolutely fabulous."
- "One of the most valuable things I learned was the importance of taking action in my community and around the world."
- "I enjoy picking up knowledge everywhere I go, and this Course was particularly insightful."
- "I learned that anyone can take action and make a difference."
- "Many of the speakers truly opened my mind... I learned so much that to recap I would need to write a whole novel. I absolutely felt that our time was well spent with people with knowledge, enthusiasm, passion and heart."
- "I want to use what I've learned to inform my world issues teacher, because he does not know about the United Nations."
- "I learned that respect and compromise are the cornerstones for any interactions and that you can make your voice heard without shouting. I've never had so much fun. I have had an experience that has opened my mind and increased my awareness of the world around me."

- "This weekend has really inspired me to try and raise awareness about human rights in my community and school."
- "I could spend a year here."

The following are a series of recommendations for future iterations of the course, culled from the participants' evaluations, presenters' feedback, and the observations of the facilitators:

- Due to the intense interest and inquisitiveness of the participants, many of the sessions ran longer than anticipated. This resulted in very little "down-time" for the participants and not enough time to ask all the questions that they had. In the future, it is recommended that either the number of workshops be reduced in order to adequately accommodate each presenter, or the Course be lengthened so that the present number of sessions can be retained.
- While most of the sessions involved either an activity or a visual aspect, some took on more of a "lecture" format. These invariably ranked among the least favourite in the participants' evaluations. In the future, it is recommended that every presenter be asked to include either a hands-on activity or a visual aspect to his/her workshop.
- It is recommended that participants receive more details about the workshops sufficiently prior to their delivery so that they have the opportunity to develop ideas, thoughts and questions on the various subjects.
- A sheet decoding all the UN (and other) acronyms would be a useful addition to the Action Kit.
- Several of the sessions could benefit from the inclusion of case studies so that the participants could develop a clearer mental picture of the UN in action.
- It is recommended that further information and more specific details be included in the initial publicity sent to schools.
- Other recommended topics that several participants suggested be covered in the Course include: international trade and finance, child labour, child soldiers, international poverty issues, the role of the Secretary-General, job opportunities in the UN and the field of human rights, sovereignty and intervention, UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and sustainable development. Several of these, including especially sustainable development, could themselves become themes of similar future courses.

Follow-Up

Right from the initial conception of the Youth Action Course, emphasis was placed on the development of follow-up activities. A solid follow-up is required in order to ensure that the knowledge gained and connections made at the Course are translated into action, and that the

learning process is sustained. While the Course itself is an important educational opportunity, the activities and outcomes that grow out of it are also a crucial measurement of its success.

The Sunday morning session on Action Strategies was intended to assist the participants brainstorm and plan events that they could implement in their schools and communities. Many interesting ideas were voiced in this session, including plans for events which focus on specific UN days (e.g. Universal Children's Day, UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, etc.), instructions on how to organize a world issues club, and general thoughts on how to raise public awareness. In groups, the participants were given the opportunity to go through the stages of planning an event so that they would leave the Course with a concrete starting point for taking action in their schools and communities.

One of the ideas that emerged during this session was to have high school youth go into Junior High and Elementary schools to teach younger children some of the basics about the UN and human rights. This idea is currently being followed-up on by UNA-Canada in its "What Kind of World...?" programme. The purpose of this programme, which began development in mid-1999, is to teach youth between the ages of 10-14 the basics of the United Nations system and global issues from a Canadian perspective, drawing links between local and international issues and highlighting the role of Canada in the UN and the UN in daily life. Action Course participants are currently being trained to go into schools and deliver the lessons which comprise the What Kind of World...? programme.

As part of the evaluation process, participants were asked what they would like to see in terms of follow-up. A key recommendation was a mechanism by which the participants could keep in touch, share action ideas and success stories, and provide motivation, inspiration and support. To this end, an e-mail listserv has been created and is being maintained by UNA-Canada, and a Virtual Classroom for interaction has been created using the tools available at www.nicenet.org (to visit the classroom, create a log-in identity on the Nicenet website, and enter **E23389Y60** for the Class Key.)

Other follow-up activities which are being considered include:

- a periodic newsletter mailed out to the participants;
- more Courses on other issues, including the environment, politics, and economics;
- hosting youth events in order to get more youth involved;
- publicizing youth-oriented or youth-organized events to the general public;
- offering support and assistance to youth taking action, where possible.

Next Steps

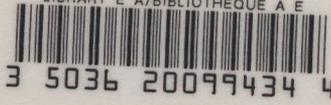
The first Youth Action Course on the United Nations, Human Security and Human Rights was a tremendous success. Not only did it succeed in providing an interactive and valuable educational experience to a group of high school students, but it also created a network of young activists who are eager and ready to raise awareness in their respective schools and communities. The impact of the Course extends far beyond the twenty-three participants.

Given the outcomes and success of the Course, UNA-Canada is interested in opportunities to extend the reach of this programme to a national level, and also in running it bilingually. Several options for expanding the Youth Action Course model are being considered:

- An initial idea is to design similar courses, each with a different theme. This model would involve a series of courses held throughout the year, each bearing the name "Youth Action Course on the United Nations and _____." Other potential themes include: Sustainable Development, Peace and Security, the Environment, International Trade and Finance, Development, and Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding and Peacemaking. A general course could also be designed simply on the United Nations itself.
- Two principal possibilities for expanding the reach of the Course exist. One is to hold a bilingual course in one central location several times per year, and attempt to ensure a representative regional distribution of participants. This would require increased funding to enable youth to attend. The other option is to transport the Course to different regions of the country, having a version run on the East and West Coasts, as well as in Québec, Central Canada and the Prairies. In this option, the Course would be run in the language appropriate to the region and/or participating youth.
- Along with the expansion of the Course, a specific website could be developed to facilitate interactions between past and present participants and to create a zone of action for raising awareness and forging links across the country.

Preliminary action is currently in progress to determine possible funding sources for such a venture. In expanding the course, it is considered a priority that costs to participants be kept as low as possible so as not to exclude any interested candidates on the basis of financial reasons.

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