World Scout Education Congress
Workshop Session on Human Rights Education

“Where, after all, do universal human 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; the neighbourhood he lives in, the school or college he attends, the factory, 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.” (Eleanor Roosevelt in 1958, on the 10th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Could the Scout Movement be one of those “small places” where human rights begin? Is Scouting the place where children and young people all over the world can find equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity without discrimination? Should and could Scouting be a place where young people are empowered to learn about human rights?

To produce positive social change and a better world, human rights education in Scouting must not only strive to develop practical skills, it must also work to foster appropriate attitudes and behaviours at all levels. We must not just educate our children and youth “to know” and “to do”, we must also educate them “to be” and “to live together”.

According to the United Nations, education on this issue aims to build a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms among children and young people
- The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity all over the world
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples' and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.
- The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by a rule of law
- The building and maintenance of peace
- The promotion of people centred sustainable development and social justice

Human rights education is much more than just passing on information about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or adopting resolutions and nice declarations. This type of education is about putting the basic underlying principles of human rights to work in Scouting's Youth Program, fully in accordance with our traditional values: fairness, respect for human dignity and difference, tolerance, and equality. This means that leaders have to demonstrate a personal commitment to human rights values through their personal example
and training methods. They must be able to present programs and activities that go beyond content, and help Scouts to put the ideas into practice and live these set of values.

To achieve this goal, human rights education in Scouting needs to define a three-dimensional approach:

1. Education about human rights: information and understanding about types of rights, the history of rights, international legal instruments, and how democracy functions.
2. Education for human rights: personal, interactive and problem solving skills like self-knowledge and self-awareness, assessing and understanding our own motives with regard to others, realising our own prejudices; listening, resisting group pressures, expressing opinions; locating information, making decisions, using judgement and conflict resolution.
3. Education through human rights: creating an environment where the structures, methods and relationships operating in Scouting reflect the values of human rights and its learning objectives; democratic working methods that demonstrate mutual respect between the leader and group members, and among the Scouts for each other.

How is human rights education reflected in our leaders’ training programs? What are the best good practices we can share from different National Scout Organizations? What kind of tools can be introduced in our youth program in order to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities…? These are some of the questions we plan to discuss during the Human Rights Session at the World Scout Education Congress, do not miss it...!