The Centre for Democratic Institutions recognises the centrality of human rights to good governance and democracy. Accordingly, the promotion of human rights is one of two parallel themes, alongside anti-corruption, shaping the broad direction of CDI’s work. The ‘Workshop on Designing and Teaching a Program or Course on Human Rights’ is an example of CDI’s commitment to the promotion of human rights. The Workshop was organised jointly by the Centre for Legal Education based at the University of Newcastle, the Mekong Region Law Centre, and CDI, with generous financial support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The workshop took place in Bangkok from 21–23 August 2000 and included participants from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Dr Sharon Bessell from CDI and Professor Christopher Roper from the Centre for Legal Education facilitated the workshop.

One objective of CDI is to establish and foster ongoing networks between individuals and organisations actively engaged in promoting democracy and good governance around the region. Thus, it is particularly pleasing that CDI is developing ongoing links with officials from around the region. Three participants in this project, Dr Ngo Duc Manh, Mr Souvannasao Samane and Mr Sok Kalyan had previously participated in CDI projects. Dr Ngo and Mr Souvannasao were members of delegations from Vietnam and Laos respectively, which visited Australia on study tours. Mr Sok participated in the Human Rights Treaty Implementation Course for Cambodia. On this occasion, Dr Ngo and Mr Souvannasao played central roles as co-tutors for the Workshop.

Aim of the Workshop
In designing the Workshop there was a conscious recognition that respect for and promotion of human rights is essential to good governance. The course designers also recognised that in the longer term, the most effective means of promoting human rights is to empower countries, in this case those in the Mekong Region, to undertake educational and training programs themselves. One important element of this is the education and training provided to the Region’s future lawyers and policy makers in
the tertiary institutions of the Region, as well as the education and training programs offered to current and future leaders, in both the public and private sectors. By providing a workshop for those who are teachers and trainers, a multiplier effect can operate. This ensures that the benefit of the workshop extends beyond the actual participants to those they will teach and train, both immediately and in the longer-term future. Accordingly, the aim of the workshop was to enable educators and trainers in the region, both in the law schools and in other contexts, to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to design and teach human rights programs.

A key objective of the Workshop was for participants to actually design a course during the Workshop. This allowed participants to put the principles taught into practice immediately. It also ensured a tangible outcome from the Workshop.

A New Approach
As Workshop participants came from four countries of the Mekong region, there was no common language. To overcome this barrier, Professor Christopher Roper developed an innovative approach involving the use of co-tutors/translators, who provided both language interpretation and conceptual explanation. The resulting model is something of a template for teaching courses to participants from diverse language groups.

The workshop programme comprised three different types of sessions: presentations; country based working groups; and plenary sessions. English was used as the language of instruction and discussion for presentations and plenary sessions. Participants used their own language during the country based working groups.

To overcome the language barrier during presentations and plenary sessions, a co-tutor with a high level of English language skills was selected from each country. The co-tutor provided a ‘whispering translation’ during the presentations and plenary sessions. The role of the co-tutors was more than that of a translator, however, and the co-tutors also provided an explanation of terms and concepts to their compatriots and acted as discussion leaders during the country based national working groups. At the beginning of each country based working group each co-tutor provided a brief overview of the preceding presentation, ensuring that all participants had a clear understanding of the issues covered. Thus, the co-tutors had an active training role, complementing the role of the Workshop facilitators.

Pre-Training Workshop
To ensure that the co-tutors were well prepared for their roles, a pre-workshop training for co-tutors was held over the two days prior to the Workshop. During this time the facilitators and co-tutors worked through the entire programme for the Workshop, allowing time to discuss and clarify the issues at hand.

Workshop
The Workshop revolved around six themes:
1. Getting Started: Things to Think about in Designing and Teaching a Human Rights Programme
2. Aims and Objectives for a Human Rights Programme
3. The Content, Structure and Timetable for the Programme
4. Teaching Methods in a Human Rights Programme
5. Teaching Materials
6. Assessment

Each theme was introduced in a presentation provided by Professor Roper or Dr Bessell. Following the presentation, participants moved to the country based working groups where they discussed the concepts introduced further and began to put them into practice by designing their own programme. A plenary session was held at the end of each day to allow participants to exchange ideas and share with one another their progress in designing their own programme.

**Getting Started**
The ‘Getting Started’ segment focused on the concept of brainstorming as a means of stimulating the brain and capturing ideas. The idea here was ‘learning by doing’ and the participants were actively and enthusiastically involved in brainstorming and developing a list of issues relating to the design and teaching of a human rights programme. The ideas identified were then sorted into topics and sequenced as a basis for forming course content, priorities and methodologies.

**Aims and Objectives for a Human Rights Programme**
This segment emphasised the importance of clearly articulated and achievable aims and objectives to the success of a Human Rights Programme. The presentation focused on the distinction between aims and objectives, noting that they should be clear, relevant, achievable, and concise. Ways of linking objectives with student assessment and programme evaluation were also canvassed. Participants then had the opportunity to develop the aims and objectives for their own programme, testing them against the clear, relevant, achievable, and concise criteria.

**Content, Structure and Timetable for the Programme**
This segment considered approaches to choosing, organising and sequencing the content of a course or programme on human rights. It also aimed to assist participants develop the skill of timetabling a programme. The presentation noted the various approaches to designing a Human Rights Programme, focusing in particular on two approaches: the Integrative Approach and Stand-Alone Human Rights Courses.

The Integrative Approach aims to incorporate a human rights perspective into a broader course, be it a university subject, a workshop or seminar for policy makers, or hands-on training for service deliverers or law enforcement agencies. Law courses are often considered to lend themselves to integrating human rights most readily. For example, courses focusing on criminal law, family law, constitutional law or property law can all be taught from a human rights perspective or by utilising human rights examples. The presentation emphasised, however, that law is not the only discipline that can integrate human rights. A wide range of university courses, including those focusing on public policy, political science, international relations, health, industrial relations and social work, all have clear human rights dimensions. Moreover, integrating a human rights perspective can strengthen a range of short-term training focusing on policy or service delivery – such as policing techniques or child protection.
The stand-alone approach describes a programme focusing explicitly on human rights. Various methodologies that can be utilised in stand-alone human rights courses were considered, including:

i. an institutional approach: focusing on the institutions and mechanisms designed to protect human rights;

ii. a rights-based approach: focusing on individual rights or sets of rights;

iii. a structural approach: focusing on the structural barriers to the implementation of human rights;

iv. a combined approach.

Two examples of a human rights programme were presented to the participants for discussion. Attention then focused on how to sequence content and how to allocate sufficient time for each component of the programme.

During the country based working groups, participants began to identify and sequence the content of their courses and to develop a timetable.

Teaching Methods in a Human Rights Programme
This segment was designed to identify various teaching methods and to discuss issues to consider when choosing teaching methods. The presentation explained the use of lecturing, case studies, mock courts, role-plays and simulations, and discussion groups. The strengths and weaknesses of each method was examined. The presentation emphasised the importance of identifying the characteristics of the learners, including why they are attending the course, what they need to know, what knowledge and experience they bring, and the implications of their cultural, religious or ethnic background. The special issues involved when learners are more senior than teachers were also considered.

The presentation then focused on ways of choosing the right teaching method to achieve the stated objectives. Finally, there was some discussion of the use of teaching aids, including over-head projectors, white boards, and flip charts.

During the country based working groups, participants identified the appropriate teaching methods for their own courses.

Teaching Materials
This segment focused on the purpose of teaching materials, the range of materials available, and how they can be utilised. The presentation emphasised the importance of using relevant materials that participants can relate to and that complement the teaching methods chosen. It was noted that materials should be accessible to students and understood by them; for example legal documents and international treaties may be highly appropriate if the participants are judges, but would not be appropriate for community groups with low levels of literacy. Materials should, however, challenge participants and encourage them to consider issues in new ways; materials might also be designed to challenge stereotypes.

Types of teaching materials considered included: lecture hand-outs; course guides; text books; international human rights treaties, declarations and resolutions; comments of United Nations treaties committees; government, UN and NGO reports; media reports; and videos. The advantages and pitfalls of various types of materials
were canvassed, with emphasis on the importance of ensuring the reliability of materials. The presentation also included some discussion of how to use materials and where to find them. Some attention was given to the wealth of resources available on the Internet, and to important issues of reliability and quality of material found on the Internet. It was noted, however, that only a minority of participants have regular access to the Internet within their workplaces.

Assessment
The final segment of the Workshop explored various methods of assessment, including open and closed book exams, ongoing assessment, and hidden assessment. It was noted that not all programmes lend themselves to formal assessment, and other approaches may be more appropriate.

The presentation focused on the principles, noting that an over-emphasis on assessment may result in little more than rote-learning and be counter-productive. The importance of linking assessment to objectives was emphasised, as was the importance of stating clearly the methods and expectations of assessment at the outset of the course. The problem of plagiarism was also discussed.

Quiz
The Workshop concluded with a light-hearted quiz. Rather than remaining in country based groups, teams comprised people from various countries. The resulting four teams then competed against each other. The quiz questions largely focused on human rights, with a few humorous general knowledge questions included.

Presentation Ceremony
The presentation ceremony was held at the end of the final day of the Workshop and was attended by several guests, including HE Alan Williams, New Zealand Ambassador to Thailand; Michelle McGillivray, second secretary, New Zealand Embassy; Dr Jingjai Hanchanlash, Board Member of the Mekong Region Law Centre; and Dr Pisawat Sukonthapan, Executive Director, Mekong Region Law Centre.

Certificates of Participation were presented by HE Alan Williams, who also addressed the participants.

Professor Christopher Roper of the Centre for Legal Education and Dr Sharon Bessell of the Centre for Democratic Institutions each made a short address, as did a representative from each country.

Outcomes
The Workshop was highly successful with three particularly valuable outcomes.

First, at the conclusion of the Workshop each country group had prepared the outline of a course dealing with issues identified as human rights priorities for their respective countries or professional environments. Participants felt well-equipped to either implement their course or recommend it for implementation. In all, five courses were developed. Two adopted an Integrative Approach: one focusing on the human rights dimensions of the Thai Constitution and one addressing the transition to a market economy and implications for consumers from a human rights perspective. It was
envisaged that each of these courses would be taught as one semester university subjects. Three Stand-Alone human rights programmes were developed: a workshop for law enforcement and court officials designed to eliminate the use of torture; a workshop on the human rights of children and juvenile justice; and a workshop on the indivisibility of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.

Second, participants had increased their understanding of the key principles for developing training courses and education programmes. The basic skills developed can be applied not only to human rights programmes, but to any form of teaching or training.

Third, at the conclusion of the course participants were in a position to pass on the skills and knowledge gained from the Workshop. This outcome had a dual benefit. First it served to empower participants to train others, thus achieving the aim of the course to produce a multiplier effect. And second it enhanced the long-term impact of the course.

**List of Participants**

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Mr Meas Sopheak
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