

# **Promoting Children's Rights in Schools through Integrating Human Rights-Based Approach into Social Work Field Education and Practice: The Case of Social Work Department, University of Gondar, Ethiopia**

by: Endeshaw Aynetu Bitew

## **Abstract**

Since its inception, social work has been inherently embedded in human rights values and norms. Social work programs, thus, are expected to integrate human rights values into their education and training so as to maintain this intrinsic linkage, and to frame social work practice from a people-centred approach. The BSW degree program of the University of Gondar (UoG), in this manner, has stated that its curriculum<sup>1</sup> was designed with reference to the standards of the International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers (IASSW/IFSW, 2004). The curriculum contents and instructional materials, however, could have been designed to equip social work students to enable them to work competently both at local and international levels with transferable skills, knowledge, and values. This project then, primarily aimed to analyze the BSW program concerning the integration or inclusion of human rights education in its curriculum. Consequently, drawing on my prior experience of social work education and practice in the University, and qualitative content analysis of the BSW curriculum, it was found that human rights contents were not integrated to the extent that the profession demands. Analysis of its program and modules' objectives throughout the curriculum, also disclosed that human rights were not given due emphasis; so that modules were not found to be structured to train and equip students able to develop human rights lens, and apply human rights methods in their practice with children. Therefore, certain actions needed to be taken to enable students to competently promote human rights, fight social injustices or engage in activities that require, at least, a minimum level of human rights expertise. To this end, this project

considered, as a second objective of this project, preparing a supplementary handbook that would possibly minimize the shortcomings of the curriculum by providing social work students direct access to the human rights framework in general and the child rights, in particular. Consequently, the handbook is expected to enable social work students to gain, at least, introductory-level understanding of the human rights framework, and also expected to empower them to question existing problem-oriented models of social work practice. Largely, its expected impact will be huge as many students, every year, are being placed in schools for field education practices that enable them to disseminate human rights knowledge to the larger 1 'Curriculum' refers to the Nationally Harmonized Modularized Curriculum for Bachelor of Social Work in 2014 under the Direction of Higher Education Strategic Center (HESC) of Federal Ministry of Education (unpublished). 4 school communities, and design projects that will address groups of children and school systems apart from the individual level of social work practice.

Key Words: Human Rights Framework, Curriculum, Integration, Field Education Practice