

# Lesson Series 14: Use of Communications for protection of people and promotion of rights - Part II

## About This Lesson

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This Lesson is a continuation from Lesson Series 13 of the HR School Lesson Series.

### I. How to improve human rights activities by use of web sites

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#### A Reading

It is time that every village, every town, every city, every workplace develop a people's web-site. Such a site will give information about people, for example, rights violations against individuals; instances of torture and discrimination; the denial of people's rights; the condition of education and health facilities; drinking water-related issues; the experiences of women.

It will be a place to share views on important topics and vote in the arena of public opinion, etc. It will provide an opportunity for people to speak for themselves and to be heard. Above all, it will preserve the stories of the people and their pictures. Such sites will alter human discourse in every area of life. Instead of hearing endlessly about a few people considered important by the establishment, we will hear about the ordinary folk who alone really represent the genuine instincts and impulses of life.

This web-site can create a place of human interaction in cyberspace, which can sustain democracy and defeat militarism and dictatorship. Thus, an age in which the influence of the folk is felt everywhere can be created. This is a possibility now, and I hope a reality in the future.

(Taken from a paper presented By Basil Fernando, AHRC, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Colonialism, Authoritarianism, Democracy and Human Rights of South East Asia, held by the May 18<sup>th</sup> Institute of Chonnam National University at the May 18 Cultural Hall, Gwangju, South Korea from 15-17, on the occasion of the commemoration of the Gwangju Uprising of 1980.)

### Questions for discussion

- A) Did you think of having a web-site for your organization; for the causes you fight for; for your village; for your work place?
- B) Do you think it is very difficult to organize a web-site for your purposes.? If so, what are those difficulties?
- C) Do you know that some other organization ( For example AHRC) can help you to put up your web-site and can help you also to maintain it?
- D) When you try to build the working group of your organization, do you give priority to recruiting persons who have a good working capacity for the use of modern communication facilities?
- F) When you allocate your funds and when you try to raise funds do you give priority to this aspect?

## II. How the use of modern communication can give you a vast advantage

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### A Reading

The mass media of the 20th century made it impossible for the ordinary folk to have much influence through the mass media. The cost of ownership of the media was so high that media ownership was easily in the hands of the elite. Though the people may at times develop their own media, these efforts were very limited in scope and often did not last for long.

Perhaps some developments which took place during the last decade of the 20th century may alter the course of human communication in the 21st century. Private computers and communication facilities that enable individuals to contact others without dependence on huge press establishments may once again bring about the type of folk communication which is able to resist the elite's predetermination of the life of the people. The potential for this now exists. The realization will very much depend on the use of this potential by folk movements themselves.

These types of private communication also help to break down the draconian laws of copyrights which hinder human communication. Among the ordinary people, the sharing of ideas, opinions and information has always been free. Much of the world's achievements, such as building irrigation systems in the past, the control of water for human use, the development of crops, the organisation of sanitation, the developments of song, dance and other forms of culture, have been on the basis of the free communication of ordinary people. This may once again become possible through the private communication facilities which are now becoming available to the ordinary folk.

The development of enlightenment in the 21st century will very much depend on the use of modern technology for private communication among the ordinary people. If the ordinary people liberate themselves from being mere consumers of information produced by the State and other big establishments and instead begin to talk about their own problems to each other, this private discourse may lead to different forms of understanding among the people. This private discourse may lead to actions and reactions among ordinary people in the world, the pressure of which will make itself felt in all important areas of life, be it global warming, the planning of production, dealing with issues of discrimination and all other matters.

(This quote is from the same speech)

### Questions for discussion

- a) Have you tried to write an urgent appeal on behalf of any one or any issue?
- b) If you have done so, have you tried to get the help of any other organization engaged in international dissemination of such appeals ( for example AHRC), to give wide publicity to your appeal?)
- c) If your answers to the above two questions are the negative, what were reasons for not trying this?
- d) Do you agree that this way you may be able to get greater attention for your appeals than by relying on the normal mass media, such as the press or TV?
- e) Have you considered the fact that by use of private communication, you can control time and the content of your appeal better than through the general mass media?
- f) Do you think it is worth giving this a try? If the answer is in the affirmative what do you propose to do to give this approach a try?
- g) You may ask similar questions regarding the use of email and internet for signing petitions, conducting debates on issues you think important, sharing information and even conducting education.