

FRIENDLY SCHOOL PROGRAMME

One of NHRI Samoa's core role is to carry out human rights education in village and school communities in Samoa. The purpose is to ensure that people understand what human rights are as well as responsibilities associated with these rights.

In 2015, the Office conducted its first ever State of Human Rights Report and discovered that there was a lot of confusion and misconception about the rights of children. The common belief and concern among parents was that human rights give children the right to whatever they want and takes away their authority to discipline their children. This is of course not the case. The Convention on the Rights of a Child outlines rights that every child is entitled and privileged to. It considers children as autonomous persons capable of making their own decisions. The Convention also recognizes that parents are free to raise children the way they want, therefore the Convention does not in any way give children the right to do as they please. It actively serves to strengthen family life

While every provision in the Convention is directly focused on the rights of the child, many also elaborate a central role for parents as key players in their realization. A close reading of the Convention highlights its acknowledgment of parents and other caregivers from four important and distinct perspectives.

- Families are fully recognized as playing a unique and vital role in the lives of children - *Preamble*
- Convention reaffirms the principle of respect for family autonomy already established in earlier human rights treaties - *Articles 5,7,8,9,1,14,16*
- Convention introduces explicit obligations on States to provide the necessary institutions, services, support and facilities to families to enable them to care adequately for their children - *Articles 3,2,18,24(d)(e)(f),27*
- Convention introduces obligations on States to take measures that serve directly to protect the rights of families through measures that strengthen and support the inter-relationships between family members - *Articles 9,4,10,29.1(c),37(c)*

As a result, the Office developed its Friendly School Programme which aims to work towards building a positive understanding among children and teachers about the value of understanding and respecting human rights and also the responsibilities and the limitations that come with it through the provision of education and information. The educational programme also focuses on promoting an overall school-wide atmosphere of equality, nondiscrimination, inclusion, respect, dignity and participation in schools. The Programme also hopes to assist the work of various organisations to tackle the school violence problem where schools are encouraged to explore what it truly means to be a friendly school.

The Programme is carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and conducted in both Primary and secondary schools across Samoa.

