



EQUALITY - Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights

This year's Human Rights Day theme draws attention to the root cause of so many human rights violations; the major contributing factor as to why in so many parts of the world, equal rights and freedoms are unattainable, yet, on another end, certain groups get to have those same rights and freedoms fulfilled and protected: **INEQUALITY**.

Because of inequality, the world has witnessed some of the most atrocious crimes in the history of its existence. Because of inequality, many people live a life of indignity every day. Because of inequality, people die due to being denied basic access to things that necessitate their survival: food, medication, vaccines, safe drinking water, shelter and protection. Because of inequality, human beings are deprived of justice, and the ease in the pursuit of happiness is grossly disproportionate- it takes some people years to attain the same objective that another group of people will get within days and even hours; classic example, being the successful application for loans, grants, housing, jobs etc. Inequality perpetuates discrimination and the latter is seen in vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women and children, the elderly, the disabled, the LGBTI community and people of other status. In order to reduce (and possibly end) inequalities, human rights approaches need to take place at every level of our community- starting in our homes all the way up to State institutions.

In order to advance human rights, the understanding and respect for the same needs to be entrenched in every man, woman and child. Human rights are not concepts that are merely taught in schools and by institutions mandated for their promotion; the importance of human dignity and the emphasis placed on treating others similar to the way one would like to be treated, is also found in the holy texts of major world religions. Moreover, our human qualities such as love,

compassion, empathy and kindness also serve as internal guides as to how we should live harmoniously and justly with others. We cannot truly appreciate people and say we are for human rights when we can so easily turn a blind eye to human suffering and selectively choose which groups should have their rights fulfilled. We cannot advance human rights if we fervently speak against an injustice done to one group but we keep quiet when the same is applied to another group. If we want to eliminate inequalities, there needs to be sincerity in our actions; this can only be achieved through the correct understanding of human rights at all levels of society. We should never forget that human rights begin when life begins- they are inherent to every human being, irrespective of gender, religion, sex, race and any other status. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” In order to attain its mandate of fulfilling human rights and simultaneously aligning with the UN 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, the State needs to adopt an inclusive human rights-based approach to development. This will help to uproot discrimination and corruption, alleviate poverty, increase the quality and standards of healthcare and education, create work places that are more human-friendly and public facilities that persons with disabilities can also access.

This year’s UN Human Rights Day theme fits perfectly with the promotion mandate of the Seychelles Human Rights Commission. Since its inception, the SHRC has been advocating for the respect of human dignity- it is the absolute right that is guaranteed to every person from the cradle till the grave. As a matter of fact, when the true meaning of human dignity is understood, one has also grasped the essence of human rights. Our education programmes are also centred around such and we aim for our message(s) to reach every corner of the community. As we partake in this fight against inequalities, our long-term goal as a Commission is to create education and awareness that elevates human rights so as to bring about positive transformations whereby: human rights are given their rightful place in every institution, they are found at the core of every policy and law.

Through diligent investigation and monitoring, the Commission addresses human rights violations (and the possibility thereof) through proper mechanisms in place. In order to achieve its goals, a good working relationship with the State, inclusive of mutual respect of each other’s role is always key. No one can function in a human rights void. Thus, all actors (both State and Non-State) should adopt a human rights-based approach and take a strong position against discrimination and inequalities. Ultimately, a win for equal rights is a win for everyone.

