



**UNIVERSIDADE
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PESSOA**

Building a Rights-Conscious Future: Educating Children on their Rights to Prevent Violations, in Modern Portugal

[Construir um Futuro Consciente dos Direitos: Educar as Crianças sobre os seus
Direitos para Prevenir as suas Violações - Atualmente em Portugal]

Trabalho de Projeto Final

Mestrado em Ação Humanitária, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento

Catarina Lima Pereira

Orientador:

Doutor Professor João Casqueira

janeiro de 2025

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I attest the originality of this work

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catarina Lima Pereira". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Catarina Lima Pereira

Final Work Project presented to Fernando Pessoa University as part of the requirements for obtaining the Master's degree in Humanitarian Action, Cooperation and Development, under guidance from Professor Doctor João Casqueira.

I dedicate this Final Work Project to my parents, Arlete Santos Lima and Helder José Marques Pereira, that gave me unconditional love and support to help me achieve my dreams.

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This Final Work Project is not just my achievement but a reflection of the extraordinary people who stood by me. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for always believing in me.

Abstract

This Final Work Project has the objective of exploring the importance of human rights, more specifically, children's rights. Now more than ever, this theme should be more and more discussed and implemented in the local communities, not only because we see an increase of radical, nationalist, populist movements throughout the world which impose a risk to the very existence of human rights but also because of the more recent armed conflicts against Palestine where not only violate human rights but also children rights.

This study consists of two main parts: a theoretical part and a practical part. The theoretical part consists of presenting the concepts of human rights and children's rights on the international stage and the existing instruments that protect them. It also aims to understand the challenges that social issues may impose on the prevention of these rights.

On the other hand, the practical part is an analysis of how teaching human rights to children will have a positive impact on the community and reduce the crimes that cause children's rights and human rights.

Despite the intention of international organizations that defend these same rights, the only way to implement this is through political intervention in the national curriculum, making it mandatory for all children to learn about this theme.

Keywords: Human Rights, Children Rights, Social Issues, Education, Red Cross, Portugal, Teacher's Training

Resumo

Este Projeto de Trabalho Final tem como objetivo explorar a importância dos direitos humanos, mais especificamente, dos direitos das crianças. Agora, mais do que nunca, este tema deve ser cada vez mais discutido e implementado nas comunidades locais, não só porque assistimos a um aumento de movimentos radicais, nacionalistas e populistas em todo o mundo que impõem um risco a própria existência dos direitos humanos, mas também devido aos conflitos armados mais recentes contra a Palestina, onde não só violam os direitos humanos, mas também os direitos das crianças.

Este estudo é composto por duas partes principais: uma parte teórica e uma parte prática. A parte teórica consiste em apresentar os conceitos de direitos humanos e direitos das crianças no panorama internacional e os instrumentos existentes que os protegem. Visa também compreender os desafios que as questões sociais podem impor à prevenção destes direitos.

Por outro lado, a parte prática é uma análise de como o ensino dos direitos humanos às crianças terá um impacto positivo na comunidade e reduzirá os crimes que põem em causa os direitos das crianças e os direitos humanos.

Apesar da intenção das organizações internacionais que defendem estes mesmos direitos, a única forma de o implementar é através da intervenção política no currículo nacional, tornando, assim, obrigatória a aprendizagem desta temática por todas as crianças.

Palavras-chave: Direitos Humanos, Direitos da Criança, Questões Sociais, Educação, Cruz Vermelha, Portugal, Formação de Professores

Übersicht

Das Ziel dieser Abschlussarbeit ist es, die Bedeutung der Menschenrechte, insbesondere der Kinderrechte, zu untersuchen. Dieses Thema sollte heute mehr denn je in den lokalen Gemeinschaften diskutiert und umgesetzt werden, nicht nur, weil wir eine Zunahme radikaler, nationalistischer und populistischer Bewegungen in der ganzen Welt beobachten, die eine Gefahr für die Existenz der Menschenrechte darstellen, sondern auch wegen der jüngsten bewaffneten Konflikte gegen Palästina, in denen nicht nur die Menschenrechte, sondern auch die Kinderrechte verletzt werden.

Diese Studie besteht aus zwei Hauptteilen: einem theoretischen Teil und einem praktischen Teil. Im theoretischen Teil werden die Konzepte der Menschenrechte und der Kinderrechte auf der internationalen Bühne sowie die bestehenden Instrumente zu ihrem Schutz vorgestellt. Er zielt auch darauf ab, die Herausforderungen zu verstehen, die sich aus sozialen Fragen für die Prävention dieser Rechte ergeben können.

Im praktischen Teil wird analysiert, wie sich die Vermittlung von Menschenrechten an Kinder positiv auf die Gemeinschaft auswirkt und Straftaten, die Kinderrechte und Menschenrechte verletzen, verringert.

Trotz der Absicht internationaler Organisationen, die sich für diese Rechte einsetzen, kann dies nur durch politische Eingriffe in den nationalen Lehrplan umgesetzt werden, indem die Vermittlung dieses Themas für alle Kinder zur Pflicht gemacht wird.

Schlüsselwörter: Menschenrechte, Kinderrechte, soziale Fragen, Erziehung, Roes Kreuz, Portugal, Weiterbildungen für Lehrer(in)

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Abbreviations

CAT Convention against Torture and Other
Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

CAT Committee	Committee Against Torture
CCPR	Human Rights Committee
CED	Committee on Enforced Disappearance
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CDF	Children’s Defense Fund
CMW	Committee of Migrant Workers
CODU	Centro de Orientação de Doentes Urgentes
CRCs	Committee of the Rights of the Child
CRIN	Child Rights International Network
CRPD	Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRE	Child Rights Education
CVP	Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa
DCI	Defence for Children International

ECHR European Convention of Human Rights

EU European Union

FIDH International Federation for Human Rights

HRE Human Rights Education

HRET Human Rights Education and Training

HRW Human Rights Watch

ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political
Rights

ICCPR-OP1 Optional Protocol to the International Covenant
on Civil and Political Rights

ICCPR-OP2 Second Optional Protocol to the International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights

ICESCR-OP Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights

ICERD International Convention on the Elimination of
All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICJ International Commission of Jurists

ICMW International Convention on the Protection of
the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

IHL International Humanitarian Law

IBCR International Bureau for Children’s Rights

LGBTQ+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and
others

NGOs Non-governmental organizations

OHCHR Office of the High Commissioner for Human
Rights

OP-CAT Optional Protocol to the Convention against
Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

OP-CEDAW Optional Protocol to the Convention on the
Elimination of Discrimination against Women

OP-CRC-AC Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights
of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

OP-CRC-IC Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights
of the Child on a communications procedure

OP-CRC-SC Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography

OP-CRPD Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

PIDE Política Internacional e de Defesa do Estado

SPT Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture

UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK United Kingdom

UN United Nations

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

US United States

Introduction

I strongly believe that one day everyone in the world will be living under Human Rights. For this, education is the key, because knowledge is power, and through education, we can teach the next generation the importance of rights and that we are all the same no matter one's race, social background, religion, or gender.

The Republic of Portugal has been a member state of the European Union since 1 January 1986 and in consequence of that a defender of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since the core of ECHR is based on the UDHR.

Despite the European Union being in accordance with the UDHR, does not mean that there are no violations of the same in the member states. Though these violations tend to be lesser and more discrete in comparison with other places in the world, it does not mean that we should ignore them and not address these issues.

In recent years in Portugal, there have been some violations that have come to light. To a certain extent, some of these situations were known to the local population and, for the most part, nothing was done to stop this behaviour. The case in question was the illegal work exploration of migrants in agriculture fields, where migrants lived in terrible conditions, received enough just to survive, and could not have access to their personal passports. To decrease this sort of behaviour, one must teach the children the importance of respecting and protecting these rights because children are the adults of the future. It is simpler to start this teaching at a tender age just like the old Portuguese saying "De pequenino é que se torce o pepino", since it is more complicated to re-educate adults.

Chapter I – Theoretical Context of the Project/ Literary Review

This chapter aims to address the key concepts necessary for the successful implementation of the project. In my view, the most effective approach is to begin by examining the historical background of all relevant aspects. Understanding the evolution of these ideas provides valuable context and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of their current significance.

Following this historical overview, the chapter delves into the concepts of human and children's rights, as well as the organizations and institutions that exist to protect these same rights giving a highlight to the International Committee of the Red Cross work, which is essential to the project. By unpacking their definitions, origins, and applications, the discussion highlights their interconnected nature and relevance to the project's objectives. This approach ensures a thorough understanding of the foundational principles, enabling a more informed and effective application in the later stages of the work.

Ultimately, this chapter seeks to build a strong conceptual framework, bridging historical insights with modern interpretations, to support the project's goals and alignment with broader social and ethical values.

1. Freedom

According to the online Cambridge Dictionary freedom means:

“Noun - UK /'fri:.dəm/ US /'fri:.dəm/ **the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc. whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited: [...]** **freedom of choice** *Everyone should be allowed freedom of choice (= the ability to make their own choices).* **Freedom of speech** *The Scandinavian*

*countries have a long tradition of protecting the freedom of speech (= the ability to say whate /'fri:.dəm/ ver you want). **freedom of thought** Freedom of thought (= the ability to think whatever you want) was denied under the dictatorship. **freedom of information** They are campaigning for freedom of information (= for any information to be allowed to be given to anyone who wants it). **freedom from** We demand freedom from injustice/persecution (= the condition of not having to suffer these things). **a right to act in the way you think you should; [...] the state of not being in prison.**" (Cambridge Dictionary Online, 2024).*

To have rights one must have freedom, as such it is two concepts that are interconnected but still independent of each other. In today's world, many take freedom for granted and risk its survival by supporting extreme ideals and by believing the so-called "Fake News" that in reality is nothing but misinformation since the term itself according to journalists does not exist because news cannot be fake if they are news. When we take the concept of freedom more in-depth, we see that philosophers may disagree and say that in a world where there are laws there is no freedom since it contradicts itself.

After reading "*What is meant by freedom?*" by Paule D. Callister one can understand that there are several ways of approaching the real meaning of what is freedom. To the author, freedom in the end is not something individual but rather it is a sherd state in a democratic society. This is because the concept itself is rather complex and multifaced where it extends the simple absence of restrictions. Freedom, according to Paule D. Callister's research, is a balance between individual autonomy and the structures of law. Freedom is not just about being free ("freedom from") but also about having the ability to act according to one's will and to choose to participate in society ("freedom to"), which means that true freedom involves relationships and responsibilities structured by the rule of law and by democratic participation.

“In the end, what does freedom mean? It means citizenship. It posits relationships rather than restraints, and it orders them in ways harmonious to both society and the individual.” (Callister, 2016, p. 143).

If we look more into a scientific perspective, it can be understood that freedom is connected to the concept of free will. According to Andrea Lavazza in *“Free Will and Neuroscience: From Explaining Freedom Away to New Ways of Operationalizing and Measuring It,”* freedom is not defined by purely conscious, moment-by-moment exercise of will but rather by the capacity to act within a framework of reasons and internal control mechanisms. This means that even with the brain unconscious of the processes that are involved in decision-making, individuals can control their actions.

2. Education

According to the online Cambridge Dictionary education means:

“Noun - uk/ ,edʒ.ʊ'keɪ.fən/ us/ ,edʒ.ə'keɪ.fən/ the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this.” (Cambridge Dictionary, online, 2024).

Education is one of the basic human rights, and many still must fight for it every day while some take it for granted. When we look more into what is education it is much more than the act of knowing and learning. Education is a process where it is transmitted information about something to someone and if we investigate the depths of it, it is a process that has existed for as long as humankind has existed. Nowadays this has become a luxury to some. Therefore, the importance of having access to education is fundamental, because knowledge makes us stronger, and, perhaps that is one of the reasons why in some parts of the world where more extreme political forces exert power, education is limited to certain groups.

“Education is education. We should learn everything and then choose which path to follow. Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human.” (Malala Yousafzai)

According to the UNESCO “*Right to Education Handbook*” published in 2019 education is divided into three main groups: Formal education (offered by public and private institutions, normally recognized by national authorities), Informal education (something that is not provided by institution but in on our daily lives) and non-formal education complement for formal education, so in other words is something that is going to reinforce what was taught in the formal education). This right imposes legal obligations on states on what should be the education system and what states should do and should not do to its citizens and non-citizens. The handbook explains in a simple form why it is important to implement the right to education and its benefits as well as the importance of education as a basic human right and as a key driver of sustainable development, equality, and peace.

Figure 1.1: The multiple benefits of education

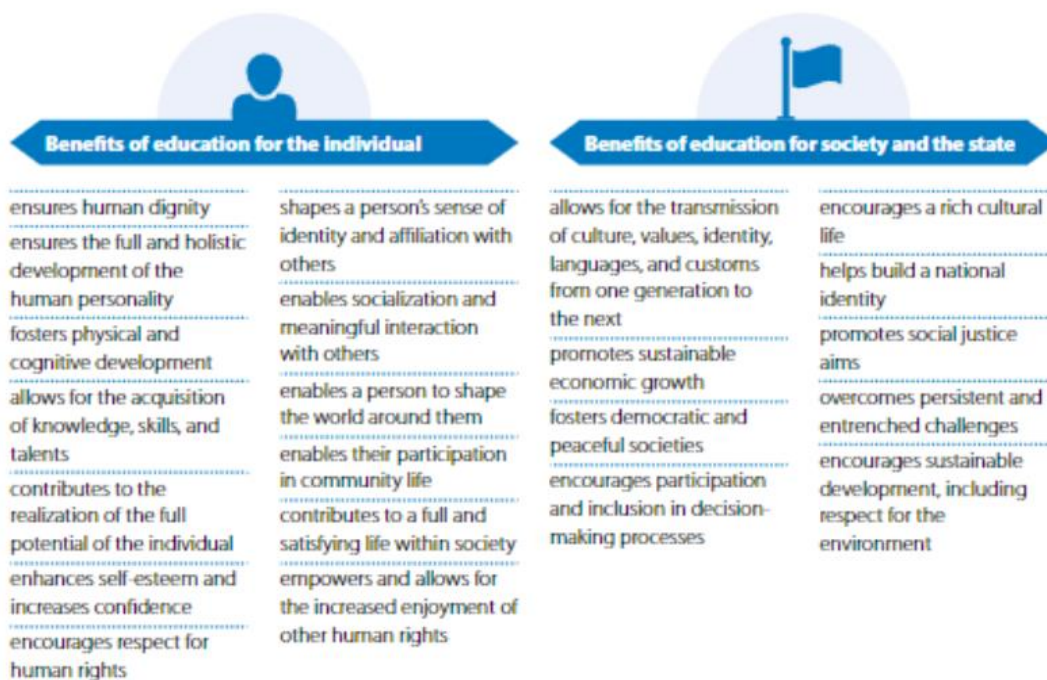


Figure 1: The benefits of education. Source: *Right to Education Handbook*, 2019, p. 30

3. Human Rights

3.1. What are Human Rights?

When people hear about human rights, they do not usually consider them something that should be discussed; many take them for granted. Now more than ever, it is extremely important to fight for them, even if we find ourselves in a state where democracy prevails.

Human Rights as we know them started to be talked around by the international community during the II World War, but it has a long history since when it started.

The first known record of the protection of human rights is a text engraved in a stone stela pillar that is now exposed in a museum in Paris, according to the site of History Chanel. This text is known as the Code Hammurabi written around 1750 BC with 282 rules created to create order and justice.¹ In 6th BC Cyrus Cylinder was created from Ancient Babilon the first known declaration of human rights.² As a matter of fact, in 1971, a replica was made and placed on the United Nations headquarters in New York, as a symbol of freedom and human dignity.³ Still, in ancient times philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle wrote about the concept of justice and natural law.

Taking a different perspective, it could also be said that religion played a role in human dignity and rights. When looking at Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, we see that all three emphasize the dignity of all individuals. Buddhism and Hinduism also promote non-violence and compassion.

¹ History.com Editors. (2009, November 9). *Code of Hammurabi*. HISTORY; A&E Television Networks. <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/hammurabi>

² The British Museum. (n.d.). *cylinder* | *British Museum*. The British Museum; The British Museum. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1880-0617-1941

³ *Replica of "Edict of Cyrus"* | *United Nations Gifts*. (n.d.). Wwww.un.org. <https://www.un.org/ungifts/replica-edict-cyrus>

The above events opened the pathway to the creation of perhaps the most significant developments in the evolution of Human Rights in the 17th and 18th centuries. According to Amnesty International, John Locke was one of the first thinkers to argue that all individuals have certain inalienable rights, such as life and liberty simply because they are human bringing the idea back of natural rights. An important philosopher who also contributed to the protection of these natural rights was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who also introduced the concept of “social contract”.⁴

It was in 1789, that one of the most significant events happened not only in this age but also in the history of humanity: The French Declaration of the Rights of Men and of the Citizen, which was inspired by the American Revolution in 1776. However, it was still lacking some essential rights since it did not include women, enslaved and poor people as an equal citizen. Consequently, as the fight of all humans to have equal rights did not end, in 1791 was created the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen by an activist named Olympe de Gouges known for her famous declaration “Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights”. It was only later that women could gain equal rights under the law, and still, many places in the modern world do not have it, but it was a mark of hope to all women.⁵ In the 19th century, a raising of women's movements emerged advocating for women's suffrage, education, and legal rights, also the abolition of slavery gained straight with figures like Frederik Douglass and William Wilberforce.

These events culminated in the necessity of the creation of something with more real meaning to what is known as Human Rights, but it was only after the atrocities in the 20th century that the League of Nations, the United Nations with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) started preventing such horrors to repeat in the future. This declaration opened doors to new moments like the Civil Rights Movement in the United

⁴ Amnesty International. (n.d.). *A brief history of human rights*. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.nl/a-brief-history-of-human-rights>

⁵ Warman, C. (2016). Tolerance: The Beacon of the Enlightenment. In *JSTOR* (1st ed., Vol. 3, pp. 11–13, 49–51). Open Book Publishers. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19b9jvh>

States of America led by Martin Luther King Jr., and anti-colonial struggles across Asia and African countries that sought independence from colonial powers.

3.2. What are Children's Rights?

The first appearance of Children's Rights was in the 20th century when at the time there was no protection for children under international law. According to UNICEF, it was in 1924 that the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Children Fund. But it was only in 1946 that the International Children's Emergency Fund was created also known as UNICEF.

Children's Rights are nothing less than Human Rights but destined to protect solely the children under the law. Children's Rights exist to solely protect children to guarantee that they are not exploited due to being dependent on adults to survive.

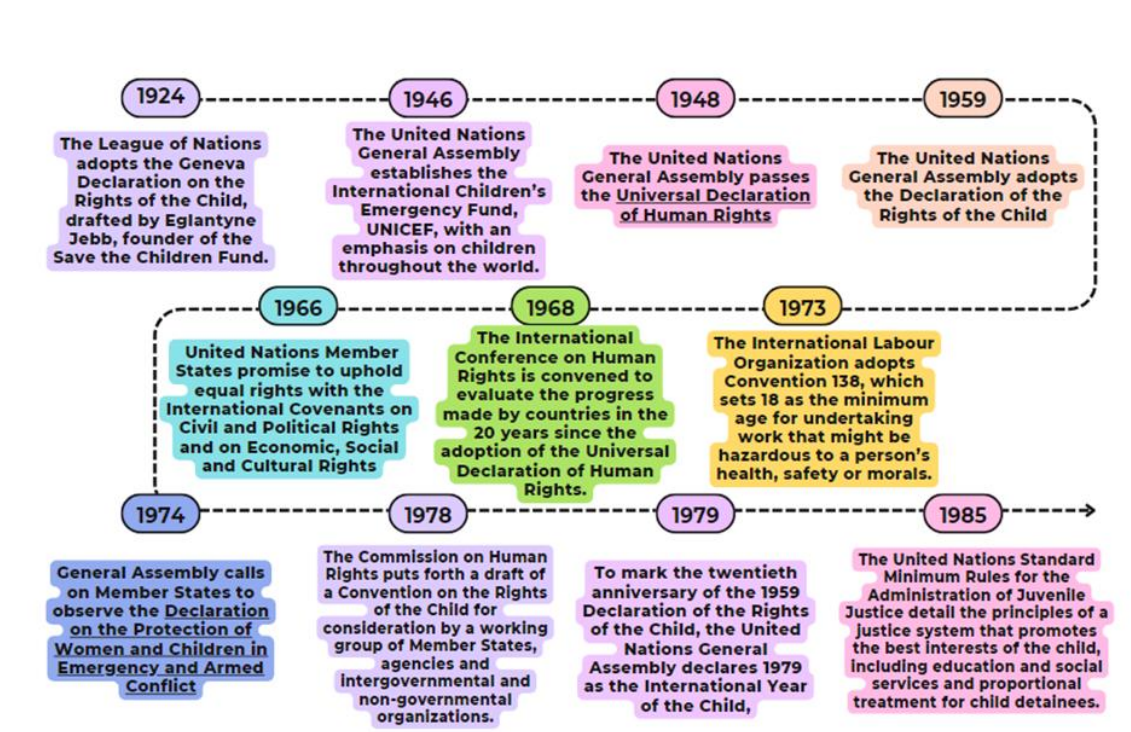


Figure 2: History of Children's Rights. Source: United Nations, 2024.

The Convention of Children's Rights can be found in article 49 where in the preamble we can read that:

“[...] The child, because of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth [...]” (Convention of Children’s Rights, article 49 preamble)

This convention is constituted of three parts: the first with forty-one articles, the second with four, and the third, the last but not less as important as others, with nine articles. According to the United Nations page of the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there are three alternatives to the convention which are:

“1. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography; 2. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in Armed Conflict; 3. Optional Protocol to the Convention on a Communications Procedure.” (United Nations, 2024)

It is also important to understand that to make countries respect and apply this convention to their country, the state must first accept to change laws and policies that respect all aspects of this convention. There is another way that does not obligate States to change or ratify policies or be part of the party of the Convention and that is the Optional Protocols to the Convention which are considered independent of the it.

The signature of the Convention does not create a legal binding of the State to the convention, but it does show a gesture of goodwill in the commitment to protect the Children’s rights and obliges the State to act against the objectives of the Convention. Notwithstanding the accession or ratification does impose a legal binding of the State to the Convention, though the ratification and the accession differ in the procedure, they also

do not need a signature. They both have two steps (first the national organs of the country must make a formal decision according to the constitution. Then a letter must be sent to the United Nations Secretary-General in New York, which must receive it sealed and with the signature of the State), but before that, they must read carefully the convention to see how the most efficient way of respect the treaty.

3.3. What is the Importance of Discussing Human Rights in the XXI Century?

Now more than ever, it is crucial to discuss human rights. While humanity has made significant progress in recognizing and protecting these rights, recent developments challenge the foundation of those achievements. Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, the resurgence of armed conflicts and the rise of extreme nationalist movements all over the world suggest that the lessons of the past are at risk of being forgotten. These troubling trends threaten to undermine decades of effort to build a more just and equitable global society.

The erosion of democratic values and institutions, coupled with widespread human suffering caused by war, displacement, and poverty, challenges the global community to confront these issues head-on. Furthermore, extreme nationalist ideologies often reject the universality of human rights, promoting division and exclusivity rather than inclusivity and unity. Such ideologies foster intolerance and discrimination, perpetuating cycles of violence and oppression. This not only endangers marginalized communities but also jeopardizes the fragile international frameworks designed to protect human rights. The new technologies may also create a new form of threat to human rights protection due to the misinformation that can be found online and presented as the truth.

Discussing human rights today is about more than acknowledging past progress—it is about renewing our commitment to these principles in the face of modern threats. It

requires addressing not only the overt violations but also the underlying systemic issues that allow inequality, oppression, and violence to persist. By engaging in these discussions, one can affirm the necessity of safeguarding human rights for all and ensure that the sacrifices and efforts of past generations were not in vain. There for, it is so important to discuss these issues with our children that are meant to be our future, and one can undressed better this after reading one of the speeches made in 31 of October of 2024 in the Council of Europe by the Commissioner for Human Rights Michael O’Flaherty where he highlights the importance of human rights in the days of today and the importance of it for our children.

Fourth and finally, a completely different issue but one I hope you'll pay attention to in your work, and that is the disappearance of education about democracy, education about human rights from our schools. Very few of our countries still have civic education, as we called it in my country when I was a child. If we don't teach our children about democracy and human rights, how can we expect them to be the type of adult citizens who will play their role in championing these essential elements of our societies? (O’Flaherty, 2024).

4. Organizations and Institutions

4.1. What Instruments Exist to Protect Human and Children's Rights?

According to the United Nations, several instruments can be used to protect these rights, as well monitoring the responsible bodies for this kind of operation. In total nine core instruments can be used to defend and protect international human rights; all nine instruments have an established committee that oversees all the implementations of the treaty made by State parties. It is also important to outline that the treaty has some optional protocols when overseeing certain concerns.

The Nine Core Instruments:

- ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which was adopted on 21 December 1965 and is monitored by CERD – Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁶

The primary goal of this convention is to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality among all individuals, regardless of colour, race, or ethnic origin. It provides a clear definition of racial discrimination and outlines measures to eradicate it in all its forms. Member states are obligated to condemn and take initiative-taking steps to eliminate any actions, policies, or practices that go against the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

In addition to promoting equality, the convention emphasizes the importance of education and awareness to combat racial prejudices and foster mutual understanding among different communities. It encourages states to implement policies and endeavours, that celebrate cultural diversity, ensure equal access to opportunities, and provide effective remedies for victims of racial discrimination. By doing so, the convention aims to create societies that uphold dignity, fairness, and respect for all individuals. It also ensures that children are not subjected to discrimination based on their race or ethnicity.

- ICCPR: International Convention on Civil and Political Rights which was adopted on 16 of December 1966 and is monitored by CCPR (Human Rights Committee).

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⁶ United Nations. (1965, December 21). *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. OHCHR; United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

⁷ United Nations. (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. OHCHR; United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

The purpose of this convention is to protect individuals' civil and political rights by ensuring freedoms like participation in civil society, protection from abuses and free expression. The key rights protected under this convention are: the right to life; freedom from torture and slavery; right to liberty and security; right to a fair trial; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression; right to peaceful assembly and association; right to privacy and equality before the law.

- ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which was adopted on 16 December 1966 and monitored by CESCR (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).⁸

The convention aims to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights. The key rights under this convention are the right to work, which includes safe working conditions; the right to unionize and to fair wages; right to social security so that one can have access to social protections like disability support and unemployment benefits; right to an adequate standard of living (housing, access to clean water, food and clothing); right to health where there is an incentive on health care services; right to education where basic education is free and accessible to everyone; and cultural rights that ensures participation in cultural life, access to scientific advancements, and protection of intellectual property.

This convention also plays a role in children's lives by ensuring children's access to quality education, adequate living standards, healthcare, and social protection resulting in the breaking down of structural social barriers such as poverty and inequality.

⁸ United Nations. (1966b, December 16). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

- CEADAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which was adopted on 18 December 1979 and monitored by CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women).⁹

This convention is in a way often described as the International Bill of Rights for Women. It is a treaty that aims to ensure equality for women in all aspects of life and eliminate discrimination. The key rights that are protected in this convention are to ensure equality in public life (participation in decision-making and right to vote), education and employment rights, health and family life, protection against exploitation and elimination of gender stereotypes.

- CAT: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which was adopted on 10 December 1984 and monitored by CAT (Committee Against Torture).¹⁰

This convention aims to prevent torture and other forms of inhumane treatment worldwide. It provides a clear definition of torture and ensures that victims have access to legal remedies and support. The convention establishes the absolute prohibition of torture, requires the criminalization of all forms of torture under national laws, mandates training and safeguards for officials to prevent such acts, and enforces the principle of non-refoulement. This means that states are prohibited from extraditing or returning individuals to countries where they face a real risk of being subjected to torture.

⁹ United Nations General Assembly. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* New York, 18 December 1979. OHCHR; United Nations.

¹⁰ United Nations. (1984). *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. OHCHR; United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

- CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted on 20 November 1989 and is monitored by CRC (Committee of the Rights of the Child)¹¹

This convention has the purpose to protect and promote the well-being of all children, by recognizing their inherent dignity and the need for care. The convention protects rights that are under this treaty such as the right to survival and development by ensuring access to adequate education, healthcare, and nutrition, as well as the right to protection which safeguards children from possible exploitation and abuse. It also recognizes the right to participation of children as active members of society, ensuring that they have the right to express their opinions, and the right to family and identity such as the right to a name, nationality and to know their family.

- ICMW: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families which was adopted on 18 December 1990 and is monitored by CMW (Committee of Migrant Workers)¹²

This convention is a treaty that aims to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families regardless of their legal status. It ensures their dignity and protection under international law. Under this treaty, the rights protected are equality before the law which includes migrants and their families, and the right to family unity meaning that they are not separated from each other ensuring that children remain in the family. Children have the right to access education regardless of their parent's migration status. Migrants and their children have access to social services which includes the right to have access to essential healthcare. Also safeguards children and their families from discrimination, abuse, and exploitation in workplaces, schools, and communities, as well as ensures the right to maintain their cultural identity and speak their native language without fear of discrimination. This convention is much more than a protection for migrant workers, it is

¹¹United Nations. (1989, November 20). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. OHCHR; United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

¹² United Nations. (1990). *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

also for their children because they are the most vulnerable to all kinds of abuse of their rights.

- CPED: International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance which was adopted on 20 December 2006 and is monitored by CED (Committee on Enforced Disappearance)¹³

This convention is aimed at preventing and addressing enforced disappearances. Ensures that individuals are not subjected to grave human rights violations and provides justice, accountability and reparations for their families. The right of this treaty that is protected more in depth is the right to freedom from enforced disappearance that guards individuals from being secretly detained by the state or individuals acting on its behalf. Through this convention, the families of victims also have the right to know the whereabouts of their beloved under circumstances of disappearance. The right to protection from retaliation and to reparation are also rights that are defended by the treaty, which ensures that victims and their families, witnesses and those seeking justice from threats receive defence, restitution and compensation. This convention also requires states to criminalize all crimes of this origin under national law and investigate as well as prosecute offenders.

Regarding children, this treaty recognizes the vulnerability of children and protects them from being forcibly taken as well as ensures the reunification of families since in many cases this sort of disappearance may be related to the fact that these children were separated from their families. This convention also emphasizes the need to address the social and psychological impact on affected children since many of the involved may be in a situation of orphaning.

¹³ United Nations. (2010). *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

- CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted on 13 December 2006 and is monitored by CRPD (Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) ¹⁴

This convention is focused on equal and fair treatment as well as respecting the fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. It aims to eliminate barriers by promoting inclusion and ensuring dignity and equal opportunities. The key rights that are protected under this treaty are the right to equality and non-discrimination which ensures that individuals with disabilities are treated equally and protected from discrimination in all areas of life; advocates for accessible environments where they can ensure participation in society; it also promotes the right to education and access to quality healthcare and habitation.

Related to children, this treaty defends inclusive education where they can in the future have the opportunity to have access to equal opportunities for future employment. Also, the protection from exploitation which includes abuse, violence and neglect. It also encourages the active involvement of children in decision-making processes that may affect their lives and policies to support families to help them support their children's development and inclusion.

¹⁴ United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

Optional Protocols to the Treaty when Handling Certain Concerns:

- ICESCR-OP: Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which was adopted on 10 December 2008 and is monitored by CESCR (Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)¹⁵

This optional protocol to the covenant has the purpose of providing mechanisms for individuals or groups to present charges to the UN when the outlined ICESCR are violated and there are no more resources at the national level to intervene. The provisions of the protocol are essentially three: to have a complaint mechanism and to have interim measures that allow the committee to request urgent action to prevent irreparable harm while a complaint is under consideration. Also, it provides an inquiry procedure that initiates investigations into possible violations, and encourages states to strengthen national mechanisms and institutions on accountability.

- ICCPR-OP1: Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was adopted on 16 December 1966 and is monitored by CCPR (Committee of Human Rights)¹⁶

This optional protocol serves as a form of complaint when occurs violations of civil and political rights. In this protocol, people can find mechanisms to effectuate the complaint against states that have ratified both the ICCPR and the protocol. The complaints must involve rights protected under the convention and must exhaust all domestic resources unless they are not available or delayed, as well as the promotion of accountability since it encourages states to invest in national mechanisms and institutions that can defend and

¹⁵ General Assembly resolution. *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. (2008 December 10.). OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-international-covenant-economic-social-and>

¹⁶ General Assembly resolution. (1966 December 16). *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-international-covenant-civil-and-political>

uphold these rights effectively. While the committee does not have the authority to be legally binding, they are authoritative and encourage states to comply with recommendations.

- ICCPR-OP2: Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the penalty where it was adopted on 15 Dec 1989 and is monitored by CCPR (Committee of Human Rights)¹⁷

The second protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights exists so states have abolition of the death penalty. Countries that ratify it commit to ending executions within their jurisdiction and taking legislative measures to uphold the right to life. The protocol allows for limited reservations during wartime but emphasizes a global move toward humane justice systems.

- OP-CEDAW: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which was adopted on 10 December 1999 and is monitored by CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Woman)¹⁸

This protocol provides a mechanism for women to file complaints about gender-based discrimination. It also allows for investigations to occur into systemic violations and ensures accountability. This protocol helps women have access to justice and promotes equality in public, social, and private life.

¹⁷ General Assembly resolution. (1989, December 15). *Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/second-optional-protocol-international-covenant-civil-and>

¹⁸ General Assembly resolution. (1999, October 6). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-elimination-all-forms>

- OP- CRC- AC: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict which was adopted on 25 May 2000 and is monitored by CRC (Committee on the Rights of the Child)¹⁹

This protocol aims to protect children from being recruited or used in armed conflicts. It sets the minimum age for military recruitment at 18 years old and requires states to prevent the use of children in any kind of hostilities. One of the purposes of this protocol is to shield children from the trauma of war and exploitation in combat roles, and it also promotes rehabilitation and reintegration for children affected by armed conflict. Through global effort, it ensures that children can live in peaceful and secure environments.

- OP-CRC-SC: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography which was adopted on 25 May 2000 and is monitored by CRC (Committee of the Rights of the Child)²⁰

This protocol addresses the protection of children from exploitation, including trafficking, prostitution, and child pornography. It requires states to criminalize these practices and take measures to prevent and combat them. It provides stronger protections against sexual exploitation and trafficking. Ensures that victims receive support, recovery services, and justice. Promotes awareness and prevention efforts, creating safer environments for children.

¹⁹ General Assembly resolution. (2000, May 25). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children>

²⁰ General Assembly resolution. (2000, May 25). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-sale-children-child>

- OP- CRC-IC: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure which was adopted on 19 December 2011 and is monitored by CRC (Committee of the Rights of the Child)²¹

This protocol allows individuals to file complaints directly to the CRC Committee when their rights are violated. It establishes a mechanism for individual communications, inquiries, and inter-state complaints. This optional protocol gives children a voice and access to justice at an international level. It also, holds states accountable for upholding children's rights and empowers children to seek redress, promoting a culture where their rights are respected and protected.

- OP-CAT: Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which was adopted on 18 December 2002 and is monitored by SPT (Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture)²²

This protocol focuses on the prevention of torture through regular monitoring and inspections of detention facilities. It also establishes a system of national and international oversight to ensure humane treatment, and it may indirectly protect children in detention, institutional care, or other vulnerable situations from torture and inhumane treatment.

²¹General Assembly resolution. (2011, December 19). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-communications>

²² General Assembly resolution. (2002, December 18). *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel>

- OP-CRPD: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities where it was adopted on 12 Dec 2006 and is monitored by CRPD (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)²³

This protocol provides a mechanism for individuals with disabilities to file complaints when their rights are violated. It supports investigations into systemic violations and ensures accountability for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Ensures that children with disabilities can challenge discrimination and injustice. Promotes inclusion in education, healthcare, and social services. Fosters a world where children with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate and thrive.

Even though some of the Conventions and Optional Protocols do not mention directly the children only the adults, it is important to recognize that all children do in fact benefit from them even if it is indirectly. All Conventions and Optional Protocols have the objective to protect human lives being that of a child or of an adult.

4.2. What are the Human and Children's Rights Organisations?

In exploring the world of human rights and children's rights, I found myself wanting to know more about the organizations that dedicate themselves to protecting these fundamental principles. Human rights are the foundation of dignity, equality, and justice for all people, and children's rights are especially vital because children are among the most vulnerable members of society. They rely on others to safeguard their well-being, ensure their voices are heard, and provide them with the tools to grow and thrive.

²³ General Assembly resolution. (2006, December 13). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

The organizations that protect these rights work in diverse ways—whether through legal support, humanitarian aid, education, policy advocacy, or grassroots activism. These groups step in where help is needed the most: defending individuals facing injustice, protecting children from exploitation, ensuring access to education, and standing up for those who are silenced or marginalized. They also raise awareness, push for legal reforms, and hold governments accountable for their responsibilities.

In this subtopic, I will enounce and present a summary of some of the most important human and children’s rights organizations.

4.2.1. Human Rights Organizations:

Amnesty International²⁴: Amnesty International is one of the world’s most recognized human rights organization, operating in over 150 countries. Its primary mission is to combat human rights abuses, such as torture, the death penalty, and unlawful detainment while championing the rights to freedom of expression and equality. The organization conducts meticulous research to expose injustices and uses its findings to launch global advocacy campaigns. Amnesty also mobilizes grassroots activism by encouraging individuals to participate in petitions, protests, and letter-writing campaigns to pressure governments and institutions to enact change. Its impact is evident in numerous legal reforms and the release of countless political prisoners.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)²⁵: Human Rights Watch focuses on documenting human rights abuses through in-depth research and reporting. By investigating conflicts, labour violations, and political repression, HRW produces detailed reports that serve as evidence for advocacy efforts. The organization collaborates closely with policymakers and

²⁴ Amnesty International. (n.d.-b). *Amnesty International*. Amnesty.org. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/>

²⁵ Human Rights Watch. (n.d.). *Human Rights Watch*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/>

international bodies to influence laws and policies that protect human rights. They also highlight emerging crises, raising awareness through global media channels to ensure that violations do not go unnoticed. Its rigorous approach has led to significant advancements in areas like the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and the promotion of workers' rights.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)²⁶: The UNHRC is an intergovernmental body tasked with addressing human rights violations and making recommendations to improve global standards. Composed of 47 elected member states, the council oversees the Universal Periodic Review, which assesses the human rights practices of every UN member state. Special procedures allow independent experts to investigate specific issues, such as freedom of religion, minority rights, or the rights of migrants. The UNHRC plays a pivotal role in fostering dialogue and cooperation among nations while holding them accountable for violations. Its work has been instrumental in addressing crises such as ethnic cleansing and systemic discrimination.

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)²⁷: The FIDH is a coalition of over 180 human rights organizations, working to defend civil, political, and socio-economic rights globally. The federation uses litigation, advocacy, and education to empower marginalized communities and ensure justice. By collaborating with local organizations, the FIDH bridges global human rights standards with grassroots initiatives. It also engages with international legal institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)²⁸: The OHCHR, part of the United Nations, is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights globally. It

²⁶ United Nations Human Rights Council. (n.d.). *OHCHR | HRC | Welcome to the Human Rights Council*. OHCHR; United Nations Human Rights Council. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/about-council>

²⁷ (n.d.-b). International Federation for Human Rights. <https://www.fidh.org/en/>

²⁸ United Nations. (n.d.). OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/ohchr_homepage

monitors violations, supports the development of international human rights laws, and provides technical assistance to states for implementing these laws. The OHCHR plays a vital role in crisis response, offering expertise and resources during emergencies, such as conflicts or natural disasters. Through its commitment to capacity-building and policy development, the OHCHR strengthens national institutions to uphold human rights for all.

Freedom House²⁹: Freedom House is an independent organization that urge

for democracy, political freedom, and human rights worldwide. Its annual reports assess the state of freedom in countries, ranking them on civil liberties and political rights. These assessments are used to identify areas of concern and inform advocacy efforts. Freedom House focuses on promoting free elections, press freedom, and civic participation while supporting activists and journalists in repressive regimes.

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)³⁰: The ICJ focuses on promoting human rights through the rule of law. It provides expert legal opinions on international human rights cases and promotes for the independence of judges and lawyers. By strengthening legal frameworks and promoting judicial accountability, the ICJ ensures that justice systems are effective in protecting human rights. Its work includes providing legal support to victims of human rights abuses and advising governments on law reforms.

The Advocates for Human Rights³¹: This organization offers legal representation and stand up for individuals facing human rights violations. It focuses on providing pro bono legal services, conducting education programs, and engaging in policy advocacy to protect vulnerable populations. The Advocates for Human Rights play a crucial role in

²⁹ Freedom House. (n.d.). *Freedom House*. Freedomhouse.org. <https://freedomhouse.org/>

³⁰ (n.d.). International Commission of Jurists. <https://www.icj.org/>

³¹ *The Advocates for Human Rights*. (n.d.). www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org. <https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Home>

assisting asylum seekers, refugees, and victims of trafficking, ensuring their access to justice and support.

4.2.2. Children's Rights Organizations:

UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)³²: UNICEF is the leading UN agency dedicated to the welfare and rights of children worldwide. It focuses on child survival, development, protection, and equality. UNICEF provides essential services such as healthcare, education, and emergency humanitarian aid to children in crisis zones. Its endorsement efforts have been instrumental in reducing child mortality rates and improving access to quality education for millions of children. UNICEF also campaigns against child labour, trafficking, and exploitation, working to create a safer and more equitable world for children.

Save the Children³³: Save the Children is a global organization that protects children's rights in times of crisis and beyond. It provides access to education, healthcare, and nutrition while advocating for policy changes to address systemic issues affecting children. The organization's emergency response efforts include setting up safe spaces for children in conflict zones and ensuring their access to essential resources. Save the Children also campaigns to end practices like child marriage and promote girls' education, empowering children to build brighter futures.

Child Rights International Network (CRIN)³⁴: CRIN is dedicated to promoting children's rights through research, advocacy, and legal action. It works to challenge violations by highlighting systemic issues and pushing for legal reforms. CRIN provides tools and resources for advocates, empowering them to fight for children's rights globally.

³² UNICEF. (n.d.). *UNICEF*. Unicef.org; UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/>

³³ Save The Children. (n.d.). *Save the Children International*. Save the Children International. <https://www.savethechildren.net/>

³⁴ CRIN. (n.d.). *CRIN*. CRIN. <https://home.crin.org/>

Its impact is seen in increased awareness of children's rights issues and the development of more robust legal protections for children.

World Vision International³⁵: World Vision International is a Christian humanitarian organization that focuses on child protection, poverty alleviation, and education. Through community development programs, it address the root causes of poverty and promote long-term sustainability. World Vision's disaster relief efforts prioritize children, ensuring their safety and well-being during emergencies. The organization's advocacy campaigns also emphasize the importance of education and protection for vulnerable children.

Plan International³⁶: Plan International works to advance children's rights and equality for girls. It focuses on education, healthcare, and protection, particularly for marginalized groups. The organization's programs address issues like early marriage, gender-based violence, and access to education. By promoting gender equality and empowering young girls, Plan International contributes to breaking cycles of poverty and discrimination.

Defence for Children International (DCI)³⁷: DCI supports for justice for children, providing legal assistance and engaging in research and policy development. Its work focuses on protecting children from violence, ensuring access to education, and promoting child participation in decision-making processes. DCI plays a critical role in reforming juvenile justice systems to align with international standards.

International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR)³⁸: The IBCR promotes and protects children's rights through legal and policy initiatives. It provides training programs for professionals working with children, ensuring they understand and respect

³⁵ World Vision International. (n.d.). *World Vision International*. World Vision International. <https://www.wvi.org/>

³⁶ Plan International. (n.d.). *Plan International*. Plan International. <https://plan-international.org/>

³⁷ *We fight for Children's Rights*. (n.d.). Defence for Children. <https://defenceforchildren.org/>

³⁸ <https://www.ibcr.org/en/>

children's rights. The IBCR also uphold for stronger legal frameworks to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation.

Terre des Hommes³⁹: Terre des Hommes combats child exploitation and promotes child welfare globally. It focuses on preventing child trafficking, promoting access to education, and providing humanitarian aid to children in need. The organization's work ensures that children in vulnerable situations are protected and supported.

ECPAT International⁴⁰: ECPAT International is a global network dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children. It engages in advocacy, research, and capacity-building efforts to combat trafficking, child pornography, and exploitation. ECPAT also works with governments and international bodies to strengthen laws and policies protecting children from abuse.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF)⁴¹: The CDF endorse for children's rights in the United States, focusing on reducing child poverty, improving access to education, and ensuring healthcare for all children. Through policy reform and public awareness campaigns, the CDF works to create opportunities for every child to thrive.

4.3. What are the Challenges and Difficulties that Arise in Protecting Human and Children's rights?

After reading *Protecting Human Rights: The Challenge to Humanitarian Organizations* by Mark Frohardt, Diane Paul, and Larry Minear one can understand better the challenges that appear when protecting human rights and children's rights.

³⁹ Terre des hommes. (n.d.). Www.tdh.org. <https://www.tdh.org/en>

⁴⁰ Home. (n.d.). ECPAT. <https://ecpat.org/>

⁴¹ Dawson, B. (n.d.). *Children's Defense Fund*. Children's Defense Fund. <https://www.childrendefense.org/>

These difficulties arise from political resistance, systemic inequality, cultural barriers, and global crises, making it a complex and ongoing struggle. Authoritarian governments often pose a significant challenge, prioritizing power and control over freedom and justice. These regimes suppress dissent, silence activists, and ignore international human rights standards, leaving little room for accountability. In times of armed conflict, the situation worsens. Civilians are caught in the crossfire, and rights violations like torture, forced displacement, and unlawful killings become rampant, often with little to no recourse for victims.

“Today’s conflicts often take place in cities and villages, with civilians as the preferred targets, the propagation of terror as the premeditated tactic, and the physical elimination or mass displacement of certain categories of populations as the overarching strategy.” (Mello, U.N., 1999, p. 65).

Economic inequality is another major obstacle. Around the world, millions of people lack access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, and housing. Marginalized groups like ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable, often facing systemic discrimination and exclusion.

Migration crises add another layer of complexity. Refugees and migrants often endure discrimination, exploitation, and denial of basic rights in host countries. Without strong international systems to protect these groups, they are left vulnerable to abuse. At the same time, advancements in technology have introduced new threats to human rights, such as mass surveillance and the misuse of personal data, which undermine freedoms and privacy.

“The reality that aid sometimes exacerbates violations of human rights has led relief workers to reconsider the basic humanitarian reflex: to relieve immediate suffering without thought to the consequences.” (Frohardt., et al, 1999, p. 26).

When it comes to children's rights, the challenges are equally pressing but distinct. Poverty continues to force millions of children into exploitative labour, depriving them of an education, particularly for girls who face additional barriers like early marriage or societal expectations that limit their opportunities, preventing them from having a safe childhood. Violence against children, including abuse and child trafficking remains widespread. Along with armed conflicts that result in children being orphaned, displaced and possibly recruited as soldiers.

Health disparities also highlight the vulnerability of children, especially in impoverished regions where preventable diseases claim countless young lives. In many cases, governments fail to prioritize children's rights, either due to a lack of resources, political will, or awareness.

On a global scale, the fight for human and children's rights faces other significant hurdles. International conventions and organizations provide critical frameworks, but inconsistent cooperation between nations weakens their impact. Political divides and competing national interests often overshadow efforts to protect these rights. Limited resources and funding further hinder grassroots organizations and NGOs, leaving them struggling to address violations effectively. In many cases, states and powerful institutions resist accountability, making it harder to secure justice for victims.

“The gap between law and practice also reflects the unwillingness of other governments, including donors and key regional players, to meet their obligations. [...] mobilizing the necessary political will for effective protection efforts.” (Frohardt., et al, 1999, p. 96-97).

Despite these challenges, in order to maintain the protection of these essential rights, it requires collaboration on all levels — from international organizations and governments to grassroots activists and local communities. While the obstacles are significant, the

collective commitment to a fairer and more equitable world is what drives progress forward.

5. International Committee of the Red Cross⁴²

According to the official platforms of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) this organization is one of the world's most respected and longstanding humanitarian organizations. Founded in 1863 by Henry Dunant and Gustave Moynier in Geneva, Switzerland, it was established in response to the need for impartial humanitarian assistance during times of armed conflict. Guided by its core principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence, the ICRC's mission is to protect and assist victims of war, natural disasters, and other crises. Over the years, it has grown into a global entity, forming the backbone of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which works to alleviate human suffering regardless of nationality, race, or creed. Its emblem, a red cross on a white background, is recognized worldwide as a symbol of protection and aid.

5.1. Synthetic Description

The ICRC operates with the primary objective of delivering humanitarian assistance where it is needed most, often in some of the world's most dangerous and inaccessible regions. Its activities include providing medical care to those injured in conflicts, distributing food and water to displaced populations, and ensuring the humane treatment of prisoners of war. The ICRC also plays a vital role in reconnecting families separated by conflict through its tracing services and Red Cross messages.

⁴² ICRC. (n.d.). *International Committee of the Red Cross*. International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en>

One of the key strengths of the ICRC lies in its ability to maintain neutrality, which allows it to gain access to conflict zones and build trust with all parties involved. This neutrality ensures that its aid reaches those who need it most, regardless of their affiliations.

Beyond its fieldwork, the ICRC is deeply involved in raising awareness about humanitarian issues. It conducts extensive research and publishes reports on the impact of war and conflict on civilians. The organization also works closely with local Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, forming a cohesive network that strengthens its global reach and effectiveness.

5.2. Legal Framework⁴³

The work of the ICRC is deeply rooted in international law, particularly international humanitarian law (IHL), which seeks to regulate the conduct of armed conflicts and protect individuals who are not participating in hostilities (ICRC, s/d). The Geneva Conventions of 1949, along with their Additional Protocols, form the cornerstone of this legal framework. These treaties establish clear guidelines for the treatment of prisoners of war, the protection of civilians, and the conduct of hostilities, ensuring that humanitarian principles are upheld even in times of war.

The ICRC has a unique mandate under the Geneva Conventions to monitor the implementation of IHL. This includes visiting prisoners of war and detained civilians, ensuring that they are treated humanely and have access to necessities. The organization also works to prevent violations of IHL by providing training and resources to armed forces, governments, and non-state actors.

The ICRC also engages in confidential dialogue with state and non-state actors to address violations of IHL. Unlike many organizations that publicly denounce violations, the

⁴³ *Law and policy* | ICRC. (n.d.). [Www.icrc.org. https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy](https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy)

ICRC's approach is to work behind the scenes, fostering trust and cooperation to achieve tangible results. This method has proven effective in gaining access to conflict zones and negotiating the release of detainees.

In essence, the ICRC's legal framework not only provides the foundation for its operations but also serves as a guiding principle for its advocacy and capacity-building efforts. By championing the rule of law, the ICRC ensures that humanitarian considerations remain central to international relations.

5.3. The Red Cross in Portugal⁴⁴

According to the official platform of the Red Cross, the organization presence in Portugal is represented by the Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa (CVP), which was established in 1865, just two years after the founding of the ICRC. As one of the oldest national societies within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the CVP has a rich history of providing humanitarian assistance both domestically and internationally.

In Portugal, the CVP's activities encompass a wide range of services aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable populations. These include emergency response, healthcare, and social support programs. The organization operates emergency medical units that provide critical care during natural disasters, accidents, and public health crises. It also runs community-based programs that address issues such as homelessness, food insecurity, and elderly care, ensuring that no one is left behind.

In addition to its domestic initiatives, the CVP contributes to international humanitarian operations, often in collaboration with the ICRC and other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. Portuguese volunteers and experts are regularly deployed to support relief

⁴⁴ *Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa - Início*. (n.d.). [Www.cruzvermelha.pt. https://www.cruzvermelha.pt/](http://www.cruzvermelha.pt/)

efforts in conflict zones and disaster-affected regions worldwide. This international dimension reflects the CVP's commitment to the global mission of the Red Cross.

The CVP also places a strong emphasis on youth engagement, offering educational programs and volunteer opportunities for young people. These initiatives aim to instil a sense of social responsibility and empower the next generation of humanitarian leaders. An example of that is my own experience at the CVP Maia Delegation as a volunteer intern which allowed me to know better the reality of the Red Cross in a relatively small community, and understand better how the theory that I have learned in university in this master's degree can be put into practices.

Chapter II – The Project as an Analysis⁴⁵

This chapter focuses on clear a picture of the current state of human rights in Portugal. Most of the information acquired in this chapter was taken from the history manual of the Portuguese high school called *Linhas da Historia – Historia A - 10º, 11º, 12º* written by Alexandra Fontes, Fatima Freitas Gomes, José Fortes and with the collaboration of Antonio Luís Catarino”.

Human rights are the fundamental freedoms and protections that every person should enjoy, regardless of where they live. Portugal, as a country part of the European Union, has committed to a range of international human rights agreements. These values are key to shaping both its laws and its daily life.

Portugal has made remarkable strides in human rights, especially since the 1974 Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution), which ended a long period of dictatorship and led to the birth of its modern democratic society. The revolution brought with it

⁴⁵ *História*. (n.d.). Representação Permanente de Portugal Junto Da União Europeia. <https://ue.missaoportugal.mne.gov.pt/pt/portugal/sobre-portugal/historia>

significant changes, including greater freedom, civil rights, and reforms aimed at equality. Yet, like many countries, Portugal still faces challenges, particularly when it comes to the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, gender equality, and the inclusion of immigrants and refugees.

1. Portugal

Portugal has a rich and fascinating history that stretches back centuries. The country's journey began in 1139 when Afonso Henriques declared himself the first King of Portugal, following a successful campaign for independence from the Kingdom of León and Castile. This marked the foundation of Portugal as a sovereign nation, formalized in 1143 with the Treaty of Zamora. It was at the end of the XIII century that King D. Dinis established one of the most prestige universities of Portugal and one of the most ancient in Europe, the University of Coimbra.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal rose to prominence as a global maritime power. This was the era of the Age of Discoveries where the Infant D. Henrique invested in the improvement of scientific knowledge with explorers like Vasco da Gama opening a sea route to India in 1498. These achievements made Portugal a leader in exploration and trade, expanding its influence across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This made also possible a new pathway to the first circumnavigation of the globe commended and planned by Fernão de Magalhães, a Portuguese navigator.

This perhaps may have been the beginning of globalization, making Portugal a hub for all types of scholars and sages. The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, was an agreement between Portugal and Spain where they divided the world into spheres of influence. This treaty granted Portugal control over territories such as Brazil, parts of Africa, and strategic regions in Asia, solidifying its role as a major colonial power. However, in 1580, Portugal entered a turbulent period under the Spanish rule. In 1640, Portugal regained its

sovereignty following the Restoration War, a defining moment of national resilience. However, the sovereignty of Portugal was again put in cause when Napoleon decided to invade Portugal not once but three times making the Portuguese royal Corte flee to Brazil, making moves for the appearance of the first constitution.

By the 19th century, Portugal's global influence began to wane with the loss of Brazil, which declared independence in 1822 marking the start of the decline of Portugal's vast empire, although it retained colonies in Africa and Asia for many years afterwards. It was in 1910 that the Republic was implemented, and D. Manuel II was the last king of Portugal.

1.1. The Dictatorship

Portugal was under an authoritarian regime known as the Estado Novo (New State) from 1933 to 1974, led by António de Oliveira Salazar. This dictatorship emphasized conservative values, censorship, and centralized power, curbing fundamental freedoms such as expression, assembly, and political opposition. The regime maintained strict control over the press and education, indoctrinating citizens with its ideology.

One of the hallmarks of the Estado Novo was its colonial policy, which fiercely opposed decolonization trends post-World War II. Portugal held onto its overseas territories in Africa and Asia, leading to protracted wars of independence in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. These conflicts, coupled with widespread poverty and repression within Portugal, eroded support for the regime both domestically and internationally resulting in greater isolation from the world as the famous phrase of Salazar "Orgulhosamente sós" (Translation: Proudly alone).

1.2. The Revolution of April

On April 25, 1974, Portugal witnessed a peaceful military coup, known as the Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution), which ended the dictatorship. Spearheaded by the Armed Forces Movement (Movimento das Forças Armadas, MFA), the revolution not only restored democracy but also facilitated the so-awaited decolonization of Portuguese territories.

This event marked a turning point for human rights in Portugal. Political prisoners were released, censorship was abolished, and democratic institutions were established. The newly formed democratic government prioritized drafting a progressive constitution, which enshrined civil liberties, gender equality, and social rights.

1.3. The Entry into the European Union

Portugal's entry into the European Economic Community (now the European Union) in 1986 marked a significant milestone in its modernization and integration into the global economy. EU membership brought financial aid, infrastructure development, and alignment with European standards of human rights and governance.

European Union policies also bolstered Portugal's efforts to promote equality and combat discrimination, significantly improving access to education, healthcare, and social services. This period solidified Portugal's commitment to upholding the rule of law and protecting fundamental rights and prevented it from becoming a left-extremist country.

2. Human Rights in Portugal

Human rights in Portugal have evolved dramatically, reflecting the country's transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. It is in the Portuguese constitution where we can find the legal document for the protection of all the rights that the European Union considers fundamental in the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations treaties on human rights. There are some specifics that the ECHR has that the UN treaty does not mention:

[...] the EU Charter contains a number of additional rights and principles that reflect the EU's advances with regard to human rights (such as the prohibition of the death penalty), or its response to technological progress and new developments (such as the ban on cloning the human body; the right to personal data protection; and the principle of environmental protection). Some of the rights and principles of the Charter are specific to the nature of the EU as an internal market and political structure; such as the freedom to conduct business in accordance with EU law, the requirement to integrate consumer protection in all EU policies, and the right to petition the European Parliament. On asylum, the EU Charter goes one step further in proclaiming the right to asylum, whereas the Declaration only recognises the right to seek and be granted asylum. (November 2018, p. 2).

2.1. Human Rights During the Dictatorship

The Estado Novo was characterized by systematic human rights violations. Political dissidents were frequently imprisoned or tortured, and the secret police (PIDE) instilled fear among the population. Censorship stifled intellectual freedom and labour unions were suppressed leaving workers without representation or rights. Elections were held but it was always to make sure that the regimes would maintain dominance, the press did

not have freedom and there was state propaganda everywhere to promote the values of the regime. In other words, human rights under the Estado Novo dictatorship were severely curtailed with systemic repression and inequalities deeply ingrained in society.

2.1.1. Colonies

When Portugal had colonies, human rights' abuses were rampant. Indigenous populations faced systemic discrimination, forced labour, and lack of political representation. The colonial wars of the 1960s and early 1970s saw widespread violence, displacement, and violations of international humanitarian law. Although the process of decolonisation began earlier in Europe after the Second World War, Portugal did not follow this right away since it was one of the forces in the rhetoric of the regime in Portugal where it parsed the times of the discoveries. The Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution's) decolonization process aimed to redress these injustices, although many post-independences struggle in former colonies persisted.

2.2. Human Rights in Present Times

Modern Portugal is a staunch advocate for human rights, both domestically and internationally. Its constitution guarantees a wide array of rights, including freedom of speech, gender equality, and protection for minority groups. The country has also taken significant steps to address historical injustices, such as recognizing colonial-era wrongs and improving immigrant integration policies. Challenges remain, such as combating racism, ensuring equitable access to resources, and addressing contemporary issues like climate justice and digital privacy.

According to the Diary of the Portugues Republic, in Portugal, since 2010, it is legal the marriage between people of the same sex and the adoption rights for same sex couples, marking the committeemen of protecting LGBTQ+ rights.

Even though Portugal is recognized for inclusive policies towards immigrants and refugees in more recent years, it has been facing several difficulties in addressing the needs of all type of migrants. Besides, unfortunately woman rights face several challenges specially when addressing domestic violence and equal salaries.

Perhaps the most significant violation of human rights in Portugal might be in Portuguese prisons. It is not the first time that a formal complaint has been made to the European Union Court due to the overcrowded prisons, the lack of hygiene and heating, and unsanitary conditions. An example of that is the case *Petrescu v. Portugal* (application no. 23190/17) and the case *Bădulescu v. Portugal* (application no. 33729/18). In both cases, foreign prisoners in Portuguese prisons allege the inhuman treatment that went through, though this does not only affect foreign prisoners it also affects the Portuguese ones, and the problem has been dragging on for years due to the lack of prison guards, maintenances of prisons and its overcrowding due to the lack of more establishments.

When addressing children's rights, they are protected under the law. Nevertheless, issues like child poverty which may lead to early exposure to violent environments and access disparities in rural areas still require attention. The Gypsy community in Portugal is one that suffers more discrimination, and the children in this community must be protected under the children's and human's rights conventions not only because they are the community with larger school dropout statistics, but also one that has more marriage and pregnancy of minors of all communities in Portugal.

3. The Role of the Portuguese Red Cross – Maia Delegation in the Fight to Protect Human Rights

The Portuguese Red Cross plays for some time now a crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights with initiatives of social work, education, and healthcare. Through the help of professionals and volunteers, the organizations act in accordance to

the values of the intuition making sure that the ones most needed receive aid in order to maintains the dignity of each and every human being. Since the CVP works together with the Portuguese government, when the government does not have more capacity of aid, they ask the organization to entre and assume some responsibilities like for example food aid or manage medication. The CVP – Maia Delegation, where I am currently doing a volunteer internship, acts in a rather small community and helps directly with food and clothes aid, about 800 people which includes elderly, children and adults in situations of risk. Through my personal experience it can be seen in above the different projects and are of action of the organization in question.

3.1. Social Work

The CVP Maia Delegation provides essential support to vulnerable populations, including refugees, the homeless, and victims of domestic violence. By offering food assistance either by gift cards to be used in the supermarket or food baskets funded by the European Union; shelter for emergency situations either through cooperation with other organizations or through people that provides their propriety for a small time; and psychological counselling. The organization addresses immediate needs while advocating for systemic change to reduce inequality and poverty. The department of social aid also has programmes of home assistance to people with reduced mobility that helps them with their personal hygiene and assistance in mealtimes. The social shop that has cloths at a symbolic cost also makes part of the office as well as the preparation of request of cloths and blankets for people that encounter themselves at a homeless situation.

3.2. Education

Education is a cornerstone of the Red Cross's human rights mission. The organization conducts awareness campaigns in schools and communities to promote understanding of fundamental rights and responsibilities. It also offers vocational training programs to empower marginalized individuals, particularly youth, enabling them to access better employment opportunities. The CVP- Maia Delegation from time to time also goes to

schools providing them with training programs either in first aid or in human rights. The organization also provides courses in different areas to adults free of charge or also paid.

3.3. Health Care

Healthcare is a critical area of focus for the Red Cross, which provides medical aid to underserved communities, particularly during emergencies. The CVP – Maia Delegation has two mobile health units that act in emergencies activated by CODU – Centro de Orientação de Doentes Urgentes (Center of Orientation of Urgent Patients). Vaccination drives through prior reservation and mental health support are among its key services. These initiatives ensure that even the most vulnerable individuals can access the care they need, reinforcing the principle that health is a fundamental human right. The office of nursing also takes care of medication management, services of nursing and one important program called “Despertar” that ensures the exchange of syringes; gives methadone in the program of rehabilitation of people dependent of illegal substances; it also provides intercourse protection and psychological and social aid to all patients in the program and anyone that comes to the organization asking for aid.

In the health care department, there is another office that is dedicated to domestic violence where provides psychological aid through the team of psychologists, and social aid through the team of social workers through the programme called “Valorizar”. This department is also responsible for transportation of victims of domestic violence into safe houses.

4. Methodology

The methodology for this Final Work Project was designed to ensure a thoughtful and comprehensive exploration of the topic. The primary sources of information were academic articles and a carefully constructed questionnaire, which allowed me to gather both theoretical insights and firsthand perspectives. The articles provided a solid

foundation, offering established research and key frameworks to guide the analysis. Meanwhile, the questionnaire served as a bridge to connect directly with participants, capturing their unique experiences and opinions. This combination of methods not only enriched the study but also made the process more dynamic and engaging, creating a balance between academic rigor and real-world relevance.

This study adopts a mixed-method research approach, combining theoretical insights from academic articles with practical data gathered through a questionnaire, making it both dynamic and comprehensive. Additionally, it is rooted in descriptive research, as it focuses on understanding and documenting the topic in depth to provide a clear and detailed picture.

Chapter III – Project as an Instrument of Change

This chapter focuses on my final work project, which aims to implement the teaching of human and children's rights in schools. The goal is to prevent future violations of these rights by fostering a deeper understanding and respect for them from an early age. Education has the power to shape values and behaviours, and by integrating human and children's rights into school curricula, we can create a foundation for more inclusive and equitable societies.

In this chapter, I will explore the possibilities for implementing such an initiative, considering the practical steps required and the impact it could have on students, teachers, and the broader school community. At the same time, I will analyse the challenges that may arise, such as resistance to change, lack of resources, or insufficient training for educators. These difficulties must be acknowledged and addressed to ensure the success and sustainability of this project.

By reflecting on these possibilities and challenges, this chapter aims to highlight the importance of education as a tool for promoting human dignity and preventing violations of rights.

1. Teaching the Universal Human Rights to Children in Portugal

In the history of Human Rights in Portugal, it can be seen an improvement through the years, especially thanks to the April revolution and the entry in the European Union. However, it still lacks the divulgation of this same rights in the population. It is in a way a story of resilience and transformation. From repression to a flourishing democracy, it reflects the country's ability to learn from its past and adapt to the evolving needs of its society.

Due to the admission of the European Union, the country had to face several changes in its form of dealing with people's rights and that is not only applying the Universal Human Rights but also teaching and explaining them to the population. Also, organizations like UNESCO played a role in encouraging Portugal to integrate human rights topics into the national educational curriculum.

According to the article of Isabel Menezes *Civic Education in Portugal: Curricular Evolutions in Basic Education* it can be seen that in the 1990s was when schools started to have reforms in their curriculum emphasizing the importance of citizenship education. Topics like citizenship, equality, and democracy began to feature in civics and social studies classes. Programs aimed at fostering tolerance, preventing bullying, and promoting gender equality were introduced. The National Strategy for Citizenship Education, launched in 2017, marked a significant step forward, explicitly incorporating human rights, children's rights, and civic responsibility into the school system. Even so the attempts to incorporate human rights in the school system since the '90s have been lacking in many aspects most now young adults and children never spoke of human rights in schools or were only presented in formats of movies. The schools indeed say that they

teach what is in the curriculum, but the reality shows otherwise, and now more than ever, human rights are taken for granted.

1.1. What could be the Role of the Red Cross in the Process

The Red Cross has a history of protecting human rights and since the Portuguese government has been having difficulties in implementing the theory into practice through the vast experience of the organization, it can play a significant role in the process of promoting the Universal Human Rights.

One of the ways the Portuguese Red Cross could make an impact is by organizing educational programs in schools. These programs could include workshops, interactive sessions, and seminars that tutor students about human rights, children's rights, and humanitarian principles. By using real-world examples and practical scenarios, the Red Cross can make these lessons engaging and relevant, helping young people understand how human rights apply to their daily lives.

When it comes to teaching, the organization could also support teachers by offering specialized training and providing them with resources such as lesson plans and educational toolkits. Equipping educators with these tools ensures that human rights education is consistent and impactful across schools.

As a non-governmental organization, the Portuguese Red Cross could aid the government in creating a neutral curriculum that does not change every time a new government is created and that follows the political values of either left or right ideals. This is one of the possible suggestions of collaboration since there are more non-governmental organizations that work in Portugal. Hugo Slim explains in a paper called *NGO's and the Future A Think Piece* published in 2013 October 22, well the potential of NGO's collaborating with governments and that there is a risk of too much reliance on

government support can compromise neutrality, limit advocacy efforts, and entangle NGOs in political agendas. Ultimately, successful collaboration requires NGOs to navigate political landscapes strategically while staying true to their core mission: serving communities, advocating for human rights, and ensuring that aid and development efforts prioritize people over politics.

1.2. The Importance of Schools

The key place for children to learn about their rights is schools. Schools are the perfect environment for an education free of bias and neutral in political matters. The article by Lotta Brantefors and Ann Quennerstedt named *Teaching and learning children's human rights: A research synthesis* explains well this idea.

Schools clearly have a key role to play in the process of dissemination. They can do this not only by educating children about their rights, as part of the formal school curriculum, but also by establishing themselves as model human rights communities which reflect the principles of the Convention and other key human rights instruments. (Osler & Starkey, 1998, p. 313 cit. in Brantefors and Quennerstedt, 2016, p.10)

It also emphasizes the importance of didactics in the process of teaching, not only because teaching human rights to children empowers them but also is vital for fostering democratic values, making them active participants in society. In other words, schools lay the foundation for a more just and equitable future.

In the table below from the same article *Teaching and learning children's human rights: A research synthesis* written by Lotta Brantefors and Ann Quennerstedt, it can be seen as a simple form of possible categories of teaching children their rights and what the students may acquire by learning them.

Table 1. Educational categories of the teaching and learning of children’s human rights		
Main motive	Educational content	Educational processes
1. Involvement		
Develop self-esteem (right to be involved) and interactional capacity	Involvement	Recognition of child’s capacity
	Interpersonal relations	Everyday interactions:
		Responsive intersubjectivity
		Social interaction
2. Agency		
Develop capacity for action in one’s own life	Empowerment	Active engagement with others
	Joint action	Altruism, unselfishness
3. Awareness		
Develop awareness about the rights, and ability to protect and enjoy them	Knowledge about (children’s) human rights	Knowledge acquisition through information
		Learning through experience
4. Citizenship		
Prepare for participatory democratic citizenship	Participation	Democratic teaching
	Decision-making	Include children’s views, voices and experiences
	Rights-based relations	
5. Respect for rights		
Develop good social relations and good behaviour	Rights-based relations: rights, respect and responsibility—the social contract	Peer interaction: learning together
		Democratic teaching
6. Social change		
Develop capacity to change social structures: increase social justice and equity	Power relations	Analyse power structures
	Empowerment	Peer interaction
	Social action	Activism
		Emancipatory attitude

Figure 3: Educational categories of the teaching and learning of children’s human rights(source: Brantefors & Quennerstedt, 2016, p. 6)

In the article *A Família e a Escola na Construção da Cidadania* written by Arthur Moreira da Silva Neto, Cristina Costa Lobo and Olívia de Carvalho also express the importance of schools in this process of learning human rights. The article explains that there should be a balance between schools and the family when teaching children their rights. They also say that schools are vital in continuing the development of citizenship initiated at home, and schools provide structured environments for children to experience democracy and learn about their rights and duties.

A escola pode e deve dar continuidade ao processo de construção da cidadania e, com a participação da família, contribuir para consolidar e robustecer a formação de pessoas autónomas, solidárias, íntegras e dispostas a lutarem por um mundo melhor. (Neto., et al, 2012, p. 259)

The idea of a democratic curriculum described in the article *Human Rights Education as Democratic Education* written by Lotta Brantefors, Britt Tellgren and Nina Thelander, is another possible approach that schools may take. The article emphasizes the integration of human rights education with democratic values, making it more than just theoretical knowledge. It's about creating an environment where students actively experience rights and responsibilities through participation and reflection. Teaching methods are designed to be interactive, relying on tools like films, news, and discussions that allow students to engage critically with real-world issues. This approach aims to foster empathy, respect, and social awareness, ultimately preparing students to act as responsible and inclusive citizens. By prioritizing ethical reflection and participation, the democratic curriculum helps students internalize values like solidarity and respect, transforming education into a live practice of democracy.

1.3. Teacher's Training

When it comes to teaching children their rights it is not enough to create a curriculum program. Like any other subject teacher must have formation in this area before anything else. The reality in most countries including Portugal, is that teachers are not trained in these areas and yet are appointed to teach children about their rights.

According to research made by UNICEF *Teaching and learning about child rights: A study of implementation in 26 countries* written by Lee Jerome, Lesley Emerson, Laura Lundy and Karen Orr, it is clear that there is a lack of training teachers in the education of human and children rights. It explores how child rights education (CRE) is being

implemented across twenty-six countries, highlighting its significance for empowering both children and adults to advocate for and apply the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The report emphasizes that education about children's rights is not just about knowledge but also about fostering environments where children can actively participate and experience their rights. However, it identifies challenges such as the lack of systematic policies, teacher training, and clear curriculum guidelines in many countries. The study underscores that CRE is a transformative process, aiming to empower children to function as rights-bearers and advocates for others' rights making schools critical spaces for this learning. It also highlights the role of collaboration among governments, NGOs, and educators in addressing gaps and promoting a global culture of child rights.

Teaching and learning about the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 'child rights approach' in order to empower both adults and children to take action to advocate for and apply these at the family, school, community, national and global levels. (Jerome et al., 2015, p. 7)

This survey also shows that most countries that participated in it do not require the education of the CRE as mandatory. Thus, it shows poor results of the learning objectives. When asked if they feel that school prepares children to promote child rights, 42% say that yes but to a limited extent. In the figure above, it can be seen better what this survey from UNICEF meant when it highlights the importance of giving training to teachers. The impact of not having our educators trained in the CRE and teaching them either way to children results in the lack of commitment of both teachers and students. In other words, in Figure 4 it can be seen some of the data summarised by this survey.

Table 2
CRE in 26 countries

	Is there a requirement in the curriculum for all children to learn about child rights?	Does the government, or a public agency, monitor/inspect the quality of CRE?	Are all teachers trained in children's rights and the CRC as part of their initial training?	Do the regulations concerning who is qualified to teach refer to child rights?	To what extent are schools required to run student councils?
Australia	○	○	○	○	○
Austria	◡	●	○	○	◡
Belgium	◡	◡	○	○	◡
Canada	◡	○	○	○	◡
Denmark	○	○	○	○	◡
Finland	●	○	○	○	◡
France	●	-	○	○	◡
Germany	◡	◡	○	○	◡
Hong Kong	○	○	○	○	◡
Hungary	●	○	○	○	●
Iceland	●	○	◡	-	◡
Ireland	○	○	○	○	◡
Israel	-	●	○	○	◡
Italy	-	-	-	-	◡
New Zealand	○	○	○	○	●
Norway	●	○	○	○	●
Poland	●	●	-	○	●
Republic of Korea	●	○	○	-	◡
Scotland	○	○	●	●	◡
Slovakia	●	○	○	-	◡
Slovenia	●	-	-	-	◡
Spain	○	○	○	○	◡
Sweden	●	○	◡	○	●
Switzerland	●	○	○	○	◡
The Netherlands	○	○	○	○	◡
For the USA questions were amended to refer to international human rights					
USA	◡	○	○	○	◡

Key:
 ● Yes
 ◡ Yes, in some places/to some extent
 ○ No
 - Disagreement among respondents

Figure 4: Overview of some key elements of the CRE across the 26 countries (source: Jerome, et al, 2015, p.23)

The article *Human Rights Education: Developing a Theoretical Understanding of Teachers' Responsibilities* written by Carol Robinson, Louise Phillips and Ann Quennerstedt, examines the crucial role teachers play in implementing human rights education (HRE) within schools. It focusses on the United Nations' emphasis on the integration of HRE into national curricula and the need for systemic changes to ensure its effectiveness. The authors propose a framework for understanding teacher responsibilities in HRE, divided into three key areas: knowledge and values, attitude and environment, and agency and action. Once again, the article points out significant gaps in existing

curricula and teacher training programs, which hinder the consistent implementation of HRE across nations. Ultimately, it underscores the need for clearer guidelines, better resources, and more robust teacher training to embed HRE into education systems meaningfully.

In the figure above, it can be seen the responsibilities through articles of teachers when addressing the HRE. In other words, it addresses civil and political rights dividing both and linking them to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Table 1. Rights examined in the teacher HRE responsibilities framework analysis.

	Specific right	Articles/documents in which right is present
Civil rights	Right to life and personal security	Article 6 of UNCRC, Article 6 of ICCPR, Article 3 of UDHR
	Right to equal value and non-discrimination	Article 7 of UNCRC; Articles 2, 3, 24 and 26 of ICCPR; Articles 2 and 3 of ICESCR; Article 7 of UDHR
	Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Article 14 of UNCRC; Article 18 of ICCPR; Article 18 of UDHR
Political rights	Right to freedom of expression	Article 13 of UNCRC; Articles 19 and 20 of ICCPR; Article 19 of UDHR
	Right to take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them	Article 12 of UNCRC; Articles 25 of ICCPR

Figure 5: Civil and Political Rights following the UDHR and CRC (source: Robinson et al, 2018, p. 230)

In Figure 6 above, it can be seen as the teacher's responsibility to teach students about the nature of human rights and their importance. It shows the responsibilities of teachers in the civil and political rights in Figure 5, in Australia, England and Sweden.

Table 2. References within curriculum documents to the knowledge and values element of the teachers' HRE responsibilities framework.

	Right to:	Examples of teachers' HRE responsibilities
Australia	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are expected to support students to: <i>"identify ethical concepts, such as equality, respect and connectedness, and describe some of their attributes"</i> (AC-EU).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Civics and Citizenship curriculum aims to ensure students develop: <i>"a lifelong sense of belonging to and engagement with civic life as an active and informed citizen in the context of Australia as a secular democratic nation with a dynamic, multicultural and multi-faith society and a Christian heritage"</i> (AC-C&C, aims).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in matters affecting them	In the General Capability of Ethical Understanding, reasoning in decision-making and actions is a core organising element. This emphasises the consideration of others, and states students will: <i>"learn to be accountable as members of a democratic community"</i> (AC-EU, 1).
England	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are expected to teach pupils to: <i>"identify and respect the differences and similarities (EC-PSHE, 13) ... and diversity among people of different race, cultures, ability, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation and the impact of prejudice, bullying, discrimination and racism on individuals and communities"</i> (29).
Sweden	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are to transmit human rights principles as basic values in Swedish society: <i>"the equal value of all people, equality between women and men"</i> (SC-Lgr11, 9), and to teach pupils: <i>"what constitutes discrimination as laid down in Swedish law"</i> (SC-Lgr11, 192).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are to transmit knowledge about freedom of religion (SC-Lgr11, 180), and <i>"should openly communicate and discuss different values, views and problems"</i> (SC-Lgr11, 14).
	Freedom of expression	Teachers are required to provide opportunities for pupils to develop: <i>"knowledge of how they can express their own views and thinking"</i> (SC-Lgr11, 211).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in matters affecting them	Teachers are expected to aim at each pupil having: <i>"knowledge of democratic principles and ... the ability to work in democratic forms"</i> (SC-Lgr11, 17).

Figure 6: Teachers' Responsibilities to Teach Students about the Nature of Civil and Political Rights (source: Robinson C., et al, 2018, p.232)

The Figure 7 above shows a continuity of Figure 6 but it emphasizes the duty to foster an environment and uphold an attitude that ensures these rights are acknowledged and protected. In England and Australia, teachers are expected to act in a non-discriminatory way and follow legislation promoting equality in classrooms, Swedish teachers can actively counter oppression and promote the equal value of all individuals.

Table 3. References within curriculum documents to the attitude and environment element of the teachers’ HRE responsibilities framework.

	Right to:	Examples of teachers’ HRE responsibilities
Australia	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are expected to create an environment which: <i>“promotes equity and excellence”</i> and provide schooling: <i>“free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location”</i> (AC-MD).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are to: <i>“ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity”</i> (AC-MD).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them	Teachers are to support young people to: <i>“make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions”</i> (AC-MD).
England	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are expected to treat pupils in a non-discriminatory way, and <i>“take account of their duties under equal opportunities legislation that covers race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy, maternity and gender reassignment”</i> (EC-NC, 9).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are required to be <i>“sensitive to the views of different cultures and faiths pupils have”</i> (EC-PSHE Guidance, 4).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them	Overarching statutory guidance requires the rights of children within Article 12 of the UNCR to be upheld in schools (EC-DCSF, EC-DfE). Teachers are required to provide opportunities for pupils to: <i>“contribute to decision-making in the school”</i> (EC-DfE).
Sweden	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are expected to <i>“show respect for the individual pupil”</i> , and to promote equal value as a basic norm in school: <i>“The equal value of all people, equality between women and men [are] values that the school should represent and impart”</i> . They are also required to actively counteract discrimination: <i>“No one should be subjected to discrimination ... Such tendencies should be actively combated”</i> (SC-Lgr11, 9).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers <i>“should openly communicate and discuss different values, views and problems”</i> (SC-Lgr11, 14), and are required to create an environment in which: <i>“Teaching in the school ... [is] non-denominational”</i> (SC-Lgr11, 9).
	Life and personal security	Teachers are expected to create an environment in which respect for human life is acknowledged and upheld: <i>“The inviolability of human life ... [is a] value[s] that the school should actively promote”</i> (SC-Lgr11, 9).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them	Teachers are expected to practise democratic working forms: <i>“It is not in itself sufficient that teaching imparts knowledge about fundamental democratic values... Democratic working forms should also be applied in practice”</i> (SC-Lgr11, 10).

Figure 7: How to foster an environment and uphold an attitude that ensures both Civil and Political Rights (source: Robinson., et al, 2018, p. 233)

Figure 8 shows that curriculum documents from all three nations assign teachers the responsibility of fostering student agency and action, particularly concerning two key rights: the civil right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and the political right to freedom of expression. For the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, teachers are expected to help students express their own opinions (Australian

curriculum), explore their likes and dislikes (English curriculum), and develop their ability to form personal viewpoints (Swedish curriculum).

Table 4. References within the curriculum documents to the agency and action element of the teachers' HRE responsibilities framework.

	Right to:	Examples of teachers' HRE responsibilities
Australia	Life and personal security	Teachers have a responsibility to teach students: "to take positive action to protect, enhance and advocate for their own and others' health, wellbeing, safety and physical activity participation across their lifespan" (AC-HPE), and to "apply personal security protocols". (AC-ICTC).
	Equal value and non-discrimination	In the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding, "Challenge stereotypes and prejudices" and "mediate cultural difference" are key ideas for teachers to facilitate pupil agency and action (AC-IU).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are to actively encourage students to: "express their own points of view and listen to the views of others" (AC – EU).
	Freedom of expression	Schools and teachers are committed to addressing the goal of young Australians becoming "Successful learners" who "are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas" (AC–MD, 8).
England	Life and personal security	It is expected that pupils will be taught to protect themselves from harm; e.g. guidance for the teaching of computing stresses the need to teach pupils to use "technology safely ... including protecting their online identity and privacy; recognise inappropriate content, contact and conduct and know how to report concerns" (EC-NC, 232).
	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are to help pupils learn: "to recognise what they like and dislike" (EC-PSHE, 9).
	Freedom of expression	Teachers are to support pupils "to ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge; to articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions" (EC-NC, 18); to "express their ideas" (EC-NC, 34); and to teach pupils "to share their opinions on things that matter to them and explain their views through discussions" (EC-PSHE, 13).
Sweden	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Teachers are expected to: "support pupils in developing their ability to form personal standpoints" (SC-Lgr11, 12).
	Equal value and non-discrimination	Teachers are required to strive towards each pupil being able to reject "the subjection of people to oppression and degrading treatment", and to respect "the intrinsic value of other people" (SC-Lgr11, 14).
	Freedom of expression	Teachers are expected to: "be open to different ideas and encourage their expression" (SC-Lgr11, 10).
	Take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them	Teachers are: "responsible for ensuring that all pupils can exercise real influence over working methods, forms and contents of education, and ensure that this influence grows with increasing age and maturity" (SC-Lgr11, 17). They are further required to enable pupils to: "always have the opportunity of taking the initiative on issues" (SC-Lgr11, 10).

Figure 8: Communicate and express the student's ideas (source: Robinson, et al, 2018, p. 235)

The survey of UNICEF *Teaching and learning about child rights: A study of implementation in 26 countries* written by Lee Jerome, Lesley Emerson, Laura Lundy and Karen Orr, and the article *Human Rights Education: Developing a Theoretical Understanding of Teachers' Responsibilities* written by Carol Robinson, Louise Phillips

and Ann Quennerstedt, provide an in-depth analysis of how the education of human and children's rights has developed and been implemented over the past decade, highlighting the challenges, and transformative potential of integrating these principles into educational systems that are still lacking in its implementation. It also shows the importance of having teachers training in the ERC.

2. The Role of the Government

When addressing the education of human and children rights one must never forget the importance and relevance that the government exercises in the process of implementation of the programs in schools and the training of the teachers. Their support and policies are essential for ensuring consistency, accessibility, and effectiveness in promoting these values across the educational system.

The article *Governmentality, Democratic State, and Education in Human Rights* by Oscar Orlando Espinel-Bernal explores how human rights education (HRE) functions as a tool for shaping citizens and maintaining democratic systems. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concepts of governmentality and biopolitics, the author argues that HRE is deeply intertwined with governance practices aimed at creating responsible, rights-conscious citizens. However, it also critiques how these practices can sometimes serve as mechanisms for population control and the reinforcement of existing power structures. It also points out that HRE often operates within rigid frameworks, which may limit its transformative potential. The article calls for a reimagining of HRE as a tool not just for maintaining the status quo but for empowering individuals and communities to challenge inequality and injustice.

After reading the article *Human rights education's curriculum problem* written by Walter C. Parker, one can have a better understanding of the reality of education on human and children rights in the U.S and the importance of the government to implement it, and why in many cases it is still lacking.

Curriculum development, then, was left to politicians, corporate wunderkinds, entrepreneurs, and a multitude of state and local committees charged with creating curriculum standards. Furthermore, curriculum theory itself, where we would expect to go for expertise, was left without an epistemology, that is, without a theory of knowledge for content selection. (Parker, 2018, p.11)

2.1. Ministry of Education

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education is in charge of implementing the education of human and children rights into the national curriculum, primarily through the Citizenship and Development program. However, the reality in classrooms often paints a different picture. Teachers lack proper training to address complex topics like equality, discrimination, and fundamental rights in a meaningful way. Without adequate support, these essential discussions are often replaced with activities that fail to engage students deeply. Films are screened, music is played, and while these methods could be powerful, they are often unrelated to the topics or focus narrowly on issues like teen pregnancy, sexual education, or recycling. These are important subjects, but they only scratch the surface of what students need to learn to understand their rights and responsibilities fully.

This lack of consistent and meaningful implementation can leave students disengaged and unprepared to think critically about the world around them. Teaching human rights isn't just about ticking boxes in a curriculum; it's about inspiring empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of justice in young people. Yet, without a more structured approach, Portugal risks missing the chance to empower its youth with the knowledge and values needed to become active and compassionate citizens.

It is also important to understand that, even though the government is in constant change thanks to elections and the existence of democracy, it should be put aside our political beliefs and take this curriculum with a neutral view and give training to our teachers.

2.2. Class of Education for Citizenship

The Citizenship class (*Cidadania e Desenvolvimento*) in Portugal is compulsory as part of the national curriculum. It is taught in primary and secondary education, from the 5th to the 12th grades, and aims to foster active citizenship by addressing critical social, cultural, and ethical issues. The subject focuses on developing students' understanding of democracy, human rights, equality, and sustainability while encouraging them to participate actively in building a more inclusive and just society.

The curriculum includes several core themes, such as human rights, gender equality, intercultural education, environmental sustainability, sexual education, health, financial literacy, and digital citizenship. These topics are intended to promote critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and civic engagement.

Through the years, the government has presented proposals for the implementation of this class. In 2011, the program for the basic curriculum and high school curriculum for the citizenship class was presented. This program points out important thematic to be discussed that were divided into five main domains: rights and responsibilities; democracy; processes and institutions, identities and diversity; and interdependence and globalization. It also shows what important competencies should students develop, for example decentring and empathy, critical and creative thinking, communication and argumentation, and participation. Still, it does not show any plan destined for teacher's training. The guidelines published, after the approval of the program were:

Road Safety Education [...] **Education for Development**, which aims to raise awareness and understanding of the causes of development problems and of inequalities, locally and globally, in a context of interdependence and globalisation, so as to promote the right and duty of every person to participate in and contribute to an integral and sustainable development.; **Education for Gender Equality**, which promotes the equal rights and duties of female and male students, through an education free of prejudice and gender stereotypes, so as to ensure the same educational opportunities and social and professional options. [...] **Human Rights Education**, which is intimately connected to Democratic Citizenship Education, focuses in the wide spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in all aspects of people's lives, while Democratic Citizenship Education focuses, essentially, in democratic rights and responsibilities and in the active participation in the civic, political, social, economical, legal and cultural spheres of society.; **Financial Education**, which allows young people to acquire and develop essential knowledge and skills so as to prepare them to make future decisions about their personal finances; [...] **Education for Security and National Defence**, which aims to highlight the specific contribution of the defence bodies and structures to the affirmation and preservation of civil rights and freedoms, as well as the nature and objectives of their activities in times of peace.; [...] **Promoting Volunteering**; [...] **Environmental Education/Sustainable Development**, [...] **European Dimension of Education**, which contributes to the students' training and partaking in the European project, enhancing their engagement, protecting their rights and duties, and thus strengthening the European identity and values. The aim is to promote a greater knowledge of Europe and its institutions, notably the European Union and the Council of Europe, the European natural and cultural heritage, and the problems that Europe faces nowadays.; **Media Literacy**; [...] **Health and Sex Education**, [...] Schools should provide accurate information about health protection and risk management, notably in the area of sexuality, violence, eating behaviour, substance abuse, lack of physical activity and accidents at school and at home. **Entrepreneurship Education**; [...] **Consumer Education**; [...] **Intercultural Education**, which promotes recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and source of learning for all, in respect for the

multicultural nature of society today. [...] (Directorate-General for Education, 2012-2013, p. 2,4 and 5)

In 2017, the government understood and recognized the importance of training teachers in the thematic of citizenship. It published a new national strategy with the name “Estrategia Nacional para a Educação para a Cidadania” to be implemented in the new school year to come. In the document shows that schools are autonomic and can implement the program how they see its best for its students, and the Universities should implement in their curriculum a subject that is for the sole purpose of teaching the class of citizenship since any teacher no matter the background formation has can give these classes – the universities did not adhere to this proposition. In the same document, it can be found what the prefill of the teacher should be to teach this class and the guidelines continue to be the same theme presented in the document of 2011.

Last year 2024, with a new government once again it was made a document to understand what is being done in this class of citizenship. The document is more detailed in what the final knowledge students should have than the prior documents with the same guidelines, but it only recognizes the importance of teachers' training, while it does not specify what should be done.

Na identificação dos temas foram essencialmente considerados os seguintes fatores: [...] formação inicial de professores, em educação para os direitos humanos na educação pré-escolar e no ensino básico (Santos, et al 2014, p.8)

3. The Aim of the Project

This project has the purpose of bringing awareness to the problem that we as a society face in our classes for citizenship in schools. The aim is to focus on Portugal, where we can see a good curriculum but there is a lack of training of teachers in this area of

expertise. For a teacher to teach mathematics, languages, or other relevant subjects, that person needs a degree in that same area but the same does not happen in the citizenship class.

It has been proven through several scholars that a good education on human rights can lead to less violence in schools, which is what I am proposing. A good curriculum in the citizenship program that has qualified teachers and the cooperation of non-governmental organizations that teach and discusses the importance of human and children rights, and how it is still our responsibilities to fight for it every day because they cannot be taken for granted. This idea of teaching our children about human rights to prevent violence is not a new one, fourteen years ago the respected journal *The Guardian* published an article specifying the importance of starting in a tender age the teaching of human rights to prevent its violation. Why is important to teach this to children? Because per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child has the right to freedom from all forms of violence (Article 19).

The publication of UNESCO's *Work on Education for Peace and Non-Violence Building Peace Through Education* published in 2008 also shows how the UN has been bringing awareness to this important topic by explaining what peace education is and what can be done and used to achieve it. In another publication of UNESCO's *Violências e Direitos Humanos: espaços da educação* published in 2013, it can be seen how the schoolers have been pointing out how important it is to discuss human rights with our children and the positive consequences that it may have in their future.

In the chapter *Violências e Direitos Humanos: Espaços da Educcação* written by Geraldo Caliman, it can be read about the importance of education as one of the most powerful tools to address systemic violence and promote human rights. This chapter delves into the dual role of educational spaces as both sites of potential violence and platforms for transformation. Schools are microcosms of society, reflecting its inequalities and injustices, but they also hold the potential to challenge these structures. By fostering

critical thinking and empathy, education can empower students to recognize and resist violence in all its forms — whether physical, symbolic, or structural. This chapter stresses that creating a culture of peace within schools requires more than policies; it demands intentional actions to cultivate trust, dialogue, and mutual respect between educators and students.

A educação está na base da construção do bem-estar social, da construção de culturas de paz capazes de garantir os direitos humanos e a prevenção de situações de risco. (Caliman ., 2013, p.13)

The chapter *A Ideia de uma Escola Educadora e sem Violências* written by Célio da Cunha reflects on the evolution of educational practices, moving from punitive models rooted in authoritarianism to inclusive and compassionate approaches. The chapter envisions schools as sanctuaries where children and adolescents can grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially without fear of discrimination or harm. It highlights the importance of educators as role models who embody respect for diversity and human dignity. In a world increasingly interconnected and competitive, schools must rise to the challenge of nurturing not only academic excellence but also ethical responsibility and emotional intelligence. By fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, the chapter argues, schools can become true incubators of non-violence and societal transformation.

[...] à construção de ambientes de aprendizagens que ampliem os horizontes da educação integral é essencial no contexto de sociedades globalizadas, interculturais e interdependentes [...] (Cunha ., 2013, p.23)

Maria Benites in the chapter “*Juventude e não violência: Territórios de Cultura e Participação*” talks about how the energy and creativity of young people are powerful forces for change, especially when channelled into cultural and participatory initiatives. This chapter explores how art, music, and community projects create spaces where youth

can express themselves, challenge societal norms, and build bridges across differences. It emphasizes that engaging young people in cultural activities not only reduces violence but also helps them develop a sense of agency and belonging. Successful programs spotlighted in the chapter demonstrate how dialogue and collaboration can transform communities, making them more resilient to division and conflict. The chapter serves as a reminder that empowering youth to lead cultural initiatives fosters not only non-violence but also hope and solidarity.

Pelo exposto acredito que pode existir uma Formação Não violenta, ou uma Formação unida a uma Educação para a verdadeira Liberdade, [...] Deve ser algo universal, que atravesse os tempos, os costumes e a sua época. [...] A Estética, que o ser humano tanto precisa, considerando que nenhuma sociedade sobrevive sem manifestações artísticas ou culturais, é o que pode ser a porta de entrada para a Ética. (Benites., 2013, p.75)

Looking at Germany serves as a case study to examine the complex intersections of youth, violence, and drug use. The chapter *Juventude - Violência - Drogas e os Direitos Humanos: Limites e Possibilidades na Alemanha* written by Bernd Fichtner critiques the prevailing punitive approaches, arguing that they often perpetuate cycles of exclusion rather than addressing root causes. Instead, it advocates for strategies grounded in human rights, focusing on rehabilitation and social integration. Bernd Fichtner underscores the importance of understanding the social and economic factors that drive young people toward risky behaviours. By shifting from punishment to prevention, Germany — and societies facing similar challenges — can create systems that support youth development and reduce violence in sustainable ways.

O caminho dos jovens para a violência e as drogas toca em pontos chaves das estruturas e mecanismos de socialização, porque estes mecanismos, ao mesmo tempo, são processados socialmente, institucionalmente e individualmente de formas muitos diferentes. [...] A agressão física, a exclusão social como “a

privação de direitos” e a desvalorização de formas de vida com o seu potencial de construir identidade” (Fichtner , 2013, p.85)

The report published by Columbia University in 2021 written by Yvette Deane, Katalin Jozan, Marvin André Krause, Gloria Moronta and Irina Preotescu, talks about Human Rights Education and Training (HRET) that is highlighted as a transformative tool for promoting empathy, critical thinking, and conflict resolution. It aims to empower individuals and communities to embrace human dignity and equality, fostering a culture of peace and justice. Programs often struggle due to unstable political environments, limited funding, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems, making it hard to measure long-term impacts. Additionally, the lack of standardized frameworks and definitions can confuse and hinder collaboration between organizations. Despite these obstacles, the report emphasizes the importance of tailoring HRET to local contexts, ensuring that it addresses the specific roots of conflict and equips educators with the skills to inspire meaningful change. It is a reminder that while the road to effective HRET is complex, the outcomes — safer communities, empowered youth, and a more peaceful world — are worth the effort.

[...] human rights education contributes to the prevention of violence and conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development, and participation in decision-making processes within democratic systems. (UN General Assembly, 2019 cit. in 2021, p.8)

It is not only the international community that has seen this theme as extremely important. In the article published in 2022 by Ana Campina, it can be seen how important it is to educate the public about their rights now more than ever, and by knowing them they can use it to defend themselves.

This proposal advocates for the collaboration of non-governmental organizations and the government to work together and analyse what has been done in other countries, and see what the best course of action towards a better resolution is on the theme in question.

They also need a more active promotion of human rights, emphasizing the role of education in combating violence and nurturing a society that respects and upholds the rights of all individuals, especially children. Schools must evolve into safe havens for learning, inclusion, and transformation, providing students with the tools to challenge systemic violence and build a more just future, and provide training to teachers or demand qualified teachers in the area in question of this project to teach our children.

3.1. Analysing Questionary

At the start of this project, I chose to create a questionnaire to gather insights from professionals about their views on teaching human and children's rights. I wanted to understand their perspectives, hear their thoughts on its importance, and explore how this kind of education could be implemented effectively. Their input was essential to shape the direction of my work and to address both the opportunities and challenges in introducing these crucial topics in schools.

All the participants in this questionnaire were women from Brazil, and their area of expertise was pedagogy. When asked about the most common way children are exposed to Human and Children's Rights and which gender is more aware of the topic, 100% of participants responded that this education happens primarily in schools, with girls being more aware of the subject than boys. Regarding the question, "Between what ages are children more aware of Human and Children's Rights?" responses were evenly split: 25% said 8–10 years, 14–16 years, and 16–18 years, while 12.5% chose 10–12 years and 12–14 years.

When asked when education on Human Rights should begin, 75% of participants believed it should start in early childhood education, while 25% suggested it should begin with mandatory education. All participants agreed that cultural and social factors significantly

influence the teaching of Human and Children's Rights, explaining that children are shaped by the environments they grow up in.

The participants identified key challenges in promoting awareness of Human and Children's Rights, including a lack of family involvement, insufficient trained professionals, funding issues, and the absence of neutrality when teaching human and children rights. When asked about the role families play in this education, they unanimously agreed that families have a crucial role in shaping children's understanding of these rights.

In discussing how education on Human and Children's Rights can impact bullying and peer conflict in schools, participants emphasized its importance in preventing such issues. All agreed that teachers need specialized training in Human and Children's Rights to convey accurate and meaningful information to children. They also unanimously believed that this education helps shape children into active, informed citizens in the future.

When asked about the most misunderstood aspects of Human and Children's Rights, participants highlighted issues such as the belief that these rights are not universal, the persistence of racism and discrimination, and the lack of seriousness with which children's voices are taken. Regarding the government's role, participants stressed that policies play a vital part in either supporting or hindering the teaching of these rights.

To address resistance from parents or community members, all participants agreed on the importance of dialogue and awareness campaigns. Regarding critical gaps in research on Human and Children's Rights education, most participants pointed to the need for a deeper understanding of these rights, addressing discrimination, acknowledging diverse realities, and consulting children directly. However, two participants said they were unsure.

Lastly, when asked how Human and Children's Rights education contributes to broader human rights awareness and advocacy in society, most participants stated that educating children in its values they will carry into adulthood, enabling them to promote these rights within society. They emphasized the need for schools to adapt their approach and for families to take a more active role. Two participants, however, did not provide an answer to this question.

Portugal, with its deep-rooted commitment to democracy and social justice, has made significant strides in human rights, yet challenges remain in ensuring that every child fully understands and benefits from these protections. This underscores a reality that is just as relevant in Portugal as it is in Brazil: education is the foundation for a more just and equitable society. Due to our proximity in both countries cultures, it is important to see the point of view of the Brazilians. In Portugal, schools play a crucial role in shaping children's awareness of human and children's rights, yet, as in Brazil, there are noticeable gaps in how these rights are understood and internalized. The consensus that human rights education should begin in early childhood aligns with Portugal's commitment to fostering democratic values from a young age, yet challenges remain—such as the lack of specialized training for teachers and the need for greater family involvement. The concerns raised about neutrality in teaching and structural barriers like funding shortages also apply to Portugal, where educational reforms often struggle to bridge the gap between policy and practice. By addressing these issues and fostering a collaborative effort between schools, families, and policymakers, Portugal can strengthen its approach to human rights education, ensuring that children grow up not only knowing their rights but also feeling empowered to defend them.

This questionnaire has emphasized more the porpoise of this project in understanding how really it is important to teach our children their rights in order to create a society that respects these values and how important it is to give our teachers training in the area and collaborate with non-governmental organization for a better result.

3.2. The Limitations

Like any project, there are limitations to its implementation. When it comes to the challenges of implementing human rights education it seems that is a global challenge.

The document, *"The Rise of Human Rights Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Possibilities"* by Lindsey N. Kingston, explores the growing importance of Human Rights Education (HRE) as a tool to promote global citizenship, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity. It can also be read about the challenges that arise. One of the biggest hurdles is the resistance within traditional academic structures, where rigid disciplines and outdated teaching methods often leave little room for interdisciplinary approaches like HRE. Educators also struggle with how to address sensitive, political, or controversial topics in ways that promote open dialogue without alienating students or faculty. Nationalistic biases and historical narratives further complicate efforts to foster a global perspective, as many education systems prioritize national identity over global citizenship. Ethical concerns also arise, particularly in experiential learning programs like study tours, where there's a fine line between meaningful engagement and unintentionally exploiting vulnerable communities. The report concludes that while HRE holds transformative potential, its success depends on overcoming these barriers and embracing strategies that prioritize ethical responsibility, collaboration, and critical reflection on global and local human rights issues.

Alison E.C. Struthers' book, *Teaching Human Rights in Primary Schools: Overcoming the Barriers to Effective Practice*, dives into the challenges of implementing Human Rights Education (HRE) in English primary schools. The Book Review of Johanna Estrella written in 2023, shows that one key obstacle in this book is the disconnect between international human rights commitments and national education policies, which often fail to prioritize HRE. Teachers also face barriers such as insufficient formation, lack of resources, and the pressure to focus on standardized testing over holistic, value-based education. Many educators feel unprepared to handle controversial topics or to

integrate human rights concepts into their everyday teaching. Moreover, there's a broader challenge of ensuring that HRE is not diluted when adapted for younger learners, though Struthers argues this can be addressed with comprehensive training and well-designed resources.

In conclusion, while Human Rights Education (HRE) holds immense potential to foster empathy, critical thinking, and global citizenship, its implementation faces significant limitations not only in Portugal but also worldwide. Challenges such as outdated academic structures, insufficient teacher training, and nationalistic biases hinder its progress. Educators often struggle to navigate sensitive topics and balance standardized testing with value-based teaching. Furthermore, the gap between international commitments and local educational policies highlights the need for stronger integration and prioritization of HRE.

Conclusion

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In conclusion, this Final Work Project seeks to shine a light on the critical importance of educating children about their rights and empowering them to navigate the world with a sense of dignity and justice. By exploring the instruments and organizations that protect human and children's rights, this work highlights not only the progress made but also the gaps that persist particularly in Portugal. While the country has a strong curriculum on paper, teachers often lack the necessary support and training from the government to effectively deliver these lessons. This disconnect leaves children underprepared to recognize and stand up for their rights, underscoring an urgent need for reform in how these values are taught.

In a globalized world, it becomes essential to learn from the experiences of others. Many countries have implemented innovative programs that successfully teach children about their rights, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations. These examples provide valuable lessons that Portugal can adapt to its reality, tailoring global best practices to meet the unique cultural and educational needs of its schools. Such an approach not only fosters a more informed and empathetic generation but also contributes to preventing violence by instilling respect for human rights early in life.

Ultimately, this project calls for a stronger partnership between the government and non-governmental organizations to create comprehensive and engaging programs on children's rights. By investing in teacher training, providing accessible resources, and fostering collaboration, Portugal can ensure its children grow up with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for themselves and others. Educating our children about their rights is not just an act of instruction — it is a step toward building a more just and compassionate society, where respect for human rights is a shared responsibility.

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