

## Human Rights Education with Children: A Review of Council of Europe's *Compasito*

The UN General Assembly proclaimed the year commencing on 10 December 2008 as the International Year of Human Rights Learning, to be devoted to activities to broaden and deepen human rights learning based on the principles of universality, indivisibility, interdependency, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive dialogue and cooperation (Resolution 62/171 of 18 December 2007). It was therefore very likely that, in 2009, unique conditions existed for launching new projects and proposing innovative activities in the field of human rights education. Still, no particularly significant initiatives seem to have been brought to the public knowledge. This is unfortunate, especially with regard to human rights education with children, as this is such an under-developed field.

Indeed, one of the main target groups of human rights education is undoubtedly constituted by children. It is thus with great pleasure that many human rights trainers and facilitators now have available *Compasito*, the Council of Europe's Manual on Human Rights Education with Children between the ages of 6 and 13. This Manual, which can be found at <http://eycb.coe.int/compasito/default.htm>, was created following the realisation that *Compass*, Council of Europe's Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People between the ages of 14 and 18 and beyond, urgently needed to be complemented with another manual targeting a younger audience eager to learn about human rights.

*Compasito* begins by offering a framework for human right education with children, clarifying and contextualising what human rights, in particular children's rights, are, and what is specific to human rights education with children in terms of methodology. Furthermore, *Compasito* makes available a range of different activities on specific human rights topics, understood in a broad sense, as to encompass issues related to citizenship, democracy, discrimination, environment, family, health, peace and poverty. An example of the interesting and pertinent activities included in this manual is "Modern Fairytale". This activity uses a cartoon based on Siwa's story, a Togolese girl who was subjected to forced labour in France and whose case gave rise to the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in *Siliadin v France*. This 'tale' of modern slavery is able to easily engage children's attention and initiate discussions on international legal human rights instruments, thus sparking the interest of children in these matters.

*Compasito* can be used in non-formal and formal educational contexts, thus having an immense educational potential. Nevertheless, conscious of its present limitations and the scope for improvement, an international team of trainers, including the authors of the first edition, are presently revising it. Special attention is being given to ways to broaden the scope of *Compasito*'s activities and refining its methodology. An even better manual of human rights education with children should come out of this process. In the mean time, teachers, trainers and activists can already make the most out of the present version of *Compasito*, including by adapting it to their own needs and context.

*Nuno Ferreira*  
*Lecturer in Law, University of Manchester*