



**UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



Uchenna Emelonye (Nigeria) has been appointed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and accredited by the Government of the Republic of Liberia as the Country Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). He brings to this position over 25 years of practicing and programming

experience as a human rights attorney. Prior to his recent appointment, he was the Country Representative of OHCHR Uganda. Previously, he was the Senior Human Rights Adviser to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) Kenya; Judicial Affairs Officer at the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur Sudan (UNAMID); Human Rights Officer at OHCHR Kosovo; and Human Rights Officer at the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

Outside the United Nations System, Uchenna was the Chief, Governance, Institutional and Justice Reform Division of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) Rome Italy; Chief of Party at RCN Justice and Démocratie Brussels Belgium; Protection and Rule of Law Coordinator at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) New York; and Country Director, Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) Nigeria.

Uchenna holds a doctorate degree in Human Rights Law (LL.D) from the University of Helsinki Finland; masters degree in Human Rights Law (LL.M) from Central European University Budapest Hungary; masters degree in Law (LL.M) and bachelor's degree in Law (LL.B) from Abia State University Nigeria. He was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 1994. Amongst numerous peer reviewed articles to his credit, Uchenna has authored and contributed chapters to books in the area of human rights and rule of law. He is married to Dr. Abigail Uchenna Emelonye and they are blessed with three children.

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**Open Letter on  
Human Rights Education**



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*Dear Sir/Madam*

On behalf of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), I invite you to think about the importance of human rights education, and would like to offer our knowledge and expertise to work with schools, universities and other interested institutions in Liberia to integrate human rights in their curriculum.

OHCHR strongly believes that human rights education is essential to achieve sustainable and long peace in Liberia, because "human rights education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others".

Several international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, highlight that human rights education and training are key for the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In 1995, the Declaration of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, urged all States and institutions to include human rights in the curriculum of all learning institutions. According to the Declaration, human rights education and training are essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, peace, and development.

Later, in 2004, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) to promote, between others, the introduction of human rights in the higher education system, and human rights training for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel at all levels.

Integrating human rights in the education system promotes values, attitudes and beliefs that encourage individuals to respect the rights of others and uphold their own. Through human rights education, students understand that they are all equal, regardless of the passport they carry, or the social class, caste or creed of their parents. They learn to redirect their own aggressive impulses and use nonviolent means to resolve disputes. Students are inspired by the courage of the pacifiers and by those who assist, not those who destroy.

Students can be guided by human rights education to make informed choices in life, to approach situations with critical and independent thought, take principled positions on issues, incline to democratic and civil actions, develop moral and intellectual integrity that transcends personal interests and to empathize with other's points of view. These lessons are surely as fundamental to life on earth as advanced calculus.

Secondary schools and universities are the best suited avenues for valued transformation of society. The future leaders and persons with significant responsibilities within Liberia would largely, if not entirely, be people who are currently undergoing secondary and university education. Empowering these students will therefore ensure that the future leaders of Liberia are sensitive and advocates of human rights.

The enjoyment of all human rights by all as envisaged in the Constitution of Liberia, and the achievement of the goals of the Pro Poor Agenda, can only be realized when every educator becomes a human rights defender and every educational institution transforms into a zone of equity, equality and dignity.

As a proactive step in pioneering a collaboration that will align the skills of students to the demands of an evolving world, OHCHR commits to collaborate with interested institutions, schools and universities to integrate human rights education in their curriculum.

For further information and inquiry, please contact [uemelonye@ohchr.org](mailto:uemelonye@ohchr.org)

Yours faithfully,

Uchenna Emelonye  
Country Representative  
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - LIBERIA