

Human Rights: A must for engineers and business managers

Colombo District

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The greatest political legacy of the last century is said to be the legacy of human rights. It is a subject that has traditionally been taught in law schools and even that more in European law schools than in American ones or others in the less developed world.

This paper presents strong reasons why our engineers and business school students must be familiar with human rights and their impact on organizations. The reasons are legal and are closely tied to the new demands on and responsibilities of professionals and the well-being of the organization for which they work – product label, labour laws including child labour and slave labour laws, criminal liability through the actions of business partners, humanitarian law and the protection of employees in a war zone, the need for engineers to study the environmental and human rights impact of their work to be eligible for project funds, the implications of the new World Criminal Court, etc.

These reasons will be detailed in the presentation. Each of these reasons will be presented with real case studies. Indeed, in Sri Lanka even social activists and social workers must be familiar with human rights, particularly the rights of the child and the rights of women, if they are to be effective. Work in the growing NGO sector now invariably requires a commitment to human rights and our graduates must be trained to meet the challenges.

We describe teaching the course at Peradeniya to engineering students, the case studies used, the special teaching methodology through moot courts and student reactions.

This work was supported by the University of Colombo's Centre for the Study of Human Rights, the Canadian International Development Agency's Peace Fund, and the National Science Foundation under Grant No. RG/2000/BG/12

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