



THRDC AND ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY TEAM UP TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE IN TANZANIA

The Tanzania's Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) has teamed up with St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) and the East Africa Human Rights Institute (EAHRI)—a local research think tank to promote human rights education through research and training. On 12th April 2023, the trio signed the memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to coordinate provision of human rights education and access to justice in Tanzania.

A 2021 study conducted by THRDC in conjunction with EAHRI, on the state of human rights education in Tanzania revealed yawning gaps in the provision of human rights education in Tanzania. According to the study, human rights education is not sufficiently provided, consequently graduates who enter the employment market in public and private sectors are often not fully equipped with knowledge of human rights. As a response to this challenge, the THRDC has teamed up with other institutions to devise measures to ensure that human rights education is widely offered across the country.

The new initiative is expected to help students at St Augustine University—the only higher learning institution in Tanzania offering compulsory human rights courses to deepen their knowledge on human rights, understand the importance of diversity, tolerance, and respect for human dignity. Through its Human Rights Centre, the SAUT University will strive to promote the culture of human rights and access to justice by enhancing outreach activities, improving legal aid services in the lake zone as well as conducting research and issue relevant publications.

Interestingly, the signed MoU provides a new lease of life for the Lake Zone's legal aid clinic, striving to nurture the army of future human rights defenders, by offering human rights courses, conducting professional research, and publishing relevant publications. For more than a decade, THRDC has been offering human rights training as it prepares the army of future human rights defenders. Under this MoU, the human rights courses and legal aid services that SAUT has been offering, will almost certainly improve significantly. The initiative, among others, creates room for organizing human rights career day for SAUT students, guest lectures, workshops, academic webinars, students' welfare (drop-in and human rights mentorship sessions), field placements and internships. The same initiative has been entered with the University of Dar es Salaam as well.

Advocate Onesmo Olengurumwa, THRDC National Coordinator, urged Tanzania government to embrace and promote the culture of human rights through education, public awareness raising and ensuring access to information and knowledge about principles and standards of human rights. According to him, human rights awareness should be promoted from lower education level so that children grow up embracing the culture of respecting human rights.

"We strongly support efforts made by higher learning institutions to prepare young people to understand, uphold and live by those human rights," he said during the MoU Signing Ceremony at SAUT Main Campus in Mwanza.

Olengurumwa said sometimes people are blindly violating human rights because they do not know anything about them, urging higher learning institutions to stick to their core mandate of imparting skills and knowledge to the public as well.

“When people get proper knowledge of human rights, they will share it out there. Although human rights, do not necessarily make a profession, but when you know about them they may help you to run affairs at your family, your work place or in your organization,”

While the Tanzanian constitution clearly states our nation shall observe principles of human rights, good governance, and respect for human dignity, Olengurumwa said many higher learning institutions have yet to include human rights courses in their curricula, adding that even those teaching such courses have not made them compulsory.

“ Many students barely know anything about human rights when they complete their studies, yet these are the people who, in their capacities magistrates, judges or official in a department for human rights, will find it hard to make wise decisions,”

In order to restore eroded moral values and curb violation of human rights, the THRDC Coordinator has advised the government to establish human rights courses at all levels of education. *“Moral values are widely eroded because people do not have a solid background of human rights. Today everyone is complaining about massive siphonage of public monies disclosed by the Controller and Auditor General’s report, but they don’t see the root cause of this problem which is lack of integrity. We need to create proper systems which will be responsible for preparing the generation of people with integrity,”*

Prior to the signing of the MoU Advocate Olengurumwa had the opportunity to lecture about 600 students from SAUT school of law on general human rights perspective from practical side of it based on his own experience in the field of human rights and also he held discussion about public interest education in Tanzania. The THRDC Coordinator inspired them to build their future careers while in school because he had also started practicing human rights while at the University of Dar es Salaam, rising ranks to become the president of the university’s human rights association. He urged them work hard so that they could be successors of the current generation of leaders.

Speaking at the signing in ceremony of the MoU, Professor Costa Ricky Mahalu, the Vice Chancellor of the St. Augustine University of Tanzania applauded the initiative to promote human rights education in Tanzania, urging the government to support it. *“This kind of knowledge should not just start at the university level it must start at pre-school so that children can learn to respect each other when they are still at their tender age”*

THRDC in collaboration with EAHRI continues to work with public and education institutions to promote human rights education, raise awareness and broaden access to knowledge and information on human rights standards and principles.

**ISSUED BY Adv. NURU MARO
PRO- THRDC -14/04/2023**