




Human needs - human rights

Length	 1 hour
Difficulty	 Beginner
Group size	 Small to medium
Aim	<p>To help participants make the connection between needs and rights.</p> <p>To educate about what rights we have.</p> <p>To overcome prejudice that human rights are a western concept.</p>
Description	A really good, interactive exercise that combines group work and plenary discussion to help participants identify the connection between their felt needs and the rights given in international law.
Resources needed	<p>Keen participants</p> <p>Cards or post-it notes (at least 12 per participant) and pens</p> <p>Flip chart paper</p> <p>Print outs of the UDHR in a language that the participants understand well.</p>
Source	Adapted exercise from the Human Rights Educators' Network of Amnesty International, USA

Tips for facilitators

In this exercise it is important to encourage an open forum for discussion, allowing different opinions, ideas and experiences to be expressed.

It is advisable NOT to mention that some people regard human rights as a western concept/values. Pointing this out may result in participants being less willing to approach human rights with an open mind. Respond to such comments if they come from participants themselves! By the end of the exercise, most participants usually come to the conclusion that the human rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) correspond to our most basic human needs. If some people haven't been won over then allow them to disagree.

Outline and instructions

Individual work	5 minutes
Group work	15 minutes
Harvesting the groups' lists	10 minutes
Working in pairs with the UDHR	15 minutes
Conclusion and summary	15 minutes

Individual work

Ask each participant to think for a couple of minutes about what things they need and want in order to lead a healthy and happy life, and to write these needs down on a piece of paper.

Group work

Divide the participants into smaller groups. Ask them to share their lists of needs with each other and then make a joint list of needs. Once the group has a joint list, encourage them to imagine a society where all of their needs are met. What would this society need in terms of laws, infrastructure, public services etc.?

Harvesting the groups' lists

Bring everyone back together. Harvest the needs that the different groups have listed by writing them in a column on the left of a flipchart.

Give each participant at least 12 post-it notes or writing cards and ask them to identify which 12 needs from the common list are most important to them, writing each one on a separate card/post-it note.

Working in pairs with the UDHR

Divide into pairs and give each pair a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The pairs should look through the UDHR and try to find rights that correspond to the each of the needs they identified as important to them.

Conclusion and summary

Bring everyone back together and harvest the pairs' conclusions. Did they find a right to match every need they prioritised? Were there any needs that didn't have a corresponding right? Were there any rights listed in the UDHR that didn't correspond to a need that they felt? Allow some well managed discussion between participants. Have different participants arrived at different conclusions? If so, why? Can the group agree that that for every basic need there is a corresponding human right? One way to help the group see how human rights correspond to our most basic human needs is to return to the joint list of needs and write down which human right the participants have connected to each need. Use the article number and refer to the print-outs of the UDHR as you do so.