

Human needs – human rights 60 min



EXPLORING HUMAN RIGHTS

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

MULTI-FORMAT EXERCISE

About the exercise

TARGET AUDIENCE

This is a more theoretical version of '[Paradise island](#)' on page 32 and is best suited to more formal training settings, for example with government officials, academics or faith leaders. It also works well with civil society organisations and human rights defenders.

PURPOSE

- To help participants make the connection between human needs and human rights.
- To help participants overcome any prejudices they might have about human rights being a 'Western concept'.

DESCRIPTION

An exercise that combines group and pair work with plenary discussion to help participants connect their human needs with their human rights under international law. It works well in contexts where there is some scepticism about human rights. '[The clifftop](#)' exercise on page 37 is a good follow-up to this exercise.



Instructions

RESOURCES

- Cards or post-it notes (at least 12 per participant) and pens.
- Flipchart paper.
- Copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in a language that the participants understand well.



BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE

If you anticipate some resistance to human rights from your target audience, build your confidence as a facilitator by reviewing our '[Tips for facilitators](#)' section on page 282 and '[Responding to tricky questions](#)' on page 286.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 1 MIN

Explain that the group will now take part in a reflection and discussion exercise that will help us think about whether human rights matter to us as individuals and as a society (or not).

HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 57 MIN

- **INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION** (4 MIN)
Ask each participant to reflect for a few minutes on the things they need and want in order to lead a healthy, happy, dignified life and to write these needs down on a piece of paper.
- **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** (15 MIN)
Divide the participants into small groups. Instruct 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 their needs are met and discuss the following question, adding any additional needs to the list.

- What would this society need in terms of laws, infrastructure, public services, and so on?

- **PLENARY FEEDBACK & INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION** (10 MIN)

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.

- **PAIR WORK** (15 MIN)

Divide the participants into pairs and give each pair a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Instruct the pairs to look through the UDHR and work together to try to find rights that correspond to the needs they identified as important to them.

- **PLENARY FEEDBACK & DISCUSSION** (13 MIN)

Bring everyone back together and harvest the pairs' conclusions. 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 UDHR as you do so.

Lead the discussion with the help of following questions:

- Did you find a right to match to every need you had prioritised, or do some needs not have a corresponding right?
- Do we need all of the rights listed in the UDHR or do some of them feel unnecessary? Is it possible to have a society that respects human dignity without them?
- Have different participants arrived at different conclusions? If so, why?
- Does the group agree that for every basic need there is a corresponding human right?

HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE 2 MIN

Conclude the exercise by reflecting on how the exercise and the discussion has illustrated the close relationship between human dignity, human needs and human rights. Human rights are our way of protecting human dignity by respecting people's basic needs. Thank everyone for their enthusiastic engagement in the discussion. If some people haven't been won over, then emphasise that it is ok to disagree – that's a human right too!

Source

Adapted from an exercise by the Human Rights Educators' Network of Amnesty International, USA.