In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), establishing the foundation of the contemporary human rights movement. The UDHR’s 30 articles detail specific rights that belong to all human beings everywhere. Over the last half century, the ideas embodied in UDHR have been transformed from abstract principles to a concrete basis for policy and action.

Today, a growing segment of U.S. civil society is turning to human rights to secure social, political, and economic objectives that they have sought for decades. The Discover Human Rights training and accompanying manual was created to strengthen the capacity of all organizations to combat entrenched injustice through the application of the human rights framework.

International human rights provide a powerful legal and moral framework for social change based on universally recognized principles. International human rights standards recognize that people must have their basic needs met and their basic freedoms guaranteed in order to live in dignity and that governments are obligated to ensure these rights, not as a matter of charity but as an internationally recognized duty.

Social justice advocates are also committed to helping people live in dignity, opposing discrimination and inequality, and protecting people against harm from the government and other actors. In the United States, this work is not often phrased in human rights terms, but it is, at heart, human rights work.

Using human rights in social justice work can help overcome some of the barriers that advocates face. Government or societal indifference, clients with multiple overlapping problems, and lack of community engagement in finding a solution are some of the factors that make it difficult to create sustainable solutions to ongoing injustices.

A human rights approach can help overcome these barriers by focusing efforts on long-term systemic change and placing responsibility on the government, community, businesses, civil society, and individuals to address the problem. It helps ensure more participatory and sustainable solutions to social justice issues, provides common standards against which to measure the shortcomings of domestic policies, and expands the circle of allies to the larger global human rights community.

A key tenet of a human rights approach is that social injustices are solved not only by addressing the immediate material need or preventing the immediate harm, but by addressing the power imbalances that give rise to discrimination, exploitation, and poverty in the first place. International human rights provides an over-arching framework that applies both to securing people’s immediate, short-term needs and to improving society in the long-term.

Human rights transcend demographic differences, issue-specific concerns, and even international boundaries by seeking to uphold all human rights for all people. By using human rights to guide their work, social justice advocates can unite around a common standard for ensuring dignity, freedom, equality, justice, and peace for everyone.

For more information or to schedule a training, contact Emily Farell at efarell@advrights.org or 612-746-4690.
Benefits of A Human Rights Approach

When advocates frame their work in terms of international human rights, they join a global movement that has its roots in the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They also bring the long struggle for human dignity and basic fairness in the United States full circle. Although many human rights principles are similar to those enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, the United States has failed time and again to fully realize those principles. Bringing U.S. advocacy into the global human rights movement will add to the growing chorus of voices demanding dignity, justice, and equality for all people.

Using human rights to frame the work of an organization or movement adds value in important ways, and the training and manual contain many specific examples. Human rights principles can strengthen U.S. social justice work for many of the following reasons:

- **More complete analysis.** Policy decisions are often based on a limited set of indicators. A human rights approach takes into consideration issues of justice, fairness, and accountability, as well as economic and other traditional factors.

- **Sustainable change.** A human rights approach creates sound and sustainable policies by considering root causes of human rights violations, protecting those most at risk of human rights violations, and working with both those who have the power to determine the policy and those affected by it, generating broad-based support.

- **Greater legal clarity.** The human rights framework defines our basic rights and freedoms through legally binding international law. These legal obligations provide consistent, legitimate, non-negotiable benchmarks against which to measure public policy.

- **More authoritative basis for policy.** Human rights are based on a universal consensus that all persons have the right to live lives filled with dignity and are backed by an international movement of activists, scholars, national leaders, and everyday people fighting for change.

- **Greater accountability.** The human rights framework is grounded in the notion that governments bear a duty toward individuals to respect, protect, and fulfill their human rights, and that they are accountable when they fail in their obligations. Human rights are not a matter of fiat, grace, or charity subject to trade-off.

- **Creates connections.** Human rights are inter-connected. The realization or violation of one right affects the fulfillment of other rights. Understanding the inter-connection of human rights can help build important coalitions, leading to greater social change.

- **Building a better world for all.** The goal of the human rights approach is the realization of a world in which everyone lives with dignity, freedom, justice, equality, and peace.
The Discover Human Rights training and manual employs a participatory methodology, combining short presentations with interactive activities including large group discussions, small group work, and role plays. Participants will analyze situations from their own experiences and evaluate how applying a human rights framework to social justice advocacy would change their approach to solving problems within their community. The training provides tools such as organizational assessments, case studies, and implementation models to help organizations create an action plan for using human rights principles in their own operations and advocacy work.

The 12-hour training is broken down into three core modules that can be taught in a single intensive 2-day training or as separate sessions.

**Module 1: International Human Rights (3 hours).** This module is a primer on human rights and the international human rights system and also explores the connection between human rights and social justice work in the United States.

**Module 2: Strategies of a Human Rights Approach (3 hours).** This module sets out the key definitions, principles, and elements of a human rights approach. Four key strategies for how to apply a human rights approach are explained in detail, as well as how these strategies affect an organization's social justice work in terms of planning and actions.

**Module 3: Applying a Human Rights Approach (6 hours).** This module introduces practical tools that can be used to implement a human rights approach, culminating in the creation of a concrete action plan. Each of the tools provided corresponds to the different human rights-based strategies explained in Module 2.

“...Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

~ Preamble, UDHR
The training takes an in-depth look at the rights of people in the United States and the human rights violations they face. Participants are given a background on the key international treaties and documents relevant to their social justice work.

Core Issues

SAFETY AND SECURITY:
The right to life, liberty, and security of person; the right to be free from violence within the family; and protection from exploitation and abuse.

EDUCATION:
The right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of herself and her family; and equal access to health services.

HEALTH:
The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including equal access to health services.

SOCIAL LIFE:
The right to family, to sexual life, to marriage, and to found a family.

PROPERTY:
The right to own property individually as well as in association with others.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
The right to participate in the formation of public decisions affecting them directly or indirectly; the right to vote, to stand for public office, and to be involved in the formulation of public policy.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION:
The right to take part in cultural life of the country, to enjoy the protection of their national cultural heritage, and to have access to it, and to be protected against their abuse.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948.
Case Studies

The training incorporates case study examples of best practices drawn from the experiences of social justice advocates around the United States who have successfully implemented human rights strategies into their work.

Case Study 1

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions - USA

The USA Division of the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE-USA) strives to build a grassroots movement to make housing a human right in the United States. This mission was inspired by international work. Bret Thiele, Co-Director, Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Litigation Program, explains: “One thing we heard again and again around the world is that the international community needs the support of the U.S. to implement human rights standards regarding displaced persons. Since Hurricane Katrina—low-income communities and people of color. As a result of Katrina, some 400,000 persons were displaced,” Thiele explains. “Since then, the storm has significantly changed the demographics of the city, and many organizations believe that the City is using the devastation caused by the Hurricane as an opportunity to rid the city of its poor.” Indeed, around eighty percent of public housing in New Orleans remained closed ten months after Katrina, leaving many low-income African American families without homes. To help advocate combat this discrimination, COHRE-USA provides grassroots advocates and homeless and low-income people the knowledge and tools necessary to fight for change.

The 2006 “Human Rights of Hurricane Survivors: Training and Advocacy Workshop” is a prime example. Held in New Orleans, the workshop educated local advocates about the international human rights standards, including housing, health care, legal protection, job training and workforce development. Heartland Alliance operates on the principle that access to these services is a basic human right. In accordance with this philosophy, Heartland Alliance works not only to directly assist marginalized individuals with their immediate needs, but to recognize their rights, promote their self-sufficiency, and ultimately, to restore their dignity.

Heartland Alliance’s From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign offers an excellent illustration, as one of its primary goals is to place poverty within a human rights framework. As Schenkelberg describes, framing poverty as a human rights issue “provides a paradigm shift that moves from the traditional U.S. narrative of poverty stricken people making bad life choices to one of social responsibility and obligations. It fosters a paradigm where poverty is a sure sign, not primarily of individual failings, but of societal responsibility not being met.” In order to accomplish this goal, the campaign conducted action forums in 21 different poverty-stricken regions across Illinois, educating individuals and communities on poverty from a human rights perspective and facilitating conversations about poverty-related issues such as the most than 700 individuals who participated. Although the forums brought together a wide range of participants from varying backgrounds and party loyalties, Heartland Alliance was particularly concerned with encouraging participation from the individuals most affected by poverty. “We saw this as a major part of our human rights focus. We needed [them] to speak out about their experiences and to offer suggestions and concerns so that they could become a voice in the process of ending poverty,” Schenkelberg states.

The collective knowledge gained from the voices of affected individuals and others present at the forums—including staff members of organizations addressing issues of poverty, local and state elected officials, and concerned citizens—the forums were able to explore the root causes of and determine viable solutions to poverty in each community, with human rights principles and values as the guiding force. Since its inception on Human Rights Day, December 2006, over 1,100 individuals and 160 organizations and faith communities covering every legislative district in Illinois have endorsed the campaign and declared their belief that freedom from poverty is a human right.

In response to statewide enthusiasm generated by the action forums, the From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign advanced legislation to establish a Commission on Poverty Eradication in Illinois. The primary function of the commission is to develop a strategic plan, crafted from regional information, affected peoples’ recommendations, and international human rights standards, that will cut extreme poverty in Illinois in half by the year 2015. The Commission, like the forums, includes a broad range of representatives, including individuals experiencing poverty, elected and appointed officials, and advocates for specific issues and populations affected by poverty. By developing and implementing specific, substantive, measurable plans and policies, the commission acts as an accountability mechanism—ensuring that the state of Illinois moves progressively toward the realization of human rights and the eventual eradication of poverty.

Case Study 5

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights

Heartland Alliance is a non-profit organization based in Chicago, Illinois, that is dedicated to serving marginalized populations—those who are poor, displaced, or in danger—by providing a wide range of services including housing, health care, legal protection, job training, and workforce development. Heartland Alliance operates on the principle that access to these services is a basic human right. In accordance with this philosophy, Heartland Alliance works not only to directly assist marginalized individuals with their immediate needs, but to recognize their rights, promote their self-sufficiency, and ultimately, to restore their dignity.

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With the collective knowledge gained from the voices of affected individuals and others present at the forums—including staff members of organizations addressing issues of poverty, local and state elected officials, and homeless individuals; financial counseling; mental and primary health care; and a host of other services, Heartland Alliance does so in a way that fosters individual empowerment and self-sufficiency—and does so in a way that truly translates human rights principles to direct services.
The training provides a clear definition of a human rights approach and the key strategies derived from this framework. Participants are then given easy-to-follow steps for transforming these principles into practice.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Dignity**

- Safety and security: Political, legal, economic, cultural, and social systems exist that, when combined, give people the building blocks for survival, livelihood, and dignity.

- Non-discrimination: All people are entitled to the same human rights without distinction based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

- Accountability: Human rights must be protected by the rule of law. Governments must comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights instruments.

**Freedom**

- Protect marginalized groups

**Equality**

- Work with responsible authorities

**Justice**

- Empower rights-holders

**Peace**

- Address the root causes of the problem

**HUMAN RIGHTS GOALS**

- Safety and security: Political, legal, economic, cultural, and social systems exist that, when combined, give people the building blocks for survival, livelihood, and dignity.

- Non-discrimination: All people are entitled to the same human rights without distinction based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

- Accountability: Human rights must be protected by the rule of law. Governments must comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights instruments.

- Participation: Every person is entitled to active, free, and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of political, economic, social, and cultural development.

**RIGHTS FRAMEWORK**

A Human Rights Approach to Social Justice

The Advocates for Human Rights

**Applying a Human Rights Approach**

This module explores how to put human rights strategies into practice, providing tools for integrating the human rights framework into programming.

Take together, the tools answer two key questions:

- What do we want to change in society?
- How can we bring about this change?

To effectively answer these questions using a human rights framework, this module will walk through the following steps:

1. Define Human Rights Goal
2. Identify Marginalized Groups
3. Analyze Root Causes of Human Rights Violation
4. Map Stakeholders
5. Evaluate Capacity Gaps
6. Create Action Plan
7. Evaluate Program Impact

The tools in each section connect back to one of the four fundamental conditions necessary for achieving human rights goals and the strategies derived from them:

- **Safety and Security**: Address the root causes of the problem
- **Non-Discrimination**: Protect marginalized groups
- **Accountability**: Work with responsible authorities
- **Participation**: Empower rights-holders

When done as a series, these tools generate an action plan that organizations can use to effectively incorporate human rights principles into their own work. Directions are given throughout this module to explain how to fill out an action plan worksheet as each tool is applied (for a blank worksheet, see page 159). Advocates may find that a particular recommended tool does not fit well with their priority issue and should feel free to try other methods for completing that step if necessary.
Planning Tools

Planning tools such as organizational assessments and implementation models are provided in each step. When done as a series, these tools generate an action plan that organizations can use to effectively incorporate human rights strategies into their own social justice work.

Tool: Capacity Gap Analysis

To conduct a capacity gap analysis, ask the following questions:

- **For the Target Rights-Holders:**
  - **Obligation:** What should the rights-holders do to help solve the problem?
  - **Motivation:** Are the rights-holders aware of the responsible authorities' obligations (regarding the human rights at issue) and do they feel empowered to claim their rights?
  - **Authority:** Is action by the rights-holders socially acceptable? Do the rights-holders have the influence and freedom necessary to compel responsible authorities to act?
  - **Resources:** Do the rights-holders have the necessary human, organizational, and financial resources to demand their rights – if not, what’s missing?

- **For the Target Responsible Authorities:**
  - **Obligation:** What should the responsible authorities do to help solve the problem? What legal standards (if any) define the obligation?
  - **Motivation:** Are the responsible authorities aware of their obligations (regarding the human rights at issue) and do they feel a responsibility to meet them?
  - **Authority:** Is action by the responsible authorities socially acceptable? Do the responsible authorities have the power to ensure their decisions will be carried out?
  - **Resources:** Do the responsible authorities have the necessary human, organizational, and financial resources to meet their obligations – if not, what’s missing?

To conduct a capacity gap analysis using a table like the example below, please see Module 3 Activity: Capacity Gap Analysis on page 165.

Example: Capacity Gap Analysis of a rights-holder (undocumented worker) and responsible authority (employer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Causes</th>
<th>Short-term Actions</th>
<th>Long-term Actions</th>
<th>Potential Allies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tool: Action Plan Worksheet

After completing Step 6, a Create Action Plan, choose which actions to implement in relation to the different levels on the action plan worksheet. Remember to consider the specific rights-holders and responsible authorities you are targeting, the specific capacity gaps you may be trying to overcome, and the potential partners with whom you could work. Write your chosen actions as well as the potential partners into the appropriate boxes under “Potential Allies” in your Action Plan worksheet (see below).

**Tool: Causality Analysis**

To conduct a causality analysis, break down the issue into different levels of causation. An easy break down separates the immediate violations or unmet needs from the legal and economic context, which in turn is separated from social, cultural, and systematic factors. Begin adding causes, trying to make sure that each violation or unmet need is linked to at least one legal, economic, cultural, social, or structural cause and vice versa. This will help ensure that the analysis is as complete as possible.

Below is an example of a causality analysis on lack of equal education for children with disabilities. To learn how to conduct a causality analysis with your organization using a problem pyramid like this one, please see Module 3 Activity: Problem Pyramid on page 165.

Example: Causality Analysis on Equal Education for Children with Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMMEDIATE CAUSES</th>
<th>LEGAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT</th>
<th>SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND SYSTEMIC FACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students cannot access education</td>
<td>School policies do not protect rights of disabled</td>
<td>Persons with disabilities face discrimination and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are not trained on educational needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>School structure and administrative technology arecommercial</td>
<td>Rights-holders lack initial capacity to gauge their right(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law does not mandate an accessible education to all children</td>
<td>Students cannot access education</td>
<td>Persons with disabilities face discrimination and exclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have completed the last step in program planning and design and should now have a strategic action plan to implement that is grounded in human rights and reflects a clear priority to address root causes, protect marginalized groups, empower rights-holders, and work with responsible authorities.
To assist advocates in implementing their action plan, the training also provides an overview of a wide range of human rights methods or actions that organizations can use to achieve concrete and sustainable results for people whose rights are being violated.

**Action Opportunity!**

Increasingly, U.S. advocates have begun using the INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (IACHR) process to bring petitions related to the death penalty, domestic violence, and immigration cases.

In evaluating whether a case could be filed as a petition before the IACHR, advocates should first determine whether the government violated any of the rights in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. If the IACHR determines that an individual, group, or nongovernmental organization has a claim under the American Declaration, it will then consider whether the petition should be heard.

The IACHR provides an online form for victims of violations, their family members, civil society organizations, or other persons to file complaints alleging human rights violations by OAS member States. To learn more, visit the IACHR website at http://www.cidh.org/casos.eng.htm.

**Dimensions of Change**

When developing action plans, it can be easy to lose sight of the big picture. Ultimately your actions, although they may themselves be specific, measurable, and time-bound, should focus on achieving the overall long-term human rights goal of bringing about positive changes in people’s lives. Short-term actions should be consistent with this long-term human rights goal, and should work to create the social, economic, political, or cultural change needed.

To help you ensure your actions are on the “Dimensions of Change” that are the core principles of a human rights approach to social justice and participation. By using these indicators, organizations can evaluate whether their activities are making progress towards their identified human rights goals.

**Monitoring and Documentation:** Collecting, verifying, and reporting information on compliance with human rights standards.

**Examples include:**
- Gathering data and writing a report on an ongoing human rights violation in the community.
- Starting watch programs for various government bodies such as courts, prisons, or elections to make sure that everyone is being granted their rights.
- Writing and submitting a shadow report to a UN treaty-monitoring body.
- Collecting testimonies from people affected by a human rights violation for presentation to government officials.

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions - USA co-led a fact-finding mission to New Orleans for UN-HABITAT. COHRE documented the impact of the rebuilding process following Katrina on low-income individuals and communities of color. The report revealed that the process favored private sector interests over the needs of local residents.

**Law and Policy Reform:** Advocating for changes in governmental budgets, policies, and laws to increase compliance with human rights standards.

**Examples include:**
- Questioning political candidates about human rights issues.
- Meeting with a state official to talk about current policies and changes that can be made.
- Organizing a petition drive in which constituents demand laws that better protect human rights.
- Creating a website that allows members of the community to submit concerns to government officials.
- Advocating for new laws to protect human rights.

The Advocates for Human Rights worked with the Minnesota Trafficking Task Force to draft a bill to prosecute those who sell human beings for sex and provide a stronger tool for those enforcing the law, connecting domestic legal protection with international human rights standards. The bill became law on May 21, 2009.

**Strengthening Governance Structures:** Creating or improving mechanisms that connect community members, civil society, businesses, and government in order to improve communication and accountability.

**Examples include:**
- Providing training to a state human rights commission to improve state response to citizen complaints.
- Helping run a community consultation body around a particular issue where constituents can interact with government officials in addressing a specific human rights concern.
- Creating a community policing initiative that draws on neighborhood knowledge to provide support to local law enforcement.

To fight the below-poverty wages of Florida’s farm workers, the Coalition for Immokalee Workers began the Campaign for Fair Food. After years of protests, Taco Bell agreed to CIW’s demands and created an investigative body that includes CIW members, which monitors worker complaints to ensure fair wages and safe working conditions.