

Defining Human Rights

Starlight Stadium Episode 1

This slide deck is designed to provide relevant instruction surrounding Starlight Stadium: Episode 1. Trainers should feel at liberty to use or adapt this slide deck to their own purposes, depending on how the game will be played, and what experience level their students possess.

What are some examples of Human Rights?

It's likely that learners already have a personal concept of what Human Rights are and aren't. As a discussion warm-up, ask students to give examples of things that they believe are human rights. This warm-up will lead directly into the next slide; if you receive no volunteers, it's okay to jump into the next activity.

Try to note the responses that students give, if any. They will be helpful reference points later in the discussion.

Make sure to explain to the students that human rights aren't just what people believe them to be, but there is (mostly) an established and agreed body of rights that exist.

Do you have a Human Right to...

- ...live free from physical violence?
- ...live free from offensive speech?
- ...have access to clean water?
- ...have access to TikTok?
- ...participate in any religion you choose?
- ...participate in a romantic relationship with anyone you choose?
- ...be fairly treated by the law?
- ...eat ice cream for dinner?
- ...gather in public places?

Building off of the conversation from the previous slide, work through the list as a class, and with a show-of-hands, ask people to decide if each item is—or is not—a human right. You might also consider calling on individuals to articulate their position on either side - note that there are correct and incorrect answers here, but there is value in understanding participants' opinions and discussing nuances and differences in opinion together.

Trainer should conclude by introducing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundational document through which human rights have been codified and developed.

Human rights are ...

Drawing on the conversation you've just had about what is and isn't a human right, work as a class to come up with a single sentence that feels like it defines "Human Rights."

Consider posing the following questions to spark discussion: To whom do human rights apply? In what situations would human rights be applied? Are human rights limited?

If the classroom space allows, consider writing/refining the definition on a whiteboard in real-time, so students have a concrete sense of how their ideas are coming together.

Trainer should conclude by referring to the core principles of human rights: Inalienable, universal, indivisible, interdependent, equal and non-discriminatory.

Human rights are legal guarantees, protecting individuals and groups, without discrimination, from State and other actors' interference with human dignity

Give a moment for this text to sink in, and then read it aloud to the class (or ask for a volunteer). Ask students to compare this definition to the one they just came up with themselves – how close are they? Are there notable similarities or differences?

Acknowledge that this definition, while thorough, is a bit dense, and that you'll be breaking it down one piece at a time as a class.

Human rights are legal guarantees, protecting individuals and groups, without discrimination, from State and other actors' interference with human dignity

Ask if anyone is surprised that these are the first words of the definition. Most people tend to think of human rights as intangible, innate values, but the fact is the state is always involved. Emphasize the following two points:

- *Human rights don't exist from person-to-person.*
- *Human rights exist from state-to-person.*

Explain that the laws, policies, procedures and mechanisms in place at the national level are key for the enjoyment of human rights in each country.

Human rights are legal guarantees, **protecting individuals and groups**, without discrimination, from State and other actors' interference with human dignity

While this text is fairly straightforward, it might be worth reminding students of commonly marginalized or disenfranchised groups (prisoners, refugees) who might have their rights imposed upon just for being a member of that group.

- *Every human has human rights, regardless of nationality, background, or behavior.*

Therefore, some human rights instruments also recognize the rights of specific groups to address past discrimination and their disadvantaged, vulnerable positions in society (e.g. rights specifically relating to persons deprived of liberty, etc.). These protections don't create new rights but ensure equal access to the rights in the UDHR.

Human rights are legal guarantees, protecting individuals and groups, without discrimination, from State and other actors' interference with human dignity

The key to this part of this section hinges on the understanding of human dignity, which can be a tough concept to articulate. Ask students to come up with their own definition of the phrase, before offering the following definition:

- *At its most basic, the concept of human dignity is the belief that all people hold a special value that's tied solely to their humanity. It has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abilities, or any other factor other than them being human.*

In other words, it's the respect that humans are afforded just by being human. If you want to go deep, you can contrast "human dignity" with the original definition of the word which was something closer to 'high status' (e.g. "dignified members of the royal family").

Tying this to the previous point, the concept of "human dignity" is what allows rights to be inherent, and not earned.

Human rights are legal guarantees, protecting individuals and groups, without discrimination, from State and other actors' interference with human dignity

States must respect, protect, and promote human rights

Given we now understand human rights are both intrinsically granted to all humans by birth AND an official, legal guarantee from the state, it might be confusing to reconcile these two. Close out the lecture by defining the role the state is expected to fulfill here.

- *Respect: Avoid actively interfering with human rights.*
- *Protect: Prevent others from violating human rights.*
- *Promote: Take active steps to support human rights.*

Speakers can recall that states have both positive and negative obligations regarding their human rights commitments. Positive obligations are, broadly speaking, obligations "to do something" to ensure respect and protection of human rights. Negative obligations refers to a duty not to act; that is, to refrain from action that would hinder human rights.