

# Human rights training toolkit

## Group exercises

This document outlines a number of group exercises that can be included in the human rights training sessions. It clarifies under each exercise what its purpose is, for which of the modules it is recommended, and how to conduct the exercise.

## Introduction

### Icebreaker

**Objective:** warm up participants, get to know each other and promote interaction

**Process – option 1:** At the start of the training session, ask each participant to state their name, role and one interesting fact about themselves that others in the room are unlikely to know about them. This can relate to their hobbies, family, special skills etc.). Prepare a response yourself so you can kick off the exercise.

**Process – option 2:** Ask each participant what super-powers they would like to have and why. Prepare a response yourself so you can kick off the exercise.

## Module 1

### Types of human rights obligations

**Objective:** increase participants' understanding of the different dimensions of human rights and the types of obligations they create.

**Process:** choose a specific human right for this exercise, such as the right to health. After explaining the different types of human rights obligations, ask participants to split up into smaller groups (4-5 participants) and discuss what could fall under the obligation to respect, the obligation to protect and the obligation to fulfil the right to health (see handouts for Module 1).

For example:

**Respect:** the right to health requires States to refrain from denying or limiting equal access for all persons to preventive, curative and palliative health services; abstain from enforcing discriminatory practices as a State policy; and abstain from imposing discriminatory practices. In other words, limiting access to health services on the basis of age would be in violation of this obligation.

**Protect:** this includes the duties of States to adopt legislation or to take other measures ensuring equal access to health care and health-related services provided by third parties. States should also ensure that third parties do not limit people's access to health-related information and services.

**Fulfil:** requires States to give sufficient recognition to the right to health in the national political and legal systems, preferably by way of legislative implementation, and to adopt a national health policy with a detailed plan for realizing the right to health. This obligation entails also the state to take positive

measures that enable and assist individuals and communities to enjoy the right to health.<sup>1</sup>

## Module 2

### Human rights challenges in older age

**Objective:** increase participants' understanding of the human rights challenges that older people face in their daily lives, taking into account the diversity of older people and the importance of economic, social, political context.

**Process:** ask participants to line up on one side of the room. Read out a number of statements and ask them to take a step forward if the statement is true (or keep their hand raised for online training sessions).

For example, "All older women and men in my community":

- Receive a pension that allows them to cover all their expenses.
- Can afford food that meets all their dietary needs.
- Live in a home that is safe and physically accessible.
- Can freely choose where they live.
- Have access to adequate support if they choose to live independently.
- Have access to adequate health care, including geriatric health care and services.
- Can access and afford all the medication they need.
- Are able to vote and access the polling station.
- Can pursue a higher education.
- Have access to a range of cultural and leisure activities that are affordable and accessible.
- Can access all public places and services.
- Have access to a lawyer or other legal support.
- Can file a complaint to an independent body or mechanism if their rights are violated.

When responding to the statements, ask participants to consider in particular elements of accessibility, affordability and quality for older people. For example, perhaps older people live in their own home. But is their home safe, does it mean their needs, is it accessible and affordable?

### What should be included in a new Convention?

**Objective:** promote reflection and discussion on the various violations of older people's rights, as well as the diversity of older people and the specific challenges they face depending on their socio-economic status, gender, political context, region etc.

**Process:** Divide participants up into smaller groups (4-5 participants). Ask them to imagine they were asked to provide input on what should be included in a new UN Convention.

- What do you think should be a priority?
- Which human rights issues have you encountered that you think should be urgently addressed?
- How would you define older people?
- ...

Ask each group to present their findings to the whole group and clarify their thought process. Focus on what the various groups have in common and what might be different from other groups.

---

<sup>1</sup> General Comment No. 14 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

During the discussion of the groups' findings, you can use existing Conventions such as the CRPD, the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons and the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa as a reference to determine overlaps and potential gaps in the rights covered.

## Module 3

### Human rights based messaging

**Objective:** strengthen participants' ability to develop messaging that is both specific to their particular focus of work and that reflects a rights-based approach to ageing.

**Process:** Divide participants into smaller groups (4-5 participants). Ask each group to choose one of the projects, reports, interventions they are currently working on and to come up with some key asks from Governments related to that work.

Encourage them to reflect on which human rights are at stake and what obligations the Government(s) in question (or other duty bearers) may have with regards to older people specifically. Ask to include the drafting of a new Convention as one of the key asks by linking it to the chosen topic. You can share the handouts from Module 2 that provide an overview of relevant treaties and rights.

Discuss the outcomes with the whole group, highlighting potential ageist bias or stereotypes that should be avoided.

### Applying the PANEL principles

**Objective:** strengthen participants' understanding of the key principles of a human rights-based approach and increase their capacity to implement those principles in their work.

**Process:** Divide participants into smaller groups (4-5 participants). Assign each group with one of the 5 main principles: participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality. Ask them to reflect on how they can implement these principles in practice, including which obstacles they might encounter and what could be considered as potential drivers. Share the handouts for each of the 5 principles with questions to guide the discussions. Ask each group to present their findings to the entire group and encourage further discussion.

Below are some examples of practical applications of each of the principles:

#### Participation:

- online survey, interviews, consultations, focus groups;
- actively involving older people's carers and communities as well;
- regular consultations throughout the project and for its evaluation, not just during the development phase;
- ensure participation of at-risk groups;
- providing easy-to-read materials.

#### Accountability:

- sharing outcomes with Government representatives;
- with regard to long-term care, share recommendations with care professionals;
- training of duty bearers (e.g. train law enforcement on VAN);
- asking organisations, policy makers, individuals etc. to pledge their commitment to the rights of older people;
- identifying Members of Parliament as "older people's champions";
- developing and using human rights indicators to monitor progress;

- contributing to submissions on human rights implementation for UN treaty bodies and mechanisms.

**Non-discrimination:**

- mapping of intersecting characteristics and assessment of potential impact;
- actively supporting participation of diverse groups;
- integrating specific human rights challenges of diverse groups.

**Empowerment:**

- capacity building of civil society and OPA’s;
- training workshops for older people and their communities;
- have older people lead training sessions themselves for other stakeholders;
- referral to legal support services.

**Legality:**

- identify relevant international human rights standards. E.g. for long-term care, include the right to independent living;
- use the guidance provided by UN treaty bodies on particular rights to support your claims;
- use guidance in relevant international policy documents.

**Responding to challenges in human rights advocacy**

**Objective:** increase participants’ capacity to respond to human rights criticism from Governments and other stakeholders by reflecting on potential reasoning behind that criticism and how to counter those arguments.

**Process:** Start by asking the group of participants whether they have come across human rights scepticism themselves and what arguments were used? If there are no or few examples, ask which arguments they think Governments might use not to protect the rights of older people and/or support the drafting of a new Convention. Write down examples or suggestions on a flipchart.

Secondly, divide participants into smaller groups (4-5 participants) and ask them to come up with counterarguments for the potential criticism that was identified or envisaged by the larger group. Ask them to reflect on who could be an ally in promoting the rights of older people and a rights-based approach to ageing. (e.g. civil society organisations advocating for equality for other groups or on other grounds than age, NHRIs and other equality bodies, pro bono lawyers, ...).

You can use the following examples of issues/arguments and solutions/counterarguments:

<b>Criticism/barrier</b>	<b>Counterargument/driver</b>
There are too many human rights treaties already	A Convention would actually create clarity by having all older people’s rights in one single treaty
A new UN Convention would have an enormous economic impact	Not all rights have to be implemented immediately – inclusion of older people would benefit the economy
Not enough resources to implement existing rights for older people	Core obligations for economic, social and cultural right that must be met, regardless of resources

Human rights do not face particular challenges	Ageism creates specific barriers in older age affecting every area of older people's lives
We already invest a lot in implementation of rights of people with disabilities	There are many older people without disabilities who do not fall within that category + often older people are excluded from policies, programs, services for people with disabilities and/or their particular needs are not considered and taken into account
We have to focus on children and youth, not older people	Today's children and youth are tomorrow's older people. Older people's rights are everyone's rights – if we are lucky we will all be older one day.
Older people and civil society here have no interest in human rights/a new Convention	There is a lack of awareness as well as the issue of internalised ageism. All the more reason to promote the rights and voice of older people
We already have many programs on ageing and older people's wellbeing	Programs are not sustainable nor do they include any noteworthy accountability or monitoring mechanisms.
We have to focus on active ageing and increasing the contributions of older people to society	Equality and inclusion are essential to achieve those goals. Older people have rights simply because they are human, regardless of their perceived contribution to society.