

Human Rights in the Context of the QCPR¹

Human rights in the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is grounded explicitly in human rights: it reaffirms States' commitments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development. It further commits States to implement the Agenda in a manner consistent with their obligations under international law. The 2030 Agenda also sets out a vision for sustainable development grounded in international human rights standards (paras. 10, 18, 19, 67, 74), putting equality and non-discrimination at the center of its efforts (paras. 3, 4, 48, 74) and encompassing not only economic and social rights but also civil, political, and cultural rights, as well as the right to development (paras. 13, 18, 55, 74).

Human Rights Based Approaches to Sustainable Development

The UNDG adopted the UN Statement of Common Understanding on the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation and Programming in 2003 so as to foster coherence at global, regional and country levels in the common programming process. Human rights-based approaches to human development are normatively grounded in international human rights standards and principles and operationally directed to respecting, protecting and upholding human rights. It follows that the plans, policies and processes of human rights based development are anchored in the system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, labour rights and the right to development.

The UN development system plays a key role in supporting programme countries, at their request, in developing national capacity to integrate human rights in national policies and fulfilling their treaty obligations.

The human rights-based approach also brings value to development efforts of all stakeholders by promoting the free, active and meaningful participation of beneficiaries in development planning and monitoring; by supporting systems for accountability, non-discrimination; by helping focus attention on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and enabling coherence between mutually reinforcing international human rights standards and economic and development policy and programmes.

Leaving no one behind

The 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no one behind (para 4) is ultimately a pledge to and for rights holders. 'Leaving no one behind' is grounded in the principles of equality and non-discrimination that are foundational principles of the UN Charter, international human rights law and national legal systems across the world.

'Leaving no one behind' calls for moving beyond assessing development's progress on the basis of averages and aggregates. It also means identifying unjust, avoidable or extreme inequalities in development outcomes and opportunities, and challenging patterns of systemic discrimination in law, policies and practices. This will require supporting legal, policy, institutional and other measures to promote equality and reverse the trend of rising inequalities. In addition, it requires active and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including the most marginalized, in mechanisms for ensuring accountability for development and recourse and remedies to all individuals and populations groups that

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are excluded or locked out of access to development's benefits. Addressing gender inequality is a particular priority of this approach as it remains the most pervasive form of inequality around the world.

A robust accountability framework, aligned to national and international human rights obligations and gender responsive, is essential for the new development agenda's success, including accountability to those currently who are left behind and those at greatest risk of being left behind.

UN human rights standards and mechanisms

The UN human rights system includes, for example, the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. The Treaty Bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor the implementation by State parties of their obligation under nine core international human rights treaties. The UPR is a unique process, created by the General Assembly in 2006 (A/RES/60/251), which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 United Nations Member States by their peers every four years. The Special Procedures are independent human rights experts with a mandate to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.

The value and strength of the UN development system are grounded in the principles, norms and standards of the UN Charter and international instruments of the UN system ratified by Member States.

Human Rights are not only central to the UN's value system and responsibilities stemming from the UN Charter but are instrumental for ensuring more equitable and sustainable development results.

The UN development system has a normative and operational role, a comparative advantage and unique mandate under the Charter to support countries, at their request, in building national capacity to integrate human rights in national policies and fulfilling treaty obligations. It adds value by making particular efforts to ensure non-discrimination and equality, free, active and meaningful participation, accountability, attention to marginalized and disadvantaged groups and support for economic and political empowerment of people.

The human rights mechanisms and their recommendations offer a tried and tested, authoritative, credible and readily accessible resource. The recommendations, together with the reports prepared can provide policy makers, development partners and UNCTS too with credible, validated data on national priorities and State commitments. These commitments can be drawn on in the preparation of national development strategies. They are a rich resource too for partners and can be a strong support for human rights-based analysis, programming, advocacy and accountability. Systematic engagement with the human rights mechanisms will be key to ensuring that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is grounded in international human rights standards.

Drawing on the United Nation's normative mandate, convening role and impartiality, a growing number of United Nations country teams are supporting governments to fulfill international human rights commitments and to integrate human rights into national policies and programmes. The standard-setting work of the Human Rights Council and the UN human rights mechanisms, and the operational support given by the UN development system, have helped countries in building national capacities to promote and apply these norms in national contexts to accelerate the achievement of development goals and to implement the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and UN treaty obligations.