

# From needs to rights

## Purpose

Give the participants an opportunity of:

- actively acquainting themselves with the UN Declaration of Human Rights
- reflecting about the gap between abstract principles and daily life

## 1. Brainstorming

- Divide the participants into groups of 5–6 persons and instruct them as follows:  
“Suppose that one morning you have an accident. Surprisingly enough, just as you are dying you are offered another life but will not know where on earth you will be reborn or the social status of your parents. Would you accept this risky offer?  
In other words, which basic conditions or needs must be met in order to live a reasonably worthy life? Write each of them down on a separate post-it slip. Be as specific as possible.”

## 2. The UN Declaration of Human Rights

- Give each participant a copy of the *UN Declaration of Human Rights*. Allow about 10 minutes for them to read the document. Meanwhile, write the following headings on a flipchart and put this where everyone can read it:

### The UN Declaration

- Art. 1 Opening paragraph
- Art. 2 - 5 Fundamental freedoms and rights
- Art. 6-12 Rule of law
- Art.13-15 Freedom of movement and nationality
- Art.16-17 Family and property
- Art.18-21 Civil and political rights
- Art.22-27 Economic, social and cultural rights
- Art.28-30 International issues

## 3. Sorting and linking needs to rights

- let each group jointly sort the slips with the basic needs
- which slips are *expressly* guaranteed in the UN Declaration? (Love, for example, is not.) The participants add the number of the relevant paragraph to the slip
- meanwhile write each of the above headings from the UN Declaration on a separate flip-over sheet and attach the sheets around the walls

#### 4. Compilation and reflections

- every post-it slip that expressly refers to an article in the UN Declaration is attached under the appropriate heading among the flip-over sheets around the walls
- reflect together on the pattern that emerges: Are there headings with few slips? Are there a whole lot of slips under other headings? How can the pattern be explained?
- what are the left-over slips about?

#### 5. Political measures

You have jointly drawn up a political framework for a fairly decent country in which you would be prepared to spend your life.

- attach a green marker to the post-it slip that you want the country's authorities to give immediate priority. Attach a red marker to a slip that the authorities should definitely leave alone
- discuss the markers (see Method Bank): are the authorities likely to act as you wish?

#### Comments

- There are usually a lot of slips under the heading *Economic, social and cultural rights* and relatively few under *Rule of law, Freedom of movement and nationality* and *Family and property*. The former have to do with daily life with all its concrete associations. The latter groups of rights tend to be perceived as more abstract. They may be at least as important but do not come to mind so readily.
- The pile of left-over slips with no clear link to the UN Declaration usually includes references to environmental issues. Environmental damage was not a prominent political issue in 1948 when the Declaration was adopted.
- Some slips that seem to have little connection with the UN Declaration usually find their way onto the flip-over sheets around the walls. Moreover, the assortment under each heading is debatable in many cases. The facilitator should refrain from making a fuss about this.