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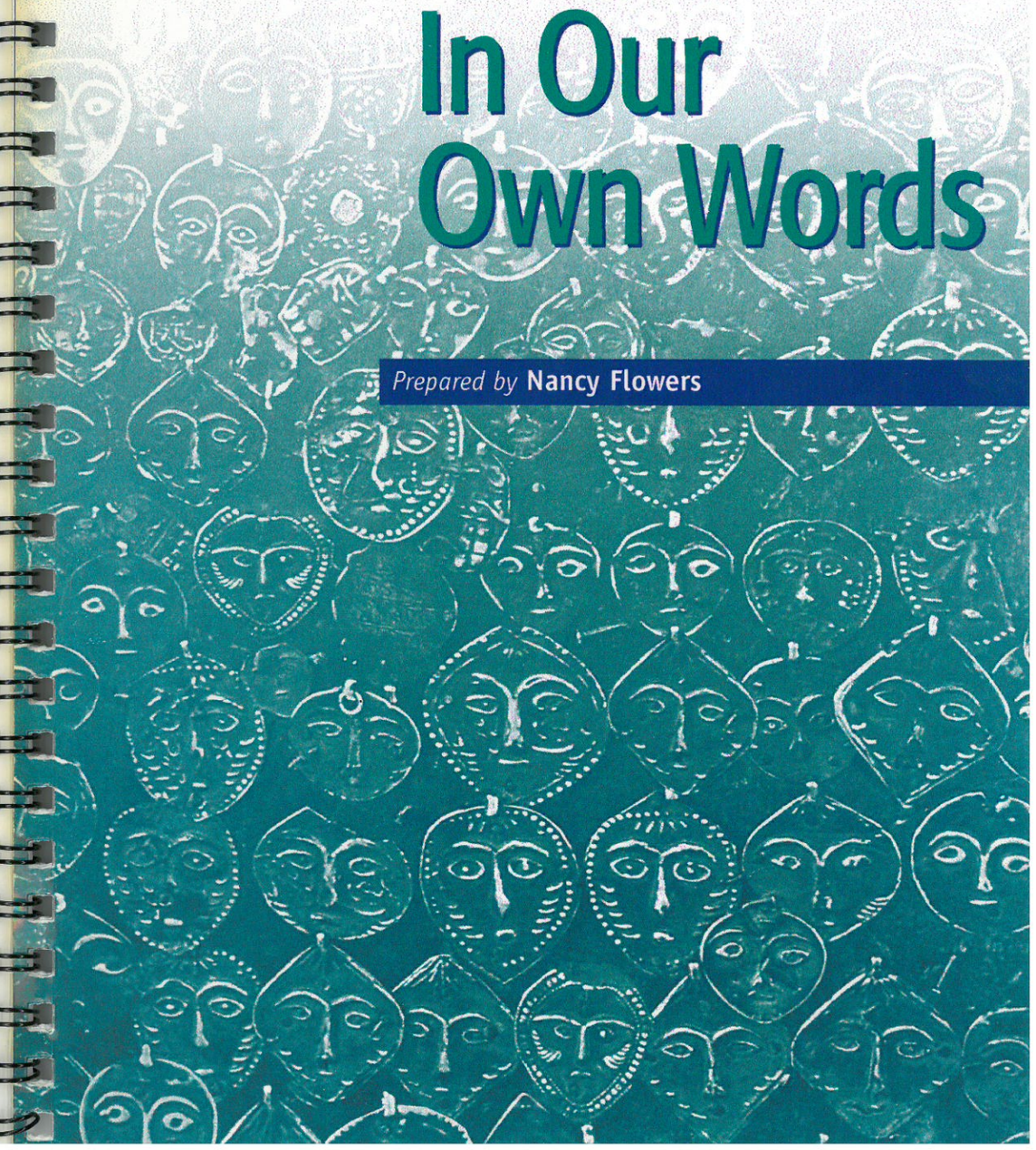
A guide for human rights education facilitators

A companion tool to
Safe and Secure **and** *Claiming Our Rights*

In Our Own Words

Prepared by **Nancy Flowers**



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Foreword

This guide to women's human rights education was prepared for use with two manuals produced by the Sisterhood Is Global Institute: *Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies*[1] and *Safe and Secure: Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls in Muslim Societies.*[2] However, the participatory methodology recommended, the human rights information provided, and the suggestions offered for adapting material to local contexts may be used by any individual or group seeking to promote human rights education, especially among women and girls.

The Sisterhood Is Global Institute welcomes comments, suggestions, and reports on using this guide to facilitation, either in conjunction with its other manuals or independently:

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[1] Afkhami, Mahnaz and Halen Vaziri, *Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies* (Bethesda, MD: Sisterhood is Global Institute, 1998).

[2] Afkhami, Mahnaz, Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, and Halen Vaziri, in consultation with Afifa Dirani Arsanios, Asma Khader, and Marlyn Tadros, *Safe and Secure: Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls in Muslim Societies* (Bethesda, MD: Sisterhood is Global Institute, 1998).

PART I:
Facilitating Learning

To most people, school is where a teacher stands in the front of a class, presents information, and calls on students to answer questions. This traditional model assumes that the teacher is the authority and the source of knowledge, whose task is to first fill up those "empty vessels"—the students—with knowledge, and then evaluate them on how much of it they retain. This method fails to relate to the learners' life experiences or acknowledge or appreciate what they already know, and is therefore inappropriate for human rights education, where not only information but skills, attitudes, and values are involved.

More effective for young and adult learners alike is an educational methodology that is horizontal rather than hierarchical, where the learner, not the teacher, is at the center of the experience and where everyone shares "ownership" of the class. In fact, the word facilitator is more appropriate than teacher in this context, for all concerned are peers, engaged in a common effort toward a shared goal. Together they analyze experience and seek to come to individual conclusions about it. The goal is not some "right answer" or even a consensus, but the collaborative exploration of an idea or issue.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art.26.2

Such collaborative methods are increasingly used throughout the world, especially in adult education. Its democratic structure engages each individual and empowers her to think and interpret for herself. Because it assumes that everyone has the right to an opinion and respects individual differences, this methodology has proven especially effective for human rights education. It encourages critical analysis of real-life situations and can lead to thoughtful and appropriate action to promote and protect human rights.

The manuals *Claiming Our Rights* and *Safe and Secure* are based on such a collaborative learning methodology, with sessions coordinated by a facilitator who is herself engaged in the learning process. However, mastering the art of facilitation requires both practice and a clear understanding of the goals and methods involved.

What Is a Facilitator?

A Facilitator Is

Collaborative. A good facilitator establishes a collaborative relationship with participants in which she is "first among equals," but responsibility for learning rests with the whole group.

Sustaining. The facilitator helps create and sustain an environment of trust and openness where everyone feels safe to speak honestly and where differences of opinion are respected.

Inclusive. The facilitator ensures that everyone feels included and has an opportunity to participate.

A structure. The facilitator provides a structure for learning, which might include setting and observing meeting times, opening and closing sessions, and keeping to the agenda.

A planner. The facilitator makes sure the "housekeeping" is done, such as setting up the meeting space, notifying participants, and seeing that everything is prepared for each session.

...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.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble

A Facilitator Is Not

The person in charge. The whole group is responsible for learning; the facilitator's role is to help that learning happen more effectively.

A lecturer. She is a co-learner, exploring the subject as an equal partner and contributing her experience to that of others.

Necessarily an expert. Though she needs to plan for each session, the facilitator may not know as much about a subject as other members of the group.

The center of attention. A good facilitator generally speaks less than other participants; instead she draws them into the discussion.

An arbiter. In collaborative learning, no one, least of all the facilitator, determines that some opinions are correct or more valid.

The maid. While the facilitator takes initial leadership in coordinating the sessions, she should not become the only person who takes responsibility. In a true collaboration, no one is stuck cleaning up the mess or attending to details every time.

What Makes a Good Facilitator?

Some qualities of a good facilitator, such as personal sensitivity and commitment, depend on the personality of the individual facilitator, but experience and awareness can help everyone improve their skills:

Sensitivity to the feelings of individuals. Part of creating and maintaining an atmosphere of trust and respect is an awareness of how individuals may be responding to both the topics under discussion and the opinions and expressions of others. Discomfort, hurt feelings, and even anger are seldom articulated; most often a person will silently drop out of the discussion and sometimes out of the group. Sensing how people are reacting and knowing how to respond to a particular person or situation is a critical skill of facilitation.

Sensitivity to the feeling of the group. In any group, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and group "chemistry" generally reflects shared feelings: eager, restless, angry, bored, enthusiastic, suspicious or even silly. Being aware of the group's dynamic and understanding how to respond is crucial to skillful facilitation.

Ability to listen. One way the facilitator learns to sense the feelings of individuals and the group is by acute listening, both to the explicit meaning of words and also to their tone and implicit meaning. In fact, facilitators generally speak less than anyone in the group. And often the facilitator's comments repeat, sum up, or respond directly to what she has heard others say.

Tact. Sometimes the facilitator must take uncomfortable actions or say awkward things for the good of the group. Her ability to do so carefully and kindly is critical. Furthermore, the subject matter of *Claiming Our Rights and Safe and Secure* is likely to evoke strong feelings and painful memories. The facilitator needs particular tact in dealing with emotional situations respectfully and sometimes also firmly.

Commitment to collaboration. The process of collaboration can occasionally seem frustrating and inefficient. At such times, every facilitator experiences the temptation to take on the easy and all too familiar role of teacher, and lead rather than facilitate the group. However, a genuine conviction about the value of cooperative learning and the empowerment it can produce will help the facilitator resist a dominating role. Likewise, the facilitator needs to be willing and able to share facilitation.

A sense of timing. The facilitator needs to develop a "sixth sense" for time: when to bring a discussion to a close, when to change the topic, when to cut off someone who has talked too long, and when to let the discussion run over the allotted time.

Flexibility. Facilitators must plan, but they must also be willing to jettison those plans in response to the situation. Often the group will take a session in an unforeseen direction or may demand more time to explore a particular topic. The facilitator needs to be able to evaluate the group's needs and determine how to respond to them. Although every session is important, sometimes a facilitator will decide to omit one in favor of giving another fuller treatment.

A sense of humor. As in most human endeavors, even the most serious, an appreciation of life's ironies, the ability to laugh at oneself, and to share the laughter of others enhances the experience for everyone.

Resourcefulness and creativity. *Claiming Our Rights* and *Safe and Secure* provide practical outlines and resources for discussion, but each group is as different as the people who make it up. A good facilitator goes "by the book" but is also expected to adapt the material to fit local conditions. She may draw on the talents and experiences of people in the group and the community. Participants may also want to contribute quotations, poems, songs, and other resources from their personal experience.

Self-Reminders for Facilitators

Be Aware Of

Your role. Your behavior more than your words will convey that you are also a learner and that this is not a traditional teacher-student situation.

Your eyes. Maintain eye contact with participants.

Your voice. Try not to talk too much or too loudly.

Your "body language." Consider that how and where you sit, may unconsciously exercise authority.

Your responsibility. Make sure everyone has a chance to be heard and be treated equally: encourage differences of opinion but discourage argument; curb those who dominate; draw in those who are hesitant.

Your class. Recognize when you need to give structure to the discussion: explain and summarize when necessary; decide when to extend a discussion and when to go on to the next topic; remind the group when they get off the subject.

Your power. Share it whenever possible (tasks like note taking, time keeping, and, ideally, leading the discussion).

Strategies for Effective Facilitation

Before You Start

Prepare yourself. Look over the material to be covered. Make an agenda (but be willing to change it).

Find out about the participants (if possible). This knowledge can sensitize you to issues of concern and potential problems.

Create a comfortable meeting space. Create a space where people can sit together as equals, see and hear each other, and feel comfortable.

Gather your materials. Gather whatever materials you need for the session (chart paper, markers, name-tags, sign-up sheets or cards to gather addresses, etc.).

At the first meeting

Get people to introduce themselves. Try to make them feel welcome. If needed, use an "icebreaker," an activity to help participants learn more about each other and become more comfortable expressing themselves in the group. Ideas for icebreakers are suggested in Appendix A.

State the time frame for this session. Inform participants of when the session will end, and of your intention to respect participants' time by beginning and ending promptly. You may ask someone to serve as the time keeper (reminding the group when 30, 15, and five minutes remain, for instance).

Explain the scope of the course and ask participants to state their expectations. If possible record these on chart paper. Then examine the list and evaluate honestly whether the session is likely to meet the listed expectations. (For instance, "Although we are not going to deal specifically with girls' education, I think many of the sessions will concern girls as well as women. Your experience as a teacher will be valuable to us all," or "We will not deal in depth here with the mechanisms of international law. I can, however, help you find resources on the subject.")

Ask participants what they do not want from the course, and to list these items. This provides a good basis for setting group ground-rules.

Establish ground-rules for the group. Ask the group to discuss the behaviors they feel will help to establish an environment of trust and make their interactions respectful, confidential, and purposeful. List these suggestions as they are mentioned and ask the group if they can agree to observe them as their ground-rules. Keep this list and post it at future sessions.

Agree on how participants will communicate with each other between sessions. You need not be the main focus of communication. If no one objects, consider giving everyone an address list.

At Every Session

Reduce hierarchical approaches. Every aspect of the program, from invitations to discussions, should reflect nonhierarchical, inclusive, and democratic principles. Even seating should be nonhierarchical, with the facilitator sitting among participants to avoid creating an assumed "head of the class."

Be concerned about inclusiveness. Be concerned that both the content and learning process show respect for human dignity and difference. All aspects of the program should consider a diversity of perspectives (such as racial, class, regional, sexual orientation, and cultural/national traditions) and consider the special needs of some participants (such as physical disabilities or child care needs). Unless the participant group is known to be uniformly well educated, leaders should offer attractive alternatives to all reading and writing activities. Written material could be read aloud. Appealing alternatives to written expression could be tape recordings, oral presentations, or collage making. Similarly, while all written materials should be accessible, they should in no way patronize the participants' intelligence. If the women are a fairly homogenous group, remind them often to consider the experiences of women who are different from themselves.

Provide an open-minded forum. Allow opportunities for participants to disagree with each other and to arrive at and maintain positions different from your own. Avoid searching for "the right answer" or "the only solution." Also, discourage arguments whose aim is to establish winners and losers.

Avoid simple answers to complex questions. Learning about human rights raises difficult questions about human behavior and cultural norms and often involves complicated answers about why people have been denied their rights. Be cautious about oversimplifications, especially reducing the responsibility for violations to one or two causes. Encourage participants to analyze the various factors which contribute to their experience. Workable strategies for improving conditions can only evolve from a thorough examination of the problem.

Use precise language and discourage stereotypes. Any study of human rights touches upon nuances of human behavior. Resist the temptation to overgeneralize and thus distort the facts or limit ideas about affecting change ("That's just the way men are"). How ethnic groups or social clusters are labeled and portrayed has a direct impact on how they are perceived ("Women won't

speak up"). When necessary, remind participants that although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them need modifying or qualifying terms (such as "sometimes," "usually," or "in many cases").

Avoid comparisons of pain. Just as human rights are indivisible, each being essential to the whole, so violations against women should not be evaluated on a scale of suffering. An insult to a woman's human dignity or limitations placed on her full potential are as much human rights violations as a physical assault on her person. No one should assume that the suffering of one woman is greater than that experienced by women in other circumstances.

Model good facilitation and then share responsibility. One result of good facilitation is the development of facilitation skills in participants. After a few sessions, when you have had time to set an example of how to facilitate, ask if anyone would like to co-lead the next session. Continue encouraging other participants to share facilitation.

Use many modes of communication. Some people learn best by hearing, others by seeing, others by doing. Try to include many modes of learning in each session. For example, when the participants in a discussion group name several different factors that contribute to a problem, list each factor on a blackboard or chart paper as it is mentioned. This kind of note taking provides a visual acknowledgment of what is being said, and also serves as a reminder for later review and discussion.

Don't hesitate to say "I don't know." Remember that the facilitator is also a learner. When you can't answer a question, ask if anyone else can, or invite someone to find the answer for the next session. Resist the urge to answer the question yourself, especially if it involves an opinion (e.g., "What is the best way to respond to public verbal aggression?"), since your reply may suggest an authority you do not intend. Instead, ask others in the group how they would answer the question and open the possibility of differing opinions.

Conclude every session with some kind of collective summary. Try to end each session with a summarizing question or an open-ended statement which everyone responds to in turn without comment from others. For example, you might ask "What words have you heard here today that you will especially remember as meaningful?" or "Try to think of a word or phrase that sums up your feelings at the end of today's session." You might also just ask people to share one thing that they are still wondering about, finishing the sentence "I still wonder...." Then go around the circle of participants so that everyone has a chance to respond if she wishes. Once such closure is established as a

ritual, participants anticipate it, and it marks a clear ending to the session. In this way the facilitator does not need to have the last word!

Keep some kind of record. Facilitators learn from experience. Record briefly what happened at each session, including adaptations and changes that occurred, and new ideas, particular successes and difficulties. These will help you and others in planning future workshops.

At the Final Session

Closure usually calls forth both feelings and expectations. Try to address both of these by anticipating them. Bring up the approaching end of the course at an earlier session and ask participants to think about a suitable activity to conclude, ideally with participants taking responsibility for conducting this. For example, you might introduce an open-ended statement that points to action, like "As a result of this workshop, I would like to do ___ in my community," or "As a result of this workshop, I will change ___ in my life."

Emphasize at the last session that learning does not end with this workshop and that there are many possibilities for both future learning and action in the public as well as the private sphere. You may also wish to have participants evaluate the workshop, either formally in writing or informally in discussion, or both. If you use a written form, provide a safe way for participants to offer constructive criticism and maintain their anonymity. If you use a discussion method, ask each participant to share one thing she liked and one thing she would change.

...the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, Preamble

Some participants may want to continue to meet, or may ask "Is this the end of this group?" Encourage those who are interested to take the initiative to organize further learning or advocacy about women's human rights, ideally under their own leadership. You might offer to provide some guidance on good facilitation (although the best instruction will have been your own example).

Many groups organize a reunion meeting some months after the final session. Such reunions provide not only an opportunity to renew friendships formed in the group, but also to evaluate the experience they have shared and reflect on how participation has affected their present lives.

Suggestions for Human Rights Education

Help participants feel part of something larger. Seek ways to connect the workshop to larger issues both nationally and internationally. Include a global citizenship dimension to the women's human rights theme being examined, making clear that problems in the local community are also experienced by women in other parts of the world. Build a sense of solidarity through the realization that women across the globe are learning about and insisting upon the full realization of their human rights. Leaders need to be prepared with current and relevant global examples of particular issues.

Encourage use of the term "women's human rights." To emphasize their universality, explain that you will use the term "women's human rights" rather than "women's rights," which implies rights limited to women. At the same time, the phrase "women's human rights" emphasizes that the advancement and denial of rights are not gender neutral. Women and girls often experience human rights violations in a different manner from men and boys.

Introduce human rights law as a "work in progress." Every woman has a right to know her human rights, and such knowledge can be empowering. Explicitly link women's personal experience to women's human rights issues; when possible connect the issue to specific articles in the Universal Declartation of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, don't emphasize documents over experience or present issue descriptions or resolutions as "perfect" or "settled." Women should be encouraged to examine and question everything. The facilitator may point out that women's participation in the drafting and enforcement of international documents has been very limited. Moreover, not all groups of women have been addressed. Participants could consider how these documents might have been different if the concerns of all women had been represented and respected. Emphasize also that each of these international documents resulted from the efforts of men and women to formulate moral principles of justice and human dignity, and that as social conditions change, new human rights law must be developed in response to new needs. The ongoing participation of all people is needed for human rights law to continue to develop and be interpreted. At every level in this process, women will be the best spokespersons and agents for achieving their own human rights.

Commitment to improving women's lives. Human rights education is not just educating about human rights. It is educating for human rights, helping people feel the importance of human rights so these rights can be integrated into the way they live, and so more action will be taken to promote and protect the rights of others at the individual, community, and national level.

Some Facilitation Tools

Icebreakers. If participants don't all know each other or feel uncomfortable, begin with a simple "icebreaker." See Appendix A for some suggestions.

Energizers. Sometimes the energy level of even the most enthusiastic group lags. Refocus attention with a quick "energizer" activity. Try those in Appendix A or develop your own.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 1

Journal writing. Having participants write down their reactions, opinions, and ideas before discussion not only raises the level of discourse, it also provides them with a written record of their evolving ideas about women's human rights and/or violence against women. Journal writing also reinforces the value of independent, critical thinking and tends to raise the level of discourse. For some participants, a journal provides an outlet to express thoughts and emotions too personal to bring up in open discussion. Here are some suggestions for using journals:

- Illustrate the importance of individual opinion by providing time for journal writing (ten minutes minimum).
- No one should be required to read from or show her journal.
- If anyone reads aloud from her journal, no one should be permitted to criticize the opinion expressed.

Evaluation. By eliciting regular evaluation the facilitator demonstrates a genuine willingness to hear and respond to the concerns of the participants. Allow time at the next session after an evaluation to summarize and respond to them. Do not rely only on verbal evaluations: if someone has a problem, she is more likely to tell you in writing than in person.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 24

PART II:
Human Rights Fundamentals

The following questions are among those most frequently asked about human rights in general and about women's human rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in particular.

What Are Human Rights?

Every person has human rights simply because she or he is a human being. Human rights are held equally by every person everywhere on the earth.

...discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of their prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Preamble

Human rights are inalienable:* you cannot be deprived of these rights any more than you can cease to be a human being. Human rights are indivisible: there is no hierarchy of rights, all are equally important to securing peace and freedom for every individual.

Human rights are interdependent: all human rights are essential parts of a complementary framework. For example, your right to participate in your community is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Another definition for human rights is those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity. When anyone's human rights are violated, that person is being treated as though she or he were not fully human. To advocate human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected.

Rights and Responsibilities

Rights cannot be separated from responsibilities. In claiming our own human rights, we acknowledge the rights of others and accept the responsibility not only to respect these rights, but to support and defend people whose rights are abused or denied. If anyone's rights are violated, no one's rights are secure.

* All underlined terms are defined in the Glossary in Appendix D.

Idealism and Pragmatism

Human rights are both idealistic and practical. Human rights principles inspire us with the vision of a better world where everyone can enjoy freedom, justice, and peace. They also set minimum standards for how individuals and institutions should treat people. Furthermore when those standards are not met, human rights provide people with a powerful framework for action, for people have human rights even if the law or those in power fail to recognize or protect them. And people who know their rights are much more likely to defend them, both for themselves and for others.

...it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble

What Is Human Rights Law?

Human rights did not begin in the twentieth century. Respect for justice and human dignity are inherent in the traditions of most cultures—as long-established practices in some, and in others as part of holy texts or legal codes—and all societies have ways of caring for the health and welfare of their members. However, only in the twentieth century was an attempt made to articulate rights for all members of the human family. Following the horrific experiences of World War II and amid the poverty of many countries newly emerging from colonial rule, many people sought to create a document that could capture the hopes, aspirations, and protections to which every person is entitled and ensure that the future of humankind could be different. This foundation document of human rights was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which the newly founded United Nations adopted on December 10, 1948.

The General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance...

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The UDHR articulates the principle first set forth in the United Nations Charter (1945) that how any government treats its own citizens is not merely a domestic issue but a matter of legitimate international concern. The 30 articles of the Declaration form a comprehensive statement covering economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights (see the Appendix of *Claiming Our Rights* or *Safe and Secure* for the text of the UDHR). The document is both universal and indivisible: however, a declaration is not binding law. Rather it is a statement of intent, a set of principles to which states commit themselves in an effort to provide their citizens a life of human dignity. Over the past 50 years, though, the UDHR has acquired the status of customary international law because states respect and observe it as though it were law. Furthermore, it has served as the legal basis for all subsequent human rights conventions, as well as the constitutions of most UN members states.

States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 3.2

Human Rights Conventions

Like all human institutions, human rights are evolving. Since the establishment of the general principles set forth in the UDHR in 1948, the UN has developed more than 20 human rights covenants and conventions, that further define human rights and establish procedures to promote and protect them. These documents, which have the status of treaties, are legally binding on the governments that ratify them. Some of these conventions prohibit certain abhorrent acts—for example, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984). Other conventions protect the rights of especially vulnerable people, such as the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Foundations of Human Rights

Equality The basis of human rights is that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (UDHR, Article 1).

Universality Certain moral and ethical values are shared in all regions of the world, and governments and communities should recognize and uphold them. The universality of rights does not mean, however, that they cannot change or that they are experienced in the same manner by all people.

Nondiscrimination The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international human rights laws afford the same rights and responsibilities equally to all women and men, boys and girls, by virtue of their humanity and regardless of any role or relationship they may have.

Indivisibility Women's rights should be addressed as an indivisible body, including political, economic, cultural, and collective rights.

Interdependence Human rights concerns appear in all spheres of life—home, school, workplace, courts, markets—everywhere. Human rights violations are interconnected; the loss of one right detracts from other rights. Similarly, the promotion of human rights in one area supports other human rights.

Government responsibility Human rights are not gifts bestowed at the pleasure of governments, nor should governments withhold them or apply them to some people but not to others. When they do so, they must be held accountable.

Private responsibility Governments are not the only upholders of human rights or perpetrators of violations. Everyone has a responsibility to respect human rights and challenge institutions and individuals who abuse them.

How Is International Human Rights Law Created?

International human rights conventions, covenants, and treaties are created and put into force by the following steps:

1. **Recognized as a need.** Many groups concerned about a human rights problem, including governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), work to bring it to the attention of the UN General Assembly. When sufficient concern is expressed, the General Assembly instructs the UN Commission on Human Rights to appoint a group to draft a declaration or convention to address that problem.
2. **Drafted by working groups.** Working groups consist of government representatives of UN Member States, as well as representatives of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.
3. **Adopted by majority in the UN General Assembly.** The General Assembly is made up of representatives of all Member States. Each state has one vote.
4. **Signed by UN Member States.** When Member States sign the convention, they are indicating that they have started the process required by their government for ratification. In signing, they also are agreeing to refrain from acts that would be contrary to the objectives of the convention.
5. **Ratified by UN Member States.** Countries freely decide whether they agree to a convention. When a government does ratify and thus become a states party to a convention, it takes on certain responsibilities to:
   - abide by the provisions of that convention;
   - change any laws in the country that contradict the convention;
   - make regular reports to the UN on how it is meeting its treaty obligations;
   - agree to be monitored by the UN on its compliance with the convention.

   Sometimes a government will agree to the spirit and intention of a convention but object to one or more of its articles. In that case it may ratify the convention but make specific reservations about the particular article(s).

6. **Entered into force.** A convention goes into effect as international law when a specified number of Member States have ratified it. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) were adopted by the General Assembly in 1966; however neither entered into force until 1976 when each had been ratified by the specified number of Member States (in this case, 35). Once a convention enters into force, it becomes part of the body of international law that may be used to claim and protect human rights.

The Rights of the Child from Declaration to Convention

The convention on the Rights of the Child provides a clear example of the evolution of a UN convention. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, advocates had called for legal measures to protect and provide for children. In 1959, a UN-appointed working group drafted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which consisted of ten principles that set forth basic rights to which all children should be entitled. These principles then needed to be codified as a convention. The drafting process lasted nine years, during which representatives of governments, intergovernmental agencies (IGOs) like UNICEF and UNESCO, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Save the Children, the International Red Cross, and the Red Crescent, worked together to create consensus on the language of the convention.

The resulting Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) contains over 50 articles that can be divided into three general categories:

- **protection,** covering specific issues such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation;
- **provision,** addressing a child's particular needs such as education and health care; and
- **participation,** acknowledging a child's growing capacity to make decisions and play a part in society.

The CRC was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 and was immediately signed by more nations in a shorter period of time than any other UN convention. As a result, it entered into force shortly thereafter, in 1990. Furthermore, the total number of Member States which have ratified the CRC has surpassed that of all other conventions. As of September 1998, only two UN Member States had not ratified it: Somalia and the United States.

How Are Human Rights Changing?

As the world changes, so does the scope and definition of human rights. For example, the UDHR makes no reference to the environment, largely because in 1948 few recognized the threat to our planet and its peoples from hazards such as radiation, industrial pollution, pesticides, and general ecological degradation. Today the UN convention on environmental rights is in the drafting stage. Similarly, there was no mention of land mines in early documents, but citizen advocacy brought this problem to international attention in the early 1990s, with the result that in 1997 the UN adopted a new "Landmines Convention" (Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines). However, in a recent statement, the UN General Assembly declared that what is needed to further human rights is not more conventions but greater implementation of existing conventions, so that the protection and liberties they embody can become a reality for all peoples of the world.

We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women, gathered here in Beijing in September 1995...reaffirm our commitment to: [t]he equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Rights to Development...
The Beijing Declaration

Are There Other Human Rights Documents Besides Those of the UN?

Countries in many regions of the world have come together to formulate documents for protecting and promoting the human rights of people living in that region—for example, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). Regional documents also exist for Europe and the Americas. The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America in the last decade have demonstrated a surge in demand for the respect of human rights. Popular movements in China, Korea, and other Asian nations reveal a similar commitment to these principles.

The laws and constitutions of most nations also define and protect the rights of their citizens. The UDHR has served as the model for the constitutions of many nations founded after 1948.

What Are Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and How Do They Influence Human Rights?

The champions of human rights have most often been citizens, not government officials. In particular, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have played a major role in advocating human rights issues.

NGOs are interest groups formed by people outside of government and which operate independently of governments. They reflect interests and purposes as diverse as the prevention of tuberculosis, the preservation or architecture, and the promotion of literacy. A few NGOs are large and international (such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Girl Scouts, the Rotary Club, and Amnesty International). Most, however, are small groups composed of ordinary citizens addressing local concerns (such as a group that works for better schools or cleaner air, opposes a new dam, or advocates against police brutality). Laws about the registration and operation of NGOs vary from country to country.

NGOs have made significant contributions to the development of human rights. Some monitor the actions of governments and pressure them to act according to human rights principles. Others work on human rights issues in their own town, region, or country. For example, the efforts of NGOs both large and small at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, drew unprecedented attention to serious violations of the human rights of women. In effect, NGOs have come to represent the voices and concerns of ordinary people in the international arena.

Many NGOs focus especially on women's human rights. Some like Sisterhood Is Global operate internationally and address many issues. Others like Friends of Women (Bangkok, Thailand), Women's Resource Center (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), or Sisters in Islam (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) deal mainly with local concerns such as trafficking in women, women's literacy, women's poverty, violence against women, or women's health and reproduction. Working in their own communities and also networking together across cultures and borders, these groups are able to bring attention to women's concerns in the communities where they live and also to the international forum. There are even smaller NGOs that focus on a single issue, such as raising funds for a local girls' school, or a weaving cooperative.

What Are Women's Human Rights?

International human rights documents explicitly state that all human beings, whether female or male, are equal in rights and dignity. However, an implicit assumption in most documents, principally written and implemented by men, is that "equality" means "the same" or even "the same as men." Thus they fail to recognize and accommodate women's very different life experiences, concerns, and needs.

Furthermore, human rights law and practice have consistently neglected women and girls. Violations based on biological and gender differences have historically not been recognized as human rights violations, and even organizations dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights have often failed to devote attention to abuses against women or to develop effective methods to investigate gender-based violations. Meanwhile, most women and girls remain ignorant of their human rights and the documents and mechanisms that define and protect them.

Women who understand their human rights are greatly empowered to claim both their rights and the their full humanity. A human rights framework provides the tools to define, analyze, and articulate women's experiences and to claim their human rights in terms recognized by the international community.

What Is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)?

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (also known as CEDAW, or the "Women's Convention") seeks to recognize the differences in women's experience and needs, and include them in the human rights framework. In December 1979, the General Assembly adopted CEDAW, a landmark in the history of women's human rights. Ratification was rapid, and the treaty came into force on September 3, 1981. Currently, 163 countries are parties to the Convention and an additional 97 have signed the treaty, binding themselves to do nothing that contradicts its terms.

The Preamble to CEDAW acknowledges that despite prior UN efforts to promote human rights and the equality of women, "extensive discrimination against women continues to exist." The Preamble declares that this discrimination violates "the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficulty the full development of the potentialities of the sexes and human, national and global development" (see the Appendix of *Claiming our Rights* or *Safe and Secure* for the text of CEDAW).

Distinctive Features of CEDAW

CEDAW defines many circumstances of discrimination against women and calls for governments that have ratified the convention to take strong action to end them. It also contains several distinctive features that distinguish it from other human rights documents:

Discrimination. CEDAW directs governments to end all discrimination against women, not only by actions and policies of the state and public authorities and institutions, but also by "any person, organization or enterprise" (Article 2.e), which could be interpreted to include family members, cultural and religious institutions, and businesses that discriminate against women.

Affirmative action. CEDAW calls for affirmative action—for the government to take "special measures aimed at accelerating...equality between men and women" (Article 4). Such measures might include preferences for women in political parties, schools and universities, and state positions.

State Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy...

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Art 14.1

Cultural practices. CEDAW deals directly with cultural practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women. In one of its most controversial articles, CEDAW directs governments "to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices" (Article 5). This includes changing all practices based on "the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes" and all stereotyped roles for both men and women.

Family planning. CEDAW is the only treaty to cover family planning. States parties are obliged to include advice on family planning in the education process (Article 10.h) and to develop family codes that guarantee women's rights to "decide freely...the number and spacing of their children" and the means to exercise this choice (Article 16.e). It also demands shared responsibility for child-rearing by both sexes (Article 5).

Human rights. CEDAW affirms the indivisibility of human rights. In practice, international human rights law gives priority to civil and political rights, while some of women's most urgent concerns involve denial of social, economic, or cultural rights. For example, the effects of structural adjustment policies and environmental degradation have had a disproportionate effect on women's lives worldwide.

Rural groups. CEDAW is the first treaty to specify rural women as a group with special problems and to recognize the importance of their work.

Limitations of CEDAW

As it has been put into effect, CEDAW, like most human rights documents, has been found to be less than perfect. Problems have been recognized in what CEDAW says about women's human rights, the mechanisms it provides for monitoring the convention, and the ways governments are ratifying and implementing it. Changes have already been made to refine and clarify CEDAW, and many suggestions have been put forward to further strengthen the convention:

Evolving definition and concepts. Like the whole field of human rights, women's human rights are evolving. For example CEDAW fails to make clear that women's human rights must be protected in both the public and private spheres of life. However, in response to women's local and national activism, the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna specifically recognized that violence against women raises human rights questions, regardless of whether such acts occur in public or in the privacy of the home. Also in 1993, the UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women that similarly recognizes both public and private violence.

Outline of Cedaw

Preamble Links women's rights to human rights.

Part I (Articles 1-6) Defines discrimination against women and the obligations of states to eliminate it.

Parts II and III (Articles 7-9 and 10-14) Details specific areas of discrimination such as education, employment, and economic and social activities. The legal status of women receives the broadest attention, including the right of women to represent their country at the international level (Article 8), and clarification that women's legal status is independent of their marital status (Article 9).

Part IV (Articles 15-16) Defines equality before the law, including in marriage and family relations.

Part V (Articles 17-22) Defines the mandate of the monitoring body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee) to implement and monitor compliance with the Convention and the reporting obligations of states.

Part VI (Articles 23-30) Describes the mechanism for signing, ratifying, revising, and making reservations to the Convention.

Implementation. In practice, most women remain second class citizens regardless of whether their country has ratified CEDAW. Women usually have great difficulty claiming their rights, especially in the family, and are often reluctant to complain about matters that are widely regarded as being a part of their culture, or a fact of life.

The CEDAW Committee. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was established to monitor compliance with the Convention. Composed of 23 experts in the fields covered by the Convention, the Committee reviews the periodic reports that states parties are required to submit on the "legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted" to conform to the Convention. However, many states that have ratified CEDAW have done little or nothing substantial. Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee has little power to pressure governments to meet their treaty obligations.

The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence.
CEDAW's General Rec. 19, Para.6

Reservations. Although CEDAW is second only to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the most widely ratified UN human rights treaty, it is also the treaty to which the greatest number of substantive reservations has been made. In particular, states have made reservations to Articles 2, 5, 9, 15, and 16, which deal with eliminating discrimination based on culture and tradition, nationality, legal capacity, marriage, and family. Some reservations contradict the fundamental goal of CEDAW and other treaties—gender equity and nondiscrimination. Other reservations preserve the power of states parties to continue discrimination, especially by excluding the family from state responsibility, the sphere where women's rights are most crucial. CEDAW contains no clear criteria or procedures to evaluate or reject reservations.

Strengthening CEDAW

Women's human rights advocates and the CEDAW Committee itself are seeking to strengthen the Women's Convention in several ways:

Improve CEDAW's implementation and monitoring procedures. This can be accomplished by giving the CEDAW Committee a mandate to:

- evaluate and reject certain reservations;
- demand that states parties submit regular reports on their progress in implementing CEDAW; and
- sanction states that fail to comply with the terms of CEDAW.

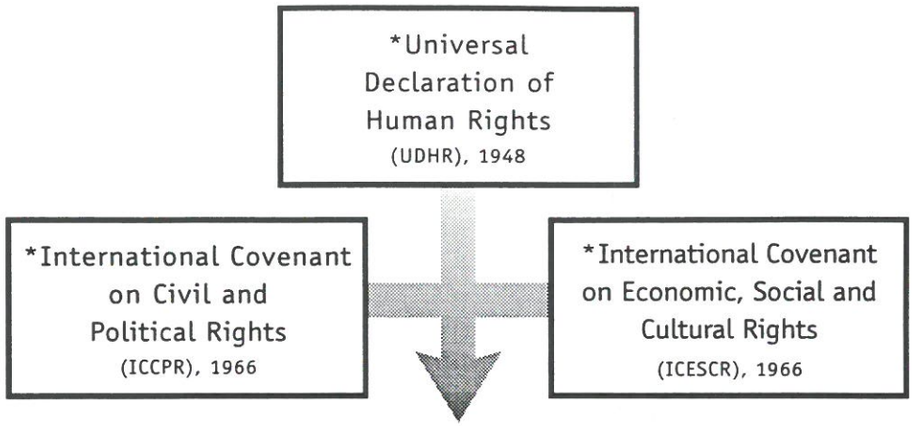
Adopt an optional protocol. This will be established for individuals to file complaints with the CEDAW Committee. In March 1999, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted a protocol that contains two procedures: a communications procedure allowing individual women or groups of women to submit claims of violations of rights to the CEDAW Committee, and an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's human rights. There are still several significant legal and political hurdles that the protocol must undergo before it is open for signature and ratification by States.

Expand the interpretation of CEDAW. This is being accomplished through use of General Recommendations and General Comments by the CEDAW Committee. For example, in its General Recommendation 19, the Committee describes violence against women as a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men. The Committee demonstrates how freedom from gender-based violence is included in the rights guaranteed in CEDAW, such as the right to life, the right to not be subject to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security of person, equality in the family, and the highest standard attainable of physical and mental heath, and other rights. Such recommendations provide NGOs with a significant advocacy tool.

Give wider recognition to NGOs. At present, these organizations have no formal status or powers in relation to CEDAW, although NGOs do submit reports on women's human rights concerns in cases where they have no official obligation to make representations to the CEDAW Committee.

Urge more attention to CEDAW by legal scholars. These scholars are developing the jurisprudence of human rights and using it domestically as well as internationally.

Gain a more appropriate level of funding. CEDAW and the CEDAW Committee have been underfunded from the outset compared to other human rights treaty bodies.



International Bill of Human Rights

Selected Human Rights Conventions and Declarations

*Convention On The Prevention And Punishment Of The Crime Of Genocide, 1948

Convention For The Suppression Of The Traffic In Persons And Of The Exploitation Of The Prostitution Of Others, 1949

Convention Relating To The Status Of Refugees, 1951

Slavery Convention Of 1926, Amended By Protocol, 1953

Convention On The Political Rights Of Women, 1953

Convention On The Nationality Of Married Women, 1957

Convention On The Reduction Of Statelessness, 1961

Convention On Consent To Marriage, Minimum Age For Marriage And Registration Of Marriages, 1962

International Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Racial Discrimination, 1965

Convention On The Non-Applicability Of Statutory Limitations To War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity, 1968

*International Convention On The Suppression And Punishment Of The Crime Of Apartheid, 1973

Declaration On The Rights Of Disabled Persons, 1975

*Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women, 1979

Declaration On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Intolerance And Of Discrimination Based On Religion Or Belief, 1981

*Convention Against Torture And Other Cruel, Inhuman Or Degrading Treatment Or Punishment, 1984

Declaration On The Right To Development, 1986

*Convention On The Rights Of The Child, 1989

International Convention On The Protection Of The Rights Of All Migrant Workers And Members Of Their Families, 1990

Declaration On The Rights Of Persons Belonging To National Or Ethnic, Religious, And Linguistic Minorities, 1992

Declaration On The Elimination Of Violence Against Women, 1993

"Human Rights Defenders Declaration," 1998

Note: Date refers to the year of adoption by the UN General Assembly.

* Most often sited in defending human rights.

PART III:
Human Rights in Context

Adapting to Local Cultures, Issues, and Interests

Claiming Our Rights and *Safe and Secure* were written for use in Muslim societies around the world. However, these cultures have little in common beyond their practice of Islam, which is itself highly diverse. For this reason, facilitators may need to adapt and supplement the material in these manuals to relate better to participants' lived experience.

Facilitators should make clear that the issues in these manuals are in no way particular to Muslim communities. On the contrary, they are common everywhere in the world. The facilitator might illustrate this point with examples or statistics drawn from resources such as those suggested in Appendix C.

...in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Preamble

The scenarios and case studies in the manuals are intended to provide a framework for discussion, not a rigid program to be followed step by step. Like a good cook, most facilitators will want to add their own ingredients and techniques to the "recipe" provided. They will also want to make adjustments for the needs of participants (such as their level of literacy, age, or experience).

The following are some suggestions for making the manuals more relevant to the local context.

Assessing Group Awareness

Although some participants may be familiar with human rights or women's issues, many may be exploring these subjects for the first time. The facilitator needs to determine the level of group awareness and, if needed, provide some general consciousness-raising activities before moving to more issue-focused discussions.

The following activities illustrate some ways the facilitator might introduce gender awareness to a group unfamiliar with the concept:

"Gender bender." Take a familiar story or plot (from a film, TV series, or folk tale, for example) and retell it with the gender of the characters switched. Then discuss the effects of this gender change.

Public faces in public places. Brainstorm a list of the public statues or portraits in your town. Then analyze the list:

- Of those depicting human beings, how many are women?
- Of those depicting men, how many are actual historical figures?
- Of those depicting fictional men, what qualities do these male figures represent?
- Of those depicting women, how many are of actual historical women?
- Of those depicting fictional women, what qualities do these female figures represent?
- How many of the male figures are clothed? What are they wearing?
- How many of the female figures are clothed? What are they wearing?
- What conclusions can you draw from these public representations about gender roles and stereotypes?

Sex or gender? Explain the differences between sex (biologically determined factors) and gender (socially determined factors). Divide participants into two groups and ask each to make a list of perceived differences between men and women, some based on sex (adult men have beards; women live longer than men) and some on gender (men are better at math; women are timid). When one group mentions a difference, the other has to decide whether it is a difference based on sex or gender. Of course, disagreement will arise (is male aggressiveness socially or biologically determined?), but the resulting discussion helps to clarify the issue of gender.

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: (a) The right to family benefits; (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit; (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, Art.13

Women in the news. Pass out some newspapers among the participants and ask them to analyze how women are represented in the press:

- Are any women pictured? Why? On what page?
- Are any articles written by women? What are they about? On what page?
- Which news stories feature women? What is the ratio of news items featuring women to those featuring men? Which news stories depict women primarily because of their beauty or their spouse's importance? Which because of their intelligence, leadership, or achievements?

- In what roles are women most commonly depicted in advertising?
- How many reports in the sports pages feature women's sports?
- What proportion of the entire paper relates to women?
- What conclusions can be drawn from the newspapers about the role of women?

Assessing Group Concerns

Claiming Our Rights and *Safe and Secure* treat issues of importance to women all over the world. However, every group of participants will have its own priorities and concerns. While the topics covered in these manuals is important and should be covered, the facilitator should also make an assessment of each group's special interests and try to include these as well.

For example, at the first session the facilitator might pose a general question like "What are some of the special concerns of women in our community?" Or in individual sessions, the facilitator might ask, "What aspects of this topic are especially important to women here in our community?"

If participants raise an issue not included in the manual (such as the rights of single women, property rights, child custody), the facilitator may want to consider adding a session, perhaps asking some of the participants to plan a scenario and provide discussion questions and quotations like those in the manual.

Assessing Group Experience

The issues in these manuals are relevant to all women, regardless of geography, class, or other circumstances. However, some participants may find the manuals reflect an unfamiliar lifestyle or require a reading level beyond their experience. Others may want something more challenging. The facilitator needs to evaluate the appropriateness of the material for the group and adapt it accordingly.

For example, the scenarios might be altered for rural or uneducated women, and the discussion based on oral narration rather than reading. More privileged or sophisticated participants might be offered supplemental readings and encouraged to research local conditions.

The facilitator should be open with the group about her concern for finding the right level, and the group's need to help with finding the best adaptations. The facilitator's willingness to adapt and consult will demonstrate clearly that this is a collaborative process and that the facilitator herself is a co-learner.

Using Storytelling

Most participants will know about situations similar to the scenarios and cases provided in the manuals, and their parallel stories can provide a rich supplement to the session. Facilitators should encourage these contributions, especially if the scenario in the manuals seems foreign to the local environment. For example, if honor killings are rare locally, the facilitator might acknowledge this fact and ask whether other acts of violence occur in the name of honor (such as "crimes of passion").

Similarly, the facilitator might announce the topic at the beginning of the session, asking "Is this an issue in our community?" and encourage participants to offer illustrative stories from their experience. These stories need not be personal. Participants may draw from legend, literature, films, television, or local history. Narrating personal or family experience should be strictly an individual choice.

Sometimes a historical perspective on these stories is helpful (for example, asking "Were there such disputes over a wife's earnings in your mother's or grandmother's day?"). Likewise comparing participants' stories can bring out significant themes.

Facilitators often need to curb storytelling lest the session lose its purpose. The number of stories might be limited ("Let's just hear one more example of such a case") or the time circumscribed ("Try to keep your stories to one minute so everybody who wishes can offer and example").

Including Local Culture

Another way to make scenarios more relevant is to relate them to local culture, both traditional and contemporary. For example, the facilitator might ask participants if they can think of any proverbs, modern or folk songs, myths, tales, novels, plays, popular films, TV series, or radio shows that relate to the theme of the session.

Participants might also analyze the content of this cultural material (such as proverbs that speak both for and against wife beating) and its implicit attitudes ("What is the relationship between men and women suggested in this song?").

Including Local Media

When participants are sensitized to a particular issue, they typically begin to see evidence of it all around them. They should be encouraged to bring in examples they hear or read in the media. If participants are especially interested in finding such local cases, the facilitator may set a time in every session to present these examples. Human rights issues in the news may also inspire the group to write to local officials or newspaper editors or to take some other form of action.

Including Statistical Information, Local Law, Custom

Questions will inevitably arise about international, national, and local law and custom regarding human rights issues. Facilitators cannot be expected to have all the answers. They should, however, be informed about where and how to find the information they may need.

Appendix B offers a checklist of questions about international, national, and local law and custom that facilitators may need to be able to answer. The group might work together to answer these questions.

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 27

Often discussing an issue makes participants want to know more. For example, how prevalent is domestic violence in the world or in this community? Appendix C suggests some sources for finding this information. Facilitators or the group itself may wish to create issue fact sheets for and about their community.

Facilitators might also consult local libraries, NGOs, or activists to learn if any relevant reports or studies are available. Two helpful UN publications that provide current international statistics are UNICEF's annual *State of the World's Children*, and the UN Development Program's annual *Human Development Report*. These are available from the national UN office and are found in most university libraries.

Dealing with Difficulties

Difficulties will inevitably arise, especially when dealing with sensitive subject matter like human rights. Some problems are unique, but others occur with predictable regularity.

Difficult Issues

As a result of the facilitator's sincere efforts to address participants' concerns, some controversial and sensitive subject matter may emerge—for example, abortion, divorce, desertion, adoption, and sex education. Although the manuals do not deal directly with these issues, they are certainly important in many women's lives.

The group may be able to accept all the topics of discussion that participants bring up. However, the facilitator needs to acknowledge openly that some topics will cause discomfort or offense, and she should seek group opinion about how they want to deal with them. In an ideal participatory learning environment, the facilitator herself is part of the group, and she, too, should feel free to express her own

reservations about a topic, just as she encourages other participants to do. They may decide to have a separate session, discuss the issue in small groups, or find some other solution. The facilitator may also suggest that postponing such topics until the group has established mutual trust and understanding.

The important principle here is that the session belongs to the participants, and they should determine what is discussed. The facilitator's role is to keep the discussion relevant to human rights, avoid argumentation, maintain a safe environment for everyone including herself, and provide a nonjudgmental forum for interactive learning.

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society...

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art 20

Difficult Situations

Difficulties will arise in every group. However, they are not the facilitator's difficulties alone but the group's, and should be dealt with by the group. The following are just two examples.

Opposition to the group. Some women may find that people close to them feel threatened by their participation in the group. A few may drop out as a result. Others may continue, but endure continual criticism. The facilitator can help by providing an opportunity to talk about these negative responses, either in private or in the group. Even if the situation cannot be improved, the group can be strengthened by confronting such problems together. Furthermore, other people in the community may learn about the group and criticize its activities. Some groups confront such criticism by inviting their critics or participant's family members to attend one meeting in order to see what goes on. Of course, the discussion at that visitors' session will not be as frank, but it can provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness among the visitors.

Including men. Certainly men need human rights education as much as women! Some groups may wish to include both men and women. The manuals work just as well for mixed or single-sex groups, but many women may feel more comfortable in an all-female setting. The inclusion of men should be decided on jointly by the participants, the facilitator, and the sponsoring organization in the light of both long-term and short-term goals.

Difficult Individuals

Sometimes one individual, either intentionally or unintentionally, obstructs the solidarity and effectiveness of the group and becomes the facilitator's biggest challenge. Solutions are as varied as individuals, but the following strategies can help.

Private consultation. One method is for the facilitator to talk to the difficult person separate from the group and express her concern about the way things are going. Without blaming, the facilitator can tactfully point our ways in which the participant could help to improve the group.

Group rules. Another approach is for the facilitator to acknowledge that the personal dynamics of the group are not working well and suggest that they draw up a few general rules to improve their interactions (such as no one interrupts, all discussions are confidential, and everyone's opinion is respected). The enforcement of these rules becomes everyone's responsibility, and often group pressure suffices to curb the difficult person

Expulsion. A last resort is to ask the person to leave the group. The bad feelings evoked by such a step must be weighed against the bad feelings already created in the group. The facilitator may suggest that the person join a later group where the blend of personalities might be more harmonious.

Cultural Relativism

One objection frequently raised against international human rights is that they embody values that contradict and threaten local values and customs. Some people regard human rights as a form of "cultural imperialism," in which alien standards are imposed on indigenous cultures. Others see human rights as a threat to their traditional ways of life.

These objections are not limited to developing countries. Many countries of the West also reject certain human rights as "not our culture." The United States, for example, does not acknowledge most social/economic rights, such as health care or housing, and has not ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Human rights issues are inherently conflicted, and facilitators should not evade these clashes of values. Instead the group will benefit from exploring the issue of how conflicts between international human rights standards and local cultural practices should be resolved.

Two helpful points for facilitators to mention are:

- Neither human rights law nor culture is absolute. As human constructs, both are continuously evolving; and
- Human rights law sets standards but generally does not prescribe how these standards are to be met, thus allowing for wide cultural differences in implementation.

Going Further

As the last sessions approach, participants usually raise questions about the group's future. The facilitator should address these concerns and help decide what to do. However, the facilitator should not be discouraged if the group simply ends when the manual is complete, for the ultimate purpose was the learning that took place.

The following are typical ways that participants can carry on as individuals or as a group.

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. 2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice...

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 19

Leading Groups

Many participants want to share their experience with others, starting new groups like the one in which they have participated. Not everyone has the skills for facilitation, but sometimes a novice can team up with an experienced facilitator or the sponsoring organization can offer facilitator training.

Working on a Particular Issue

Often, one topic elicits more intense interest and concern, and participants may want to explore it in greater depth. The facilitator should encourage them to use the format and participatory methods established by the manual to both plan and carry out future sessions.

Taking Action

Some groups or individuals will choose to take action on an issue of particular concern. They will usually need to develop advocacy skills, such as information gathering, documentation, and strategizing for action. They may join a local NGO or call on it for help. They might also consult resources like *Women's Human Rights Step by Step* (Women, Law & Development International, 1997) or *Human Rights Institution Building: A Handbook on Establishing and Sustaining Human Rights Organizations* (New York; The Fund for Peace, 1994). See Appendix C for a list of resources for action.

APPENDIX A:
Icebreakers and Energizers

Icebreakers

The following suggestions are short and simple ways to introduce participants to each other and help them feel more comfortable with the group.

Interview. Break the participants into pairs. Explain that each person is to ask her partner several questions about herself (such as where she is from, what her family is like, some of her favorite things such as color, flower, music, or foods, or perhaps one surprising fact about herself). Allow about five minutes for this part. Then each participant introduces her partner to the group, describing what she has learned. Urge participants to keep each introduction to less than one minute.

"Picture this." Seat participants in a circle. Pass around two or three pictures (from a newspaper, magazine, calendar, or book) and ask each participant to give her name and then respond to the picture. You might ask:

- "What is going on in this picture?" or "What kind of story does this picture suggest?"
- "What would be a good title for this picture? "
- "What are the people in this picture saying to each other?"

An alternative format is to lay a group of pictures at the center of the circle and let each participant select one she likes. Then each participant in turn gives her name, displays her picture, and explains what attracted her to it.

Self-analysis. Seat participants in a circle. Go around the group asking each participant to give her name and respond to one of the following questions:

- If you were an animal, which animal would you choose to be and why?
- If you were a plant (a tree, flower, fruit, vegetable, or so on), what would you choose to be and why?

Teamwork. Divide participants into randomly selected teams of three or four. Allow about five minutes for each team to discover among themselves the characteristics they have in common. These might be cultural, physical, personal tastes (in music, food, hobbies, and so on), family structures, or something entirely different. Ask each team to give themselves a name and be able to explain the reason for it. Ask them to also choose a spokesperson. When the full group gathers again, call on each team spokesperson to name the team and its members, and explain the team's name.

Portraits. Provide participants with plain paper and a pen. Ask everyone to find a partner she doesn't know. Explain that each person is to draw a quick sketch of the other and to ask some questions (such as her name, or what she enjoys doing, or a surprising fact about herself) that will be incorporated into the portrait. Allow only a short time (three to five minutes) for this and encourage everyone to make their portraits and write the names as large as possible. Then ask each participant to show her portrait and introduce her partner to the group. Hang the portraits where everyone can see to facilitate learning names.

Energizers

The following non-verbal activities can help raise group spirits, create solidarity, and refocus energy.

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16.2

Fireworks. The facilitator assigns small groups to make the sounds and gestures of different fireworks. Some are bombs that hiss and explode. Others are firecrackers imitated by hand claps. Some are wheels that spin and so on. Each group performs separately, and then the whole group makes a grand display.

The rainforest. The facilitator stands in the center of participants, who mimic her movements, making sounds and gestures for different aspects of the forest (birds, insects, and other creatures, rustling leaves, blowing wind, animals calling) with their voices and hands—snapping fingers, slapping sides, clapping hands, and so on. The resulting sound is like a rainforest.

The storm. The facilitator assigns different sounds (such as rain, wind, or thunder) and gestures to pairs of participants, and then narrates the soft beginnings of the storm, conducting the various sounds like an orchestra ("And then the lightning flashes! And the thunder roars!") through the conclusion of the storm.

APPENDIX B:
Questions about Local Law and Custom

The following checklist provides some questions about international, national, and local law and custom that facilitators may need to be able to answer. The group might work together to answer these questions.

General Questions

1. What international human rights treaties has your national government ratified? (See Part II for a list of selected human rights treaties and declarations.)
2. A government is obliged to send in reports on how well it is implementing any treaty it has ratified.
   a. Has your government filed any reports on its effort to implement the human rights treaties it has signed, especially CEDAW?
   b. If so, does the report seem accurate?
   c. Local and national NGOs will often send their own "shadow report" which contradicts the government report. Do any such "shadow reports" exist in your country?
3. Often, national or local law is simply disregarded or offenders are only lightly punished. Are crimes against women punished according to the law in this community?
   a. Are some crimes against women ignored? Which ones? Why?
   b. Are some crimes against women prosecuted? Which ones? Why?
4. What local resources are available to assist women who experience human rights violations (such as hot lines, or shelter for battered women)?
5. What national or local NGO's work for human rights? For women's human rights?
   a. Do they work in your community?
   b. How can they help?

Questions about Specific Issues

6. What does national law and/or your country's constitution say about the issue of this session?
   a. How is the issue defined?
   b. What are the legal protections against violation of this human rights issue?

c. What are the penalties for abuse of this law?

d. Who or what body makes decisions about violations of this law?

e. Is this law usually enforced?

7. What does local law say about this issue?

   a. How is the issue defined?

   b. What are the legal protections against violation of this human rights issue?

   c. What are the penalties for abuse of this law?

   d. Who or what body makes decisions about violations of this law?

   e. Is this law usually enforced?

8. What does local custom say about this issue?

   a. How is the issue defined?

   b. What are the protections against violation of this human rights issue?

   c. What are the penalties for violating this prohibition?

   d. Who or what body makes decisions about violations of custom?

   e. Is this customary prohibition usually enforced?

9. Do national law, local law, and custom agree on this issue?

   a. How are conflicts resolved?

   b. Does one code take precedence other another?

   c. Which code is most advantageous to women?

10. What local resources are available to assist women who experience human rights abuses around this issue?

11. What national or local NGOs work on this issues?

    a. Do they work in your community?

    b. How can they help?

For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women...

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Art. 17.1

APPENDIX C: Resources

Looking for Information

In this so-called "information age," knowing where and how to look for information is as important as possessing a body of facts, which may be quickly out-of-date or expanded. Each of the following suggestions is a first step that can lead to additional sources.

National and Local Sources

Foreign Ministry, Department of State. The office of government that deals with foreign affairs and represents the government abroad is usually a good source for information about what international human rights documents your government has ratified, government progress reports on the fulfillment of treaty obligations, and official policy statements on particular issues.

Ministry of Women's Affairs, Women's Bureau. This office of government usually has detailed information on policies and statistics affecting women, including information like the average age of marriage, number of children, and patterns in women's health, education, employment, and income.

Ministries of Labor, Health, or Education. These government offices usually have statistics about women in the workplace, women's diseases and health care, disabled women, and women who attend and work in schools at all levels.

Local, national, and international NGOs. NGOs frequently prepare reports on their focus issues, sometimes as a "shadow report" that contradicts the government's treaty progress reports, sometimes as an annual report on that issue or on general human rights in a country. NGO activists can often suggest additional sources of information.

Regional, city, or village census records. These local, regional, and national records can reveal a great deal about women's lives.

Municipal and university libraries. Libraries frequently collect UN documents, reports, census records, and relevant books.

International Sources

The United Nations. The UN and its agencies provide a number of useful publications and statistical reports. Many are available on the Internet (see below). Hard copies, usually in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic, can be obtained from UN country offices, which are usually located in capital cities. Materials are also available from the UN Publication Office or the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in either New York or Geneva:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations 8-14
Avenue de la Paix 1211
Geneva 10, Switzerland

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

UN national and regional offices. UN offices are located in the capital cities of most UN Member States. Many of these have an information division whose job is to assist people in obtaining information and documents. Similar help is usually available at the local field office of a UN agency such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), or the national committee for UNICEF. These UN offices can usually help in obtaining documents in local languages.

Internet Sources

UN web sites

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
http://www.unicef.org
This web site offers country-by-country statistics on the state of the world's children and information on UNICEF programs, publications, and a "Voices of Youth" section where youth can exchange opinions.

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
http://www.undp.org/fwcw/csw.htm
This is the official site for follow-up to the World Conference on Women in Beijing; also contains reports on women and the UN system.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
http://www.unifem.undp.org
This web site offers fact sheets about women worldwide, a catalogue, and order forms for publications.

United Nations documents
http://www.un.org/docs/
Many UN documents are located at this address.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
http://www.unhchr.ch/
This web site provides the text of all UN human rights treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 250 languages (http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr). Also available is information on which governments have ratified human rights treaties, publications, meetings, and programs.

Other human rights web sites

AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science)
Human Rights Resources on the Internet
http://shr.aaas.org/dhr.htm

AVIVA's 'Webzine' (International group of women based in London)
http://www.aviva.org/

AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research)
http://www.aware.org.sg/

CAPWIP Web (Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics)
http://www.capwip.org/

Human Rights Internet's documentation center and publishing house
http://www.hri.ca

ISIS-Manila (women's resources in the Asia-Pacific)
http://www.isiswomen.org/

Organisation Mondiale contre la Torture (The World Organization Against Torture)
http://www.derechos.org/omct/

Project Diana, Online Human Rights Archive, Yale Law School
http://diana.law.yale.edu/

Q Web (global communication network on women's health and gender issues)
http://www.qweb.kvinnoforum.se

SAWNET (South Asian Women's NETwork)
http://www.umiacs.umd.edu:80/users/sawweb/sawnet

SIGI (Sisterhood Is Global Institute)
http://www.sigi.org

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom)
http://www.wilpf.org

Women's Human Rights Resources, Bora Laskin Law Library,
University of Toronto
http://www.law.utoronto.ca/pubs/H_RGHTS.HTM

Women Workers' Center (Pakistan)
http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/i_aii/pag_n.html

Printed Resources

The following list is only a small sampling of the material available on women's human rights. See also the bibliographies in *Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies,* Sisterhood Is Global Institute, Bethesda, MD, 1998; *Safe and Secure: Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls in Muslim Societies,* Sisterhood Is Global Institute, Bethesda, MD, 1998; and *Women's Human Rights Step by Step* or *Local Action/Global Change: Learning about the Human Rights of Women and Girls* (see below) for more complete bibliographies broken down by topic.

The Fund for Peace in association with the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of *Human Rights, Human Rights Institution Building: A Handbook on Establishing and Sustaining Human Rights Organizations,* (New York: The Fund for Peace, 1994). Published in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. Copies can be obtained at The Fund for Peace, Human Rights Program, 823 United Nations Plaza, Suite 717, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: (212) 661-5900; Fax: (212) 661-5904; E-mail: ffpeace@igc.apc.org.

Human Rights Watch, *The Human Rights Global Report on Women's Rights* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995).

Institute for Women, Law, and Development and Human Rights Watch, *Women's Human Rights Step by Step: A Practical Guide to Using International Human Rights Law and Mechanisms to Defend Women's Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Women, Law and Development, 1997). Available from Institute for Women, Law, and Development, 1350 Connecticut Ave., Suite 407, Washington, DC 20005-1701, USA; Tel: (202) 463-7477;Fax: (202) 463-7480; E-mail: wld@wld.org.

Mertus, Julie with Mallika Dutt and Nancy Flowers, *Local Action/ Global Change: Learning about the Human Rights of Women and Girls* (New York: UNIFEM, 1999). Available from Womens, Ink, Sales Department, 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA; E-mail: wink@womenink.org.

Seager, Joni, *The State of Women in the World Atlas* (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1997) Available from Penguin Books, 27 Wright Lane, London W8 5TZ. England.

Tomasevski, Katarina, *Women and Human Rights* (London; New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993).

United Nations, *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics* (UN.DOC.ST/ESA/STAT/SET.K/12), (New York: United Nations, 1995).

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The State of the World's Children* (New York: United Nations, published annually). Available at UNICEF Publication Sales, Division of Communication, Room 943-1, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017 USA; E-mail: pubdoc@unicef.org, or at UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Piazza SS Anunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy; Fax: (39-55) 244-817; E-mail: krigoli@unicef_iede.it.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Commitments to Tights: A Cross-Reference Guide to the Human Rights of Women and Girls in the Beijing Platform for Action, Related UN Conferences and Conventions* (New York: UNIFEM and UNICEF, 1998). Available from Women, Ink., 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA; E-mail: wink@womenink.org.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report.* (New York: United Nations, published annually). Available from UN publications offices worldwide.

APPENDIX D:
A Human Rights Glossary

Affirmative Action: Action taken by a government or private institution to make up for past discrimination against a group on the basis of gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, or disability, in education, employment, or political participation.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Consensus documents agreed to by 189 nations that participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995. These lay out twelve critical areas of concern and actions to be taken by governments and citizens to advance the human rights* of women.

Commission on Human Rights: Intergovernmental body formed by the Economic Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN to respond to human rights violations by forming recommendations, passing resolutions, and mandating investigation. One of the first and most important international human rights bodies, the Commission meets for six weeks each year.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): Established in 1946, this 46-member intergovernmental body formed by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN prepares recommendations on the status of women worldwide and monitors the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.*

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: The 23 member treaty-monitoring body established by the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). States parties periodically report to the Committee on measures they have taken to comply with the treaty.

Convention: A binding agreement between states, used synonymously with treaty and covenant. The UN General Assembly affirms international human rights norms when it adopts conventions. Conventions become legally binding on governments that have ratified them. Member States that violate the standards set forth in a convention can be censured by the UN.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Adopted 1979; entered into force 1981. The first legally binding international document prohibiting discrimination against women and obligating governments to take affirmative steps to advance the equality of women.

* Underlined terms are also defined in the Glossary.

Convention on the Rights of the Child: Adopted 1989; entered into force 1990. Convention creating legal obligations on Member States to advance and protect the civil, cultural, economic, social, and political rights of children.

Covenant: A binding agreement between states, used synonymously with convention and treaty. The major international human rights covenants, both passed in 1966, are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

Customary International Law: Law that becomes binding on states although it is not written, but rather is widely adhered to out of custom. When enough states begin to behave as though something is law, it becomes law "by use," and is binding even on those states that have not expressly consented. This is one of the main sources of international law.

Declaration: Document stating agreed upon standards but which is not legally binding. UN conferences, like the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, usually produce two sets of declarations—one written by government representatives, and one by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The UN General Assembly often issues influential but legally non-binding declarations.

Human Rights: The rights that all people are entitled to simply because they are human beings, irrespective of their citizenship, nationality, race, ethnicity, language, sex, sexuality, or abilities. Human rights become enforceable when they are made into laws such as conventions, covenants, or treaties, or as they become recognized as customary international law.

Inalienable: Refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken away under any circumstances.

Indivisible: Refers to the equal importance and interdependence of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights for the full enjoyment by all people of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

Interdependent: Refers to the complementary framework of human rights law. For example, the ability to participate in one's government is directly affected by the right to express oneself, to get an education, and even to obtain the necessities of life.

Intergovernmental Organizations: Organizations sponsored by more than one government which collaborate on issues of international concern. Some are regional (such as the Council of Europe, the Organization of African Unity), some are alliances (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO), and some are dedicated to a specific purpose (such as the UN Centre for Human Rights, or the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO).

International Bill of Human Rights: Refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): Adopted 1966; entered into force 1976. Declares that all people have a broad range of civil and political rights. The ICCPR established an eighteen-member Human Rights Committee that monitors Member States' compliance with the Covenant.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): Adopted 1966; entered into force 1976. Convention that declares all people have a broad range of economic, social, and cultural rights. The ICESCR established an 18-member monitoring Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, made up of elected experts in the areas covered by the Covenant.

Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs): Organizations formed by people outside of government. NGO's monitor the proceedings of human rights bodies such as the UN Commission on Human Rights and are the "watchdogs" of the human rights that fall within their mandate. Some are large and international (e.g. the Red Cross, Amnesty International, the Girl Scouts); others may be small and local (e.g. an organization to advocate for people with disabilities in a particular city, a coalition to promote women's rights in one refugee camp). NGO's play a major role in influencing UN policy, and many of them have official consultative status at the UN.

Ratification: Process by which the legislative body of a state confirms a government's action in signing a treaty. It is a formal procedure by which a state becomes bound to a treaty after acceptance.

Reservations: Exceptions that a state party makes to a document it ratifies, indicating that it does not agree to follow a particular provision. States are not allowed to make reservations that undercut the fundamental meaning of a treaty. More reservations have been made to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) than any other convention.

State Parties: Those countries that have ratified a covenant, convention, or treaty and are thereby bound to conform to its provisions.

Treaty: Formal agreement between states which defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations; used synonymously with convention or covenant. When conventions are adopted by the UN General Assembly, they create legally binding international obligations for the Member States that have signed the treaty. When a national government ratifies a treaty, the articles of that treaty become part of its domestic legal obligations.

United Nations Charter: Constituting treaty of the UN, setting forth the goals, functions, and responsibilities of the Member States; originally adopted in San Francisco in 1945 by 50 founding nations, today all states that participate in the UN have agreed to the obligations set forth in the Charter.

Universal Declaration Of Human Rights (UDHR): (1948). Primary UN document establishing human rights standards and norms. Although the declaration was intended to be non-binding, through time its various provisions have become customary international law.

Source: Adapted from Julie Mertus et al, *Local Action/Global Change* and the Minnesota Partners in Human Rights Resource Notebook.