



Making Human Rights a Reality

Human rights are universal, belonging to every human being, no matter where in the world, simply by virtue of their humanity.

Today, about a quarter of the world's people continue to live in circumstances that threaten these rights, and indeed their lives, on a daily basis – A situation that all United Nations member states have agreed must end.

International Cooperation for Development

The Millennium Development Goals, agreed by world leaders as a blueprint for eradicating global poverty, provide the basis for international cooperation to fulfil **people's right to development**, as provided for in treaties such as the UN-Charter.

As a global community, we have the resources, knowledge and skills to reverse the trend of growing inequality, increasing poverty and pervasive human rights abuses. Yet, efforts by the global community to make serious progress towards ending human suffering continue to fall short.



To be poor is more than simply lacking food, water or clothes; poverty is about social, political, economic and cultural exclusion.

For Ireland's Development NGOs, the fight against global poverty and inequality is a matter of principle. Our concept of poverty is not limited to the absence of food, water or other resources; instead we think of poverty as a manifestation of social, economic, cultural or political exclusion, and a denial of people's basic human rights.

Poverty is not inevitable; it is both a cause and consequence of human rights abuses.

What are Irish NGOs doing?

★ Irish NGOs integrate the norms and principles of international human rights treaties into their work. They **seek to go beyond the treatment of symptoms**, and address the root causes of poverty and inequality, by basing their programmes on empowerment, not charity.

- ★ Irish NGOs see the people whom they seek to assist not as objects of charity, but as **people with rights and potential**. They base their work on poor people's legitimate claims to rights and dignity, and they will call on those actors in society that bear a duty to promote, protect and respect those rights.
- ★ And NGOs remind Governments that they chose voluntarily to sign up to international human rights treaties. As a consequence, a key role for Irish NGOs is to **hold Governments to account for their obligations** under those agreements.

In this context, the key principles under which NGOs operate include:

- **Addressing root causes:** Irish NGOs do not simply strive to meet basic needs, but invest in analysis of - and efforts to - redress the rules, mechanisms and institutions that exclude and discriminate against certain groups in society.
- **Prioritisation of the most vulnerable:** Irish NGOs' development strategies address the interests and needs of the most vulnerable people. Irish NGOs help marginalised groups to gain an equal voice in legal, economic, political and administrative processes.
- **Empowerment:** Irish NGOs support and facilitate the empowerment of vulnerable and excluded groups and communities. We assist groups to build their capacity to organise and assert themselves in processes that affect them, and to hold their government to account.
- **Participation:** Irish NGOs seek to change unjust power structures by promoting the participation and active engagement of poor people. Impoverished and discriminated women and men must be included in the design, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that impact on their lives. As well as having a strong basis in human rights law, the right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives also results in more effective programmes.
- **Accountability:** Irish NGOs challenge themselves, and all others who have power over poor people and communities, to be transparent and accountable to those communities.

NGOs will continue to provide direct support to poor women, men, boys and girls around the world. However, they strive to ensure that their work also has a **long-term impact**. They do this by focusing on the long-term obligations of governments and other institutions to **respect, protect and fulfil human rights**.

