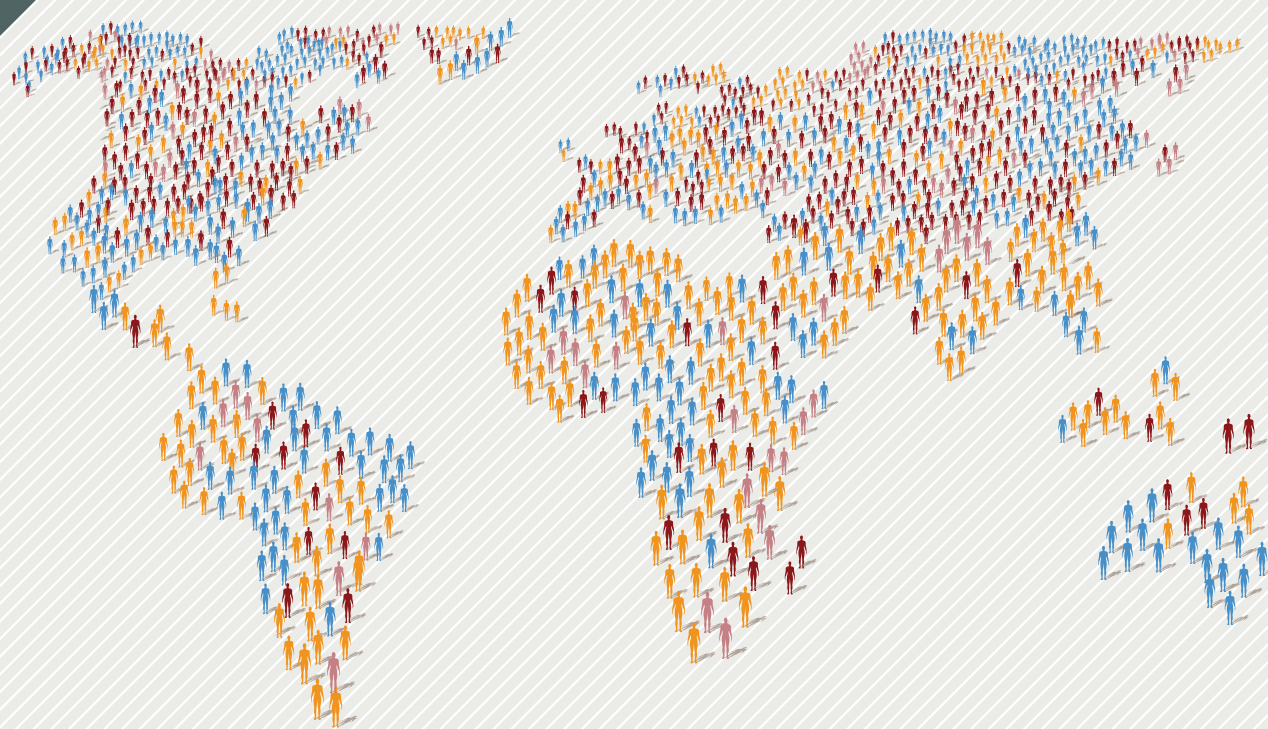


HUMAN RIGHTS INDICATORS

A Guide to Measurement and Implementation



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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HR/PUB/12/5

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NEW YORK AND GENEVA, 2012



“ We should never forget that behind every piece of statistical data are human beings who were born free and equal in dignity and rights. We must strive to make their human rights stories, especially those of the powerless, visible through robust indicators and to use them in constantly improving our human rights policies and implementation systems to bring positive change to people’s lives.

Navi Pillay
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

In step with United Nations efforts to further promote universal standards and better protect people against human rights violations, this publication of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provides practical guidance for the development of quantitative and qualitative indicators to strengthen the measurement and implementation of human rights, including the right to development. It contains a detailed description of the conceptual and methodological framework for human rights indicators recommended by international and national human rights mechanisms and used by a growing number of governmental and non-governmental actors. Concrete examples of indicators identified for a number of human rights—all stemming from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—and other practical tools and illustrations are provided to support processes and stakeholders that aim to improve the realization of human rights on the ground. This *Guide* will be of interest to human rights advocates as well as policymakers, development practitioners, statisticians and other key actors who contribute to making human rights a reality for all.



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The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and in international human rights laws and treaties. It is guided in its work by the mandate provided by the General Assembly in resolution 48/141, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights instruments, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

The mandate includes preventing human rights violations, securing respect for all human rights, promoting international cooperation to protect human rights, coordinating related activities throughout the United Nations, and strengthening and streamlining United Nations human rights work. In addition to its mandated responsibilities, it leads efforts to integrate a human rights approach within all work carried out by the United Nations system.

FOREWORD

The human rights journey from standard-setting to effective implementation depends, in large measure, on the availability of appropriate tools for policy formulation and evaluation. Indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, are one such essential tool.

While the importance of indicators for the realization of human rights is widely recognized, and even enshrined in human rights treaties, as in article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, their use has not yet become systematic. The present *Guide* will help in filling this gap.

In recent years, the critical need for such tools has become increasingly evident. On the eve of the Arab Spring, there were still reports about the remarkable economic and social progress and general improvements in governance and the rule of law that some countries in the region were achieving. At the same time, United Nations human rights mechanisms and voices from civil society were painting a different picture, and reporting on exclusion, the marginalization of communities, discrimination, absence of participation, censorship, political repression or lack of an independent judiciary and denial of basic economic and social rights.

Popular uprisings and demonstrations in other parts of the world, including in relatively well-off countries, remind us of the necessity to place the human being at the centre of our development policy and to adjust our analytical lens accordingly. They compel us to review existing analytical, methodological and legal frameworks to ensure that they integrate real attention to freedom from fear and want, and to discrimination; assess the extent of public participation in development and in the fair distribution of its benefits; strengthen

accountability and embrace methods empowering people, especially the most vulnerable and the most marginalized.

Policy management, human rights and statistical systems are closely interrelated and thus need to be in tune with each other for promoting the well-being of people. Devising a policy or statistical indicator is not a norm or value-neutral exercise. Yet, integrating human rights in these processes is not only a normative imperative, it also makes good practical sense. Failing to do so can have real consequences.

I believe that this *Guide* will represent an important reference and resource from this perspective. There is a long way to go in improving our capacities for human rights implementation. There are numerous challenges in the collection and dissemination of information on human rights. What to monitor, how to collect information and interpret it from a human rights perspective, and the inherent danger of misusing data, are but some of the concerns addressed in this publication. The *Guide* also reminds us of the limitations that are intrinsic to any indicator. In particular, it cannot and should not be seen as a substitute for more in-depth, qualitative and judicial assessments which will continue to be the cornerstones of human rights monitoring. Instead, the indicators and methods described in this *Guide* are primarily meant to inform more comprehensive assessments and are neither designed nor suitable for ranking the human rights performance of States. The primary objective here is to highlight the human rights norms and principles, spell out the essential attributes of the rights enshrined in international instruments and translate this narrative into contextually relevant indicators and benchmarks for implementing and measuring human rights at country level.

I commend the women and men, the countries, State agencies, regional and national human rights institutions, statistical offices, civil society organizations and United Nations entities that were engaged in and have contributed to making this pioneering work on human rights indicators a reality. As illustrated by several national and regional initiatives, this work, which is still in progress and in connection with which my Office continues to receive a growing number of requests for support and assistance, provides useful tools in strengthening national capacity for human rights implementation.

I trust that the continued engagement, dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, including the human rights and development communities, will truly help foster human rights-based and people-centred development at country level. Indicators are in this sense a potential bridge between the human rights and the development policy discourses.

I hope this *Guide* will be widely disseminated, within and beyond traditional human rights forums, and invite all users and other stakeholders to share their knowledge and experiences and send feedback to my Office.

Most importantly, we should never forget that behind every piece of statistical data are human beings who were born free and equal in dignity and rights. We must strive to make their human rights stories, especially those of the powerless, visible through robust indicators and to use them in constantly improving our human rights policies and implementation systems to bring positive change to people's lives.



Navi Pillay

*United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this publication would not have been possible without the contributions and support of a large number of individuals and organizations. It benefited from the guidance of the human rights treaty bodies and a series of consultations and workshops organized by OHCHR between 2005 and 2012 in different countries and regions. OHCHR is particularly grateful to Rajeev Malhotra for initiating and conceptualizing the work on indicators for human rights at OHCHR and for his leading role in the development of the *Guide* with Nicolas Fasel and Grace Sanico Steffan. OHCHR wishes to thank Martin Scheinin for his substantive leadership and the following other members (or former members) of human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs and experts for their invaluable guidance and support: Francisco Alba, Jana Asher, José Francisco Calí Tzay, Audrey R. Chapman, Eitan Felner, Maria Virginia Bras Gomes, Paul Hunt, Moushira Khattab, Miloon Kothari, Lothar Krappmann, Todd Landman, Manfred Nowak, Michael O’Flaherty, Mark Orkin, Victoria Popescu, Eibe Riedel, Hans-Otto Sano, the late Hanna Beate Schoepp-Schilling, Mehmet Sevim and Christopher Stone. OHCHR also wishes to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (Statistical Division), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (PARIS21/Metagora) for the essential expertise they provided to this work.

