



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
by email: janica.puisto@un.org

Inputs for Human Rights Council resolution 51/12 on local government and human rights

Graz, 27.09.2023
CAT2-STAKEHOLDER Cooperation/KS/MM/25

Dear Sir/Madam,

The International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO is pleased to respond to the call for inputs for Human Rights Council resolution 51/12 on local government and human rights as follows.

1. *What capacity building initiatives have been taken to implement/incorporate human rights in local administration?*
 - a. *Please provide information on institutional structures for coordination and harmonization of capacity building initiatives.*
- [International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO](#)

Located in the Human Righty City of Graz (Austria) and building on more than 20 years of experience, the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO (the Centre) fosters the implementation of human rights at the local and regional levels by capacity-building, data collection and research, monitoring, and international cooperation. The Centre's work programme is anchored in the norms, standards, and principles of the international human rights framework and focuses on their implementation at the local level. The Centre holds profound knowledge on the theoretical, practical, and policy-related aspects of human rights and non-discrimination at local level. The Centre conducts its activities in a multi-disciplinary manner that puts in-depth, analytical understanding at its core and aims to inform evidence-based policy making. A core mandate of the Centre is to build the capacity of national and sub-national governmental institutions. The Centre contributes to coordinating and harmonising capacity-building initiatives through exchanges with relevant actors in a global network.

In its capacity-building efforts directed at local and regional governments, the Centre facilitates the implementation of human rights by generating, managing, and applying knowledge and materials for inclusive and equitable development based on human rights



and by offering a laboratory for taking up novel and proven practices for cities and regions on how to deliver on the goals set by the 2030 Agenda and the promise of “Leaving No One Behind”. The Centre regularly provides consulting and capacity-building services to elected representatives and staff members of governmental institutions in a broader framework in and outside of Europe. The Centre uses its global network to coordinate and harmonize capacity building initiatives

- [Academy and Conference series “Human Rights Go Local – What Works”](#)

The Academy and Conference series “Human Rights Go Local – What Works” is the annual flagship event co-organised by the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels and the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security at the University of Graz together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the African Local Governments Academy (UCLG-Africa), the Austrian Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs, the Federal Province of Styria, the City of Graz, and the University of Graz.

The event series aims at demonstrating and synthesising innovative approaches and proven practices for protecting and promoting human rights at the local level, with the goal of making cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The exchange of practical knowledge on realizing human rights at the local level also serves the coordination and harmonization of related capacity building initiatives around the globe.

The Academy and Conference series comprises four steps: an edition of the [“Human Rights Go Local” Publication Series](#) to kick off discussions, an Academy to bring together global expertise, a Conference to present results, and an Outcome Document to guide political decision-making. These steps support the coordination and harmonization of human rights capacity building at the local level.

Outcome Documents:

- International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels and UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security (2023), [Governing the City by Human Rights Objectives: Management Concepts and Instruments](#), Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks of Human Rights Go Local: What Works Academy and Conference 2023.
- International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels and UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security (2022), [From Intentions to Commitments: Towards the Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Human Rights](#), Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks of Human Rights Go Local: What Works Academy and Conference 2022.
- International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels and UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security (2021), [Building Bridges between Local Governments and the Scientific Community to Promote](#)



[Human Rights](#), Outcome Document and Explanatory Remarks of Human Rights Go Local: What Works Academy and Conference 2021.

b. Please provide information on the involvement of civil society, the private sector, academia, etc. in capacity building initiatives.

- The global target group of the Academy and Conference series "Human Rights Go Local - What Works" includes local authorities, city representatives, networks, civil society initiatives, think tanks, academia and the next generation of human rights experts. It is thus an opportunity for local government to exchange experiences also with civil society. By seeking input from these stakeholders, local governments obtain feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts and identify areas for improvement. This enables local governments to identify the gaps and limitations in their current approach and to refine their strategies to better meet their human rights obligations.
- The Encouragements enshrined in the annual Outcome Documents regularly highlight the importance for local governments to collaborate and partner with relevant stakeholders including the civil society and specify the potential for their involvement.

c. Please provide information on any monitoring or evaluation mechanisms assessing the effectiveness of capacity building initiatives and their impact on the promotion and protection of human rights at the local level.

- The Academy and Conference series "Human Rights Go Local – What Works" is regularly evaluated by the participants. For the evaluation results see below.
 - 2023 Edition of the Academy and Conference: "[Governing the city by human rights objectives: Management concepts and instruments](#)"
 - 2022 Edition of the Academy and Conference: "[From Intentions to Commitments: Towards the Effective and Sustainable Implementation of Human Rights](#)".
 - 2021 Edition of the Academy and Conference: "[Building Bridges between Local Governments and the Scientific Community to Promote Human Rights](#)".

2. *What are the capacity building gaps and needs of local governments in relation to implementing/incorporating human rights at the local level?*

This question can be better answered by local governments themselves.

3. *What measures are needed to further strengthen the capacity of local governments to implement/incorporate human rights at the local level?*

Support related to evidence

- Foster the understanding of local governments on how to base the development of key policies, programmes, and decision-making processes as well as their monitoring and evaluation on research on human rights at the local level.



- Foster the understanding of local governments on how to review existing qualitative and quantitative data related to human rights and how to complement this data with further information deemed necessary to fill data gaps.

Support related to commitments to human rights

- Support local governments in adopting explicit commitments substantiating how human rights norms, principles, and standards, shall inform their laws, policies, and programmes within their competences and in view of the local context. The commitment to fulfil the principles of a “Human Rights City” or the adoption of a human rights action plan are examples of such commitments. Concrete commitments are a prerequisite for capacity-building efforts to be effective.
- Commitment must be explicit and mobilise local actors, including the local government and its administration, civil society, academia, as well as affected people, towards common goals.

Support for anchoring human rights in local administration

- Support local governments in embedding human rights in local administrations. Capacity-building efforts must focus on how to embed human rights in local public management systems, including local budgets.

4. *What are existing procedures and practices for engaging local governments in the work of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and in implementing, reporting and following up on relevant recommendations? How could the existing level of engagement be enhanced?*

This question can be better answered by local governments themselves.

5. *What are the capacity building gaps and needs of local governments in relation to engaging with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and in implementing, reporting and following up on relevant recommendations?*

This question can be better answered by local governments themselves.

6. *What are the main challenges in your country in the promotion and protection of human rights at the local level?*

- Lack of awareness and knowledge concerning the practical implementation of human rights: One challenge is the limited understanding of how human rights can be implemented in everyday administrative life at the local level. Many local government officials are not fully aware of their possibilities in this regard. Promoting awareness and education is crucial to addressing this problem. Promising initiatives relate to practices such as human rights impact-orientation, the anchoring of human rights in the budget, and the planning and implementation of effective human rights action plans.
- Proper data collection and monitoring: Collecting reliable data on human rights at the local level is crucial for accountability. However, local governments face challenges in



gathering comprehensive and accurate data, which is necessary for evidence-based policymaking.

- Lack of political will: Some local governments have little political interest in expanding their commitment to human rights. The balance between political interests and human rights duties is a constant concern to be addressed.
7. Please provide examples, good practices, challenges, and recommendations with regard to the above-mentioned issues.
- It is recommended that local authorities contextualise international conventions and other norms and standards within a local human rights action plan.

