



# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

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## AID AND RIGHTS AN AGENDA FOR NGOS

### A RIGHTS WAY TO DEVELOPMENT ACTION PACK

Every day, all over the world NGOs work with people to realise the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – to end poverty, hunger and discrimination, to educate and to organise. Human rights provide a universal language for NGOs to address governments that provide or receive aid and to hold them to account for failing to direct sufficient resources and political will to the realisation of all human rights.

The Human Rights Council of Australia has put together an action pack designed for all NGOs involved in human rights and/or development. The action pack has been produced firstly for national NGOs in countries that receive development assistance. It is hoped that the pack will also be used by all NGOs interested in influencing government policies.

The action pack provides an introduction to the human rights approach to development assistance and aims to encourage and equip development and human rights NGOs to begin a dialogue with official development agencies about aid and human rights.

#### **WHY AN ACTION PACK?**

International human rights agreements call for the provision of aid to help realise human rights but very little of the many millions of dollars spent on aid every year is allocated for this purpose. In the countries where this money is spent most people have little or no say on how it is spent. As well, aid donors remain largely unaccountable to the people of these countries.

For the last few years the Human Rights Council has been working with other NGOs to try and persuade aid donors to adopt a human rights approach to development assistance. Many donors show little awareness that human rights include the right to food, the right to shelter, the right to health, the right to education as well as the right to free association, to free speech and to be free from discrimination.

The Human Rights Council has prepared this action pack because it believes that all development aid should be focussed on achieving human rights objectives and that this can only occur with the free, active and informed participation of the people concerned.

It is hoped that this pack can help NGOs to insist on their right to participate in decisions on how aid money to their country is spent. It aims to provide some useful tools for holding donors accountable to their human rights obligations. Ideally, NGOs can use this action pack to obtain additional resources for and to focus attention on the realization of human rights and to generate international solidarity for their work.

The action pack is based on The Rights Way to Development Manual and The Rights Way to Development: A Human Rights Approach to Development Assistance published in 1998 and 1995 respectively.

## **WHY A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH IS RELEVANT TO NGOS**

We believe that NGOs will find a human rights approach to development essential for their work. For human rights NGOs focusing on civil and political rights, a human rights approach can ensure that donors and their aid do not ignore issues of civil and political rights. For development NGOs working in community struggles for economic and social justice, the approach can ensure that donors listen to the people and focus resources on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

## **HOW TO USE THE ACTION PACK**

This action pack contains a number of documents providing background information, explanation and suggestions for action.

The suggestions for action in this pack are made in the spirit of international solidarity for human rights and because we believe the struggle for human rights is a universal one. We would suggest that you discuss this pack within your organisation. You should decide whether the suggested actions can help to increase resources for the issues you work on, to put those issues on the agenda of donors and possibly through them, on your government's agenda. Any action will need to be adapted to the situation in the country in which you are working.

## **CONTENTS OF THE ACTION PACK**

- Introducing a Human Rights Approach to Development Assistance

Development and other NGOs have a vital role to play in making development the process by which people realise their human rights. This document shows how human rights standards can be a practical framework for development assistance, why this is relevant to NGOs and how a

human rights approach to development can be used by NGOs to remind governments of their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill all our rights.

- An agenda for NGOs – Steps Towards Rights Partnerships

Many donor governments now have policies that give importance to popular participation and human rights. This document provides an outline of the steps that NGOs can take to be informed about the donor's aid program and to become participants in the decision-making process of the development program.

- Beginning the dialogue – Practical advice for approaching donors

This document contains practical advice on how to make the most of approaches to donor embassies and aid agency representatives.

- Some questions answered

This clarifies some complex issues on the human rights approach to development.

- Human rights references

This fold-out poster of the International Bill of Rights also provides some useful human rights references, addresses and websites.

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[Human Rights Council of Australia Home Page](#)

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## **Other HRCA web pages on development and human rights**

[The Rights Way to Development Manual](#)

[A Human Rights Approach to Development Assistance - Symposium Papers](#)

[Implementing a human rights approach to development - Views from Thai NGOs](#)

[Realization of the Right to Development](#)



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