

# **Towards Decent Work for All: A Holistic Human Rights Model**

Gillian MacNaughton  
University of Oxford

Diane F. Frey  
London School of Economics

# Decent Work?

ILO Definition (1999):

- “Work” broader than labor or employment
- “Decent” not just job creation but jobs of acceptable quality - freedom, equity, security and human dignity
- Four Pillars
  - (1) Promoting Employment
  - (2) Enhancing Social Protection
  - (3) Promoting Social Dialogue
  - (4) Realizing Rights at Work

# **Social Justice and Human Rights Approaches**

## **Social Justice**

- ILO Constitution
- Declaration of Philadelphia
- CLS Declaration
- Decent Work Agenda
- Declaration on Social Justice

## **Human Rights**

- UDHR
- ICCPR
- ICESCR
- Vienna Declaration
- Optional Protocol

# A Holistic Human Rights Approach

1. Universality and inalienability
2. Interrelatedness, interdependence and indivisibility
3. Equality of rights

# 1. Universality and Inalienability

**Universality:** All people, everywhere in the world are entitled to human rights at all times.

**Inalienability:** People cannot voluntarily or involuntarily surrender their human rights.

## 2. Interdependency

**Interrelated:** All human rights are intricately connected to each other.

**Interdependency:**

- (A) The realization of one right supports and reinforces realization of other rights.
- (B) People are interdependent and so their rights are also interdependent.

**Indivisibility:** Human rights establish a holistic framework in which all rights reinforce each other.

# 3. Equality of Rights

All human rights have equal status as rights.

Human rights cannot be ranked in a hierarchical order.

All human rights are inherent to human dignity.

# **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

- 160 Countries
- Most comprehensive international treaty on work rights
- A holistic human rights framework
- General Comment 18: Right to Work

# **A Holistic Approach to Decent Work**

## **\*\*Strategies\*\***

- A. Defining decent work holistically
- B. Recognizing interdependency
- C. Applying human rights methods
- D. Building coalitions

# A. Defining decent work

- Work rights
  - Right to work
  - Conditions at work
  - Union rights
- Work-related rights
  - Family rights
  - Adequate standard of living
  - Social Security
- Beyond four core labour rights
  - Example: Overtime Maquilas in Honduras

## **B. Recognizing Interdependency**

- Understand all rights are interdependent
- Consider human rights beyond the one right immediately relevant
- Ensure measures to enhance one right do not diminish enjoyment of other rights

Example: Child labour in Pakistan and women's human rights

# C. Applying Human Rights Methods

- Human rights impact assessment
  - Example: assessing compliance with worker rights in mineral processing plants in the DRC
- Human rights-based budget analysis
- Human rights poverty reduction strategies

# D. Building Coalitions

Holistic human rights approach helps to:

- Link rights
- Build coalitions

Example: Work rights and health rights

# Conclusions

Original promise of a holistic approach:

- ILO Declaration of Philadelphia
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights