

# Aligning Poverty Reduction & Measurement with Human Rights & SDGs

---

The role of National  
Human Rights Institutions



## Human rights-based approach to poverty reduction and measurement

Poverty is not only a lack of income; it is a lack of access to goods, services and participation in society, which are essential for the enjoyment of human rights, leading to socio-economic inequality and exclusion.

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) to poverty reduction and measurement puts human rights standards at the centre of planning, policy and practice. It includes the principles of:

- Accountability
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Participation

Due to their broad human rights mandate and position as interlocutors between civil society and the state, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are ideal actors in supporting this approach.

### Human rights-based approach to poverty measurement

For poverty reduction strategies to be effective at addressing structural causes and human rights violations, poverty itself needs to be measured as a multidimensional phenomenon. This includes using range of methodologies, combining quantitative and qualitative data and including data protection and self-identification safeguards. People living in poverty should be involved in designing indicators and measurement tools. Attention should also be given to the 'missing poor' and the non-take-up of rights.

### Opportunities in the SDGs framework

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) incorporate human rights and formulate indicators that can reinforce an HRBA to poverty reduction and measurement. With the SDGs as a basis, NHRIs can cooperate with national statistical offices and other actors, including those living in poverty, in the development of human rights indicators to measure relative and absolute poverty, with reference to the SDGs framework.

## What are National Human Rights Institutions?

NHRIs are state-mandated bodies, independent of government, that promote and protect human rights. They address the full range of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

NHRIs promote and protect human rights through: providing legal assistance; monitoring the human rights situation; advising governments, parliaments and other state bodies; reporting to international human rights mechanisms; and promoting a culture of rights through training and awareness raising.

### NHRIs and SDGs

Given the convergence between the SDGs and human rights standards, NHRIs can play a key role in translating the SDGs into reality on the ground. Their diverse functions enable them to act as accountability actors in the implementation of the SDGs framework.



## How NHRIs support an HRBA to poverty reduction and measurement, in the context of SDGs

## Examples of NHRI practice

### Accountability

NHRIs can hold states accountable to their human rights obligations by monitoring the implementation of poverty reduction strategies, measurement tools and National Action Plans on SDGs, while also ensuring that these approaches have a basis in human rights.

*The Scottish Human Rights Commission and Equality and Human Rights Commission (Great Britain) advised the Scottish government on an HRBA to legislation aiming to reduce poverty. The Scottish institution also mapped the links between SDGs and the Scottish National Action Plan on human rights as a basis to an SDG Implementation Plan.*

### Equality & Non-Discrimination

NHRIs can insist on the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of social and economic condition. They also help ensure that poverty impact assessments feature in human rights impact assessments and that data is disaggregated.

*Latvia's Ombudsman drew the attention of the government and parliament on the vulnerabilities of the elderly, children and families with low income facing the risk of poverty and social exclusion.*

### Participation

NHRIs can facilitate dialogue between people living in poverty and state authorities. They can set up participatory processes to give people living in poverty a voice in the choice of human rights indicators and can ensure their representation on NHRI advisory bodies.

*The Service to Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion (Belgium) developed the Research-Action-Training programme, involving people living in poverty, researchers and governments to improve indicators on assessing poverty. The programme confirmed the importance of involving people living in poverty in obtaining information and interpreting it within context.*

### Adequate Poverty Measurement

NHRIs can cooperate with other stakeholders, such as national statistical offices and those living in poverty, on identifying diverse methodologies to collecting data on poverty, including data on the 'missing poor'. They can also provide training on these methodologies to national statistical offices, including consideration of the SDGs.

*Croatia's Ombudswoman has been visiting Roma settlements and informing the government on the risk of this group facing poverty. This type of practice is important in an HRBA to poverty measurement, as some social groups may normally be excluded from data ('the missing poor').*



## About ENNHRI

ENNHRI, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, works to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Europe through strengthening, supporting and connecting European NHRIs. It is made up of all 44 NHRIs in Europe.

## ENNHRI's work on economic and social rights

ENNHRI members have chosen 'economic and social rights' to be one of the thematic priorities for the network, with special attention given to synergies between regional and international frameworks, including SDGs.

In 2019, ENNHRI's activities focus on: strengthening capacities of NHRIs when monitoring ESR in divided societies and conflict; communicating and promoting ESR in times of populism; and ensuring an HRBA to economic and social policies.

+32 (0) 2212 3175 ▪ [info@ennhri.org](mailto:info@ennhri.org)  
Rue Royale 138, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium



[ennhri.org](http://ennhri.org)



[@ennhri](https://twitter.com/ennhri)



[ENNHRI](https://www.facebook.com/ENNHRI)

