



Human Rights: Where Peace and Justice Begin

Learning Guide: Ages 14+



Your right to education. Your right to safety. Your right to speak. These are not privileges; they are rights that belong to every person on earth. **Human rights are the fundamental protections that allow all of us, regardless of where we live, our background, or our identity, to live with dignity, equality, and freedom.** From the Ubuntu philosophy of southern Africa to Europe's Magna Carta, societies across history have recognized that protecting human dignity is the foundation of a just and peaceful world. Yet today, human rights face serious threats. Rising inequality, conflict, digital surveillance, climate displacement, and systemic discrimination push millions to the margins. Young people are among the most affected — and among the most powerful forces for change. **This module invites learners to explore the urgent challenge of upholding human rights in the face of violations and inequality, understand root causes of injustice, and identify their role in building fair, inclusive, and resilient communities.** It includes a three-part learning journey with background information, video-based content, interactive visuals, guided research, and systems thinking activities designed to inspire reflection and action.



Learners will

- **Understand key concepts** of human rights, including universality, equality, non-discrimination, and interdependence, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Examine historical roots** of human rights across diverse cultures and how international frameworks have developed to protect the most vulnerable.
- **Explore systems, institutions, and stakeholders** — from the UN to youth movements — that work to uphold and defend human rights.
- **Reflect on today's greatest challenges** to human rights, including conflict, inequality, digital surveillance, and climate change, and how these issues are interconnected.
- **Develop ideas for youth-led action** that strengthens social cohesion, trust, and justice in their own communities and beyond.



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Eleanor Roosevelt is pictured with a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in November 1949. Roosevelt was the chair of the United Nations committee that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was accepted by the General Assembly during its third session on December 10th, 1948 in Paris, France.

Acknowledgements

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How to Use This Module

This module is a flexible learning journey through three phases:



Each component can be done in class or as homework. Time estimates are suggestions only, adaptable to diverse contexts and students' needs.

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	<u>Explore Key Concepts</u>	Build shared understanding of key terms	Reading	30 min
	<u>Understand the Stakeholders & Systems</u>	Identify who's involved, how they're connected, and see country examples	Reading + visual	30 min
	<u>Dive into the Research</u>	Investigate your country, community, school, and youth action networks	3 Worksheets	60–90 min
	<u>Go Further</u>	Optional resources for deeper learning	Extension links	Flexible
C O N N E C T	<u>Meet the Speakers</u>	Learn about the speakers and the organizations they serve	Speaker bios	15 min
	<u>Watch the Dialogue</u>	Hear global leaders and youth perspective	Pre-recorded video	60 min
	<u>Explore the Insights</u>	See a word cloud, poll results, and youth ideas for action	Visuals + prompts	30 min
	<u>Reflect on the Dialogue</u>	Use the See-Think-Wonder routine to think, deepen, and challenge assumptions	Worksheet + discussion	30 min
T R A N S F O R M	<u>Trace the Patterns</u>	Use the Sustainability Compass to reflect on interconnected impacts	Worksheet + discussion	45 min
	<u>Go Below the Surface</u>	Analyze root causes with the Iceberg Model	Worksheet + discussion	45 min
	<u>Take Action</u>	Discover action ideas, engage in a social media challenge and youth-led initiatives	Action menu + challenge prompts	30 min
	<u>Reflect & Review</u>	Share takeaways and assess learning	Self/peer reflection + showcase	30 min

DISCOVER

See What's at Stake

Explore Key Concepts

Understand the Stakeholders & Systems

Dive into the Research

1. Investigate Your Country or Community
2. Map Your School or Community
3. Spotlight Youth Movements

Go Further

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See What's At Stake

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that every person deserves. These rights ensure that all people, regardless of where they live, their background, or identity, have the freedom to live with dignity, respect, and safety. Human rights include the right to education, freedom of expression, equality, and protection from discrimination. They allow people to feel secure, participate in their communities, and access opportunities (United Nations (OHCHR)).

Human rights matter because they help create fair and just societies where everyone has a voice and is protected from harm. For example, consider the right to education: in some parts of the world, girls are denied this right simply because of their gender. By protecting their right to learn, we not only empower them to pursue their dreams, but also strengthen their communities. When everyone's rights are respected, societies become stronger, more peaceful, and more resilient, benefiting everyone.

Just societies are not only free from war, they have institutions and that allow people to resolve problems fairly and without violence. They build trust, protect rights, and recover from crises by adapting and transforming together.

In this module, you'll explore what human rights mean in your own context, connect global patterns to local realities, and consider how you can help build fairer, more resilient communities. Protecting human rights isn't the task of diplomats alone, it starts with the choices we make, the words we use, and how we live every day — principles first put into writing in 1948, in a document that still defines what we owe each other.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



Article 1

Free and equal

All human beings are born free and equal and should be treated the same way.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Global Advocates for Human Rights



What does justice look like for victims of human rights abuses? At the age of 10, Juliette De Rivero organized her first protest against discrimination in her school that prevented girls from playing football. Now she is the UN Human Rights Representative in Colombia and believes that **“anything is possible when victims are empowered to claim their rights and realize their collective strength.”**



What specific strategies can we use to fight against human rights abuses? Jo Becker, an advocate at Human Rights Watch introduces key principles of human rights advocacy and describes the work done by the Human Rights Watch. She provides ways to think about human rights violations and **strategies to deal with these issues and incite long-term sustained change.**



You are a human rights person, you just don't know it yet. Dr. K Chad Clay talks about the misconception of human rights and the idea that these issues happen far away from us. We must shift our perspective from an economy based worldview to a human rights centric society to foster a more diverse, sustainable, and equitable future. He uses human rights data to educate and advocate on human rights projects.

The **United Nations** (UN) was founded in 1945 to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” That mission remains as vital today as it was in the aftermath of World War II. Through peacekeeping, diplomacy, human rights advocacy, and development cooperation, the UN works to prevent conflict and foster stability across the globe. Yet the world has changed profoundly since 1945. New forms of warfare, digital threats, and global inequalities demand renewed cooperation and stronger institutions. To remain effective, the UN must continue to evolve, ensuring that decisions on human rights and peace reflect the realities, voices, and aspirations of all nations.

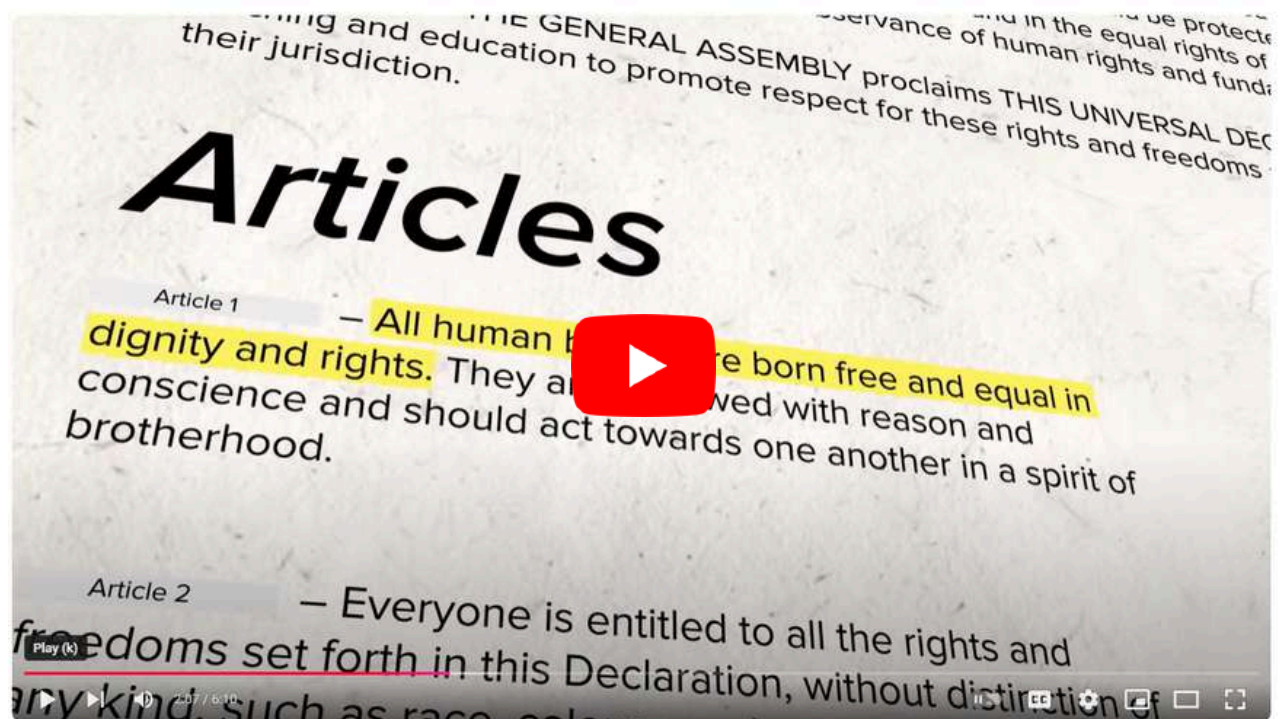
Historical Roots of Human Rights

Human rights have roots in diverse societies worldwide, long before formalized frameworks. Indigenous communities upheld human rights principles through customs that valued community welfare and respect. For instance, the **Ubuntu philosophy** in southern Africa emphasizes shared humanity – “I am because you are” – , while the **Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy** in North America established early principles of justice and equality. In Asia, **Ashoka the Great** promoted tolerance and welfare for all, and the **Code of Hammurabi** in Mesopotamia advocated for fair treatment within society. In Europe, the **Magna Carta** of 1215 limited the powers of the English monarchy, establishing early protections against arbitrary rule and influencing future human rights documents.

In 1948, following the world wars, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** was adopted by the United Nations, setting a global standard affirming that all individuals are entitled to dignity, freedom, and respect, with Article 1 emphasizing that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Key treaties have been built on the UDHR: The **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** (2007) upholds Indigenous rights to self-determination and land, while conventions like the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989) and the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (1979) work to protect vulnerable groups, promote equality, and prevent discrimination.

Watch this short video to learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:



Core Principles of Human Rights

UNIVERSALITY AND INALIENABILITY

Human rights are universal, meaning **they apply to everyone, everywhere**, regardless of nationality, culture, race, religion, or any other status. These rights are inalienable, meaning **they cannot be taken away or forfeited**, even voluntarily. Universality and inalienability underscore human rights as a basic part of human dignity and identity.

INDIVISIBILITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

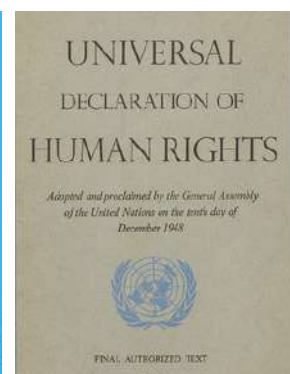
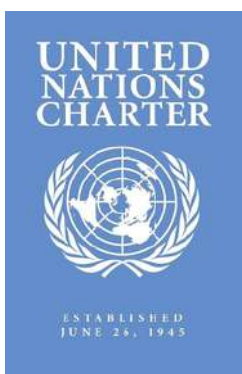
Human rights are indivisible, meaning **no one right is more important than another**. Each right contributes to a person's dignity, and all rights are interdependent; for instance, the right to health impacts the right to education, and the right to a fair trial affects personal freedom and security. Recognizing this interconnectedness ensures that human rights are seen as a complete system where **each right supports the others**, contributing to overall well-being and justice.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

All people are entitled to human rights without discrimination of any kind, whether based on race, gender, language, religion, or social or economic status. Equality and non-discrimination are essential to human rights because they affirm that **every person's rights have equal importance**. This principle emphasizes the need to address systemic inequalities that may prevent certain groups from accessing their rights.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RULE OF LAW

Governments, institutions, and organizations have an obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. They must avoid actions that violate rights, actively safeguard individuals from abuses, and create the conditions necessary for people to enjoy their rights. Accountability ensures that if rights are violated, **systems are in place for people to seek justice and for perpetrators to be held responsible**. This principle relies on a strong rule of law, with fair, accessible, and impartial legal systems that protect citizens and make human rights enforceable.



Challenges & Drivers

Today, human rights face significant challenges worldwide, with rising inequalities, conflicts, and authoritarianism creating an environment where basic freedoms are increasingly threatened ([Human Rights Watch](#)). These drivers do not act alone, they overlap and reinforce one another. Understanding them helps us see where change is needed.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY



Economic inequality remains a major barrier to human rights, as poverty and lack of access to resources prevent individuals from fully participating in society ([UNDP](#)). When people lack access to essentials like healthcare, education, and decent work, they are deprived of the opportunities and dignity that underpin human rights. Additionally, marginalized communities, including women, children, and ethnic minorities, are often the most vulnerable to these inequalities, facing systemic discrimination that restricts their freedoms and opportunities ([OHCHR](#)).

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



The rapid growth of digital technology, which, while beneficial, brings new human rights risks, especially concerning privacy and freedom of expression. Governments and private companies increasingly collect, store, and monitor personal data, often without proper safeguards, raising concerns about surveillance and data misuse. In many places, digital censorship and misinformation are also used to suppress dissent, curtailing individuals' rights to free speech and access to information. As the world becomes more interconnected, ensuring digital rights and privacy protections will be essential to upholding human rights in the 21st century ([Amnesty International](#)).

CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate change poses a profound threat to human rights, particularly for those in vulnerable regions. Extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and resource scarcity are already impacting millions, often in communities that have contributed the least to global emissions. Climate-related displacement, food insecurity, and health crises underscore the urgent need for climate justice as a human rights issue ([OHCHR](#)). Ensuring that climate action is equitable and considers the needs of marginalized communities is crucial to protecting fundamental rights in a warming world. Addressing these human rights challenges requires a coordinated, global approach that upholds justice, accountability, and equal opportunity for all.



Discussion

- Which driver feels most urgent to you — and why?
- These drivers don't work alone. Pick two and explain how they make each other worse. What would it take to break the cycle?
- What is one concrete action young people in your school or community could take?

From Rights to Goals: How Human Rights and the SDGs Connect

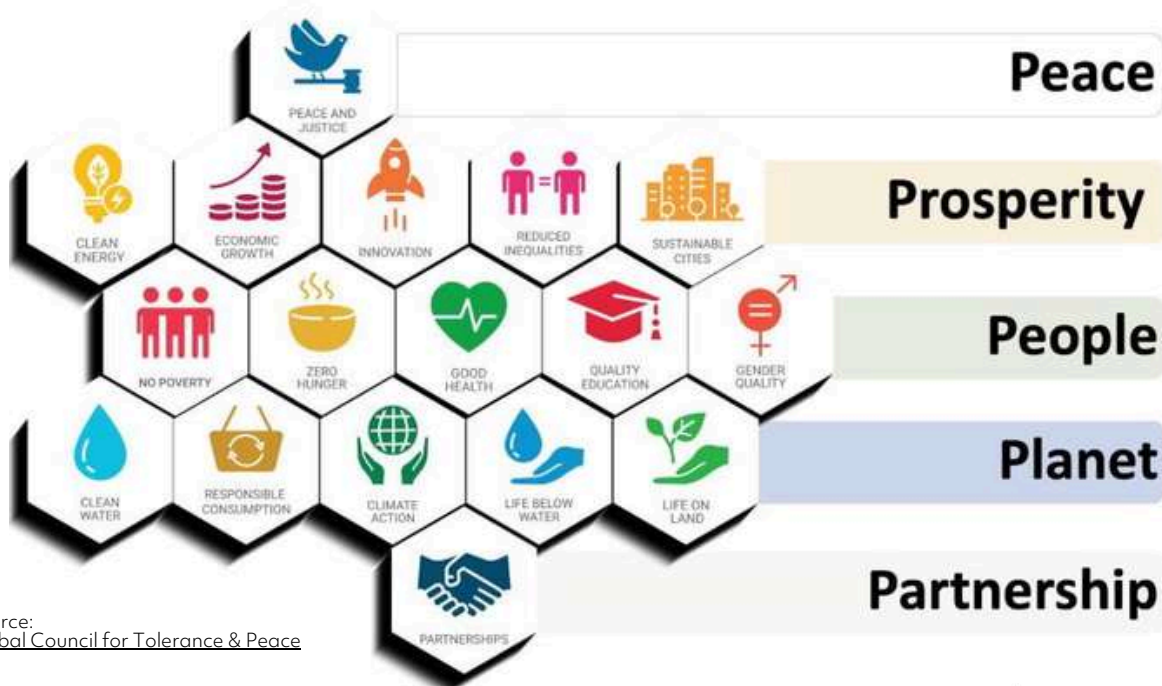
Human rights have existed as a global commitment since 1948. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came 67 years later. But they are not separate ideas, they are two expressions of the same vision.

Human rights define what every person is entitled to: dignity, freedom, equality, and the conditions needed to live a full life. They are not privileges. They are not granted by governments. They belong to every human being by virtue of being human. The challenge has always been turning that principle into reality.

That is where the SDGs come in. Adopted by world leaders in 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals translate human rights commitments into concrete, measurable targets with a 2030 deadline. Where human rights ask what do people deserve, the SDGs ask how do we get there.

The connections run across all 17 goals. Goals 1 and 2 address poverty and hunger — the root drivers of instability and rights violations. Goals 3 and 4 build the health systems and education that give rights real meaning. Goal 5 advances gender equality, essential to any inclusive society. Goals 6 and 7 protect access to water and energy — resources no one should have to fight for. Goals 8, 9, and 10 connect decent work, innovation, and reduced inequality — the foundations of a society where opportunity is shared. Goal 11 ensures cities are safe and inclusive for all. Goals 12 through 15 address the environmental pressures — unsustainable consumption, climate change, loss of biodiversity — that increasingly threaten people's rights to life, health, and home. Goal 16 anchors everything in rule of law, accountability, and strong institutions. Without these, no right is secure. Goal 17 calls on countries, communities, and youth to collaborate across borders — because human rights and sustainable development are global responsibilities.

**Progress on the SDGs is progress on human rights.
And protecting human rights is what makes that progress last.**



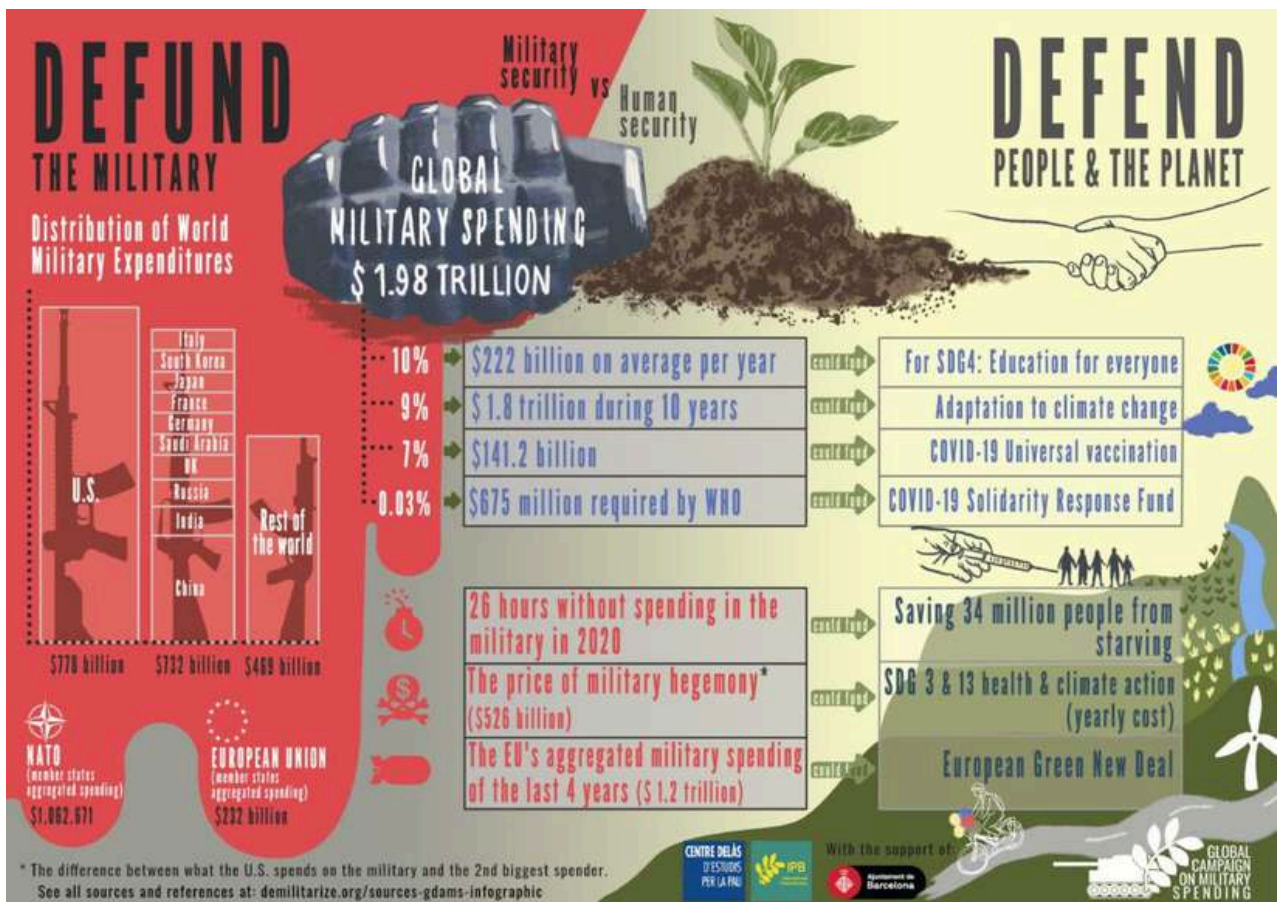
Source:
[Global Council for Tolerance & Peace](#)

Key Distinctions

Human rights don't just define what people deserve. They also shape how societies should respond when peace is threatened. Two distinctions are especially important. The first is between **SECURITY VS. MILITARIZATION**.

Security refers to the condition in which people and communities feel safe, not only from violence, but from threats to their dignity, rights, and basic needs. It includes **human security**: access to food, clean water, healthcare, education, and freedom from fear and oppression. True security addresses the root causes of conflict through diplomacy, social investment, and inclusive governance. In this sense, peacebuilding and development are powerful security strategies.

Militarization occurs when societies increasingly rely on military force or logic to handle problems, even those that are social, economic, or political in nature. It often involves rising defense budgets, a stronger military presence in civilian life, and treating others as threats to be contained. Global military spending reached \$2.7 trillion in 2024, the steepest annual increase since the end of the Cold War (SIPRI). Every dollar spent on weapons is a dollar not spent on the human security that rights require.



How might the world look if even a fraction of global military spending were redirected toward education, healthcare, or climate action?

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The second distinction is between **JUSTICE VS. PUNISHMENT**. It goes to the heart of how societies repair harm while upholding human rights.

Justice seeks to restore balance. It focuses on fairness, accountability, and healing, ensuring that rights are protected, that everyone is treated equally before the law, and that those harmed are heard and supported. True justice goes beyond retribution. It addresses the root causes of harm, helps rebuild trust, and strengthens the social fabric that prevents future conflict.

Punishment, by contrast, focuses on retribution and imposing penalties for wrongdoing, often through incarceration or exclusion. While it can deter harmful acts, excessive or unequal punishment deepens resentment and inequality, especially when justice systems discriminate or fail to offer pathways for rehabilitation and reintegration.

As communities and nations strive to build peace, they face a difficult question: how can we hold people accountable while still allowing for forgiveness, learning, and transformation? What does justice look like when the goal is not revenge but rebuilding relationships and restoring dignity?

Restorative justice offers one answer, and one that aligns closely with a human rights approach. Rather than asking only what rule was broken and who must be punished, it asks who was harmed, what do they need, and how do we repair it together.



Source: [Alberta Court of Justice](#)

Common Myths and Misconceptions – Debunked

Human rights are often misunderstood. Some assumptions are partly true. Others are oversimplified or simply wrong. In small groups, read each statement below and decide whether you agree or disagree before reading the explanation. Then discuss how these misconceptions shape public opinion and policy in your own context.



“Human rights are only for some citizens.”



According to international law, human rights apply to every person regardless of nationality, citizenship, or legal status. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes no exceptions. But the reality is more complicated. Stateless people, refugees, undocumented migrants, and marginalized communities often find their rights denied or ignored in practice. This gap between principle and reality is not proof that human rights are selective by design. It is proof that the work of protecting them is unfinished. The goal is not to lower the standard but to close the gap.



“Human rights are politically left-wing.”



Human rights do not belong to any political tradition. The Universal Declaration protects individual freedoms that conservatives value, including the right to private property, personal safety, and religious practice, alongside social rights like healthcare and education. And yet, human rights are contested politically everywhere. Governments across the spectrum restrict free speech, limit assembly, or roll back protections. The question is not whether human rights are left or right. It is whether those in power are willing to be held accountable to them.



“Human rights are a western concept.”



The idea that human beings have inherent dignity predates western philosophy by centuries. The Ubuntu philosophy of southern Africa, the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the edicts of Ashoka the Great in Asia, and the Code of Hammurabi from Mesopotamia all reflect ancient traditions of rights and responsibility. That said, the 1948 Declaration was shaped largely by western powers, and many nations under colonial rule had little voice in drafting it. Recognizing that history does not weaken the framework, it is a reason to keep expanding who shapes it.



Discussion

- Which of these myths is most common in your community or country, and why do you think it persists?
- Where do you see the gap between human rights in principle and human rights in practice in your own context?
- Who in your community is already doing the work of closing that gap, and what can you learn from them?

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Explore Key Concepts

Accountability and Rule of Law: Accountability requires governments to uphold human rights and ensure justice when violations occur. The rule of law is fundamental to protecting human rights, ensuring fair treatment, legal recourse, and impartial justice ([UN](#)).

Equality and Non-Discrimination: All people are entitled to human rights without discrimination. This principle asserts that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of factors race, gender, language, religion, or social status. Non-discrimination is essential to fair treatment and justice ([UNOHCHR](#)).

Indivisibility and Interdependence of Rights: Human rights are indivisible and interdependent, meaning that each right contributes to the whole and no right is more important than another. For instance, the right to education affects the right to work, health, and freedom of expression. This interdependence underscores the need to protect all rights to ensure individual dignity ([UNOHCHR](#)).

Right to Asylum: The right to asylum allows individuals fleeing persecution or conflict to seek protection in another country. This right is safeguarded under international law to ensure people have refuge when their safety is at risk in their home countries ([UNHCR](#)).

Right to Education: Education is recognized as a human right that empowers individuals, promotes equality, and contributes to social and economic development. It is protected by Article 26 of the UDHR and supports the fulfillment of many other human rights ([UNESCO](#)).

Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression: Freedom of opinion and expression allows individuals to think freely, express their views, and seek and impart information without interference. This right is critical for democratic participation and social progress and is protected by Article 19 of the UDHR ([UNESCO](#)).

Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security: The right to life is fundamental, protecting individuals from arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, and inhumane treatment. It is essential for the enjoyment of other rights and freedoms and is enshrined in Article 3 of the UDHR ([UDHR](#)).



Reflection Questions

- Which of these ideas feels most relevant in your community?
- How can accountability ensure non-discrimination? Can you think of any examples of this?
- How do these concepts connect? For example, how might the right to education be related to the right to freedom of opinion?

DISCOVER

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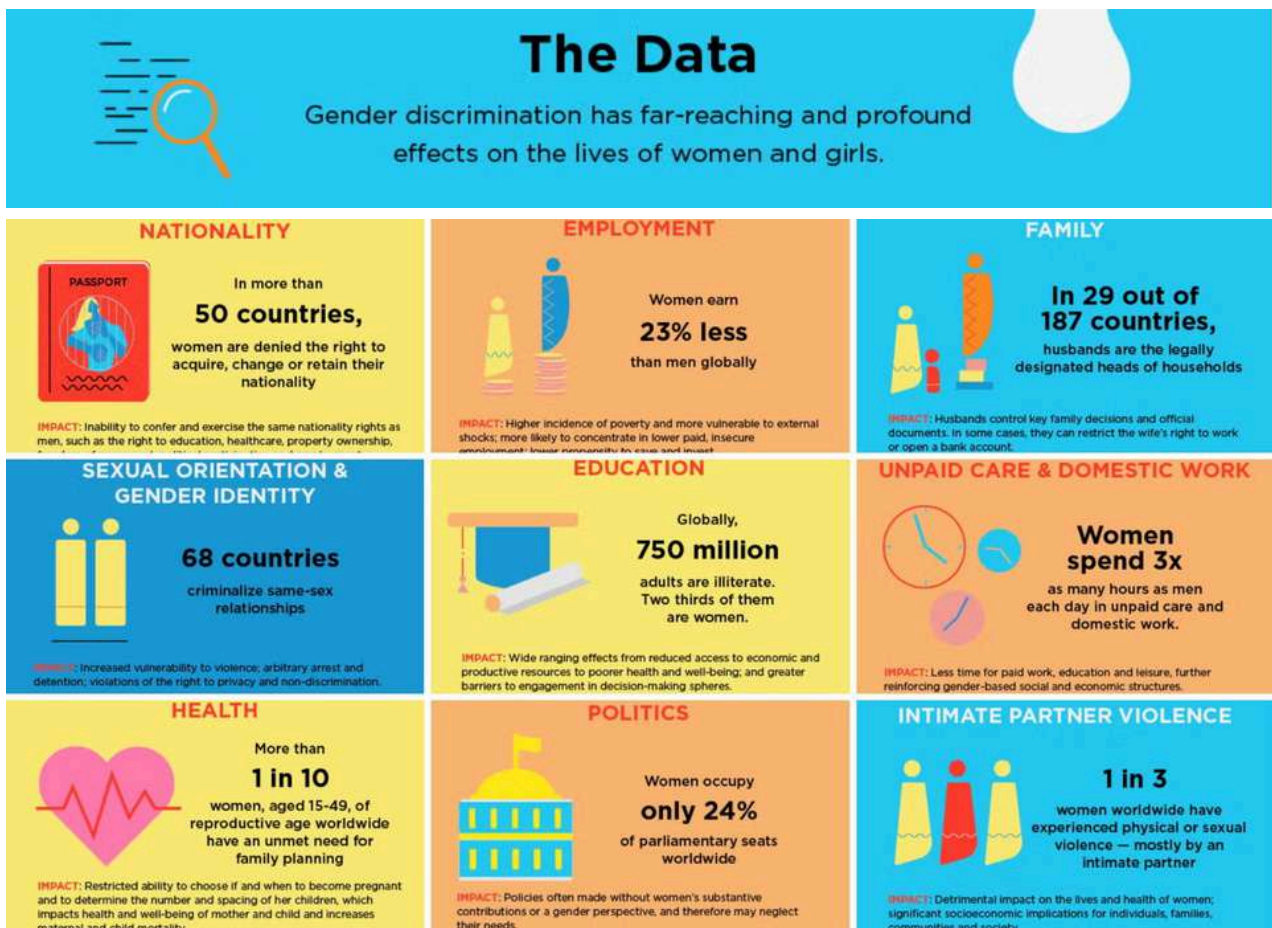
TRANSFORM

Right to Privacy: The right to privacy protects individuals from unwarranted interference in their personal lives, such as surveillance, data collection, or intrusions into private communications. This right is especially critical in the digital age, where personal data is at risk (UN OHCHR).

Right to Work and Just Conditions of Employment: The right to work ensures everyone has access to employment in safe, just, and favorable conditions. It includes fair wages, the right to join trade unions, and protection against forced labor, promoting economic security and dignity (ILO).

Universality of Human Rights: Human rights are universal, meaning they apply to everyone, everywhere, without exception. This principle ensures that all individuals, regardless of nationality, gender, race, religion, or status, have equal rights. Universality is a cornerstone of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN OHCHR).

Explore this infographic on gender based human rights violations:



Source: UN WOMEN

CLICK HERE FOR MORE !!

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Understand the Stakeholders & Systems

Who Protects Human Rights?

Upholding our human rights is a collective effort. It depends on cooperation across all levels of society and on understanding how diverse actors work together to create inclusive and resilient societies that advocates for human rights for all.

TRANSFORM

JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Justice systems and security institutions, including courts, police, and security forces, enforce human rights and oversee justice for abuses. Their legitimacy depends on fairness, accountability, and the prevention of abuse of power.

GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY MAKERS

Protect human rights by implementing laws, policies, and judicial systems that uphold these rights for all citizens. Established national human rights institutions work to investigate violations, support victims, and promote accountability.

FAITH LEADERS & COMMUNITIES

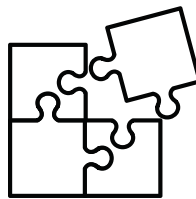
Local communities and faith leaders play a vital role in mediating disputes, fostering reconciliation, and promoting human rights at the grassroots level.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The United Nations- UN Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and UNICEF work to to monitor, promote, and safeguard human rights. They create international standards, investigate abuses, and support vulnerable populations.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector and industry contribute to stability by creating jobs and economic opportunities. When guided by ethical practices, they reduce inequality and promote human rights, but exploitation and corruption can violate these rights.



CIVIL SOCIETY & NGOS

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch give voice to communities, advocate for human rights, support marginalised groups, and provide essential services during crises.

YOUTH & THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The general public and youth promote human rights through civic engagement, advocacy, and accountability. Young people, are powerful agents of change, bringing new ideas, bridging divides, and shaping more just and secure societies.

DONORS & PHILANTHROPY

Donors and philanthropic actors, including int. agencies, foundations, and local benefactors, provide critical funding for human rights advocacy, education, and community resilience initiatives.

MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY

Media and technology platforms shape public opinion, raise awareness, and amplify human rights initiatives. At the same time, they can spread misinformation and polarizing narratives that undermine human rights.

Examples from Different Regions

Burma: Young Advocates Program

Challenge: The 2021 military coup plunged Myanmar into a human rights crisis. The military targeted civilians, shut down independent media, and intensified the persecution of the Rohingya minority. Young people faced violence, displacement, and the near-total collapse of education and civic life.

Response: Equality Myanmar's Young Advocates Program trains migrant and displaced youth to become peer-to-peer human rights advocates in their own communities. Through plays, lectures, community discussions, and organized events, participants build the skills and confidence to raise awareness of child rights, document abuses, and speak out where institutions have failed.

Lesson Learned: In contexts where formal systems have collapsed, youth-led peer education can fill critical gaps. Programs like this show that advocacy does not require permission from those in power. It starts within communities.

Serbia: Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Challenge: Decades of conflict, political instability, and state-sponsored historical denial have left deep wounds across the former Yugoslavia. Young people in Serbia grew up with competing narratives about war crimes and collective responsibility, making honest dialogue about the past politically difficult and socially fraught.

Response: The Youth Initiative for Human Rights works across the region to build a culture of truth-telling and accountability. Through educational programs, documentation projects, and cross-border exchange, the organization connects young people from countries that were once at war, fostering cooperation where governments have often failed to do so.

Lesson Learned: Healing from conflict requires more than peace agreements. It requires the next generation to understand what happened and to choose a different path. Youth-led memory work is a form of human rights advocacy.

Palestine: Palestinian Youth Movement

Challenge: The war in Gaza and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory have produced one of the world's most severe and prolonged human rights crises, marked by civilian casualties, forced displacement, restricted access to food and healthcare, and the systematic denial of self-determination.

Response: The Palestinian Youth Movement is an international grassroots organization mobilizing Palestinian and Arab youth across the diaspora to advocate for liberation and justice. Its campaigns have targeted arms trade complicity, university investments, and government policy, using social media, direct action, and coalition-building to sustain global pressure.

Lesson Learned: When official channels fail, youth-led transnational organizing can shift political narratives and hold institutions accountable. Technology and social media have become essential tools for advocacy across borders.

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Dive into the Research

Learners are encouraged to partake in guided research and activities to explore the topic. Research can be completed independently in a computer lab, as a homework assignment, by talking to community members, visiting a library, or as a classroom, club or community activity.

This research worksheet will help you explore the topic in your country and community by analyzing policies, trends, and challenges. Answer each question using reliable data and sources. Reflect on the findings and connect them to global challenges. Be ready to discuss or present your research.

ACTIVITY

1

Learner Research Worksheet: Investigate Your COUNTRY and Community

1. What are human rights, and why are they essential for a fair and just society?

2. Identify two human rights challenges in the world today that affect your country. Explain each and its impact on people's lives.

3. Which of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on human rights? Choose one and describe its purpose and goals.

4. Find out two actions that individuals or organizations in your community are taking to promote or protect human rights.

5. What are some of the ways your school promotes human rights?

6. Are there human rights resources for students and youth in your community? Describe one and its purpose.

7. What does your country's constitution say about human rights? Identify one right and its role.

ACTIVITY
2

This worksheet will help you assess how your school or community is promoting human rights and identify areas for improvement. Use this as a guide to observe, ask questions, and take notes on human rights practices in your context.

Learner Research Worksheet: Investigate Your SCHOOL or Community		
Investigate	Yes, No, Unsure	Notes and Observations
Does your school/community provide opportunities for students or youth to learn about human rights?		
Does your school/community have a group or council dedicated to human rights awareness or social justice? If so, what initiatives or decisions has this group been involved in to promote or protect human rights?		
Does your school/community hold events, town halls, or assemblies where students can discuss human rights issues or raise concerns?		
What decisions do you think school leaders or community leaders make that impact students' rights and well-being? Ask them about it as part of your research.		
How do you think young people could be more involved in human rights awareness and decision-making processes at school or in your community? List a few ideas.		

ACTIVITY

3

In this activity, learners explore how young people around the world are at advocating for human rights through social mobilization and activism, pushing for local and global change.

They will investigate a youth-led movement or organization, consider its impact, and reflect on how similar strategies could be applied in their own communities.

Examples of Youth-Led Movements:

- **Black Girls Dream Initiative**: Initiative promoting education and bridging the gender gap by telling success stories that are often ignored. They aim to change the narrative of the young African female as an indispensable part of society.
- **March For Our Lives**: National gun violence prevention organization focusing on mobilizing young people through art, protest and story telling.
- **One Young World Human Rights Delegation**: Global community of young leaders that aims to inspire young leaders, build leadership skills, and enabling them to act locally and globally. They plan the One Young World Summit for global changemakers.
- **Black Lives Matter Youth**: A foundation focused on fighting injustice and serving Black people globally through funding and direct support services. They aim to uplift Black arts and culture and nurture Black life and liberation.
- **Fridays for Future**: An environmental activism and community action movement that take action through global strike movements, and provide resources to empower youth to organize their own movements.
- **Add a local youth movement or initiative or choose one that resonates with you.**



Research / Discussion Questions

- What is the mission or goal of the youth-led movement you chose?
- What strategies or actions do the youth use to create change (e.g., protests, social media campaigns, community projects)?
- Who are the key actors or partners involved in supporting the movement?
- What impact has the movement had locally, nationally, or globally?
- How could similar actions be applied in your own community to address local issues?



DISCOVER

[See What's at Stake](#)

[Explore Key Concepts](#)

[Understand the Stakeholders & Systems](#)

Dive into the Research

- [Investigate Your Country or Community](#)
- [Map Your School or Community](#)
- [Spotlight Youth Movements](#)

Go Further



Courses & Publications

- [SDG Academy | Human Rights, Human Wrongs](#) (free online course)
- [Teaching and Learning for Transformative Action](#) (UNESCO, 2019)
- [Empowering students for just societies: a handbook for secondary school teachers](#) (UNESCO, 2019)

Websites & Multimedia

- [Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights | Lesson Plans for Grades 9-12](#)
- [UNESCO | Teaching Respect for All](#)
- [UNICEF | The Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#)
- [World's Largest Lesson](#)
- [TED-Ed: Video bank for teachers and students](#)
- [The UN's Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World](#)

Documentaries & Films

Films by [Yann Arthus-Bertrand](#) about humanity and the planet, [freely available](#).

(in 6 languages)
[LINK TO FILM](#)



[LINK TO FILM](#)



[LINK TO FILM](#)



DISCOVER

Meet the Speakers

Watch the Dialogue

Explore the Insights

Reflect on the Dialogue

CONNECT

Meet the Speakers

TRANSFORM



Jeffery D. Sachs

Professor, Author, and Advisor to the United Nations and Governments

Jeffrey D. Sachs is a globally recognized economist, bestselling author, and leader in sustainable development, known for innovative approaches to addressing extreme poverty, climate change, and economic crises. He directs the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and is President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Sachs has served as a special advisor to three UN Secretaries-General and holds multiple prestigious positions, including Co-Chair of the Council of Engineers for the Energy Transition and academic roles worldwide.

His numerous books include *The End of Poverty* (2005), *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2015), *The Ages of Globalization: Geography, Technology, and Institutions* (2020), and *Ethics in Action for Sustainable Development* (2022). He is a recipient of honors such as the 2022 Tang Prize in Sustainable Development and Time magazine's "100 Most Influential People."

“By understanding our shared history, we can also understand how to meet the great challenges of our time.”



Karimot Odebode

SDG Young Leader recognized by the UN & Founder of Black Girl's Dream Initiative

Karimot Odebode is a lawyer, education advocate, and poet from Ibadan, Nigeria. She is the founder and project lead at the Black Girl's Dream Initiative. Karimot is the author of the poetry collection 'a woman has many names' and uses her poetry to foster sustainable development. She created the Transform Education anthem for the United Nations Girls Education Initiative and has been featured by the Global Education Summit, Plan International, and BBC Media Action, International Telecommunications Union, UNICEF amongst others. Karimot was a key contributor to the Transform Education summit at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

There she co-presented the Youth Declaration on Transforming Education at the 77th United Nations General Assembly. She is one of the 17 Young Leaders for the SDGs recognized by the United Nations, and a member of the UNESCO 2024-2025 SDG4 Youth & Students Network. Karimot is an alumna of Harvard University where she studied for a master's degree in Education Policy and Analysis.

“Young people have the passion as well as physical and mental capacity to move the world.”



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Watch the Dialogue

In this session, youth leaders from around the world engage in live dialogue with two global figures on what human rights mean today and what it takes to protect them.

The conversation is anchored by two questions.



1. **Why are human rights essential in today's world, and who holds the responsibility to protect them in the face of current global challenges?**
2. **How can young people and communities contribute to advancing equality, inclusion, and the protection of human rights, particularly for those most often left behind?**

The youth leaders in the room bring their own communities and contexts to both questions. Their contributions are as central to the dialogue as the speakers themselves.

As you watch, notice where speakers agree and where they differ. Pay attention to the distance between human rights in principle and human rights in practice, and ask yourself: who gets to define and defend rights in today's world, and what does that mean for you?

WATCH THE DIALOGUE



DISCOVER

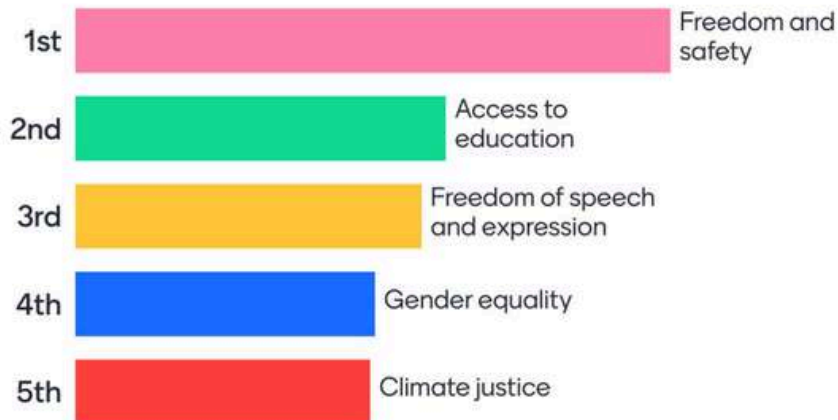
CONNECT

TRANSFORM

Participants shared their ideas about factors that impact human rights and equality through a digital poll with the results shared below.

Urge your students to look closely at the choices presented and choose 2–3 key concepts that resonate most with them. Why do these concepts stand out? Do they connect to something they are passionate about?

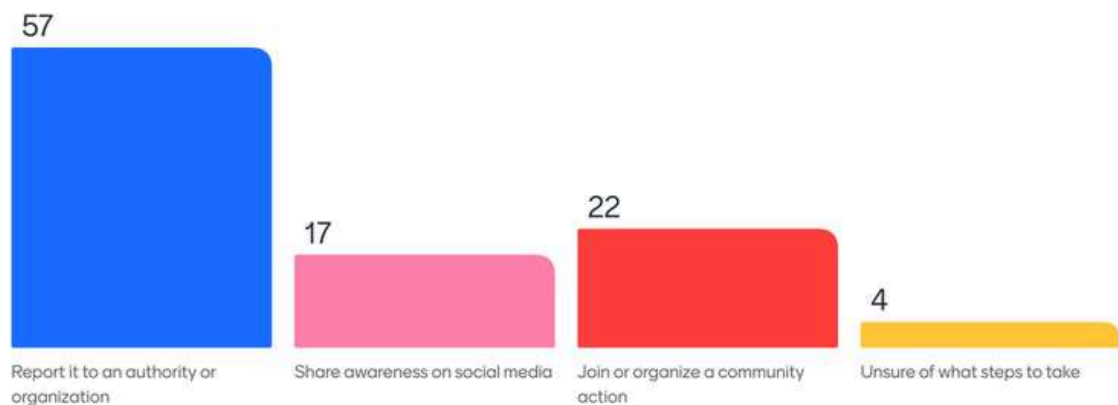
Poll 1 Which human rights issue do you think requires the most urgent attention globally?



Poll 2 What barriers prevent young people from fully enjoying their human rights?



Poll 3 What would you do if you witnessed a violation of human rights?



DISCOVER

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Participants were asked the question **“What actions can young people take to promote and protect human rights in their homes, schools, and communities?”** Some of the responses are displayed below.

“Young people can promote human rights by fostering respect and equality, advocating for inclusive policies, awareness programs, and volunteering or leading initiatives.”

“Start an awareness campaign, establish a collaborative group that promotes a safe and secure lifestyle, get the conversation going and educate others.”

“Investigate and research human rights at your own school by reading policies and drawing attention to aspects that need development.”

“Educate yourself on your rights and responsibilities. Start or join communities that take action to promote and protect human rights.”

“Youth can act as ambassadors for human rights. They can write to columns in newspapers, post on social media, and create more autonomy for human rights.”

“Treat people with respect each and everyday. Run projects to promote human rights. Stand up for what you believe in and speak for those who cannot.”

“Establish networks where people can report human rights violations and get connected to resources to protect their rights.”



DISCOVER

[Meet the Speakers](#)

[Watch the Dialogue](#)

[Explore the Insights](#)

[Reflect on the Dialogue](#)

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Reflect on the Dialogue

Engage your student in reflecting on the live session/ dialogue on human rights with Jeffrey D. Sachs and Karimot Odebode through a "3-2-1" reflection activity.

ACTIVITY

A 3-2-1 reflection activity is a reflection routine that allows students to individually and then collectively reflect on their learning. This activity has been modified from the [Harvard Project Zero visible thinking routine](#) to help your students clarify content, encourage curiosity, and build a connection to real-world problems they perceive and experience.

Instructions:

Provide your students with the three prompts below to guide their reflection. Use a think-pair-share format to scaffold thinking time to ensure that all students have time to process their learning individually and aloud before being asked to share with the class.

3 - 2 - 1

3 – What are 3 facts you have learned from the live dialogue on Human Rights?

2 – What are 2 questions that you still have about Human Rights?

1 – What is 1 challenge that you care about related to Human Rights?



Teaching tips:

- Using timers to scaffold a think-pair-share activity can be useful to set the expectation for thinking and sharing time – for example, 5 minutes for each section.
- To create a visual thinking activity where students can reflect upon and see patterns in their collective thinking, use Post-its on different sections of a board or a Google Form to collect answers. This may allow answers to be more easily reviewed for the suggested learning activities below.

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Trace the Patterns

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Trace the Patterns

In this activity, learners use the **Sustainability Compass** to think systemically about the human right of their choice from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that they can create a visual poster or video recording that educates people on the status of that right in their home country.

Tool: Students organize their thinking using the Sustainability Compass. This tool helps us explore any issue or topic through the lens of systems thinking to identify ways to make a systemic, sustainable impact. The four Compass Points help us consider the elements in our natural and human world so that we can make a positive impact on N for Nature, E for Economy, S for Society, and W for Wellbeing. Allow students to do this activity in groups. Each person or group will have a unique result based on their perspectives and knowledge.

Activity Instructions:

1. Decide if students will approach this topic individually or in groups. If in groups, we recommend using the responses from the Step 1: 3-2-1 Reflection activity above to help groups select their human rights focus.
2. Begin by having your students organize their thinking by using the Sustainability Compass to reflect on the importance of their chosen human right. Share the below **PATH** with instructions with your students. For step-by-step support in using the Sustainability Compass, use this video.

P Pick a topic: Pick the human right you want to focus on and use it to complete the following sentence: **How is our country doing on ensuring << selected human right >>?** Write the complete sentence in the middle of your blank Sustainability Compass (see next page).

A Add ideas: Use information from the community investigation, life experiences, and additional research, if you wish, to add factors that impact or are impacted by your topic to all four Compass Points. You can include facts, statistics, observations, photos of your community – any relevant ideas! Try to add at least four ideas to each Compass Point area. If you're unsure which Compass Point an idea belongs in, go with your gut!

T Think Analytically: Draw arrows to reflect the interrelationships between the factors you have identified. This can reflect things like cause and effect or information and materials flows. Challenge yourself to find a chain of cause and effect that includes at least three ideas or to find a closed loop of cause and effect. Continue until you have at least ten connections, if not many more!

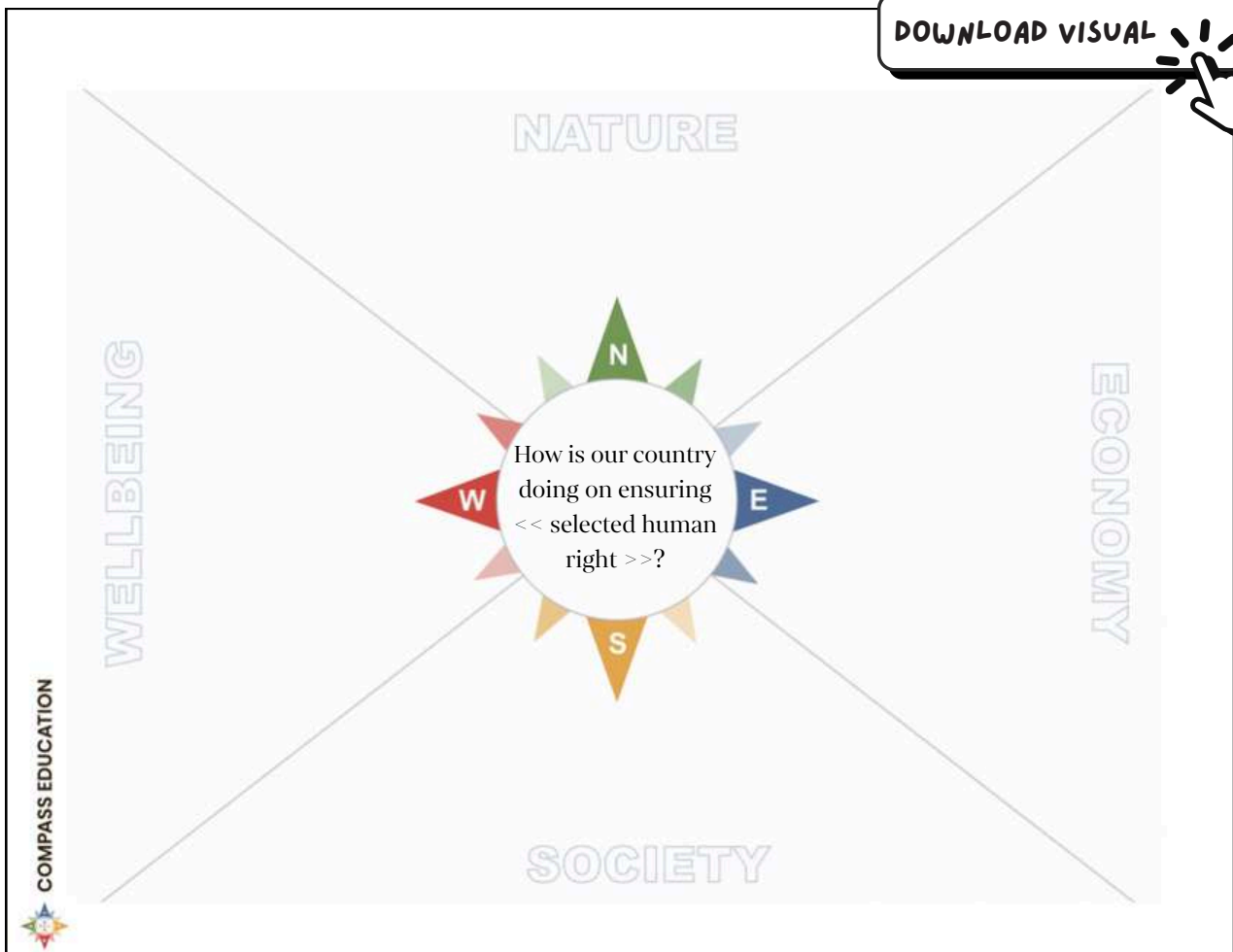
H Have a Look for Leverage Points: Take a step back to have another look at your Sustainability Compass map. Identify the factor(s) that are the most interconnected. These hubs are "leverage points" where we can apply a relatively small amount of energy to have a big impact! If we change something here, we can also impact everything connected to it.

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DOWNLOAD VISUAL



Use these prompts to guide your thinking in each section:

- Nature: How does this human right connect to environmental conditions?
- Economy: What economic factors enable or undermine this right?
- Society: How do culture, community, discrimination, or social norms shape who enjoys this right and who does not?
- Wellbeing: What is the human impact? How does the status of this right affect people's physical and mental health, dignity, and sense of safety?

3. After individuals or groups are done 'Compassing' their selected human right, invite each group to share its Compass Map and leverage point(s) with another group for some feedback.

4. Allow students a class period to create a visual poster or a 2-minute video to educate community members about their selected human rights status in your country. They should include elements of their learning from each of the four Compass Points to ensure they are demonstrating the systemic nature of what is currently happening and the impact it is having on the community.

5. Share student videos or posters around the school community through the best avenue for your school. This activity is also the perfect opportunity to ask them to contribute to the [SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE #OurVoiceOurPower](#).

DISCOVER

Trace the Patterns

Go Below the Surface

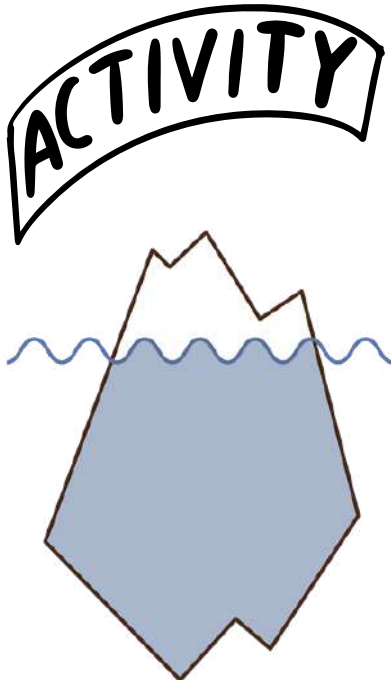
Take Action

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Go Below the Surface



In this activity, learners use the **Systems Iceberg** as a tool to discover what's happening below what's visible - helping us surface deeper levels of understanding, and identify where meaningful change can happen.

This activity uses the Systems Iceberg to help your students analyze the challenges they care about related to human rights. You may pull from the challenges they brainstormed during the 3-2-1 Reflection activity.

Tool: The Systems Iceberg is a systems thinking tool that allows us to think systematically about the underlying causes of the problems we see in our communities by exploring behavior patterns, systems and structures, and mental models that shape how we interact with the world. This video explains the Systems Iceberg in more detail. Allow students to do this activity individually or in groups. Each group will have a unique result based on their perspectives and knowledge.

We encourage you to have your students do this activity thinking specifically about your school community or local region so that they can consider real information and personal experiences, not broad generalizations.

Activity Instructions:

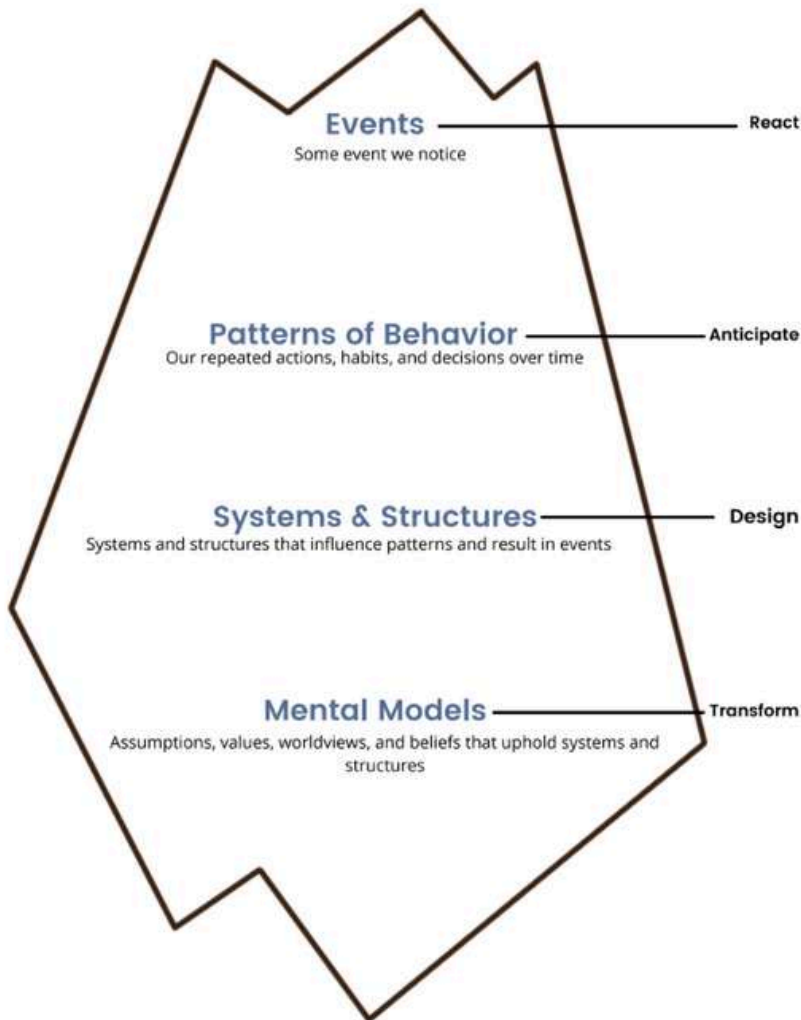
1. Show students the Systemic Iceberg and explain to them that systems thinking helps us consider how the problems we see in our world are connected to underlying patterns of behavior, systems, and structures or our mental models (worldviews).
2. Tell them their task will be to use this tool to analyze the underlying causes of the challenges they care about related to human rights in your community. Make sure they know that they might find some things that are helping address the challenge and some that might hinder our ability to address the challenge. We expect them to brainstorm things that are helping and hindering – it won't be all good or bad.
3. Break students into groups and give them each a copy of this Systems Iceberg template, or ask them to draw their own iceberg on a poster.

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4. Ask groups to pick the challenge they want to address and to write it at the top of their hand out or poster paper.
5. Beginning at the top with the **'Events'** layer, ask students: "What events do we see in our community related to your challenge?"



- a. To help your students understand what 'events' are, tell them to imagine things they could capture in a photograph through a single-moment snapshot.
- b. Give them 5 minutes to add as many ideas as they can.
- c. Running example: The Right to Education
 - i. A student can't go to school because of bad weather due to a storm.
 - ii. One school receives more money for education than another in the same district.
 - iii. A student gets an attendance certificate celebration of perfect attendance.

6. Next, move down to the **'Patterns of Behavior'** level. Ask students: What patterns and trends are related to your challenge?
 - a. To help them understand patterns of behavior, tell them that we should be able to see something happening repeatedly or changing over time, as if we are watching many photos connected, like in a video, book, or story.
 - b. Give them 5 minutes to add as many ideas as they can.
 - c. Running Example:
 - i. The annual hurricane season disrupts access to education.
 - ii. School funding is not distributed evenly across our community.
 - iii. Students are celebrated for having high attendance in school.

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7. Next, move down to the '**System and Structure**' level. Ask students: What systems and structures lead to the patterns of behavior and events related to their challenges?
 - a. Systems and structures can be natural or human-made. They can be things like social institutions, cultural norms, laws, and structures.
 - b. Give them 5 minutes to add as many ideas as they can.
 - c. Running example:
 - i. Climate change and weather systems.
 - ii. Schools are funded differently in different communities (property taxes, state taxes, etc.).
 - iii. Laws regarding truancy and child labor.
8. Last, prompt students to brainstorm at the '**Mental Models**' layer: What mindsets, beliefs, and values could we hold in our world that lead us to create these systems and structures?
 - a. Mental models usually can be phrased as an 'I statement' or 'we statements' like 'I think...', 'We believe...', 'People value...'. They are always an opinion or statement of belief.
 - b. Give them 5 minutes to add as many ideas as they can.
 - c. Running example:
 - i. People believe climate change isn't urgent to address now.
 - ii. Schools should get money based on how many students they have and what they teach.
 - iii. Education is valuable, and all children deserve access to it.
9. Now, prompt students to find a **leverage point** – somewhere on their systems iceberg, where they might target a change project to make a difference. Give them 5 minutes to brainstorm how to change things there. For example:
 - a. Target an event: Create an emergency response plan to make the school available virtually during inclement weather.
 - b. Target a pattern of behavior: Create a plan to celebrate student attendance and more aspects of youth engaging in schools.
 - c. Target a system or structure: Review or update laws regarding how schools receive funding.
 - d. Target a mental model: Create a campaign on the realities of climate change and how it's impacting your community and access to education.
10. Ask students to do a gallery walk to look at each other's ideas.
11. Discuss which ideas for action students feel are most within their sphere of influence to do something about and why.

DISCOVER

Trace the Patterns

Go Below the Surface

Take Action

Reflect & Review

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Take Action

This section includes ideas for action and a global social media challenge you can participate in.

Pathways for Action

Ensuring that all human rights are protected in a safe and inclusive society requires action at every level. Young people, have the energy, creativity, and commitment to drive meaningful change. By promoting dialogue, standing against injustice, and connecting with global youth movements, learners can take practical steps toward promoting human rights in their own communities and beyond.



Education and Raising Awareness

In order to advocate for human rights, you need to know what those rights are. All action begins with education, take time to learn about different human rights issues.

Ideas for action:

- Organize or attend human rights advocacy clubs your school or community
- Launch peer-led workshops on human rights, non-discrimination, and inclusion
- Use digital platforms to share stories of human rights campaigns



Advocate for Human Rights

Systemic change depends on youth voices being heard by decision-makers.

Ideas for action:

- Write letters or petitions to local representatives on youth priorities
- Participate in Model UN or youth councils to practice diplomacy and advocacy
- Campaign online for SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



Promote and Practice Respect

Everyday acts of respect and fairness can reduce violence and create safer environments.

Ideas for action:

- Respect everyone regardless of your differences
- Be kind and spread the message
- Encourage peers to practice conflict resolution and respectful dialogue



Use Arts, Media, and Sports to Start the Dialogue

Creative expression and sports are powerful tools to connect diverse groups and promote cooperation.

Ideas for action:

- Create murals, performances, or exhibitions
- Host sports tournaments that bring together youth from different backgrounds
- Produce short videos, podcasts, or social media campaigns about human rights and justice

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**THE MOST-LIKED POSTS
WILL BE AMPLIFIED**

Ages of Globalization:



Global Schools Program:



Social Media Challenge #OurVoiceOurPower

Task: In small groups, create a simple social media campaign on a global issue linked to the SDGs.

Goal: Decide what your post aims to do, e.g. raise awareness, share a solution, or showcase an action.

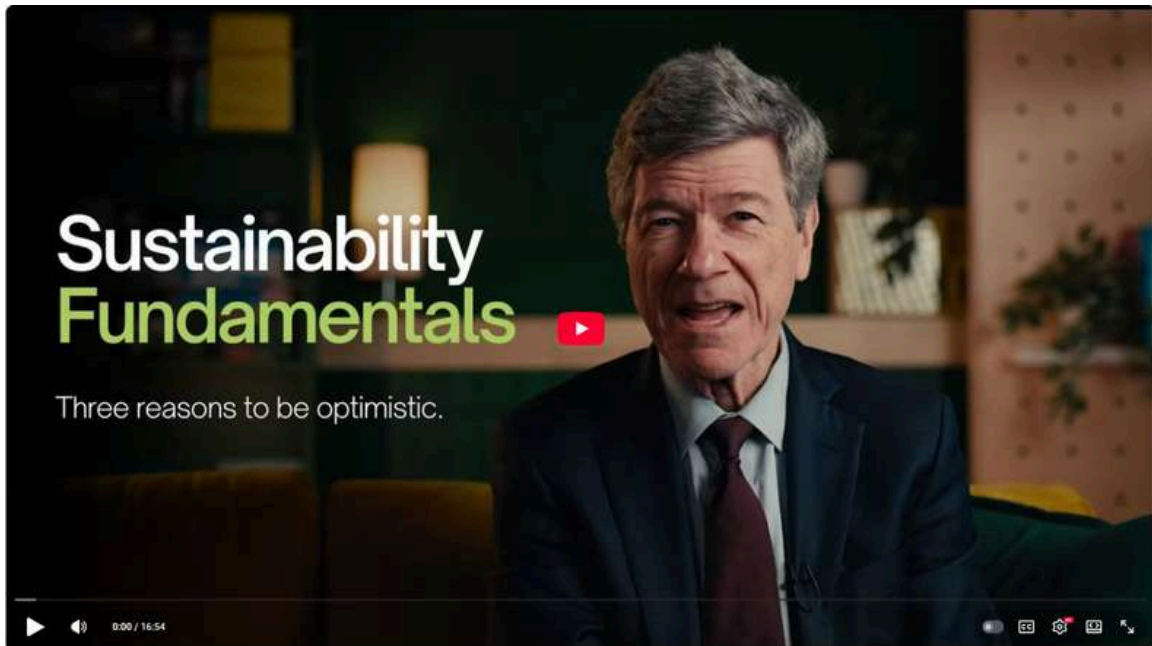
Platform & Permissions: Post from a school/club/NGO account if possible (or a dedicated class account). Choose an age-appropriate platform and follow school/parent consent rules.

Tagging: Tag “Ages of Globalization” and “Global Schools Program”. Use #UNatYourDoorstep and #OurVoiceOurPower.

Quality & Safety: Be respectful, fact-based, and visually clear.

Timeline: The campaign runs until August 2026

No social media? Share internally via your class blog, posters, video reels shown in class, or exchange with a partner classroom.



Watch this video by Professor Jeffrey Sachs to understand the importance of the SDGs, why they offer hope for the future, and how we can all take action to achieve them.





Social Media Challenge Planning Template



Form a Team & Choose Your Topic

Working in small groups is ideal for brainstorming and building on each other's ideas. Take a look at the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), pick an issue/SDG(s) you are passionate about, propose a solution or share information, solutions and actions. Research and discuss it with your peers, educator(s), and families. Understand different perspectives and think about what message(s) you want to share using research, facts, and statistics.

Set Your Goals

Think about what you want to accomplish with your post(s). Do you aim to:

- Raise awareness about an issue?
- Share your thoughts or solutions?
- Encourage others to take action or share their own perspectives?

Choose Your Platform

Ask your instructor if you can use your school's/club/community/NGO social media account(s) or if you can create a dedicated account for your post(s). Will you be using Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, or Facebook? Make sure you know how to navigate the platforms effectively and safely.

Creating Your Content

Length & Format: What type of content are you creating (e.g., a short video, a photo series, a written post)? Keep your message positive, respectful, and impactful. Aim to inspire and connect with others.

Visuals: Create eye-catching visuals, e.g. by creating a free <https://www.canva.com/> account. Whether it's a photo, a graphic, or a video, make sure it supports your message.

Hashtags & Tags: Use the campaign's official hashtags: #OurVoiceOurPower for the #SDGs and your unique hashtag(s). Don't forget to tag the official accounts @Ages of Globalisation ([LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) and @Global Schools Program ([LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X/Twitter](#)).

Posting Your Content

Are you posting from your school/club/community/NGO account or your personal account? Make sure your post's privacy settings are appropriate. Discuss with your teacher or parents if you're unsure.

Engage with Others

Engage with other posts in the campaign by liking, commenting, or re-sharing them. Show support, ask questions, and start conversations!

Keep track of how your post is doing. Respond to comments and thank people for their support.

Reflect on Your Experience

After posting, think about the impact of your contribution. How did it make you feel? What did you learn? Share your experience with others. What worked well? What could you improve next time?

DISCOVER

Trace the Patterns

Go Below the Surface

Take Action

Reflect & Review



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Reflect & Review

In this section, we offer suggestions to review and assess learners' understanding and engagement with the topic and the activities in this module. The focus is on evaluating grasp of background information, participation in activities, and the ability to propose actionable, youth-led solutions. We also encourage educators to celebrate learners' accomplishments and growth.

Guiding Questions

- **Background Understanding:** Did learners demonstrate a clear understanding of key human rights concepts (e.g., universality and unalienability, indivisibility and interdependence, equality and non-discrimination, UN Declaration of Human Rights, links to SDGs)?
- **Research Accuracy:** Are the responses in the Learner Research Worksheet accurate and reflective of local and global peace-and-security issues? Did students use credible sources (e.g., UN agencies, national statistics, reputable NGOs/research institutes)?
- **Community Insight:** Did learners effectively investigate how their school or community promotes (or undermines) human rights through safety, trust, inclusion, and access to justice? Assess the quality of observations and the feasibility of proposed improvements (e.g., restorative practices, anti-bullying, media literacy).
- **Discussion Participation:** How actively did students participate in dialogue and debate on human rights? Look for engagement, critical thinking, respectful listening, and the ability to connect root causes (inequality, discrimination, disinformation, trauma, climate stress) to real contexts.
- **Activity Engagement:** Did students effectively use the Sustainability Compass and Systems Iceberg to analyze the issues and propose solutions? Assess their application of these tools in understanding human rights and the SDGs.
- **Social Media Challenge / Action Outputs:** Evaluate the creativity, relevance, and impact of students' peace-and-security posts or action concepts. Did they raise awareness, propose practical steps, cite evidence, and use campaign tags appropriately?

Ideas for Assessment Methods

Quizzes

- What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and why is this important for us?
- State the core principles of human rights and explain how are they interconnected.
- Which sustainable development goals (SDGs) directly speak to human rights issues?
- What are the greatest challenges to human rights today?
- Name the key stakeholders involved in human rights and explain their roles.
- Identify two human rights issues in your context and one potential leverage point for each.

Presentations & Group Discussion

- Have learners present findings from their Country or School/Community research and facilitate discussion:
 - "The History of Human Rights through the Philosophy of Indigenous Communities"
 - "The Greatest Challenges to Human Rights Today and How Youth can Take Action Today"
 - "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Why It Matters"
 - "How Collaboration Among Stakeholders (government, consumers, producers, civil society, media/ tech, youth) Can Promote Human Rights."

Activity Reports on Systems Tools

- Review learners' Compass/Iceberg mapping. Assess clarity of cause-effect pathways, quality of evidence, identification of leverage points.

Reflection Essays

- Identify three key action areas for human rights advocacy. How can these be implemented in your own community?
- Explain how disinformation and polarization damage trust, and outline a youth-led media literacy response.
- Explore accountability using a real or hypothetical school/ community case; propose a plan.
- Map the stakeholders for one issue (e.g., economic inequality, hate speech, climate) and describe a partnership strategy.

Self-Assessment & Peer Feedback

Invite short reflections and pair with a simple peer rubric focusing on accuracy, empathy, systems thinking, and feasibility of actions.

- One belief I changed about human rights is...
- One practice our school could adopt to promote human rights is...
- One partnership we need (and why) is...

Social Media Campaign Impact

- Track engagement. Consider clarity of message, ethical framing, accuracy, constructive tone, and clear call to action.

