




## Exercise Three: Land, Water and Food as Human Rights

 **Time: 10 - 15 minutes**

### **Objectives**

- To provide a background and framework for using a rights-based approach to talk about access to food, water and land.
- To generate discussion on the false hierarchy between “civil and political” rights and “economic, social and cultural” rights in the context of the United States.
- To explore the concept of access to resources as a human right.

### **Materials needed**

- A sheet of large butcher paper
- Tape
- Markers

### **Preparation**

- Post a sheet of butcher or poster paper in a central part of the room.
- Draw a line down the middle of the butcher paper. On one side write “Civil and Political Rights” and on the other side write “Economic, Social and Cultural rights.”

### **Preparation**

1. Facilitator should state: “The previous exercise got us thinking about the different functions of land. That exercise revealed how important land is in our every day lives. Some of the most acute issues facing rural populations are land and water. We are now going to think about land as it relates to food production and water from a rights-based perspective.”
2. Ask for two volunteers to be recorders.
- 2 min* 3. Have workshop participants brainstorm a list of civil and political rights. Ask the volunteers to record responses on the butcher paper.
- 2 min* 4. Have participants brainstorm a list of economic, social and cultural rights. Ask the volunteer to record responses on the butcher paper.
- 5 min* 5. Read each list then ask participants to imagine a country that prides itself on its democratic practices where citizens are guaranteed civil and political rights, but not economic, social and cultural rights. Discuss what life would be like for those citizens.



## Exercise Three, continued

A possible list will look like the following:

### Civil and Political Rights

- Right to vote
- Right to fair trial
- Right to peaceful assembly
- Right to life
- Freedom of religion
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom from torture

### Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- Right to education
- Right to health
- Right to work
- Right to fair wages
- Right to water
- Freedom from slavery
- Right to adequate standard of living (food, clothing, housing)

## ? Possible Questions for Discussion

- Is it possible to guarantee civil and political rights without guaranteeing economic, social and cultural rights?
- What are the implications when something is a guaranteed right?
- Why does there tend to be much more focus on civil and political rights?
- Do some human rights take precedence over others?
- Is there a human “right to land”? If not, should there be one?
- Who is the best guarantor of these rights?

## ⊙ Closing

*2 minutes*

The facilitator should highlight the right to water and the right to food, and talk about access to land in the context of food production.

State that the concept of water and food as human rights are the foundation of this workshop. The right to land is commonly seen as the right to property (which is a recognized right under international law), but Grassroots International and others around the world are calling for a right to land for food production.

While the “right to land for food production” has not been designated as a “legal” right by the United Nations, there is currently a lot of debate about it because one can’t guarantee the right to food without land or the right to water. The right to land for food production is different from the right to food and water in that in most countries it does not yet have legal backing. However, people are calling for a right to access land for food production all over the world and many argue that the right to land is implied in the right to food.

Water and food are often referred to as the most fundamental of human rights because it is impossible to fulfill other human rights without them. Because of this, they should be treated as **Public Goods** and NOT as commodities for profit. Right now these resources are on the global market. This workshop is designed to get us thinking about whether or not they should stay there.



## Exercise Three, continued

### Facilitator Context

The facilitator should clarify that:

- The United Nations is the authority on human rights. The right to food and the right to water are identified as human rights by the UN in UN treaties. Member countries then sign onto these treaties. Some countries then create constitutions that complement UN treaties. These rights are legal under international human rights law.
- All human rights have the same weight—equal, indivisible and interdependent. One set does not have precedence over another and every country must be held accountable to respect, protect and fulfill these rights.

The UN documents that provide legitimacy to the concept of water and food as human rights are:

- The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25) that establishes that, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for... health and well-being... including food."
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which codifies "the human right to food" (Article 11).
- The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights also states that, "The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses."

The United States has signed both the treaty on Civil and Political Rights and the Treaty on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The U.S. has ratified the treaty on Civil and Political Rights, but not Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Signing the treaty is a formal pledge of support which implies intention to guarantee the rights spelled out in the treaty at a later date. Ratifying the treaty makes a government obligated to guarantee that its citizens have all of those rights.