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# **HUMAN RIGHTS ASSESSMENT**

## **METHODOLOGY**

**JUNE 30, 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

This human rights assessment tool is a straightforward yet flexible guide on how to understand what is happening with human rights where you are working. This document breaks the process into steps, but reality may not be quite so linear. With that in mind, take what is useful, given the time and resources you have available, and focus on information you can realistically gather to develop and inform a comprehensive picture of human rights where you are working. Human rights issues are, by their very nature, complicated and often have a number of different layers; however, this tool is designed for anyone's use, regardless of prior knowledge of human rights.

Before beginning, it is useful to take a moment to **think about why you are doing this**: How do human rights affect your work? Why have you determined that a human rights assessment is needed right now? The assumption is that you are looking to understand what is going on and to create a road map or guide to help you develop solutions. You may be trying to identify a very specific or local issue, or you may want to understand the broad national context. Whatever the purpose of your analysis, this document can act as a tool to help narrow down problems to address and identify entry points for possible solutions.

*The purpose of the analysis is to inform action, not to replace it.*  
– Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

So, **what exactly are human rights, and why do you need to think about them?** It is actually pretty simple: Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings regardless of where they live; where they come from; their sex, ethnicity, race, religion, language; or anything else that might define them. Human beings have these rights by virtue of being born. Unfortunately, many people across the world are not able to exercise these rights; perhaps they are not free to express their opinions, or they cannot obtain justice if a crime is committed, or they live in fear of persecution based on their identity.

Limitations on peoples' rights inevitably have an effect on other aspects of their lives such as health, education, and work. That is why human rights affect the ability of individuals—and, ultimately, communities and countries—to grow and develop in a safe and stable way. Maybe you are working in one of these issue areas and have already noticed this because human rights issues are impacting your project, creating a challenge and/or a window of opportunity.

Now that it has been established **why** you are doing this assessment, the next step is to talk about **how you are going to do it**. The **way** in which you collect information is almost as important as the information itself. This assessment is a **participatory process**, meaning you will speak with people to gather information and understand their perspectives rather than relying only on technical documents, which may not reflect the reality on the ground. While it is helpful to read up on relevant reports—including a few valuable ones highlighted throughout this guide—the real nuance will come from conversations with people who live and understand the reality of the human rights situation. Involving people also empowers them, allowing you to develop relationships that can help you address human rights challenges in the future. It might encourage other important actors, such as governments, to think more about rights issues and can help you identify whether there is support or opposition for action and the reasons behind this.

## STEP I. UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS

To understand human rights challenges, it is necessary to first understand some human rights principles—which is another way of saying, the ideas that underpin these rights. The **goal** of this step, therefore, is to demystify human rights. As a **result**, you will have a firmer grasp on what human rights are, be able to name a few examples, and understand how international law comes into play.

Rights are “things you are allowed to be, to do, or to have.”<sup>1</sup> As discussed in the introduction, human rights apply to all people simply by virtue of being human. They are **universal** because every human is entitled to the same rights, in equal measure, no matter who or where they are. These rights cannot be disputed by anyone, for any reason—in other words, they are **inalienable**.

You may have heard of human rights as being **interconnected** because they are all equal to, relate to, and build on each other. They do not exist in a vacuum and cannot cancel each other out or supersede each other. You have both the right to express your opinion *and* the right to not be tortured for doing so, or for any other reason. This helps explain how one person or group can have multiple rights violated at the same time. Although there are technically different **categories** of human rights (more on that later), they are all still **interrelated** and **inseparable** from each other. Knowing about these different categories is important mostly because some of the people you speak with as part of this assessment may be more

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<sup>1</sup> “What Are Human Rights? Human Rights Defined,” Youth for Human Rights, <http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights.html>.

focused on one set of rights, which can affect their perspective on the overall situation in the country and, by extension, the information you gather from them.

Here is a brief, though incomplete, summary of some basic human rights in plain language to give you a sense of what they include:<sup>2</sup>

**We Are All Born Free & Equal:** we should all be treated in the same way. **Don't Discriminate:** these rights belong to everybody, whatever our differences. **Freedom of Thought:** we all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we want. **Freedom of Expression:** we all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people. **The Right to Public Assembly:** we all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we do not want to. **No Slavery:** nobody has any right to make us a slave, nor can we make anyone our slave. **No Torture:** nobody has any right to hurt or torture us. **We're All Equal Before the Law:** the law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly. **No Unfair Detainment:** nobody has the right to put us in prison without good reason and keep us there, or to send us away from our country. **The Right to Trial:** if we are put on trial this should be in public and **We're Always Innocent until Proven Guilty.** **The Right to Privacy:** nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family without a good reason. **Freedom to Move:** we all have the right to go where we want in our own country and to travel as we wish. **The Right to Your Own Things:** everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason. **The Right to Education:** education is a right. Primary school should be free.

Human rights are based on **international law**, so it is also important to know a bit about international treaties and how they affect laws and policies where you are working. International human rights law is a **set of rules for how governments should behave** with respect to their citizens. At its most basic, it requires governments to ensure that people can enjoy their fundamental freedoms. Like national constitutions, which are pacts between governments and their citizens, international human rights treaties are agreements between countries and the international community, whereby governments agree to guarantee certain rights within their own territories.

- ✓ **All countries** are obligated to abide by the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Most countries have signed on to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These three together form the **International Bill of Human Rights** and establish a wide range of individual rights and government obligations to protect them.

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<sup>2</sup> “United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Simplified Version,” Youth for Human Rights, <http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/articles-1-15.html>.

- ✓ The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) lists **18 major international treaties** and related “optional protocols” to which states have signed on. These include but are not limited to the Convention against Torture (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- ✓ **Regional organizations**—such as the African Union (AU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Council of Europe (COE), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of American States (OAS), and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—also have their own laws, and some have justice systems to deal with violations of these laws.<sup>3</sup>

Why do you need to know this? Because governments choose to join these treaties freely and commit to the obligations therein, so sometimes reminding them of their own promises can be a good starting point. Consequently, you will want to know if **international and/or domestic laws can or do address the identified problems**.

## STEP II. ENGAGING KEY ACTORS

With a firmer grasp on what human rights are, you can move on to gathering information about the situation where you are working. As established in the introduction, it is essential to use a participatory approach for your assessment, so this step will focus on who you should speak with and how you choose or identify them. Different people have different points of view, areas of focus, and interests, so it is important to think of a diverse group of **key actors** within the society or community where you are working.

The **goal** is to identify private, public, and nongovernmental sector sources who are well-informed but also reflect the makeup of the country itself. Start with the actors commonly referred to as **civil society** because they are often on the front lines of efforts to protect and promote human rights. These individuals, groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), associations, and independent media hold the government accountable for fulfilling the rights of all members of society. Civil society may even fill

<sup>3</sup> USAID, *Human Rights Landscape Analysis Tool*, June 2016, [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PBAAE633.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAE633.pdf), 8-9.

in when the government is unable or unwilling to address human rights violations and assist victims and at-risk populations. Not all members of civil society work on human rights issues specifically, so the prompts below should help you come up with a diverse group of actors who can provide different perspectives of the situation in which you are working.

Here are some questions to help you with brainstorming; however, feel free to expand or condense them based on the particular context or operating environment:

- Are there respected organizations and/or individual activists working on human rights issues at the national and/or local level?
  - You may hear the term **human rights defenders (HRDs)** used in this context. Put simply, these are individuals, organizations, associations, or more loosely formed coalitions that work to protect the rights and freedoms of others.
    - They are defined by what they do, as opposed to their connection to an organization, a particular job, or other identities. They could be activists, investigative journalists or bloggers, labor associations, academics, lawyers, members of government, or even socially active businesses.
    - They could be doing a range of things, such as monitoring and documenting human rights violations, working on strategic litigation, training others, or raising awareness about human rights issues.
  - **Victims' associations** provide direct support to people whose rights have been violated, try to get the government to acknowledge the violation, and advocate for some kind of compensation or reparation for those who have suffered harm. They can provide valuable insight into specific incidents of human rights violations that have occurred.
  - Think about groups of people who seem to be sidelined or particularly vulnerable to attack. These could be but are not limited to women, religious, ethnic, or gender and sexual minorities.
    - Who works to empower or defend these populations?
- Who are the **influential journalists and media** within and outside your country's capital?
  - Who do you hear on the radio or see on television talking about human rights?
  - What newspapers or journalists seem to be respected for fair reporting?
- What **religious institutions** are well-respected and objective?
- Who are the **legal professionals** working at different levels of the judicial system?
  - Is there a bar association?

- Who are the **business leaders** in the community?
  - Is there a chamber of commerce? What are the existing trade associations?

Next, think about the **government**. Is it possible to reach out to government officials? Keep in mind that human rights are often a sensitive issue for governments and that even if authorities are willing to speak with you, they may be reluctant to provide much information in their official capacity. Ask your civil society actors about the safety and prudence of interviewing government officials, and find out:

- Is there a government human rights office or commission?
- Are there political leaders that have spoken out on human rights or civic issues?
- If you interact with the government, what is the best way to raise these issues in a meeting or dialogue?

Having identified a select group of key actors, **how will you engage with them?** Interviews, meetings, focus groups, roundtables, surveys, and web-based technology are all possible ways to glean information, and each has its pros and cons. Consider the time and resources you have available, as well as those of your informants, possible safety issues, and the kind of discussions you are looking to have as you review these options. Think carefully about culture, language and literacy, geography, accessibility, communication styles, and other factors that might prevent informants from providing you with honest and useful input.<sup>4</sup> However you are able or choose to engage with key actors, the goal is to ensure that your information-gathering process is **locally driven** and that the findings are grounded in the reality of the particular country or context. This engagement also empowers people to play an active role in and drive their own development, rather than passively receive assistance.

**Individual interviews** with a diverse set of key actors are a way to gather qualitative, descriptive information that creates an overall picture of patterns of political and social processes in a country. **Focus groups** are planned, facilitated discussions among a small group of key actors designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Focus groups are a good way to triangulate your information and should ideally be conducted both in mixed groups and in groups segregated by sex, age, and social status to ensure everyone has a chance to be heard.<sup>5</sup> **Surveys** are a way to poll a section of the population using a standard set of questions to gather information on their

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<sup>4</sup> Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, *Using Human Rights Assessments in Local Governance*, August 2014, [https://sfgov.org/dosw/sites/default/files/iaohra\\_toolkit\\_9.11.14\\_reduced.pdf](https://sfgov.org/dosw/sites/default/files/iaohra_toolkit_9.11.14_reduced.pdf), 5.

<sup>5</sup> USAID, *Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework*, September 2014, [https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Master\\_SAF\\_FINAL%20Fully%20Edited%209-28-15.pdf](https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Master_SAF_FINAL%20Fully%20Edited%209-28-15.pdf), 13.



attitudes, impressions, opinions, or satisfaction levels. **Roundtables or reference groups** are convened at regular intervals to gauge the perceptions of a group of people over time. All of these methods can be used either formally or informally, depending on your particular situation.

Two important things to keep in mind as you speak with key actors are **accountability** and **disaggregation**.

- Consider that your informants are taking time out of their busy schedules to educate you. They deserve, at a minimum, to be provided with the results of your analysis. This practice of accountability is not only common courtesy but can help you cross-check findings while at the same time involving various actors in your proposed solutions.
- As you collect information, try to break it down, or disaggregate, by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, income, geographical location, and any other relevant categories. This will allow you to compare the information you receive from key actors and better understand the situations of specific groups. It can help you identify patterns of inequity and discrimination and even measure inequalities among groups more easily.<sup>6</sup>

As you interact with key actors through whichever method you chose, keep a database or record of all the information you collect. As a **result**, you will gain a broad picture of human rights from a variety of perspectives.

### STEP III. IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS

All governments everywhere are supposed to **protect** their citizens against human rights violations, not interfere with or limit—that is, **respect**—citizens' rights, and take any action needed to **fulfill** citizens' rights.<sup>7</sup> If a person's rights are not protected, respected, and fulfilled, then **their rights are being violated**.

The **goal** of this step is to understand to what extent people are able to exercise their rights where you are and, if they are not, what kinds of human rights problems exist. Below are some key questions you will want to answer in this step. The answers will mostly come from key actors via interviews, focus groups,

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data*, 2018, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf>, 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Using Human Rights Assessments in Local Governance*, 2.

or surveys, but it is also a good idea to include other information-gathering methods in case some key actors are not available. You will also want to verify, or triangulate, the information you get from actors by reading news articles, international reports, and/or historical documents or review other relevant texts such as the Universal Periodic Review,<sup>8</sup> an overview of the human rights records of all UN member states. Remember that **everyone you speak with has a particular perspective**, and this can sometimes affect the reliability or objectivity of the information.

- Are human rights generally respected in the country?
  - Are basic rights of association, speech, and assembly respected, and are all citizens free to exercise these rights equally?
  - Does the government protect everyone’s personal security and freedom equally, or are some groups left out?
    - Do government officials or security forces (such as police or the army) provoke violence?
    - Do security forces obey the law?
  - Does the government abide by its own laws and rules?
    - Do people abuse their power for personal gain—that is, does **corruption** exist?
    - Do crimes generally go unpunished—that is, does **impunity** exist?
- To what extent do all citizens have access to fair and equitable systems of justice, either formal or informal? Do laws discriminate against citizens based on sex, ethnicity, religion, or other factors?
  - Can all people rely equally on the court system?
  - How are women, LGBT+ individuals, indigenous peoples, racial or ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups treated?
    - Does the government try to prevent, criminalize, and punish violence against the groups listed above?
    - Do security forces give equal attention to addressing—or are they involved in—violence against women, persons with disabilities, LGBT+ individuals, indigenous peoples, racial or ethnic minorities, or other marginalized groups?
- Are there institutions—such as human rights commissions—to monitor and prevent abuse of human rights? Are these institutions independent, and do they have authority to hold rights violators accountable?

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<sup>8</sup> “Universal Periodic Review,” United Nations Human Rights Council, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-home>.

Remember that governments' human rights duties include **positive and negative obligations**, meaning they are not only bound to not violate your rights; they are also obliged to take proactive steps to protect your rights from being violated by others. This is why governments are called upon to **respect, protect, and fulfill** the enjoyment of human rights.<sup>9</sup> With that in mind, here are some additional questions about the **legal landscape** to consider:

- Has the government signed on to a treaty, or is it a member of an organization with responsibilities related to the problem?
  - OHCHR's [Dashboard](#) is an easy and fast way to see what each country has signed on to.
  - How are those obligations applied in the country?
- Are there domestic laws, constitutional provisions, legislation, national-level policies, administrative regulations (bylaws, for example), executive decrees, or judicial decisions that protect the rights with which you are concerned?
- Are there laws that are missing or that actually violate rights guaranteed by international law?
  - For example, legislation may restrict an NGO's ability to operate, which could be at odds with constitutional commitments to—and international standards of—freedom of association or assembly.<sup>10</sup>
- How do people seek and obtain remedies if their rights are violated under domestic law?
  - Are there weaknesses within domestic institutions that make action difficult or impossible to take?

Combine the answers to these types of questions found through general research or review of literature with the information collected from key actors. As a **result**, you will start to group human rights violations by theme or issue area, forming the basis of your analysis.

#### STEP IV. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Your conversations and research up to this point may have left you with a fairly expansive and intimidating list of human rights issues. The **goal** of this step, therefore, is to create a core set of problems and identify their causes and consequences.

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<sup>9</sup> "Overview of the Human Rights Framework," International Justice Resource Center, [http://www.ijrcenter.org/ihr-reading-room/overview-of-the-human-rights-framework/#THE\\_INTERNATIONAL\\_HUMAN\\_RIGHTSFRAMEWORK&gsc.tab=0](http://www.ijrcenter.org/ihr-reading-room/overview-of-the-human-rights-framework/#THE_INTERNATIONAL_HUMAN_RIGHTSFRAMEWORK&gsc.tab=0).

<sup>10</sup> *Human Rights Landscape Analysis Tool*, 11.

Start by categorizing all of the problems identified in the previous section. There are a few ways to do this; however, writing out all the problems on post it notes and/or a whiteboard is a helpful first step before categorizing them into groups. **Just as human rights are interconnected, so too are human rights problems**, so you should start to see some repetition. Ask yourself, are some identified issues indistinguishable or are they perhaps intertwined with or the cause of another problem?

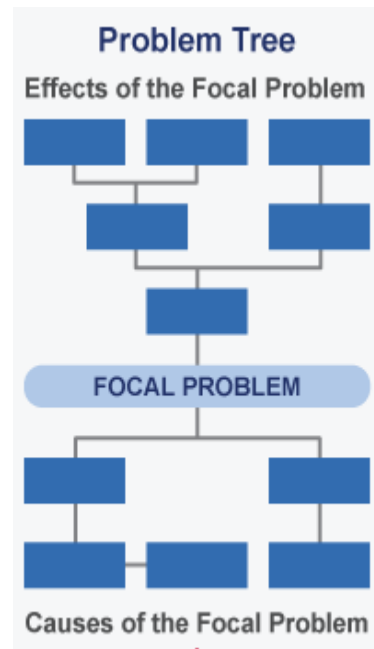
Once the problems are organized and categorized, you should have a handful of distinct issues or problems. Try to limit yourself to a core set—one to three—of problems that seem most realistic for you to analyze further, and eventually think about solutions or ways to address the problems. Here are some questions that may help narrow this down:

- What problems have the most serious consequences?<sup>11</sup>
- Is there a willingness, either on the part of authorities or civil society, to address these problems?
  - Keep in mind that you will probably need to work with local partners and that their buy-in is important.
- What possible solutions might there be to these problems?
- Can these solutions realistically be carried out, at least in part, in a short (three to five year) timeframe?
- If so, is someone else already working on the same issues?
  - This could be an argument both in favor of and against focusing on a particular problem, so think about what your value added could be.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from “Planning tools: Problem Tree Analysis,” Overseas Development Institute, January 13, 2009, <https://www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis>.

Next, use flip chart paper to create a **problem tree** for each of the core problems to get to their **causes** and **consequences**. Write the problem or issue in the center of the flip chart; this becomes the trunk of the tree. Do not worry about the exact wording of the problem itself, as the roots and branches that you add will start to further define the issue. Identify the causes, or roots, of the focal problem, and then identify the consequences, which become the branches. As you arrange the causes and consequences, you might start to subdivide roots (causes) and branches (consequences). This chart is an example of how your tree might look, but you should use whatever format or imagery makes the most sense to you.



Problem trees can get big, so once you have finished yours, you will need to determine what parts of the tree you will research further. List out the causes and consequences identified in your trees. The same questions you considered above can help you narrow your list to a recommended three to five causes of human rights problems on which to focus.

As a **result**, you will have a well-defined set of human rights issues or challenges you can focus on that align with your strategy or goals.

## STEP V. ACTOR MAPPING (IDENTIFICATION AND CAPACITY)

Using the narrowed-down list of core human rights issues and their causes, you can begin to think about the **people** that have some kind of **impact** on these problems. Why? Because **bringing about change is rarely, if ever, a direct process**. It is not usually as simple as identifying the so-called bad guys and telling them to stop a violation. Solutions to human rights problems typically require you to do a number of different things, including working with various people who have the access and influence to affect the problem positively or negatively. You therefore want to understand key players where you are and figure out how they relate to and connect with each other.

The **goal** here is to give you a clearer understanding of current actors, their roles, and their level of engagement and/or strength of connections with each other. The **result** of this step is a map that helps you visualize people who have a real, or potential, impact on the problems you found and their relationships to

each other. The **actor map** helps you understand **who plays a role in making the problems better or worse**. The key actors helped you identify the problems, and they can also serve as a reference in this step.

Begin by thinking in general terms of people, organizations, and institutions linked to the human rights problems you found and writing them down. These might be different government institutions, communities and victims affected by the problems, other countries or governments, non-state actors such as armed groups, multinational companies, international organizations, humanitarian and development agencies, human rights organizations, and donors, among many others. Below are questions to assist in your brainstorming:

- Who is most affected by the human rights problem?
- Who works on behalf of these affected people? Who is trying to help?
- Who has significant influence or power—positive or negative—in the situation?
  - Beyond the government, think about other powers that be, such as religious leaders, business entities, NGOs, the media, embassies, neighboring countries, donors, and international agencies. They may have the power to influence the government in relation to the human rights problem at stake.
  - What are the interests and demands of the powers that be? How influential are they in relation to the particular human rights problem?
- Who is responsible for taking the steps to **respect, protect, and fulfill** human rights?
  - Be as specific as possible. For instance, instead of listing “the government,” clearly identify which state organ, ministry, or provincial or local government entity is responsible.
- Who is actually responsible for the human rights violations? List the multiple levels of—direct or indirect—responsibility.<sup>12</sup>

Once you have a list of actors, organize them into color-coded categories. For example, those affected by the problem might be blue; those trying to help, green; governments, red; non-state actors, black; donors, purple. Next, identify what kind of **relationship** your primary actors have. If it is a productive or positive relationship, draw a solid line between them; if it is a negative, antagonistic, or unhelpful relationship, draw a dotted line. Not every actor will have an important relationship with vfv all other actors; do not

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<sup>12</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Manual on Human Rights Monitoring (Revised Edition), January 2011, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/manual-human-rights-monitoring-revised-edition>.

draw lines between these actors. Maybe the relationship is complicated and can be both positive and negative—show that with both types of lines. Be sure to include a key to guide yourself and anyone who reads your map.

As your map develops, think about and label possible **allies and opponents**. Any actor’s willingness and ability to fix a human rights problem comes from a combination of their own resources and abilities and their political attitudes or personal convictions.<sup>13</sup> A single actor could be **both an ally and an opponent** depending on the angle from which a human rights problem is assessed. A particular government institution, for example, could be viewed not only as a cause of an identified problem but also as part of the solution.

Keep in mind, actors do not necessarily even need to support human rights to be possible allies. They simply need to benefit from, and therefore support, certain solutions to human rights problems. For example, businesses prefer to operate in a stable, predictable environment, making them natural allies if you are championing fair contract laws.<sup>14</sup>

Use the actor map to help develop a strategy for intervention by highlighting opportunities and challenges, finding possible entry points and levers of change, and identifying potential allies and opponents for your core set of problems.

## STEP VI. SCENARIO PLANNING

Political and social situations can change by the minute. You may go through this entire exercise and arrive at some valid conclusions only to have the entire landscape—and thus your analysis—change overnight. One way to prepare for this is to think through different scenarios.

The **goal** of the scenario matrix is to help you break potentially daunting changes into understandable outcomes, which you can arrange in order of likelihood or best- and worst-case outcomes. Scenario analysis does not try to show one exact picture of the future. Instead, it presents several **alternative futures** by taking into account the many directions these problems can go. The scenario matrix will also help you identify the causes of the problem that can become either threats or opportunities. Ask yourself,

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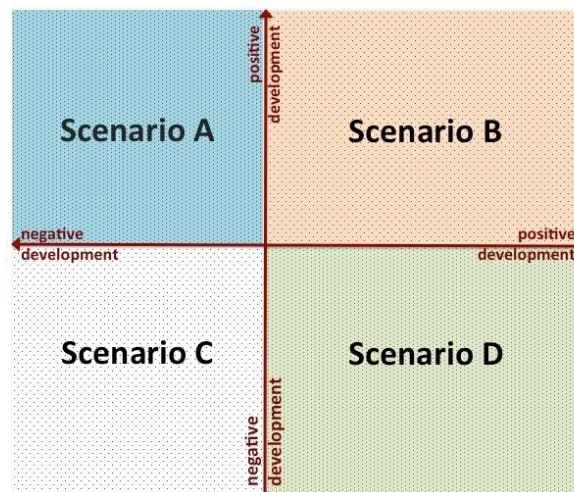
<sup>13</sup> “OHCHR Manual on Human Rights Monitoring,” 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework*, 36.

how could the different causes you thought through in the problem analysis step change? Thinking about how and to what extent these factors have evolved over the past 5 to 10 years could also give you a clue as to how they might change in the next few years.

To start building your scenarios, think of two of the causes of your focal problem (the x and y axes of the matrix below), and then imagine extremely positive and negative outcomes for each of these two situations. Place the potential outcomes in the four quadrants of the matrix, thereby giving you four distinct future scenarios. These four scenarios will help you understand the possible threats and opportunities you may encounter when addressing the human rights problem.

Next, name each outcome and imagine the **stories** behind these scenarios. These stories are the paths along which the problem may evolve overtime. If it helps, build a theory of change for the preferred scenario, including a reasonable set of intermediate outcomes.



Once you have developed a theory of change for the desirable scenario, you should go through the same process for the other three scenarios. When developing a theory of change for undesirable scenarios, you need to think as the opponent to identify outcomes required to realize those scenarios. Understanding what the opponents want to achieve is a crucial step in understanding how the future will evolve and what risks any future project will have to mitigate.

Ideally, the theories of change for all four scenarios will help to identify intermediate outcomes that are relevant across all scenarios. These common outcomes clearly indicate most-likely or certain future events, while the outcomes that differ between the scenarios are still possible but less certain.



As a **result**, you will use the common outcomes identified in the four scenarios, along with the problem tree and actor map, to develop strategies and/or responses to your core human rights problem.

## STEP VII. RISK ANALYSIS

The last step in your assessment is to think through the **possible risks associated with responding** to the problems you have identified.

The **goal** of this analysis is to provide more information on the type of approach you can develop and, ultimately, effectively implement. As you learned in the actor mapping step, you will likely team up with others in your search for solutions; this makes it your responsibility to consider how your actions might affect not only you or your organization but also your potential partners and the actors involved.

Considering the risks for each problem or cause will help you understand what can be done based on the scenarios you developed and your understanding of the context. Not all threats or risks will have an impact on your response or approach; the objective is to determine which threats are likely to affect the problem you are trying to address. Start by **identifying any hazards** you can imagine might be associated with the problems you want to address. Try thinking through the risks associated with these PESTLE factors:

- **Political** factors
  - Do any upcoming elections pose a threat? Are people free to participate in politics, and if not, could that represent a risk? How well does the government function? Are people free to express themselves and organize amongst themselves? Do they have personal autonomy? Are laws respected?
- **Economic** factors
  - Is the economy growing? Is there inflation, unemployment, and/or economic inequality? How much foreign aid and foreign direct investment is there? What is government debt like?
- **Social** factors
  - How do factors such as population growth, age distribution, education levels, urbanization, ethnicity (including ethnic conflicts), and religion pose a potential threat?
- **Technological** factors

- What role do emerging technologies, internet and mobile penetration, and diversity of media play in increasing or decreasing risk?
- **Legal** factors
  - Consider the legal framework, police and security sector, and the independence of the courts.
- **Environmental** factors
  - Could climate change, deforestation, and destruction from resource extraction create a risk?

Next, decide **who** may be harmed and **how** by the risks you outlined. Think not only about yourself or your organization but the people you would be working with or on behalf of. **Assess** these risks: consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm and what could be done to mitigate this harm. Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains, so you will have to decide whether the risk is high, medium, or low.

Use the resulting risk analysis as guiding principles for your response or approach once the assessment is complete. Taking the time to think through possible scenarios and risks associated with the human rights problems you identified will help you decide what kinds of solutions are feasible.

## CONCLUSION

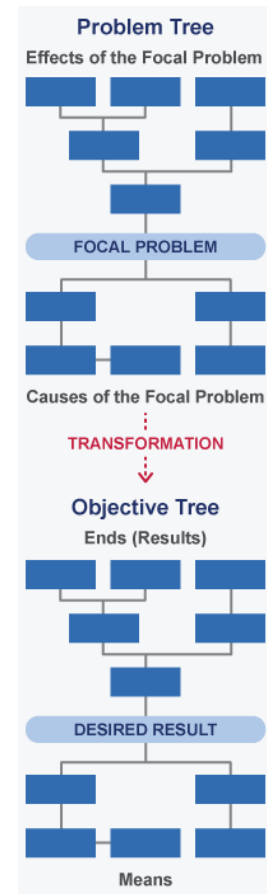
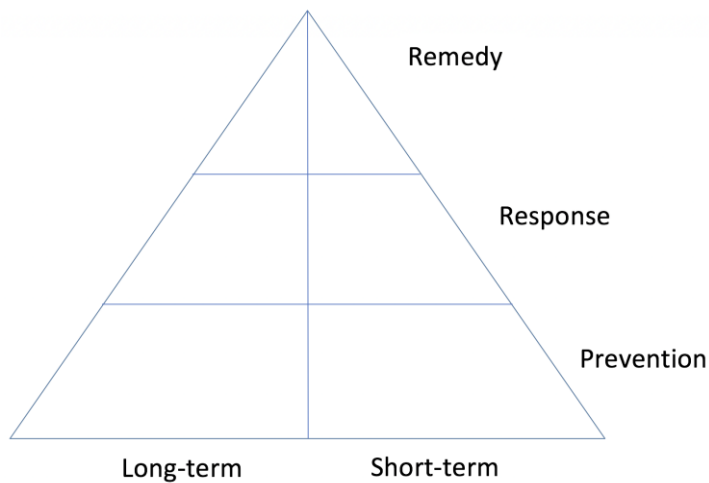
Congratulations, you have completed an assessment! You used a participative approach to identify up to three core human rights problems and their underlying causes. You mapped out the actors involved and possible scenarios, including risks associated with the problems. So—**now what?** What can you do with this information?

The assessment should identify the core human rights problem(s) you want address, the risks associated with doing so, and how the problem may evolve in the near future. The information you collected during the assessment should provide the evidence base you need to **develop your strategy or approach** to solving the core human rights problem(s). There are three ways outlined below to organize the information.

One way to do this is to return to your four scenarios for each problem and analyze why certain outcomes might happen, including information on how events and actors can influence one another. This will help in developing a strategic intervention that can achieve the outcomes of the most desirable scenario identified in the assessment, which is key to addressing the core human rights problem.

Alternatively, go back to your problem tree. You can convert it into an **objectives tree** by rephrasing each of the problems into positive desirable outcomes, as if the problem has already been solved. In this way, you turn root causes and consequences into solutions and figure out entry points for your intervention based on scenario planning and risk analysis. These solutions become your goals and objectives for positive change.

Another option would be to organize your selected problems into the triangle matrix below. Consider the risks, scenarios, and actors you identified and think through how you could **prevent** the problem before it happens or how you might **respond** to or provide a **remedy** for it once it has happened. You will also want to think about whether these interventions would be short- or long-term in nature. This will help you form a coherent strategy.



You now have the tools you need to develop well-thought-out responses to the problems you uncovered. Do not forget to **involve the key actors** in your approach wherever and whenever possible. Their input can help keep your response firmly rooted in the human rights realities on the ground, and their partnership may be crucial in implementing your approach.