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Human Rights Tools

An Introduction to the Development of
Human Rights

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Definitions

- ***Human Rights*** deals with the various things that you are entitled as human beings. As long as you are a member of the human family you have a right to a number of things, including:
 - Work
 - Health care
 - Adequate Living Standard
 - Education
 - Social Security
 - Safe environmental conditions



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Definitions

- **Human Rights Tools** are the many documents, which are created by states and international organizations, like the United Nations, and European Union, to guide what people (on a minimum) are entitled to. Human rights tools are known by many names, some of these are: Convention, Declaration, Charter, and Constitution



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Development of Human Rights

- Human rights is not a new concept to world history. The ancient Egyptians have records of the existence of human rights, which were based on truth, order, balance and justice in the universe. All persons (with the exception of slaves) were viewed as equals under the law, regardless of wealth or social position
- Human rights has gone through several changes since its earliest records. The practice of keeping slaves contradicts ideas of freedom and equality associated with human rights today. Modern practice accords human rights to all people, but not all persons are able to fully realize those rights



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Human Rights Responsibilities

- Human Rights charters, conventions, and laws are signed and entered into at national, regional, and international levels between states, represented by Government officers
- Human Rights conventions are binding documents, which outline minimum standards for Governments to operate by in order to ensure that your basic rights are realized
- The state (e.g. Jamaica) is responsible for ensuring that all your rights are realized



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Human Rights Responsibilities

- This means that Government is expected to create the proper environment in order to ensure that the various aspects of your human rights can be realized
- The proper environment requires that laws, policies, and programs are created to guide the actions and behaviors of people and organizations, and make provision for breaches
- In order to ensure that every one realizes their right to education, the Government of Jamaica has a responsibility for making primary school education mandatory and free



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Human Rights Responsibilities

- As members of the human family and citizens of states that sign various human rights conventions, you have a responsibility to respect other persons rights, and not engage in activities that will prevent others from realizing their human rights
- It is expected that when you realize your right to education you will learn to respect human rights and freedoms; understand, tolerate, and be friendly to people of other religious groups, nations, and races
- As a member of the human family you have a responsibility to your country, community and family to assist, where possible, others to realize their economic and social rights



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Human Rights Responsibilities

- You can help others to realize their economic and social rights by sharing information that you know, reporting human rights breaches that you know about, lobbying for a change in particular situations, pooling resources (e.g. money, skills, and tools) of community members together to respond to problems, networking and collaborating with local and national agencies to make innovative responses to problems



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Goals of Human Rights Tools

- To create basic standards for guiding the treatment of persons
- To provide guidelines for equity, equality, and justice
- To protect people from abuse and mistreatment
- To guide the inclusion of human rights in national Constitutions



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Examples of Human Rights Tools

- **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)** created to pay special attention to the need of all human beings to realize economic, social and cultural rights as a basis for achieving freedom, justice and peace
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** created to protect inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. It is seen as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace
- **The French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789)** created to reduce the “ignorance, neglect, and contempt of the rights of man”, which was perceived as “the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments”
- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)** created to protect the rights of children and youth



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