

A Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction: Experiences and Lessons from Asia and Europe

Expert Workshop



Expert Workshop on: A Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction: Experiences and Lessons from Asia and Europe 9, September 2024 Bangkok, Thailand

CONTEXT

Poverty undermines economic and social rights as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education, which are fundamental and indispensable rights for human dignity. A person who lives in poverty faces a range of interdependent deprivations, including inadequate food, precarious housing, unsafe working conditions, limited or no access to education and health care, lack of political power and unequal access to justice and public life. Furthermore, the multiple deprivations linked to poverty are often mutually reinforcing and associated with stigma, insecurity and other human rights-related issues such as discrimination and social exclusion. The concept of poverty is not new, but it is increasingly viewed in political and legal terms – bringing into play human rights obligations for a broad range of actors, most especially governments. A human rights-based approach (HRBA) to poverty reduction helps to formulate and adopt policies and strategies that not only focus on reducing economic poverty but also addresses underlying structural causes and related human rights violations. Consequently, to be successful in addressing multiple dimensions of poverty, it must be measured in a manner that considers its varying aspects in relation to human rights.

Between 2015 and 2018, global poverty continued its historical decline, with the extreme povertyⁱ rate falling from 10.1 per cent to 8.6 per cent.ⁱⁱ However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of wars in different parts of the world have reversed much of the progress made with global extreme poverty rising for the first time in two decades. Furthermore, the pandemic exposed deep-seated inequalities and significant gaps and inadequacies in social protection coverage across all countries. At the same time, climate change threatens to undermine efforts to eradicate poverty and unravel hard-won development gains.

Eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the international community has collectively committed to in 2015. However, to ensure that progress in global poverty reduction is restored, we must find just, inclusive and game-changing approaches that can address the challenges of our unpredictable global environment in line with the agenda's transformative promise of 'Leave No One Behind'. Furthermore, more can be done to strengthen the integration of human rights and poverty reduction and to make better use of international human rights law to guide policy on poverty alleviation.

By inviting various perspectives from Asian and European civil society, government and national human rights institutions representatives, this 1-day Expert Workshop will bring together shared experiences of the challenges underlying the relationship



between human rights and poverty reduction and provide a platform to discuss and debate the progress and existing impediments to operationalising human rights-centric approaches to poverty reduction programmes and policies in Asia and Europe.

Participants and format

Participants shall be invited as experts given their experience and work on human rights and poverty alleviation. The expert workshop will be open to experts and practitioners from civil society, academia, national human rights institutions, international organisations and representatives of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Member countries.

The workshop is an **invitation-only event** for which relevant participants are selected by the Co-organisers.

To provide anonymity to speakers and encourage openness, the Workshop deliberations take place under the **Chatham House Rule**, meaning that the discussions are not attributable to individuals but to the Workshop session group as a whole.

Workshop sessions and objectives

The expert workshop will consist of three sessions. Each session will last for approximately 1.5 hours and include presentations from experts followed by a plenary discussion:

- **Session 1** (10:30-12:00) will focus on **Integration of Human Rights in Poverty Reduction Strategy and Measurement**
- **Session 2** (13:15-14:45) will focus on **Poverty Reduction and Those in the Most Vulnerable Situations**
- **Session 3** (15:00-16:30) will focus on **Social Protection: A Human Right and Sustainable Development**

(*timings may be subject to change)

The workshop aims to

- Examine how poverty can be addressed through international human rights framework and how human rights might be integrated into action on poverty in practice.
- Identify key obstacles to implementing a human rights-centric framework in poverty reduction programmes and action plans and discuss similarities and differences in both regions.
- Discuss perspectives from relevant governments, civil society and national human rights institute representatives.
- Identify areas for capacity-building and alliances between different stakeholders working on poverty reduction and human rights across Asia and Europe.

By addressing the following guiding questions:

1. *How effective are the current poverty reduction measures and programmes in capturing and combating inequality and discrimination (whether in gender or against minority or vulnerable groups)? To what*



- extent does the lack of reliable methodology that can provide accurate information and data affect human rights-based poverty reduction efforts? What role can e.g. artificial intelligence (AI) play in this regard?*
- II. *How can government accountability for their economic and social rights obligations (including poverty reduction measures) be strengthened? What are some of the impediments to the legal empowerment of persons living in poverty, and how can these be addressed?*
 - III. *In what ways have the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals made progress toward integrating human rights into poverty reduction and reducing inequalities among individuals and groups? What are some vulnerable groups that require additional support or have been overlooked? Are poverty-reduction strategies inclusive of those who are at risk of being left behind?*
 - IV. *As a means of reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing dignity among vulnerable populations, how can the intake of universal social protection be enhanced? Are the voices of vulnerable groups represented in policy dialogues concerning social protection?*
 - V. *What are some possible alliances between different stakeholders working on poverty reduction and human rights in Asia and Europe?*

Background reading

Prior to the Workshop, the **Lead Rapporteur** with expertise on the topic prepares the **Background Paper** which lays the basis for the workshop discussions. The Paper will be presented by the Rapporteur at the start of the Workshop.

The Background Paper is available [here](#).

Workshop outputs

1. The identification of national capacities and key hurdles, at both technical and political levels, to operationalise the linkages between human rights and poverty reduction at both policy and programme levels.
2. Conceptual understanding of the interconnections between poverty reduction and human rights, and the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, climate change and vulnerability and other human rights domains.
3. Identification of opportunities and responsibilities in regional and international frameworks, in particular the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and various international human rights conventions, to underscore the importance and practical implications of these interlinkages.
4. Solutions and strategies for the enhancement of accountability for greater integration of human rights and poverty reduction.
5. Practical policy recommendations for civil society, national human rights institutes, and governments.
6. Recommendations and findings promoted at relevant regional or international platforms and shared with ASEM Partner Governments.

About the Informal ASEM

The **Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Seminar on Human Rights series** is an annual human rights dialogue among selected civil society participants and government representatives from 51 [Asian and European countries](#), the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. The aim of this initiative is to promote mutual



**Seminar on
Human Rights**

understanding and cooperation between Asia and Europe in the area of political dialogue, particularly on human rights issues.

For more detailed information about the ASEM Human Rights Seminar series and its Co-organisers, please go [here](#) .

The Workshop is organised as part of the **22nd edition of the ASEMHRS**, which focuses on human rights and poverty reduction.

ⁱ The international poverty line is currently defined as 1.90 US dollars per person per day.

ⁱⁱ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/goal-01/>

Co-organisers:



**RAOUL
WALLENBERG
INSTITUTE**
OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW



Co-funded by the European Union



With the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency



Co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

