

CONCEPT NOTE

GOAL

TO BRING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEARER TO THE PEOPLE BY ASSISTING STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND RESPECT ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

BACKGROUND



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CLOSELY INTERTWINED AND COMPLEMENTARY OBJECTIVES

A safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNISED

Since the 1970s, environmental rights have grown more rapidly than any other human right, and increasingly, these rights are being invoked and upheld. Courts in at least 44 nations have issued decisions enforcing the constitutional right to a healthy environment.



PROMOTING, RESPECTING AND PROTECTING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IS KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A human rights perspective on environmental protection not only promotes human dignity, equality and freedom benefits of implementing all human rights but also improves the effectiveness of policy making generally.



HOWEVER, VIOLATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ARE ON THE RISE

Environmental rights are enshrined in over 100 constitutions and yet there is escalating harassment, intimidation, and murder of environmental defenders, in addition to attempts by some countries to limit the activities of nongovernmental organizations. A failure to meet environmental rights obligations has resulted in:

- A Relentless destructive pressures on the environment from human activity, such as deforestation and pollution.
- B Direct negative impacts on the enjoyment of human rights, disproportionately affecting the vulnerable: around 40 - 50 percent of the 197 environmental defenders killed in 2017 came from indigenous and local communities.



WORK AREAS



COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Create and support the telling and sharing of stories on environmental defenders.



ADVOCACY:

Disseminate the importance of a rights-based approach to environmental protection to policymakers at local, national, regional and international levels as well as to business.



INFORMATION SHARING:

Provide stakeholders involved in environmental rights (governments, civil society, communities etc) with information, tools and resources to assist them in protecting, promoting and respecting environmental rights through developing or sharing resources.



PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Facilitate networks for judges, governments, environmental defenders and civil society to share their experiences with environmental rights.



OBJECTIVES



PROMOTE AWARENESS:

Make the public aware of environmental rights and their violations, including by publicising the plight of environmental defenders.



PROMOTE ACCESS TO INFORMATION:

Equip the public, particularly indigenous and traditional communities with the information to fight for their environmental rights.

- A Influence policy-making:** States adopt a rights based approach to environmental protection
- B Guide the private sector:** Businesses move beyond a compliance culture to one where they respect environmental rights
- C Strengthen action:** Stakeholders have increased capacity to promote, protect and respect environmental rights

FURTHER RESOURCES

www.environmentalrightsinitiative.org

Environmental Rights Initiative video:

<https://bit.ly/2GLOimS>

UN Environment Assembly video:

<https://bit.ly/2r3ANJl>

Mini-Course on Environmental Defenders:

<https://bit.ly/2vTSRut>

UN Environment's Policy on Environmental Defenders available in all six languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish):

<https://bit.ly/2HwO4nU>