

Step 1: Understand the change that is needed — Training needs assessment

While we would not normally consider conducting an evaluation at the start of a human rights training session or programme, what educators call a training needs assessment is exactly that – evaluation conducted even before the training gets off the ground.

In human rights education, a training needs assessment should enable us to gather the necessary information to:

- Build an adequate picture of the human rights context (environmental scan);
- Develop a profile of the potential learners (learner characteristics);
- Identify capacity gaps or needs of learners in relation to promoting a human rights culture.

A good understanding of the human rights context and of the characteristics of the potential learners will help us to determine their training needs and to identify the overall learning goal. Training needs assessment will also help inform our decisions about the most appropriate content, methods, techniques and time frame for our human rights training.

Here are some key notions of a training needs assessment.

Key notions of a training needs assessment

What is training needs assessment?

A type of evaluation that is conducted during the planning phase, that is, before a human rights training session has been developed, to determine training needs.

Why?

Training needs assessment helps human rights educators identify the gap that exists between the current human rights and human rights education situation and a more ideal situation that can be addressed by training. Understanding this gap will enable human rights educators to identify the training needs of the learners. Information collected prior to training can be used to shape the training and make it more effective.

How?

The process for conducting a training needs assessment is the same as for any type of evaluation:

- Define the purpose
- Determine the right questions about the context of the training and about the learners
- Collect information from the right sources to answer your questions; analyse the data to make your recommendations
- Act on the information – this involves specifying learning needs and identifying the overall learning goal of the training session or programme

Two main information-gathering activities of a training needs assessment for HRE are:

- The environmental scan - an analysis of the context in which the human rights training will take place. This includes gathering and analysing information about learners' organizational or community context and their actual work in their organization or communities. It can also

involve an analysis of the political situation, and the current human rights situation both in the country and globally.

- The learner profile - an analysis of various learner characteristics that will help us build an accurate picture of the learners for the training session and thus inform our decisions about training design. Key characteristics include demographic information, occupation, education and motivation for learning.

When resources for conducting training needs assessment are limited, it is often possible to integrate some of the basic questions into pre-training questionnaires, informal interviews and pre-training assignments.

Result

Information gathered through these two activities will enable us to determine training needs and identify an overall training goal.

Example of a training needs assessment

Situation

In order to meet its requirements under the country's National Plan for Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) of the country is required to integrate human rights into the Ministry's work. The Ministry determined that training in human rights would be needed for its entire staff, starting with senior officials in the Ministry. To this end MOSA officials contacted The Rights Way, a national human rights NGO with extensive experience in HRE, to develop and implement a human rights training session for the Ministry's senior officials. The Rights Way agreed to work with the Ministry on this training.

The training needs assessment

1. Purpose

MOSA senior officials are a new target audience for the NGO. The Rights Way, therefore, felt it was essential to have a good understanding of the work context of these officials, as well as their specific learning needs related to the integration of human rights into their work.

2. Determining the right questions and getting the answers from the right sources

Some of the critical questions the training needs assessment should address are listed below.

(a) Environmental scan

- What is the current human rights situation for the recipients of social welfare services and programmes offered by MOSA? Is the situation similar for women and men? Are there recipient groups experiencing unique human rights problems?
- What is the organizational structure of MOSA? Which departments/institutions of MOSA will be involved in the human rights training?
- What are the specific obligations of MOSA with respect to integrating human rights in its work under the country's National Plan for Human Rights?
- Are there other organizations carrying out similar training with MOSA staff?
- Do appropriate training materials for integrating human rights into social welfare already exist?

Sources and tools for the environmental scan

To gather information about the organizational structure and the work of the Ministry, The Rights Way human rights educators who would be developing and delivering the training:

- Sent, by e-mail, a series of questions to the main contact for the training at MOSA in preparation for face-to-face meetings
- Held face-to-face meetings and conducted interviews with selected MOSA staff from the various Ministry departments that would be participating in the training, ensuring that both men and women were included
- Reviewed documentation provided by MOSA staff

- Held meetings with members of their own staff who have specific experience with the context and contents of the training

(b) Learner profile

In addition to gathering demographics information, other critical information that would need to be gathered about the learners included:

- Their level of awareness concerning their country's National Plan for Human Rights
- Their level of awareness concerning the specific policy requirements of their departments with respect to the implementation of the National Plan for Human Rights
- Their knowledge and expertise in the area of human rights and in particular human rights in the context of the provision of social welfare services

Sources and tools for the learner profile

To build an adequate profile of the learners, The Rights Way human rights educators working on this training session:

- Developed a questionnaire to gather the necessary information. To ensure that the return rate would be high, they requested that high-ranking officials within the different MOSA departments that would be participating in the training distribute the questionnaire to two or three of their senior staff, including both women and men
- Carried out a small number of face-to-face interviews with MOSA staff (both women and men) who would be attending the training

3. Analysing the data and determining training needs

The training needs assessment helped The Rights Way to better understand the complexity of MOSA's organizational structure as well as build an accurate profile of potential learners. While the needs assessment revealed that human rights is not new to a number of the potential learners, there was an expressed need to increase their knowledge of human rights and identify how a human rights-based approach can be integrated into MOSA's social work policies and programmes. They were now in a position to move on to the next step in the process, which is to determine the results they are aiming to achieve and to develop an overall goal and learning objectives for the training session.

Reference: Equitas and OHCHR, (2011) *Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities – A Handbook for Human Rights Educators*, OHCHR, Geneva, 52-54.

Note: The full version of *Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities – A Handbook for Human Rights Educators* can be downloaded from the Equitas website at: <https://equitas.org/en/resources-2/human-rights-defenders-and-educators/evaluation/>.