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# Rights-based Community Practice

Giving communities the power to act to create change



# Ideological considerations in human rights advocacy practice

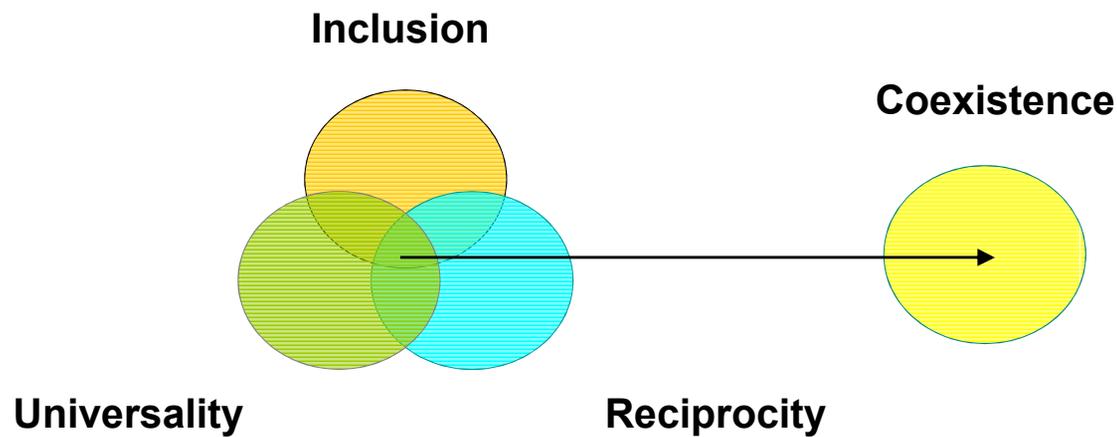
## Human rights advocacy

- Coexistence
- Universality
- Inclusive
- Supple
- Ambiguous
- Reciprocity
- Creativity
- Transformation
- Win-win scenario
- Symmetry

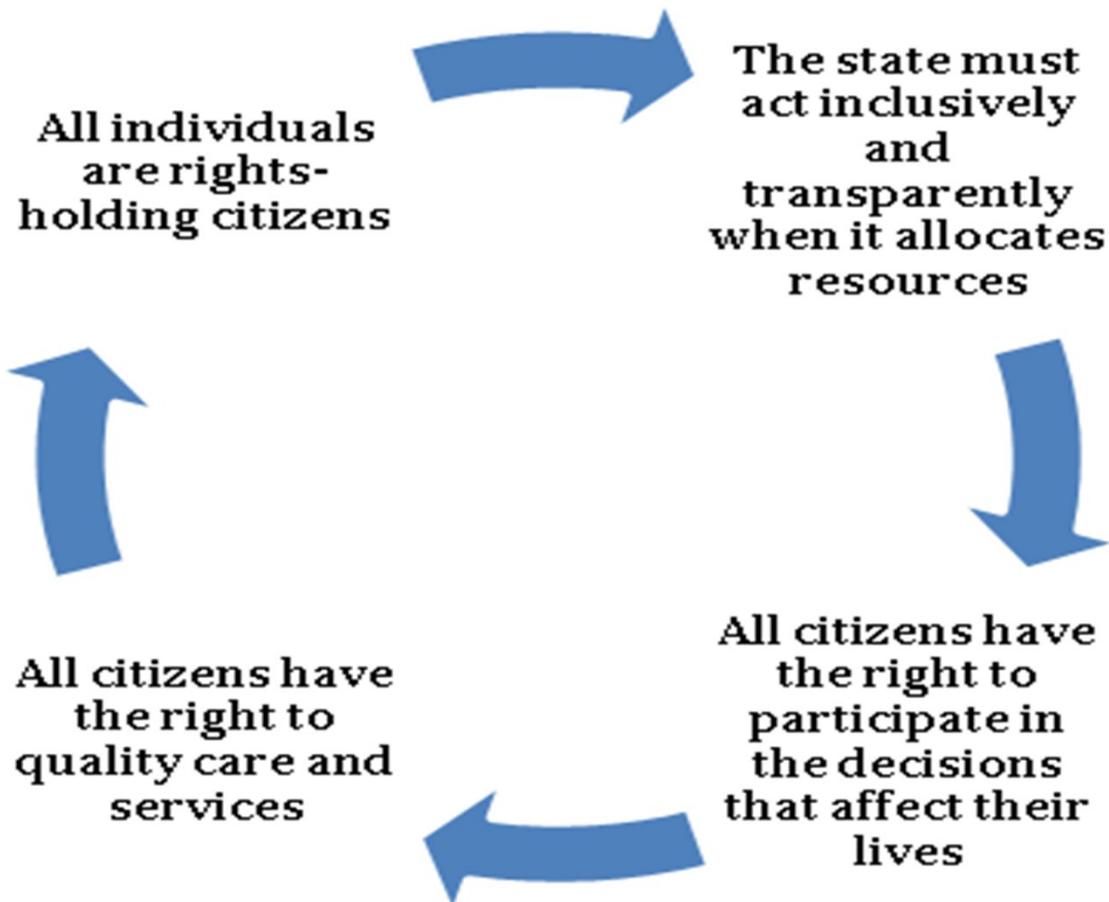
## Dichotomous ideologies

- Competitiveness
- Selectivity
- Exclusive
- Rigid
- Polarized
- Dominant interests
- Predetermination
- Conflict
- Win-lose scenario
- Hierarchy

# Principles of human rights advocacy



# Principles of rights based community practice



# Needs for a rights-based community practice model:

- Must be **interdisciplinary**
- Must intervene in a way that responds to the **personal, communal, institutional and political** aspects of disempowerment by having a direct impact on the individual and collective level, and
- Aspires to **advance the principles of reciprocity, universality and inclusion in each of its activities** and in a coherent way that creates a recognizable and distinct practice.

**That is, a model of rights-based community practice is more than a set of skills. What makes it a model is that it seeks to operationalise its central principles and values in each of its activities.**



# Conceptual Framework

Rights-based community practice (RBCP)



RBCP

	Disentitlement	Tools of Empowerment
Individual	Expressed when people <b>believe, act or feel that they do not deserve equal treatment</b> , that benefits and rights do not apply to them, and that they lack the resources or capacity to stand up for themselves.	Tools and resources are both internal and external. Internally they relate to personal power, self-confidence, trust and identity, which reflect inner strength and personal security. External resources are money, goods and services, legitimacy, information and status.
Communal	Occurs when the majority of persons constituting the same reference group do not receive sufficient resources or are excluded from influencing decisions that affect their collective welfare. Disentitled communities are those wherein <b>people are alienated from each other as well as from their institutions</b> . It creates a context that fosters fundamentalism and violence.	Organizing around issues that unite people rather than issues that divide them, developing democratic, autonomous organizations.
Institutional	Deals with issues of <b>access and bureaucratic discretion as forms of rationing</b> which limit the availability of resources. People are unable to access entitlements that were made available to them by law. The <b>barriers</b> can be either physical (distance, lack of resources) or psychological, cultural. This state is particularly experienced by the poor, elderly, unemployed, immigrants, etc.	Ensuring access, outreach, and participation in decision-making processes.
Political	Occurs in relation to <b>laws and regulations that are discriminatory</b> , contain arbitrary restrictions and privilege certain groups. When people lack opportunities to shape and influence events, to participate in decisions relating to their fundamental welfare, beliefs and aspirations, they become alienated from the society around them.	People become participants in decisions that affect them and are able to influence those decisions.



# Methodologies

Rights-based community practice (RBCP)



## RBCP Centres

## Storefront

The store-front serves as a walk-in centre providing immediate information, referral and advocacy in accessing entitlements and receiving existing services. The store-front is staffed by trained community volunteers and social work students. **The physical setting** of the store-front signals to the community that the Centre **promotes inclusion** of all its residents, providing easy access for the population. It establishes an important symbol that the rights based organizations must belong to and facilitate interaction among groups of people who tend to live side by side while harbouring fear and prejudice about each other. **The store-fronts deal with the issues based on the needs of residents, identified by the residents themselves.** The third feature of the store-front is that **the service is principally carried out by volunteers who themselves went through the empowerment process.**

## Outreach

The outreach component is designed to **bring advocacy services to those who are unaware that they have been deprived of their rights and entitlements** and are unable to come to the store-front. Through door knocking, store-front services are brought to the community, to the elderly and to the handicapped. Experience has shown how important it is to **go where people need services rather than waiting for them in the central offices.**

## Community Organization

Issues that cannot be solved through individual advocacy but rather **require policy change and affect large numbers of people** are identified; community workers organize groups to advocate for rights. Issues that bring together people of diverse backgrounds are defined. They can be tackled by establishing new autonomous organizations or by changing laws or regulations. Advocating for change takes into account the needs of disadvantaged groups.

## Participation

**Participation is both a method and an outcome** in human rights advocacy practice. Participating in decision making is a right and an essential tool of empowerment. Through participation, people become claimants.

## Policy Analysis

An ability to provide information on what is available and to receive rights underlies all of the above methodologies. In many cases this information is not readily available and **reading laws by qualified people is necessary** to understand and to **translate the legal language into rights.** Key issues that arise from policy analysis are brought to the attention of the public.

# Practice Structures that characterize all RBCP centres

Rights-based community practice (RBCP)



They are located in the **most disadvantaged and the most ethnically diverse communities** in their respective cities. The centre's location makes access for the poorest populations, those most disempowered, readily available.

The centres offer **walk-in services** to address personal experiences of disempowerment. The service is offered primarily by volunteers from the community, many of whom have themselves experienced disempowerment and been assisted by the centres.

The centres are **volunteer-based**. Community volunteers participate in decision making processes that impact on the policies of the practice centres, allowing for civilian oversight at different levels of policy and programming.

The centres are **academically linked**, providing community residents with academic and institutional resources, and universities with progressive learning environments for community practice, research and volunteering.

The centres engage in **outreach work** to identify common legal and social issues of disempowerment and recruit the community and volunteers to organize around them.

The centres counter communal, institutional and political levels of disempowerment through **community organization, legal action and empowerment**.

Finally, the centres maintain a combined approach employing **both social workers and lawyers**, allowing non-state actors to take legal ownership and **enhance civilian oversight of the legal system**.