

## Script: Focus Human Rights 2

The series “WissensWerte” (civic education clips) on human rights consists of a general film on this issue and one film on each of the three dimensions of human rights. Each dimension is of equal importance in the human rights system.

The history of human rights, current human rights violations, as well as the development of the human rights system and its greatest problems, are also examined.

This clip looks at the second dimension: economic, social and cultural rights, also known as ESC rights.

What is more, it examines the role of NGOs such as Amnesty International and looks at women’s human rights.

But exactly which rights belong to the second dimension?

Economic rights include: the right to work and the right to fair working conditions. The right to form trade unions, the right to strike and a ban on child and forced labour.

Social rights include:

The right to social security and the right to a decent standard of living. This also comprises the right to clothing, housing and food, in particular access to water.

Furthermore, they include the protection of the health of mothers and children and the right to education for all, together with free access to primary education.

Cultural rights are also fostered and protected, in particular the rights of minorities or indigenous peoples. For example, the right to participate in cultural life. And the protection of intellectual property.

What is more, the ban on discrimination forms a key part of all human rights.

No one should be discriminated against on the grounds of their origins, religion, gender, sexual orientation, the colour of their skin, age or other differences.

Economic, social and cultural rights emerged in 1966 when they were set out in the United Nations International Covenant which deals with these rights.

The international convention entered into force in 1976. It has now been ratified by 160 states.

Originally, the idea was that this Covenant and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would form a single comprehensive convention.

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During the Cold War, however, East and West could not agree. Human rights became a pawn for political interests.

The rights of the first dimension – such as freedom of opinion and political participation – were a problem for the authoritarian governments of the Eastern bloc. They therefore preferred to promote the ESC rights of the second dimension in the debate on human rights. Partly in reaction to this and partly out of conviction, the Western bloc focused on civil and political rights.

This meant that ESC rights received less attention than civil and political rights during this period.

While the rights of the first dimension were considered to be legally enforceable, ESC rights were regarded more as goals to be achieved.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, there has been a push to give ESC rights the same legal status as civil and political rights.

This is important for it promotes the principle of the indivisibility of human rights.

NGOs play a key role in developing and implementing this legal foundation.

NGOs are civil society organizations which do not have any ties with governments.

There are a large number of NGOs in the field of human rights. The best known organizations which campaign in a wide range of fields include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First and the International Society for Human Rights.

There are also many organizations with a special focus. For example, Human Rights Campaign promotes the rights of homosexual and transsexual people. FIAN focuses on the right to food. Habitat International Coalition champions the right to housing. While Survival International focuses on the human rights of indigenous peoples.

In addition to these well-known examples, there are countless small local NGOs which do valuable work in the human rights field.

NGOs have a broad range of instruments:

They provide information on human rights:

For only those who know their rights can exercise or fight for them.

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They monitor human rights violations around the world and draw attention to them.

They protest and organize campaigns against human rights violations. The public outrage this provokes turns into pressure on those violating human rights.

They help the victims of human rights violations to join forces and better protect their interests.

They work in national and international bodies to extend the human rights system.

Many NGOs offer the chance to become involved at various levels. They are thus a key point of contact for anyone who is interested in human rights or would like to become actively involved in championing them.

The question of women's human rights is also closely linked to ESC rights. For women in particular are often denied ESC rights.

Around two-thirds of the world's poor and illiterate are women. Women earn less: in the EU, the average income of female workers is typically one quarter lower than that of their male colleagues.

And the situation regarding first dimension rights is not much better. For example, only around ten per cent of the world's members of parliament are women.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which entered into force in 1981, was an important step forward. In 2000, an Optional Protocol allowing individuals or groups to submit a complaint entered into force. This made it easier to enforce rights.

The final declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 was the first document to also describe violence against women in the private sphere as a human rights violation and to condemn it.

Despite this progress, the extreme discrimination suffered by women remains one of the big-gest problems in the human rights system.

More information on human rights and the other dimensions can be found in the other WissensWerte Clips.