

## ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

### 1 RESPECT AND PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Civil Society Organizations are effective as development actors when they develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

**equitas**



Photo: Marc Forget/Equitas

### Human rights training: Equitas

Equitas equips human rights defenders and their organizations with tools to become more effective educators and advocates.

## CHALLENGE

Through partnerships with local organizations, relevant policy groups, and experts, Equitas capacity-building programs explore a variety of issues relating to human rights and education in different cultural and religious contexts. As well, it performs advisory and training services in the field of human rights education for other international bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In order to enhance the impact of its efforts, Equitas recognized the need to equip civil society organizations with better tools to promote human rights, particularly around issues of gender equality and the inclusion of vulnerable and discriminated-against groups.



## RESPONSE



In 2008, Equitas launched its Global Human Rights Education Program (GHREP) with support from CIDA, which aims to equip CSOs, national human rights institutions, and government departments to be better able to promote and defend human rights for all. The program includes an annual three-week training session in Montreal that brings together up to 120 human rights workers from 60 countries to learn about human rights principles and values, as well as participatory human rights education techniques and specialized regional and national level programs; these are delivered in collaboration with networks of trainees in the Philippines, Indonesia, the former Soviet Union, East and West Africa, and Haiti. These activities do not seek to be prescriptive; rather, they are focused on adapting to local realities and mobilizing local resources to promote sustainability. From its roots in the annual training program in Montreal, the program has evolved into a much more comprehensive rights-based intervention. It includes an ongoing support system of coaching and technical support, the development of individual action plans, and an online community that includes over 1,800 practitioners.

# LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

Working in close collaboration with local partners, Equitas can adjust the program to fit local contexts, but building local capacity to take full ownership of the regional and national initiatives takes time. Recently, Equitas and its partners have achieved some notable successes in securing funding from local sources who may be able to sustain these initiatives once CIDA support comes to an end. Equitas believes that effective human rights education and training must engage the learner in the process and lead to actions that enhance community-level engagement and participation. Equitas programs have also demonstrated that human rights values such as equality, respect, inclusion, and collaboration can become powerful tools for mobilizing and empowering communities to help themselves. For example, In Tanzania, an organization in Moshi used the participatory approach learned from Equitas to help market-women organize themselves and participate in the electoral process. As a result, the number of women elected in the Kilimanjaro region at the levels of districts, the municipality, and parliament in 2010 rose from 8 to 25. In addition, collaboration with 48 women's groups led to the integration of a gender perspective into local government development plans.



As local partners assume more responsibility in their programs, Equitas must also adapt its own offering from a more traditional role of trainers to a more flexible one as coach or advisor.

## MAINSTREAMING/KNOWLEDGE SHARING



UN OHCHR and Equitas have co-produced "Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities: A Handbook for Human Rights Educators" and Equitas is introducing evaluation modules into its training programs. Currently, Equitas is continuing efforts to develop more practical indicators to assist in measuring the impact of human rights education and training.

## NEXT STEPS

Equitas has recognized the need to build its own capacity to engage in more systematic knowledge sharing to complement its successful programming activities. In coming years, Equitas will be investing a greater percentage of its resources in tools to document and share lessons learned and best practices from the experiences of its trainees and own programs. Equitas will also be sharpening the focus of its programming on the link between human rights education, engaged citizenship, and enhanced economic, social, and political development.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

Evaluating Human Rights Training Activities: A Handbook for Human Rights Educators  
[http://equitas.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Equitas\\_EvaluationHandbook.pdf](http://equitas.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Equitas_EvaluationHandbook.pdf)

For copies of Equitas education resources in French, English, Arabic, Indonesian, Spanish and Russian  
<http://equitas.org/resources/>

Go here for more examples of how Canadian civil society is improving its development practice: <http://www.ccic.ca/IP-case-studies.php>