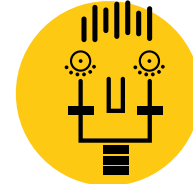


FACTSHEET

February 2021

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND (LNOB) AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH (HRBA)



SDC is firmly committed to making the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights an integral part of its work, as well as to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our specific commitments to human rights, including leaving no one behind (LNOB) are laid down in the:

- > [SDC Guidance on Human Rights in Development and Cooperation](#) (2019)
- > [SDC Guidance Leave No One Behind](#) (2019)

This note aims to clarify the links between the Human Rights Based Approach to development and the objective to Leave No One Behind. It outlines the human rights basis of the overarching commitment of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the related legal obligation (non-discrimination and equality being core human rights principles) to Leave No One Behind. It emphasizes how this pledge can contribute substantially to the realization of human rights for all.



What is the link between the HRBA and LNOB?

Human rights are rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural) inherent to all human beings.¹ They oblige States and other duty-bearers to respect, protect and fulfil human rights of individuals and groups, without discrimination.

Customary international law and human rights treaty ratifications mean that Switzerland has to ensure that all its international cooperation interventions are **accurately and explicitly in line with human rights law and humanitarian law norms**. SDC operationalizes human rights in development through the human rights based approach (HRBA). The key principles of HRBA (non-discrimination, inclusive participation, transparency and accountability) are

¹ Human rights are inherent to all human beings, irrespective of nationality, place of residence, sex, gender, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. Human rights are universal, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. HR are guaranteed by law, in treaties, customary international law, and other sources of international law.

international human rights norms. Applying a HRBA means framing objectives in line with the international human rights framework; identifying respective rights and duties; strengthening duty-bearers' capacities to meet their human rights obligations and empowering rights-holders to know and claim their rights (e.g. access to clean water, to food, to political participation etc).

LNOB is a political commitment by all UN Member States that adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. They pledged to ensure "no one will be left behind" and to "endeavour to reach the furthest behind first". "Leaving no one behind" means ending extreme poverty in all its forms, reducing inequalities among both individuals (vertical) and groups (horizontal) and addressing discriminatory barriers, which could arise from geography or aspects of social identity etc. Tackling these issues requires the prioritization and fast-tracking of action for those who are worst-off. SDC is committed to give more attention to the excluded and the poorest of the poor and seeks to catalyse social transformation to overcome existing inequalities. Sustainable and equitable development is not possible if certain groups of society are excluded from fully participating in economic, social and political activities in their societies.

HRBA and LNOB - intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing concepts

The 2030 Agenda is grounded in international human rights standards, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals "seek to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"². The commitment to Leave No One Behind is hence both an overarching 2030 Agenda principle and a human rights law obligation based on principles of non-discrimination/equality, participation/inclusion and the universality of human rights.

The political commitment to LNOB marks a renewed call to States and other duty-bearers (such as intergovernmental organizations) to reinforce their efforts to comply with, and advance, internationally agreed human rights norms and standards.

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



Powerful complementarities between HRBA and LNOB

The specific relevance of HRBA for ensuring that no one is left behind includes its central premise that **human rights are for all** (*Art. 1 UDHR all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*), with a specific focus on those **vulnerable to human rights violations**, in particular arising from poverty. Human Rights vulnerability can arise from a range of immutable and mutable characteristics and can engage economic, social cultural, civil and political rights.

Vulnerability to human rights violations/being left behind is particularly pronounced when factors of exclusion and discrimination intersect. Factors of exclusion include gender identity or sexual orientation, age, disability, health or migration status, geography, vulnerability to natural disasters and other identity criteria. The international human rights law framework prohibits discrimination on a wide range of grounds, including [discrimination against indigenous peoples](#), [migrants](#), [minorities](#), [people with disabilities](#), [discrimination against women](#), [racial](#) and [religious discrimination](#), or [discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

Poverty and discrimination are inextricably linked. Poverty is both a result of the denial of human rights and an impediment to a range of human rights being vindicated. LNOB requires a **multidimensional** understanding of **poverty** which addresses all factors that mean certain individuals and groups are **marginalized or excluded** from decision-making and other processes that affect their lives.

This comparison shows that the HRBA and LNOB **are intrinsically linked**. Both seek to analyse inequalities and factors of exclusion that lie at the heart of development issues and both seek to redress discriminatory practices and **unjust distribution of power that impede development**. Hence, respecting the analogous principles of the 2030 Agenda (LNOB) and HRBA (non-discrimination/equality, participation/inclusion) can help to realize the rights of marginalized groups or those who lag behind in development due to discrimination or exclusion.

Operationalising HRBA and the LNOB commitment

The key operational link between HRBA and LNOB includes the human rights law principle, central to HRBA, that the **means of delivering human rights is as important as the results**. Development interventions must be adapted to meet the requirements of vulnerable groups, contribute to their empowerment and participation and acknowledge their right to “use their own agency”.

The situation of vulnerable rights-holders does not change merely from passive or formal non-discrimination or ‘trickle down’ benefits of development, but rather necessitates **pro-active, targeted and specifically adapted interventions**. This obligation of pro-activity is in line with positive human rights obligations of duty bearers to “respect, protect and fulfil” rights and with the LNOB-pledge to reach the “furthest behind first”. Key to ‘leaving no one behind’ is the prioritisation and fast-tracking of actions for the poorest and most marginalised people – known as progressive universalism.

In practice, the fulfilment of the LNOB commitment through the HRBA framework and principles requires:

- › **Needs assessment and context analysis** with a particular focus on legal, political, economic, social, gender and others factors that may perpetuate inequality, exclusion and vulnerability, in a particular country, context or sector.
- › Active, free, and meaningful **participation in all stages of programming** of those left behind (or at risk of being so).
- › Monitoring and evaluation systems that **measure both results for, and the quality of participation by, those left behind** (or at risk of being so). To measure progress for specific groups or sectors of society, the 2030 Agenda specifies that its follow-up and review will be informed by **disaggregating data** “by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts”. In that sense, national statistics systems need to be strengthened and supplemented with other sources of data. Reports from the human rights treaty bodies, Special Procedures and other authoritative sources etc. provide a readymade source of data³.

Key messages:

- › LNOB is a **political commitment** of UN member states signatories of the 2030 Agenda.
- › Promoting human rights is a **legal obligation** based on treaty ratifications by states and others.
- › LNOB is both a **core 2030 Agenda principle** and a **human rights obligation**, namely the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of all rights⁴.
- › **Leaving no one behind** means **ensuring human rights for all**.
- › To ‘walk the talk’ with regard to LNOB and broader human rights commitments, development actors have to work on unequal distribution of power and horizontal and vertical inequalities.

For additional information:

- › [Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams](#) (2019)
- › UN [Checklist for a human rights-based approach to socio-economic country responses to COVID-19](#) (2020) (linking HRBA and LNOB)
- › [SDC-FCHR Shareweb Human Rights](#)
- › [SDC Poverty-Wellbeing/leave-no-one-behind Shareweb](#)

³ <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Briefing11-interactif-HD.pdf>

⁴ *Art. 1 Universal Declaration of human rights “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”*

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