

# **Driving Societal Change: Occupational Therapy, Health and Human Rights**

Sponsored by the World Federation of Occupational  
Therapists Human Rights International Advisory Group



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# Our agenda:

- Global vision of health for all
- Bringing a human rights focus to the health of vulnerable people
- Empowering occupational therapists to step forward on human rights
  - with information
  - through educational reform

# Workshop plan

- Brief presentation
- Warm up exercises
- Work shopping – in small groups, focusing on the level that most concerns you
- Planning – what next?

# Occupational therapy tends to:

- Focus on individuals with medical conditions
- Overlook underlying determinants of health, participation and social inclusion
- Solve the same problems repeatedly without resolving the conditions that create them
- Partner with health professionals not people with occupational issues



# Our Vision

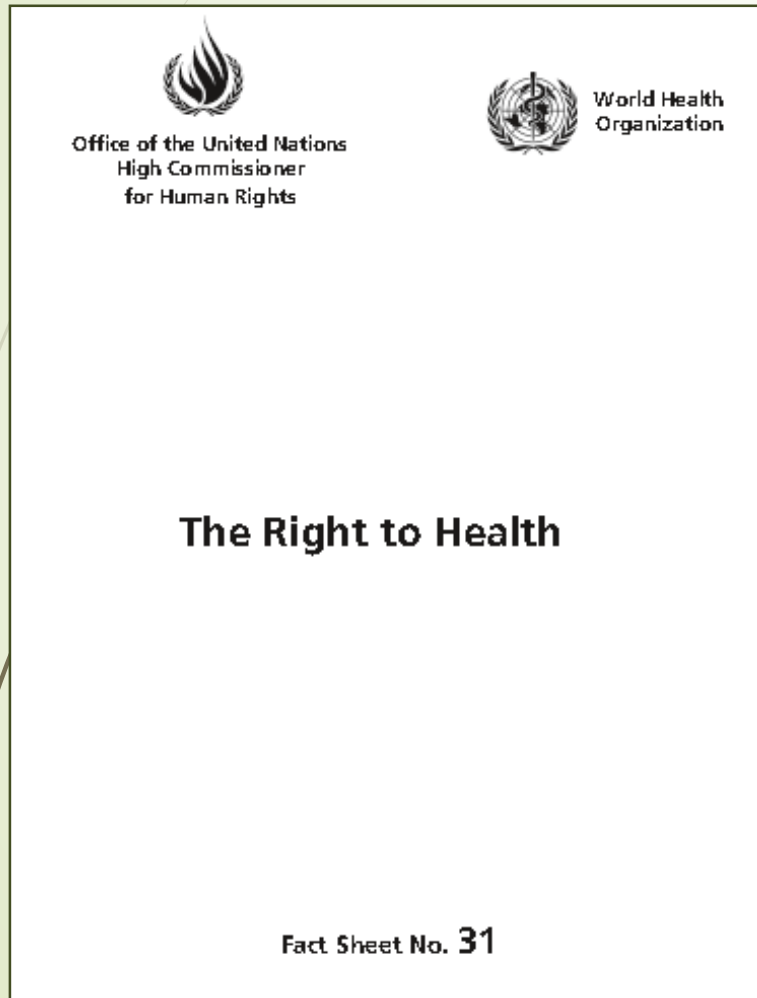
That **every** occupational therapy educational programme has a clearly stated commitment to making their country more inclusive and participatory

# Workshop Exercise #1

- **What are your aims?**
- **What is your vision of human rights and occupational therapy?**



# Call for social change: United Nations 2008



... at a minimum States must show that they are making every possible effort, within available resources, to better protect and promote all rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

# Call for social change: United Nations

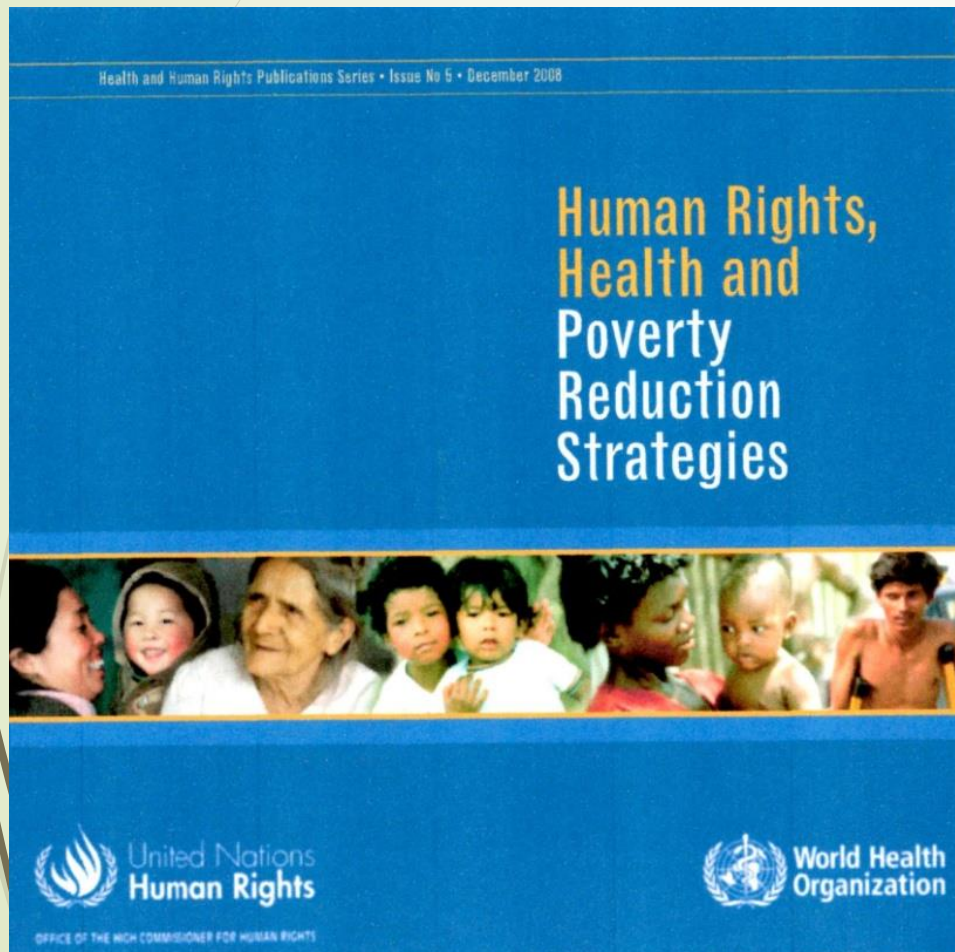


## Millennium Development Goals (1990 – 2015)

- Poverty (currently 1.2 billion)
- Decent work
- A Life of Dignity for All

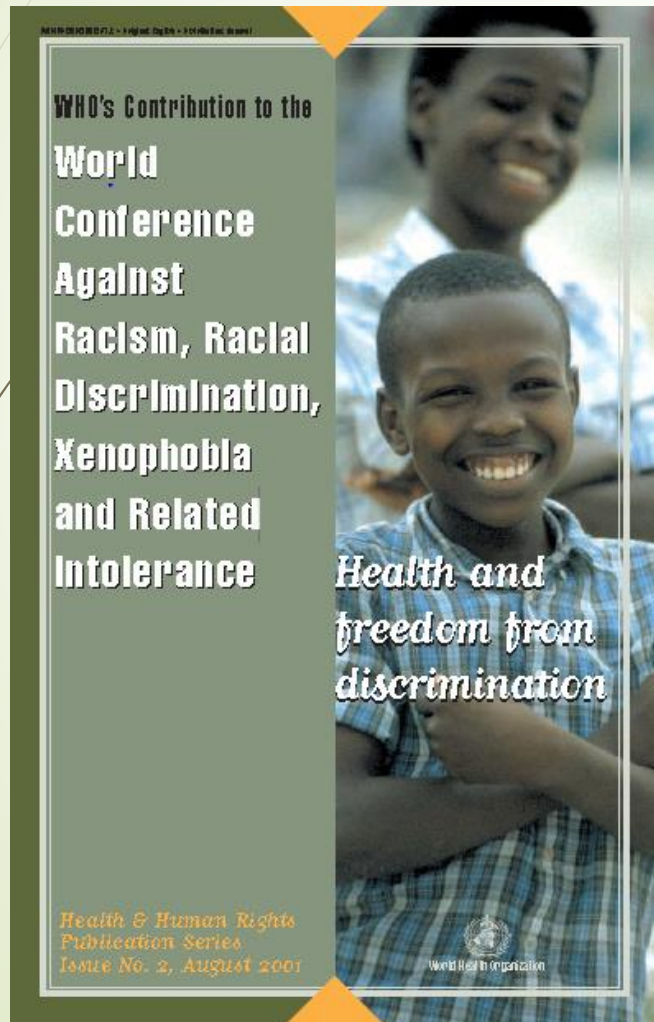
# Call for social change: UN & WHO

Health constitutes a fundamental human right, particularly relevant to poverty reduction ... [enabling] individuals and communities to lift themselves out of poverty.





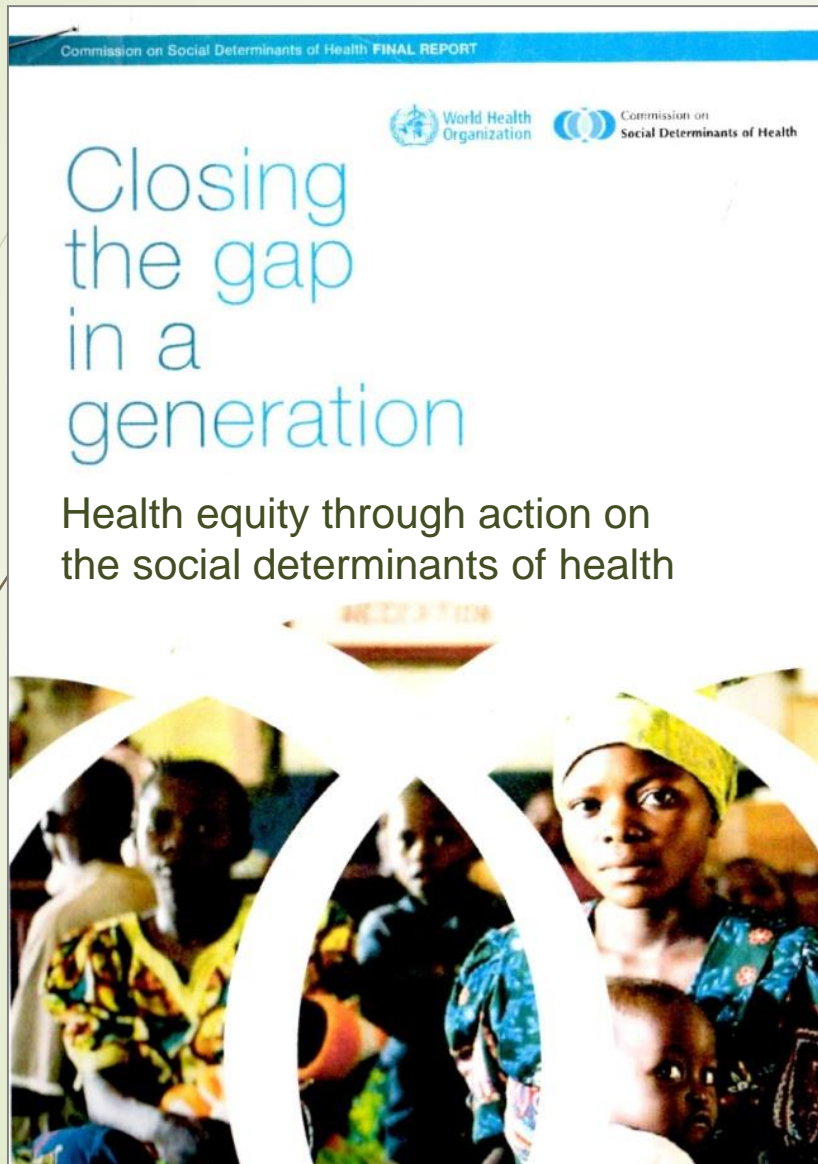
# Call for social change: UN & WHO



2001

Vulnerable and marginalized groups in society bear an undue proportion of health problems.

# Call for social change: WHO

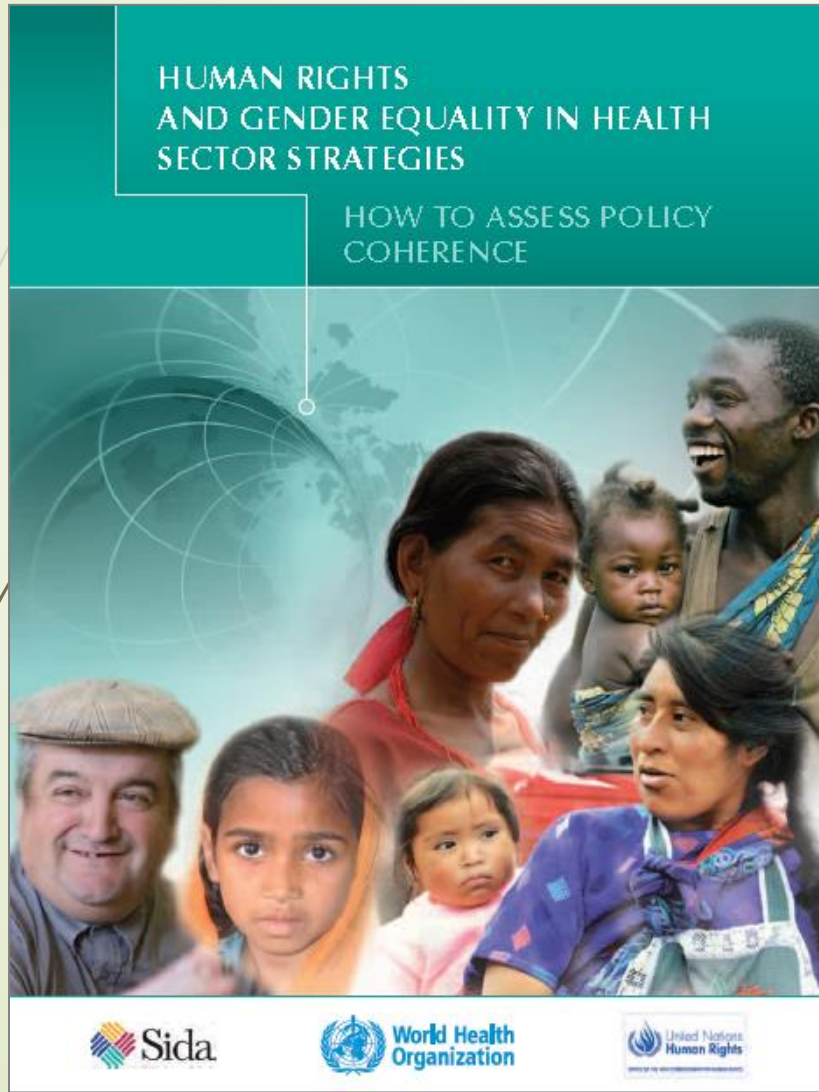


WFOT Human Rights Pre-Congress Workshop

2008

Social justice is a matter of life and death. It affects the way people live, their consequent chance of illness, and their risk of premature death....

# Call for social change: WHO



2011

Addressing gender inequality “is not only the *right* thing to do, ethically and legally, it also leads to better, more sustainable and equitable outcomes in the health sector.”



# Call for social change: WHO

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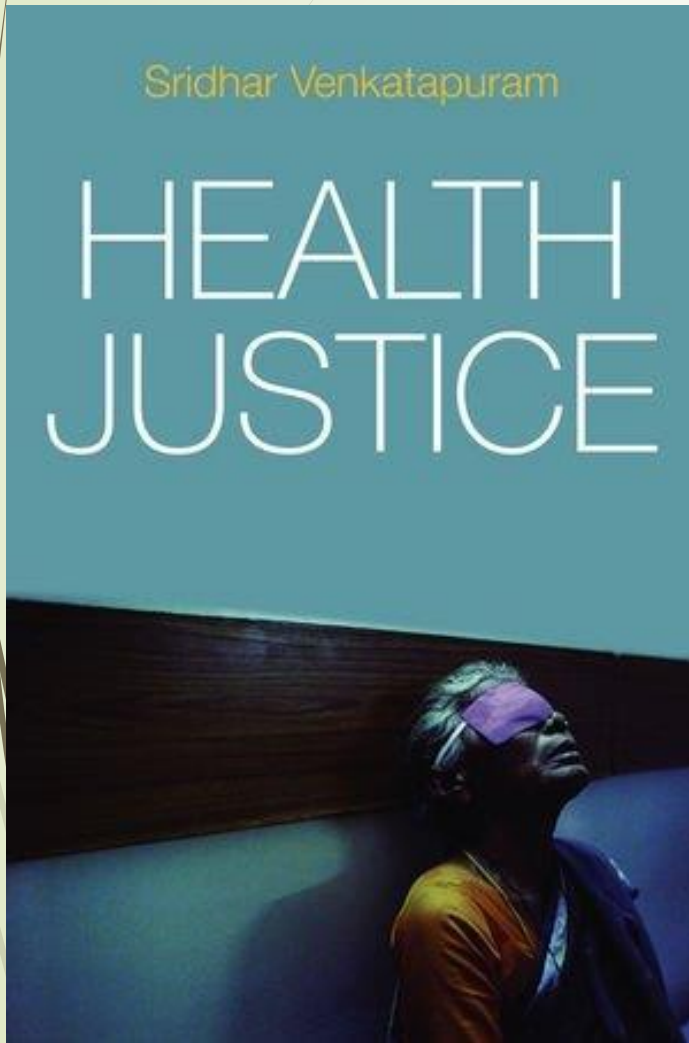


2011

Many people with disabilities do not have equal access ... and experience exclusion from everyday life activities. ... disability is increasingly understood as a human right concern.

# Ethical Argument: Health Justice

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- Righting the social conditions that cause people to “suffer preventable impairments or to die prematurely” (Venkatapuram, 2011)
- Individuals are free to be and do what they want
- Social arrangements that nurture, protect, promote and restore their capability to be healthy.

# Overall Message

The universal right to health demands more than equitable access to healthcare services

Closing the gap requires preferential allocation to those in greatest social need

(WHO, 1979)

Strategies must be developed with and for them



# Overall Message for Occupational Therapists

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Taking a rights-based approach to health means:

- ➡ reducing vulnerability to ill-health and social exclusion (injustice, restricted human rights) of those at greatest risk in everyday life occupations

**BY**

- ➡ addressing the social determinants of poor health and social exclusion

***The most important social determinant from our perspective:***

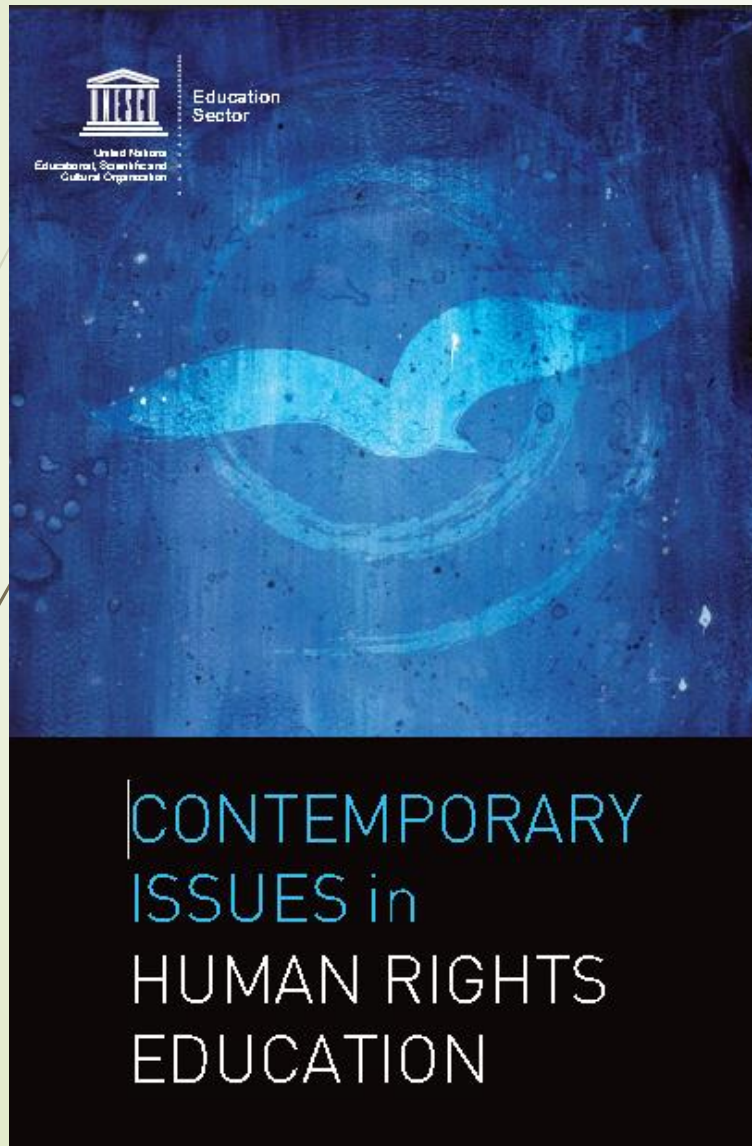
***Access to a health giving occupations and inclusion in the occupations of a society***

# Workshop Exercise #2

## *Small group discussion*

How can occupational therapists respond to the United Nations and World Health Organization call to action on human rights?

# Education for Human Rights



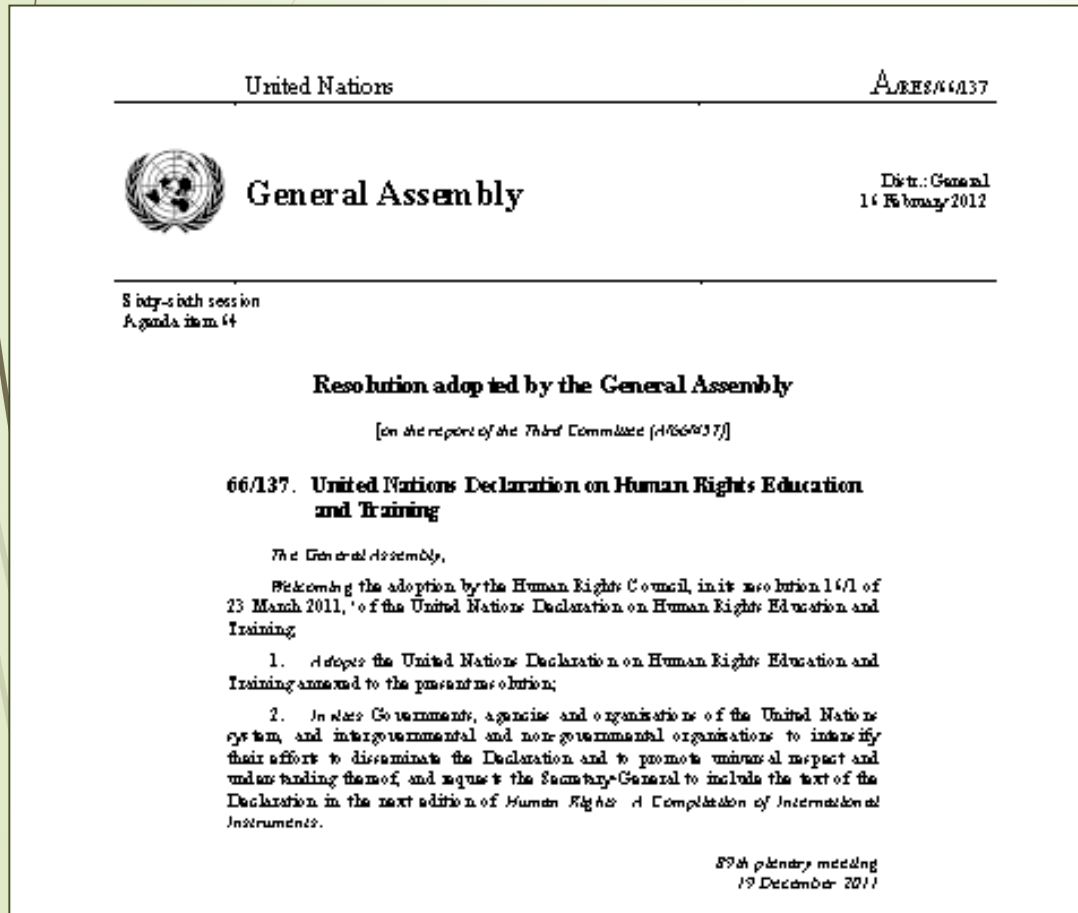
## UNESCO

By promoting recognition of and respect for human rights in all societies, it empowers learners so that they might actively contribute to the building of a sustainable and peaceful future.

(2011)



# UN Declaration on Human Rights Education & Training (2012)



Applies to "all parts of society, at all levels" including ...

- preschool to higher education
- education in the community

# UN Declaration on Human Rights Education & Training (2012)

**Goal:** Everyone is aware of their own rights & responsibilities in respect of the rights of others, ... promoting the development of the individual as a responsible member of a free, peaceful, pluralist & inclusive society."

**Principles:** Respect, tolerance, recognition

# Changes pending ...

## 2002 WFOT Minimum Standards for Education of Occupational Therapists

Changes pending are driven by societal needs to experience **everyday** justice and human rights

Changes pending are also driven by professional needs to be socially responsive, relevant and in tune with global trends in professional education.



So the question  
becomes.....

How might occupational  
therapy educational  
programmes help to make  
their country more inclusive  
and participatory?

# Workshop Exercise #3 Discussion groups

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**Educational programme level** – what could a commitment to advance inclusion and participation with vulnerable groups look like?

**Curriculum level** – how could this commitment be reflected in curriculum frameworks, resources, evaluation of student outcomes etc

**Classroom level** – how might academic and fieldwork educators prepare graduates to advance this commitment?

**Ongoing professional development level** – how might practitioners advance inclusion and participation with vulnerable groups?

# Educational Programme Level

- Does every programme decide for itself?
- Who might programmes partner with to decide on their commitment?
- What occupational structures require change?  
e.g. competitive sports; access to work, play and education



# Curriculum Level

- Should every course include human rights competencies?
- What are occupational therapy competencies for advancing inclusion and participation with vulnerable groups?
- How might those competencies be assessed?

# Teaching / Learning Level

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1. How do educators involve vulnerable people without exploiting them?
2. What classroom strategies are effective in raising student awareness and skills?
3. What interdisciplinary partnerships might best promote student competencies?
4. What community development learning opportunities exist to address population needs?

# Professional Development Level

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- How do practitioners balance their need for technical skills with human rights education?
- How do they find time for critical reflection on inclusion and participation?
- How can the social determinants of health be factored in to professional reasoning?
- When might a community development approach reach more people than individualized therapy?



# Exercise # 4:

## Refining the Questions

- In your group, discuss the questions provided for that level?
- What questions would you like to add, change or delete?

# Forward Planning & Conclusion

- How could you carry on this discussion with your colleagues?
- Are there people here you want to stay connected with?
- Do you have social network skills to expand the conversation? (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- How can you influence the educational programmes in your country?
- Can you support the work of the WFOT IAG on Human Rights and how?

# Review

- How well were your aims met?
- Suggestions for future workshops...