



RBA Position Paper

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approach to
development**

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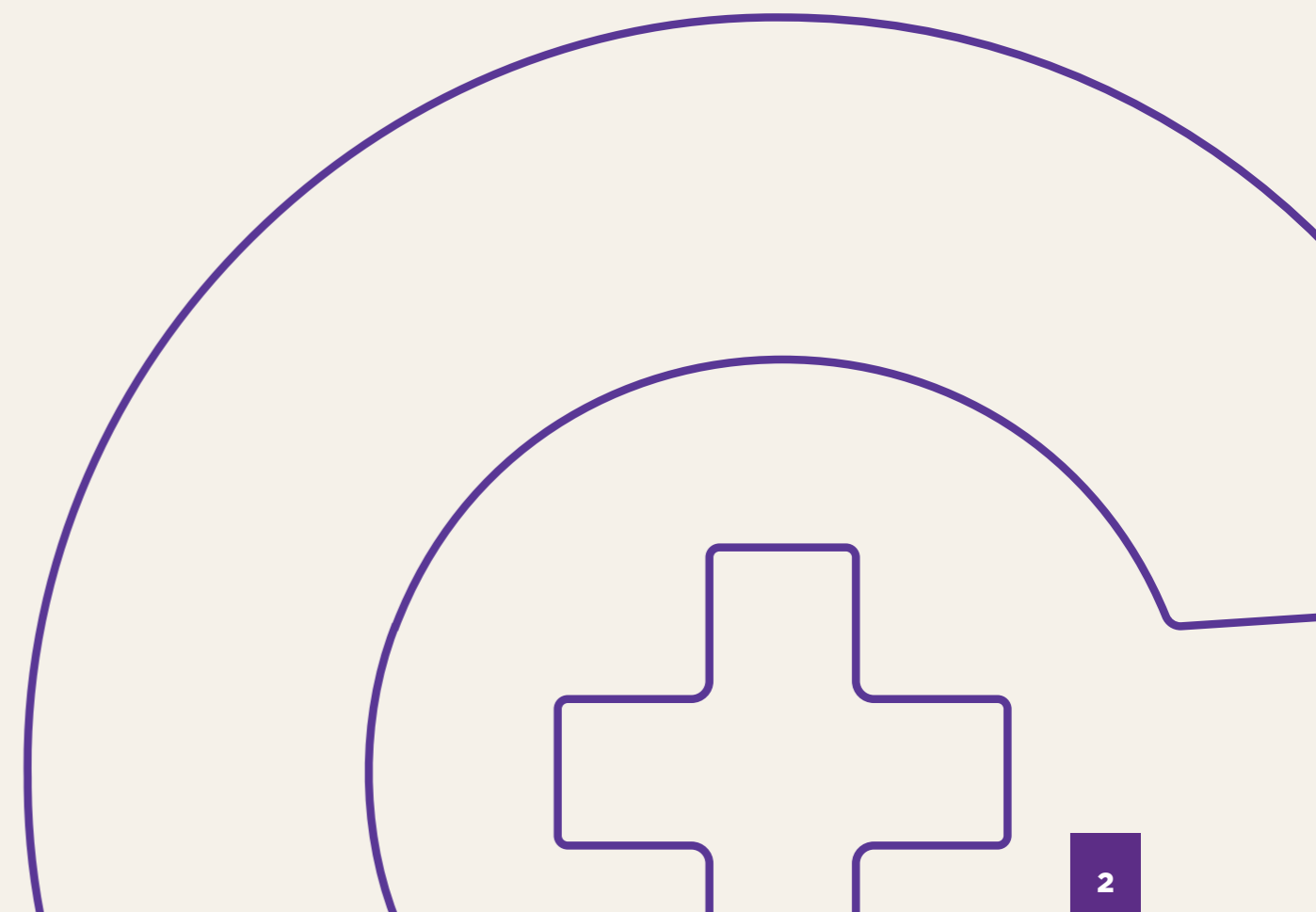
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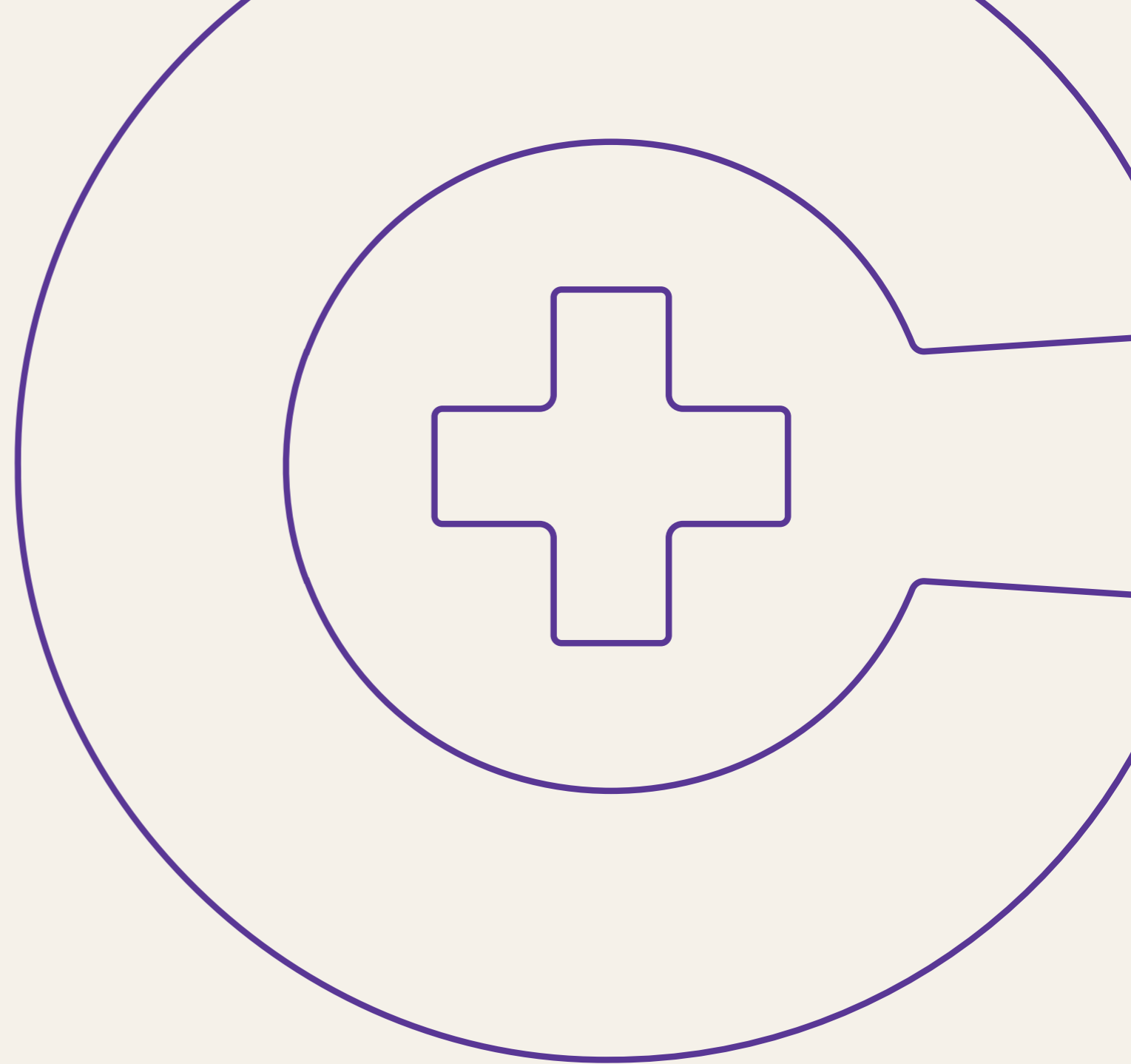
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Introduction: The right-based approach in brief

Human rights were adopted worldwide through The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, as a tool to recognize and protect the irreversible status of all human beings as born free and equal in dignity and rights. Human rights constitutes the basis of a rights-based approach emphasizing our legal and moral obligation to promote human development and justice among people

through the fundamental and universal human rights. These are categorized as political and civil rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion and belief, and socio-economic rights and cultural rights such as the right to education, health and an adequate standard of living.

“A rights-based approach to development describes situations not simply in terms of human needs, or developmental requirements, but in terms of society’s obligations to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals, empowers people to demand justice as a right, not as a charity, and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed”.

- Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

A rights-based approach to development

The rights-based approach promotes a conceptual shift away from the traditional needs-based approach to development with a focus on rights and duties. The motivation for engaging in development is an act of justice derived from the notion that every human being is a holder of fundamental human rights and equally entitled to certain freedoms and a certain standard of material and spiritual wellbeing. Therefore every woman, man and child is a rights-holder, and despite living in poverty, oppression or suffering not a passive object or recipient of charity.

By accepting that human beings have a legitimate claim to rights, we acknowledge that there are actors in society who have obligations and responsibilities to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights. These actors are considered duty-bearers.

The primary duty-bearer is the state (including the government, public authorities and officials, etc.) which carries the principal legal obligation and responsibility towards its citizens, but the rights-based approach also accounts for the moral framework governing the relations between persons and groups of people such as community leaders, religious leaders, private companies, civil society organizations and parents, who are con-

sidered moral duty-bearers.

In a rights-based approach, we are obliged to respect the rights of others, identify the structural root causes of poverty, injustice and discrimination, and stand up against these by demanding fundamental structural changes. The concepts of rights-holders and duty-bearers introduce an important element of social accountability where valid claims can be made against states and other moral duty-bearers to respect, protect and fulfil entitled rights, and where duty-bearers can be held accountable for their capability to comply with these claims.

There is not one authoritative way in which a rights-based approach is understood and incorporated into development work. Different actors choose different methods and tools to promote the achievement of human rights. Center of Church Based Development (henceforth: CKU) acknowledges that rights-based strategies are influenced by the local context, such as the political opportunity to articulate a rights agenda, and we realize that cultural norms and religious beliefs impact how a rights-based approach to development is manifested and practiced.



CKU's right-based commitment

God has imparted dignity to all human beings. God delivers from bondage, defends the vulnerable, strengthens the weak, and desires abundant life, peace and justice for all of creation. As a faith-based organization, CKU is called to take part in God's mission of justice, peace and respect for all creation and to seek for the meaningful, joyful, and eternal life which God has intended for everyone.

CKU believes that every person is created in the image of God as a unique and dignified human being, with an inherent right to enjoy life in its fullness and experience justice, and equal opportunities – regardless of position in life, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, belief or any other human condition. We emphasize the individual person's freedom and responsibility, while simultaneously stressing that freedom and responsibility only become reality in relation to our fellow humans – that there is a universal bond of sharing which connects all humanity. We trust that we as humans have capacity to take responsibility not only for our own lives, but also for the lives of our neighbour. Therefore, CKU wants to promote a vision for a better world characterized by equality, sustainability, ownership of own development, and peace and justice – a world where all people are considered equal, where everyone experiences equal access to rights and freedoms, where

righteous and democratic structures prevail, and where communities and vulnerable groups change their own life situation without compromising their integrity and independence.

Our development work is entrenched in a Christian view of life and humanity, a view in which diakonia constitutes an essential element. In today's Christian understanding, diakonia is regarded as the task and responsibility to work for a just world and a fair distribution of its resources.

In a global context where human dignity is violated by poverty, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities and resources, and where states and other actors are not adequately responding to their human rights obligations, we consider it our responsibility to lift a prophetic voice and speak up against human degradation, unjust and violations, and defend the dignity of women, men and children.

We find that the rights-based approach

is a logical operationalization of our diaconal obligations, and consider the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Conventions and mechanisms to be relevant tools in promoting and restoring the God given human dignity, creating sound relationships, and empowering people to fight for justice and equal opportunities for all.

By acting on the structural root causes of poverty, injustice and discrimination, and by addressing those with the responsibility and power to make the necessary changes, we have seen that the rights-based approach offers possibilities for increased sustainability of our interventions.

CKU recognizes that the global church environment is no uniform entity, and that the contextualization of human rights is influenced by different conditions such as denomination, the perception of the individual versus the collective, and how the society in general relates to human rights.

“We are bound up in a delicate network of interdependence, because as we say in our African idiom, a person is a person through other persons. To dehumanize others inexorably means that one is dehumanized as well”.

- Desmond Tutu, Archbishop





CKU's right-based principles

The rights-based approach to development is guided by a number of basic human rights principles derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

There exists no consolidated list of human rights principles, but the principles applied by different development actors are relatively consistent and refer to the same ethical motivation of ensuring justice and dignity for every human being. The concepts of Transformation, Reconciliation and Empowerment are key markers for CKU's rights-based development work, which builds on the principles of non-discrimination and equality, accountability and rule of law, and empowerment and participation.

Transformation: restoring human dignity

CKU respects the equality of all individuals. By the virtue of the inherent human dignity all persons are equally entitled to human rights without discrimination of any kind.

CKU considers the cause of human suffering to be the broken relationship between God and Man which has led to the deprivation human rights. The denial of rights is often rooted in complex social, cultural and political structures and practices that discriminate and exclude marginalized, vulnerable and impoverished persons and groups from gaining and exercising their rights.

The human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination gives us mandate

and responsibility to restore human dignity by:

Recognizing the most marginalized, vulnerable and impoverished persons and groups as equal and valuable persons who should not be exposed to unjust differential treatment.

Committing to leave no-one behind (in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals), addressing vulnerable groups and endeavour to reach first those who are furthest behind.

Responding to the often urgent needs for economic, social and physical security of

the persons and groups most vulnerable and affected by rights violations, including minority groups, people with disabilities, refugees, people living with HIV/AIDS, and vulnerable women and children

Examining and targeting the roots of the discriminatory practices, unjust structures and unequal power relations that obstruct enforcement of rights.

Our approach to gender inclusion and inclusion of people living with HIV/AIDS is further elaborated in our Gender Policy and HIV/AIDS Policy.

Reconciliation: healing broken relationships

CKU regards formal and moral duty-bearers as answerable for complying with and enforcing human rights in accordance with the international human rights standards.

In situations where duty-bearers are unwilling or unable to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of others, CKU considers the relationship between duty-bearers and rights-holders to be broken. Only by developing the capacity of duty-bearers and demanding accountability for their actions and obligations, it is possible to ensure the enforcement of human rights, and restore peaceful coexistence and justice.

The human rights principles of accountability and rule of law give us mandate and responsibility to mediate and heal the broken relationship between rights-holders and duty-bearers by:

- Acknowledging that rights-holders are entitled to rights and protection against rights violations.
- Identifying the relevant duty-bearers and engaging them in a constructive dialogue and cooperation in order to build their willingness and capacity to enforce the human rights standards.
- Confronting unjust structures, discriminatory practices and unequal power relation and establish mechanisms for holding those responsible to account when/if rights are violated.
- Operating in an inclusive and transparent manner that ensures downwards, inwards and upwards accountability to our target groups, our own organization, and our donors.



Empowerment: endowing people and communities

Every person is entitled to participate in and contribute to his/her own development and that of society. Such participation implies that people, including those with the least power, are adequately empowered to participate actively and meaningfully.

CKU believes that Christianity contains an empowering ability with its inherent hope of a better world different from the realities of human misery and degradation we experience as a consequence of inequality, poverty, and violence. We believe that people have the power to actively influence their own conditions, and that they feel ethically obliged to speak-up against underlying oppressive power structures and claim for justice and equality for all fellow humans.

The human rights principles of participation and empowerment give us mandate and responsibility to endow persons and communities with knowledge, skills and

- determination to positively influence their life and the larger society by:
- Acknowledging that all people have the resources/assets that when mobilized can enhance life possibilities for one self and others.
- Including rights-holders in development programming and in decisions that may impact their lives.
- Increasing rights awareness and legal literacy, and building capacity of rights-holders to understand their rights, formulate demands and seek redress if rights are violated.
- Mobilizing and strengthening the collective action and organization of rights-holders to hold duty bearers accountable and demand for necessary changes in legislation, policies, institutions and practices.



Operationalizing a right-based approach

Based on our understanding of rights-based development work, CKU commits itself to the following minimum agenda on our road to operationalizing our rights-based development strategies:

We find that development efforts must be based on a thorough contextual understanding; i.e. an understanding of the socio-political environment, the major rights issues and challenges, the rights-holders and duty-bearers and their respective capacities, responsibilities and interests. Contextual knowledge and understanding is essential when working in contexts characterized by unrest/autocracy/instability, and it is a necessity when seeking an appropriate confrontation with harmful customary law/practice. In fragile political contexts it is important that we remain observant, strategic and proactive in our operations. If necessary, we can apply a risk-minimizing approach to human rights, by using a language other than the language of rights and/or by addressing a limited cluster of rights (i.e. socio-economic rights), meanwhile acknowledging that human rights can function as an orientation and encouragement for resistance as well as dialogue for change.

We recognize that working with human rights creates risks. Therefore, we commit ourselves to do effective risk analysis, and to support partners that might be endangered through their rights-based work.

We will direct development assistance towards women, men and children living in poverty or under degrading conditions, and strive to make sure that no-one is left behind (in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals) when determining the target groups of our development interventions.

We will promote strategic service delivery and ensure that the delivery of essential goods is not taken over by civil society or any other private actor. Instead our interventions are directed at outcomes that contribute to a situation where the state is able to realize its obligation to enforce the fundamental human rights of marginalized and discriminated persons and groups.

We will support initiatives that strategically combat poverty, injustice and discrimination and increase the accountability of duty-bearers through a) constructive advocacy engagements for

changes in laws, policies, resource allocations, implementation frameworks and discriminatory attitude and behavior, and through b) building capacity (knowledge, attitude and practices) to comply with the human rights standards.

Accountability of duty-bearers is closely linked to empowerment of rights-holders. We will therefore support initiatives that facilitate processes through which rights-holders increasingly identify themselves as rights-holders and active citizens, where they gain legal literacy, more control over their lives and ability to challenge those social norms and practices and political decisions which reproduces poverty and marginalization. We will focus on group empowerment and mobilization, in order to establish a critical mass of rights-holders claiming their rights, thereby protecting the individual and strengthening civil society organization.

Our approach to capacity development and advocacy is further elaborated in our Capacity Building Policy and our Advocacy Policy.

We shall link our development interventions to human rights standards, and actively promote the use of international, regional and national human rights monitoring mechanisms such as the UNs Universal Periodic Reviews, including the shadow-reporting by civil society, Human Rights Councils, individual complaint mechanisms etc. to provide legitimacy rights, particular when national mechanisms fail to protect or comply with the universal human rights obligations. We will also make use of the Human Rights Guide to the Sustainable Development Goals to identify relevant information such as the correlation between the development goals and the various human rights convention as well as the monitoring bodies responsible for collecting data on the individual goals.

In line with the rights-based principles, we will ensure meaningful participation in and influence of our members and partners in policy and programme development. We will pursue equal partnerships and strive to strengthen ownership by rejecting the traditional donor-recipient relationship and by actively involving the targeted rights-holders in the design, monitoring and evaluation of our development interventions. We will encourage and support our members to strengthen their rights-based development work, including the active and meaningful participation of their partners and the targeted rights-holders.

Our approach to partnership is further elaborated in our Partnership Policy.

