



HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

**A HANDBOOK ON CONDUCTING
COMMUNITY PUBLIC MEETINGS**



COVER PICTURE:

Community members of Kwonkic village lamiyo sub county in Agago district attending a public Baraza on 29th September 2011

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FOREWORD

THE UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION as the National Human Rights Institution in Uganda is committed to its mandate to protect and promote human rights. This is based on our conviction that the development of our country and its people hinges much on the realisation of human rights for all.

Realisation of human rights for all requires that every person in Uganda is guaranteed and indeed enjoys his/her rights as stipulated in the Constitution and other legal instruments, while willingly fulfilling his/her civic duties. Even though it would seem like an insurmountable challenge for us as a single institution to reach every person in Uganda, given our resource constraints, over the years we have proved that creativity and innovation are instrumental in improving efficiency and effectiveness as we deliver on our mandate.

The concept of a human rights baraza is a good example of such innovation that has enabled us to reach out to the rights holders even up to the village level through a cost- effective but hugely beneficial strategy. In this handbook on human rights baraza, therefore, we have documented some best practices derived from our experience, which have enabled us to enhance our human rights education and awareness creation function through a community baraza. In addition, we have documented the benefits and opportunities that this approach provides for the fulfilment of all other functions of the Commission beyond human rights education.

I have the pleasure of sharing with you clients and partners, this Human Rights Baraza Handbook which is simple, user-friendly and broad enough to be tailored to any individual or institution's need. It is our hope as a Commission that the best practices documented herein will enhance current efforts to take services to the people that most need them. Through this I hope to see an increase in the number of citizens aware of their rights and duties; able to effectively participate in decision-making on matters that affect them; and able to hold their leaders accountable. Ultimately, this would translate into realisation of citizens' rights and fulfilment of their duties, which would in turn contribute to the stability and development of our country.

For God and My country



Med S.K. Kaggwa

Chairperson/Uganda Human Rights Commission

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THIS HANDBOOK on Human Rights Baraza has been developed through combined efforts of various people at different levels. I am very grateful to each and every person who made a contribution directly and indirectly to the process of producing the handbook.

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I am grateful to the staff of the Commission whose practical experiences and technical expertise informed the development of this handbook. In particular, I thank the select Committee of staff that took time to brainstorm, research, draft, compile and edit the handbook right from the concept stage to the final document. This Committee comprised: the Director Research, Education and Documentation Ms. Dorah B Kabuye, Director Regional Services Mr. George Paliel Ufoyuru, the Commission Planner Mr. Charles Mukasa, Regional Human Rights Officer (RHRO) Gulu Mr. Kamadi Byonabye, RHRO Fort Portal Ms. Rose Atim, RHRO Central Mr. Wilfred Asimwe Muganga, RHRO Masaka Mr. Willy Agirembabazi, Senior Human Rights Officer/Editor Ms. Rose Mary Kemigisha, Human Rights Officer Ms. Rizzan Nassuna, the Peace Building Project Manager Mr. James Diers Mwangusya, Peace Building Project Human Rights Analyst Mr. Ambrose Ogwal and the Peace Building Project Accountant Ms. Immaculate Namutebi.

The handbook would not have been produced without the kind support of the United Nations in Uganda who provided the funding, not only for the Peace Building through Justice for all and Human Rights Project that UHRC implemented in Northern Uganda, specifically Acholi sub region, but also to facilitate the documenting of the best practices of a community baraza and producing the handbook.



G.T Mwesigye

Secretary to the Commission

Uganda Human Rights Commission

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Baraza:	A Kiswahili word meaning a public meeting, which is used as a platform for creating awareness, responding to issues affecting a given community, sharing vital information, providing citizens with the opportunity to identify and propose solutions to concerns.
Community:	People living (sometimes working) in social units larger than a household who share commonalities in locality, characteristics, values and challenges
Pre-visit:	A fact-finding visit to the community prior to the baraza activity
Human rights education:	All educational, training, information, awareness raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
Human Rights:	Claims or entitlements that accrue to one by virtue of being human.
Inalienable:	Human rights cannot be removed or detachable from a human being.
Indivisible:	Human rights exist as a whole; they are inseparable; They are all equally important for human dignity. States must never choose to guarantee some rights at the expense of others..
Interdependent:	The human rights depend on each other; any impact on one will automatically or ultimately affect the others.
Mobilisation:	Reaching out to the community members to explain, convince, invite, prepare and organise them to attend the baraza
Community leaders:	People who hold positions of leadership, authority and influence at the political, civic, social, religious, cultural levels within the community.
Community-based radios:	Radio stations located within a given locality which target and mainly broadcast to members of the community in that locality.

Abbreviations and acronyms

HRE:	Human Rights Education
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IEC:	Information, Education and Communication
PBF:	Peace Building Fund
RHRO:	Regional Human Rights Officer
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UHRC:	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UN:	United Nations
USD	United States Dollars

PREFACE

UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (UHRC) is the National Human Rights Institution established under Article 51 of the Constitution of Republic of Uganda with a mandate to protect and promote human rights in Uganda. The functions of UHRC as stipulated under Article 52 (1) of the Constitution are to:

- a) Investigate, at its own initiative or on a complaint made by any person or group of persons against the violation of any human right;
- b) Visit jails, prisons, and places of detention or related facilities with a view of assessing and inspecting conditions of the inmates and make recommendations;
- c) Establish a continuing programme of research, education and information to enhance respect of human rights;
- d) Recommend to Parliament effective measures to promote human rights including provision of compensation to victims of violations of human rights, or their families;
- e) Create and sustain within society the awareness of the provisions of this constitution as the fundamental law of the people of Uganda;
- f) Educate and encourage the public to defend this Constitution at all times against all forms of abuse and violation;
- g) Formulate, implement, and oversee programmes intended to inculcate in the citizens of Uganda awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people;
- h) Monitor the Government's compliance with international treaty and convention obligations on human rights; and
- i) Perform such other functions as may be provided by law.

Article 52 (2) also requires the Commission to publish periodical reports and submit annual reports to Parliament on the state of human rights and freedoms in the country.

In fulfilment of its promotional mandate, the UHRC uses various interventions to enhance citizens' understanding and awareness of human rights and civic duties and empower them with knowledge and skills to effectively participate

in their own governance. UHRC has used among others, training workshops, drama, media programmes and publications.

UHRC adopted the method of a public meeting commonly known as **baraza** to carry out human rights education as an effective way of reaching out to more people in their localities. UHRC has so far conducted 306 community public meetings countrywide through its nine regional offices to reach out to the communities at even the lowest administrative level. In September 2011, UHRC received funds to implement the 'Peace Building through Justice for all and human rights' project in the Acholi sub region in Kitgum, Gulu, Lamwo, Amuru, Pader, Nwoya, and Agago districts. UHRC particularly used the baraza approach in its special intervention in post-conflict northern Uganda, which was supported by the UN Peace Building Fund (PBF). In the period of one year in which the project was implemented, UHRC conducted 129 community public meetings.

It is from these experiences of using the strategy of a community baraza that UHRC decided to document the best practices of the increasingly popular and effective means of reaching out to many people at grass roots level. With support from the PBF, UHRC embarked on the process of developing a standardised handbook on organising a community human rights baraza. A Select Committee of UHRC staff was appointed and together with the project staff harmonised these experiences, documented the best practice and developed basic guidelines for a community human rights baraza.

This handbook therefore, explains the concept of human right baraza and contextualises it into the wider mandate of human rights education and awareness creation, which is fundamental in promotion of human rights. It provides guidelines for preparing, conducting and reporting on a community baraza as well as the lessons the UHRC has learnt over the years from implementing the community public meetings.

The handbook is a general guideline and can be used by any individual or institution planning to organise a community baraza. It has been written in simple language for use by both technical and non-technical individuals implementing human rights work in communities. It provides a logical outlook of all the baraza activities in order to cover the processes in their entirety. However, the handbook is not intended to provide the full content of the presentations that would be discussed in a baraza as these are usually determined by the issues at hand in a particular community.



SECTION 1

THE BROADER CONTEXT OF
HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION



A member of the community asking questions during a public Baraza in Kwonkic village in Lamiyo sub county Agago district

THE BROADER CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The observance of human rights of all is a key ingredient of good governance and democracy. Generally, human rights are understood as entitlements that accrue to one by virtue of being human. They are inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. Human rights are provided for in international, regional and national instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) and national Constitutions of the respective states. States are obliged to guarantee and ensure the realisation of these rights for all. The recognition of a state as democratic is dependent on among other things, its ability to protect, promote and fulfil its human rights obligations, failure of which amounts to violation of human rights.

In view of the above, the promotional obligation requires the state to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of rights and freedoms. This leads to empowered and informed citizens who are capable of holding those in power accountable for omissions and commissions; demanding for the realisation of their rights; and fulfilling their civic duties. This is affirmed in Article 26 (2) of the UDHR, which states that:

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

According to Article 2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, human rights education (HRE) comprises all educational, training, information, awareness raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. This contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills, understanding as well as developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights. This obliges the state to provide an enabling environment for education in general and HRE in particular, in addition to citizen participation in affairs that affect them as individuals and/or their communities.

In an effort to fulfil obligations on HRE and citizen participation, states have undertaken various mechanisms. These include among others, establishment of institutional frameworks; formulation of policies and laws; and incorporation of human rights education in formal and informal education systems. These mechanisms have helped the respective states to enhance HRE.

In Uganda, one such mechanism was the creation of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) following a recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights between 1962 and 1985 that was reiterated by the Uganda Constitutional Commission (1989 to 1994). The Commission Inquiry into Human Rights Violations acknowledged that lack of HRE caused citizens' powerlessness, inaction and indifference as state agents committed atrocities with impunity. This citizens' inaction was strongly attributed to the lack of HRE. In view of this, the Commission recommended continuous HRE to empower the citizens to claim their rights and demand for accountability.

In respect to HRE therefore, UHRC was established to among other functions, establish a continuing programme of research, education and information to enhance respect of human rights; create and sustain within society the awareness of the provision of the Constitution as the fundamental law of the people of Uganda; educate and encourage the public to defend the Constitution at all times against all forms of abuse and violations; and formulate, implement and oversee programmes intended to inculcate in the citizens of Uganda, awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people. In an effort to fulfil these functions, UHRC has over the years undertaken various strategies to promote human rights awareness in the country, significant among which is HRE through community public meetings.

This handbook expounds on the concept of human rights baraza and its effectiveness as a methodology of conducting human rights education; provides guidelines of holding a successful human rights baraza; and documents UHRC experience and lessons learnt in undertaking human rights baraza. It is a guideline of the expected standards one should consider when conducting a human rights baraza.

1.1 THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

Baraza is a Kiswahili word meaning a public meeting(s), that is used as a platform for creating awareness, responding to issues affecting a given community, sharing vital information, providing citizens with the opportunity to

identify and propose solutions to concerns. It is also an avenue for information dissemination to the community as well as a quick means of getting feedback on the critical issues affecting that community. A human rights baraza therefore is a community public meeting conducted to discuss issues of human rights as well as other governance issues including democracy, service delivery, peace and conflict management, and rule of law which have an impact on human rights. These meetings are conducted in public places like market areas, community hall/centre, places of worship, and open arenas.



Community members attending a public Baraza in Kwonkic village in Lamiyo sub county Agago district

A human rights baraza targets all persons who live in social units or community larger than a household and share common values and challenges. These units are normally the lowest administrative units, commonly known as villages. This targeting is intended to reach out to the people who more often than not get information 'second hand' and participate through representation. Therefore the aim is to give such people an opportunity to personally participate and

directly voice their perspectives in a dialogue on human rights issues in their respective communities. The baraza is also a platform for empowering them with information and knowledge that can enhance their ability to participate in their governance; claim their rights; and ensure that duty bearers fulfil their obligations to the communities.

Nevertheless, in some circumstances a baraza may be organized for specific target groups that are not necessarily at the lowest administrative level. Such groups may be targeted on account of their vulnerability, peculiar circumstances, and common issues of concern among others.



SECTION 2

**GUIDELINES ON A HUMAN
RIGHTS BARAZA**



Community members of Layik village Amida sub county Kitgum District attending a community Baraza.

GUIDELINES ON A HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

2.0 INTRODUCTION

As a methodology of conducting human rights education, a human rights baraza may be prompted by a number of conditions. It may be the pertinent human rights situation in a given community; demand from community member(s) or other person(s) concerned about a given situation in a community; issues emerging from human rights activities like monitoring, mediations, investigations, inspections, mobile complaints handling, tribunals, media programmes such as radio talk shows, training and workshops, as well as referrals from other partners and local leaders.

This section is a practical guide to a human rights baraza. It provides a step by step guide to preparing, conducting and assessing the effectiveness of a baraza as a methodology of human rights education.

2.1 STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES ON A HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

2.1.1 PREPARING FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

STEP 1: Hold a planning meeting to consider the following:

- a) Designate a particular staff to coordinate and manage the process of holding a human rights baraza in a given community;
- b) Review and confirm the financial and other resources;
- c) Identify a community where the baraza is going to take place and review available information on that community;
- d) Plan for a pre-visit.

STEP 2: Undertake a pre-visit to the identified community. While in the community do the following:

- a) Make a courtesy call on the local or community leaders and explain the purpose of the visit;
- b) Identify a local or community leader or other contact person(s) you will be working with to mobilise and prepare community members for the baraza. Explain the purpose of your visit to this mobiliser/contact person and agree on the proposed date, time and venue. Ensure that you get details of their contacts including telephone numbers for further communication;

- c) Identify and inform those charged with security in the community about the planned baraza, proposed venue, date and time;
- d) Establish the political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the community;
- e) Identify a local or community based radio stations to be used in mobilisation of community members; and
- f) Establish other actors in the human rights field who are already addressing the issue(s) of concern in that community, ascertain their interventions to avoid duplication and team up with them where possible;

STEP 3: Hold a post-visit planning meeting to:

- a) Discuss the findings of the pre-visit;
- b) Identify resource persons for the planned baraza basing on technical expertise, experience and similarity of objectives. Resource persons may be identified from within or without the identified community, including translators and sign language interpreters where necessary;
- c) Assign roles and responsibilities to the team that is going to conduct the baraza;

STEP 4: Update the community mobiliser/contact person on among other things:

- a) Relevant decisions from the post-visit planning meeting that may have an impact on the baraza and keep in touch with him or her thereafter.

STEP 5: Contact the mobiliser/contact person preferably one week to the baraza date to:

- a) Ensure that community members are mobilised and invited to attend the baraza; and
- b) Establish whether there are other circumstances in the community that may impact on the baraza.

STEP 6: Organise all required materials, tools, equipment and resources for the baraza and remind the baraza team of their assigned roles and responsibilities beforehand. **A checklist on what should be done before conducting a baraza is attached as Appendix 1.**

2.1.2 CONDUCTING A HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA

- STEP 1:** Arrive at the baraza venue at least 1 hour before the scheduled time and get in touch with the mobiliser/contact person.
- STEP 2:** Where possible, make courtesy calls to political and civic leaders to inform them of your presence.
- STEP 3:** Arrange the venue, set and pre test all tools and equipment to be used in the baraza.
- STEP 4:** Position yourselves strategically and get ready to start the baraza.
- STEP 5:** Register participants as they arrive and determine a number that is adequate for you to start.
- STEP 6:** Start the baraza with a prayer where applicable and let the mobiliser/contact person welcome participants and introduce community leaders present before inviting the baraza team leader to take over.
- STEP 7:** As the team leader, introduce your team, explain to the participants the purpose of the baraza and take them through the rest of the agenda. An ideal agenda for a human rights baraza may include:
- a) Prayer
 - b) General introductions
 - c) Opening remarks
 - d) Presentations on basic information about the institution holding the baraza, the concept of human rights, the redress mechanisms for human rights violations and a brief on the pertinent human rights issue(s) in that community
 - e) Questions and answer session
 - f) Way forward and closing remarks

While conducting a human rights baraza, consider the following:

- a) Be flexible to accommodate persons of different leadership hierarchy;
- b) Make all remarks and presentations as precise and concise as possible so that you can have adequate time for dialogue and discussions;
- c) The rapporteur should take note of recommendations and emerging issues that require follow up and further action;
- d) Provide refreshments to participants. However, this should be done towards the end of the baraza to avoid commotion and disruption;

- e) Ensure coverage of the baraza in terms of photography and where possible videography;
- f) Ensure that the assessment tool (refer to Appendix 2) is filled in before leaving the baraza venue;
- g) For purposes of consistency of messages delivered in the baraza, the team leader should make the closing remarks and officially close the meeting.

2.1.3 POST-BARAZA ACTIONS

STEP 1: Prepare a comprehensive activity report within seven days of holding the baraza. (refer to Appendix 2). The report should:

- a) Not exceed 20 pages in total;
- b) Include a summary of presentations made;
- c) Capture issues in reported speech;
- d) Clearly state recommendations as well as emerging issues that need further action; and
- e) Have as an annex the attendance list of all participants.

STEP 2: Where applicable, make a financial accountability report in accordance with the stipulated financial regulations.

STEP 3: Hold a post-baraza meeting to:

- a) Evaluate the baraza;
- b) Discuss follow up actions; and
- c) Designate a staff to coordinate follow up actions.



UHRC official (standing right) Ms. Rizzan Nassuna making a presentation during a human rights baraza held at Kasambya sub county headquarters, in Mubende district in June 2012



UHRC official (standing left) Ms. Alex Kirunda responds to participants' questions during a human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county headquarters, in Mubende district in June 2012.



The people of Bagezza sub county, Mubende district raise hands during human rights baraza held at Kasambya sub county headquarters, in Mubende district in June 2012



An LC 2 councillor from Mugungulu Parish contributes to the discussions during a human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county, Mubende district in June 2012



An elder who is also a member of the Village Health Team passionately raised issues during a human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county, Mubende district in June 2012



The Police District Community Liaison Officer/ in charge of child and family protection unit Mr. Joseph Enjulu (in uniform) flanked on his left by the O/C CID Mr Martin Okiria of Mubende district attend the human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county, Mubende district in June 2012.



The District Police Commander Mubende, Mr. Enock Abeine responding to questions raised by the people during a human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county, Mubende district in June 2012



A participants contributes to the discussions during a human rights baraza held at Bagezza sub county, Mubende district in June 2012



SECTION 3

**HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA: THE
EXPERIENCE OF UHRC AND
LESSONS LEARNT**



Community members of Layik village Amida sub county Kitgum District attending a community Baraza.

HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA: THE EXPERIENCE OF UHRC AND LESSONS LEARNT

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) started using the human rights community baraza methodology in 2010. This was in an effort to take human rights messages/ information to the grassroots level. The need was realized during another UHRC initiative of Mobile Complaints Handling where the function of receiving human rights complaints on alleged human rights violations was taken to the areas/districts which were distant from the regional office or hard-to-reach. During these mobile complaints handling exercises it became very clear that the majority of people who turned up had little knowledge about their human rights or the types of complaints that the UHRC handles. Many times people turned up for mobile complaints handling exercises expecting to be sensitised about their human rights. This was an indicator of a significant demand for human rights sensitisation programmes within the communities.

The experience of UHRC in conducting the human rights baraza has presented opportunities as well as challenges. In this section UHRC has documented its experience as well as lessons learnt in order to inform future implementation and enhance success.

3.1 UHRC EXPERIENCE

Carrying out mobilisation and conducting Baraza

In preparation for a community baraza, UHRC has mobilised communities within their respective localities using their local leaders. UHRC holds a community baraza at the grassroots level as opposed to a formal workshop that draws targeted participants away from their communities to mostly hotels as venues. The baraza participants usually know each other as they ordinarily live in the same locality or work together. UHRC prefers to use the local language during the baraza where possible, but where there is need for an interpreter, his/her services are procured. In some instances, a staff member of UHRC who is well conversant with the local language plays the role of an interpreter. During the organisation and conducting of the baraza, local resources within the communities are used. For instance, community members may come along with

their stools or mats and converge in their neighbours' compound or under a tree or in a playground. The use of local resources, and the fact that members are known to each other lead to local ownership of the meetings and encourages active participation of the majority of participants.

Usually before the planned baraza, local leaders are consulted; pre-visits made; and planning meetings held to ensure the success of the baraza. In order to supplement the efforts of local leaders in mobilisation of the community members for the baraza, radio announcements have been made and radio talk shows held usually on the community-based radios where they exist or other radio stations with signal coverage that reaches the targeted community.

Methodologies employed

UHRC has employed a range of approaches in conducting a baraza including drama and training sessions jointly conducted with local leaders such as local council leaders, local area police and other partners. The approach has in most cases resulted in immediate responses to human rights challenges facing the communities. For example, if an allegation of violation of a certain human right is made by a participant against a certain individual or institution, UHRC usually asks a representative of that institution present in the meeting to respond to it. However, in instances where it is not possible to provide adequate responses, participants are promised a follow up on the issues raised and given feedback later.

Drama has been used as a strategy to deliver human rights messages to the community in the local languages using local examples. This has been both entertaining and educative as it increases the participants' knowledge about the human rights issues depicted in the drama show. Drama has proved to be interesting to participants and relevant to their day to day experiences. Drama shows have also helped in pulling quite a large number of people to the baraza.

In other instances UHRC has utilised the opportunity of religious and cultural functions/fora, where brief dialogues on human rights issues are held after prayers, or during cultural events. These have proved to be not only effective in the delivery of human rights messages but also in reaching larger audiences at a minimal or no cost.

3.2 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE BARAZA INTERVENTION

3.2.1 Promoting community ownership

The involvement of communities and local leaders in the mobilisation and conducting of the community baraza has promoted community ownership and

management of the baraza. Local leaders own the baraza which they perceive to be providing an opportunity for them to interact with the community members they lead. The communities on the other hand view a baraza as an avenue through which they express their opinions and influence positive change in their local communities.

In some instances, at the end of the baraza communities made positive proposals such as establishment of human rights committees at local level to help monitor and report on human rights violations. These committees have been formed on a voluntary basis comprised of opinion and community leaders with integrity. So far, these voluntary human rights committees have been instrumental in referring victims of human rights violations to UHRC for assistance and in reporting at their own initiative human rights violations within the communities.

During the baraza, participants have come to appreciate that they can be part and parcel of the solution to the human rights challenges in their respective communities. In the communities where a baraza has been held, people have taken it upon themselves to monitor and report human rights violations using their own resources. A human rights baraza therefore provides a forum for the people to lodge human rights complaints and raise issues for action by UHRC and other relevant institutions.

3.2.2 Utilisation of local resources for a successful baraza

The success of a baraza to a greater extent depends on one's capacity to mobilise and utilise local resources. Mobilisation of participants should always be done with the help of local leaders because they are trusted and respected in their respective jurisdictions. Local leaders may include heads of lower administrative units, religious, cultural and opinion leaders among others. Where local media channels exist, they should be used to mobilise the community. These include but are not limited to community-based radio stations. In most cases such local resources are either provided free of charge or at a minimal cost. Resource persons drawn from the communities who facilitate during a baraza have rarely been paid honoraria or reimbursed for fuel expenses as is common with hotel-based workshops. Since the baraza is held at the community level, participants use their own resources such as chairs, stools, mats and others. The above examples illustrate how mobilisation and utilisation of local resources and knowledge can reduce costs of conducting a human rights baraza.

3.2.3 Ability to reach out to the otherwise neglected local communities

Local communities have rarely been targets of most institutions involved in human rights education, yet they are the people who need human rights awareness most. The people who need empowerment mainly have always

been neglected on the basis of their inability to communicate in English, their location and appearance. According to the National Household Survey of 2009, Uganda's population statistics indicated that over 85% live in rural areas yet before the idea of the baraza was initiated this population category was more or less not reached. The introduction of the human rights baraza has provided an opportunity to rural based populations to be reached directly to learn and understand their various human rights and civic obligations. For example, a total of 1701 people in 120 villages were reached by UHRC through the baraza initiative implemented by the Gulu Regional Office between October 2011 and May 2012.

3.2.4 Reduced costs of conducting human rights programmes

The introduction of the baraza has significantly reduced the costs associated with human rights programmes. Experience has proved that funds that were originally spent on a single human rights workshop are adequate for 10 community public meetings with more or less the same outputs. A baraza can reach more people than a formal workshop would. For example, whereas a baraza can accommodate as many as 200 participants, a workshop would accommodate 100 at a maximum. The number of participants in a UHRC-organised baraza has always ranged between 100 and 400 participants.

The baraza approach has helped UHRC make significant savings on venues in hotels. For instance a venue for 200 participants for a day in a hotel can be secured currently at approximately UGX 600,000 (USD 240) only, compared to the venue for a baraza which is usually free of charge or at a maximum at UGX 50,000 (USD 20). The costs of one special radio announcements can go for UGX 50,000 (USD 20) on the big radio stations but can be placed at a community-based radio for as little as UGX 1,000 (less than half a US dollar). A meal in a hotel which goes for UGX 30,000 (USD 12) can be secured at UGX 5,000 (USD 2) in a community setting. In organising for a baraza the costs for accommodation, transport refund, meals, venue, and honoraria have largely been avoided. The limited costs incurred are usually on fuel, stationery, hiring of chairs and purchase of refreshments. This has made the baraza initiative the most cost effective approach of conducting human rights programmes with comparatively huge results.

3.2.5 New approaches and strategies

By working with the local leaders in targeting the communities, UHRC has learnt that issues of concern get responded to immediately or at least quickly as the leaders would be at hand to respond and act on them. In addition, partnerships with Community Based Organisations, local non-governmental organisations and local leaders have been strengthened through the community baraza. A good lesson learnt is that the institution conducting a human rights baraza gets

information about the human rights situation of the targeted community. It is critical for interventions to respect and value local knowledge, progressive cultures and traditions. Most importantly, UHRC has appreciated the need to continuously revise and adopt innovative strategies and approaches to HRE.

3.2.6 Enhancing community policing

A community baraza enhances community policing where a police officer(s) is involved as a facilitator. The direct interaction between the police personnel and the community members not only helps in getting the members' questions answered, but it can also get issues acted on expeditiously, in addition to strengthening the partnership between police and the communities.

3.2.7 Convenient venues conducive for participation

The utilisation of local community venues makes it easy for participants to access them. They are usually cheap or offered at no cost and they are conducive. Since community members attending a baraza know each other, they do not feel intimidated or fear to freely participate. The friendly environment facilitates the free flow of ideas and communication in a participatory manner.

3.2.8 Opportunity allowing for other varied human rights work

A community baraza can provide an opportunity for the organisation to perform some of their other functions. During a baraza activity, the UHRC was able to organise after the discussions to receive complaints, give legal advice and assistance, provide some complainants with information on the status of their complaints. UHRC was also able to monitor and get information on the situation of human rights and get feedback from the people on its human rights services. A baraza would also provide an opportunity to assess the capacity and knowledge gaps of partners like police, CSOs, political and civic leaders within a given community and this would inform UHRC's planning for further training and sensitisation. Through the baraza, UHRC could also get pointers to critical thematic areas that could inform the process of selection of topics for formal researches to undertake.

3.3 CONCERNS IN LESSONS LEARNT

- 1) It is easy for the discussions in the baraza to derail from the set goals or theme because the participants tend to raise any issues of concern to them irrespective of the theme of discussion. Likewise they expect the discussion to provide answers and solutions to their issues. There is therefore need for the baraza team to bear this in mind and manage participants' expectations, the discussions and time accordingly.

- 2) The timing of the baraza needs to be set bearing in mind the social, political and economic circumstances of the community. For example, a baraza should not be organised on a Friday at noon in a predominantly Muslim community; or in the morning hours during a planting or harvesting season in a community where people are cultivators.
- 3) In communities where there is male dominance or social and cultural challenges of marginalisation of people like children and women, there is need to ensure that these challenges do not get reflected in the baraza. There must be strategies for targeted mobilisation that can ensure that all categories of people in a given community attend and effectively participate in the baraza.
- 4) In cases where more than one baraza is planned for multiple communities on any given day, if the planning is not thorough, the distances between the different targeted communities could affect the baraza output and the ability to devote enough time to each. One needs to strategically map-out the communities for targeting in consideration of proximity and the time needed to move from one community to another, among other things.
- 5) Over reliance on external mobilisers/contact persons may lead to over mobilisation or under mobilisation of community members for a particular baraza. The vigilance and constant involvement of the designated officer in mobilisation is critical for the proper management of the process.
- 6) The focus and coverage of a baraza is generally the village level or the lowest administrative unit. This is narrow compared to the total number of villages in the country that need to be ideally covered. Therefore, the baraza approach would require a long time of implementation to be able to cover a reasonable number of villages. It is therefore important that the baraza team undertakes purposeful targeting in order to maximise the benefits of targeting some communities over others.

- 7) Considering the large number of people who turn-up for the baraza, the IEC materials for distribution to the community members are usually never enough to cover each individual present, given that it is an open meeting. Therefore, the baraza team should carry along as many IEC materials as possible, but should also identify key community members to give reference materials like copies of the national Constitution and the other laws. These key members should hold the reference materials in trust for the rest of the community members and should be able to ensure that they are easily accessible to them whenever they want to make reference.
- 8) There is need for an effective follow-up mechanism and that is why a staff member should be designated for that specific responsibility to follow-up on emerging issues from the baraza. If issues of concern are not followed up and feedback given to the communities, it discounts the impact the baraza would have had on the targeted community.
- 9) Sometimes community members' expectations have been shaped or influenced by what they have already experienced from other interventions of different partners. It is important that the baraza team establishes and manages such expectations accordingly, particularly so when they are not in tandem with what the baraza intervention might be able to offer.
- 10) Security of property and persons is an issue of paramount importance. Considering that the baraza is an open forum, there is need to ensure adequate security during the baraza. This may be provided by either the person in charge of security in that community or the area police.
- 11) The organisers of a baraza should consider the weather patterns in a given community to avoid disruptions from the vagaries of nature. In this regard, the timing and venue among others should be appropriately decided on.

3.4 EXPECTED VALUES WHILE CONDUCTING A BARAZA

- a) Dress appropriately.
- b) Be non-partisan.
- c) Treat all participants equally and be respectful.
- d) Use appropriate language to address the audience.
- e) Be sensitive to the community in respect of their socio-cultural disposition.
- f) Avoid discreditable conduct and unethical behaviour e.g. drunkenness, indiscipline e.g. answering phone calls during baraza discussions.
- g) Avoid being too domineering, pompous or too defensive during the baraza discussions.
- h) Provide for future contact, official rather than private telephone numbers to the participants.
- i) Avoid giving false hopes to participants beyond your institutional mandate and capacity.
- j) Avoid committing your institution on matters on which decisions are beyond your control.
- k) Manage and steer the baraza discussions effectively in order to curb participants' unrealistic expectations.
- l) Ensure that presentations during the baraza are concise so that adequate time is left for the question and answer session.
- m) Be flexible to accommodate people of different administrative hierarchy, though bearing in mind the protocol where necessary.



A woman participant asks a question during human rights baraza held at Kasambya sub county headquarters, in Mubende district in June 2012.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA CHECKLIST

1. Clear definition and assignment of roles and responsibilities to all baraza team members
2. The political sensitivities that should be taken into account when choosing mobiliser(s)/contact person(s)
3. Mobiliser(s)/contact person(s) details and contact number(s)
4. List of resource persons and their contact number(s)
5. Security personnel and their contact number(s)
6. Confirmed venue
7. Copies of presentations and IEC reference materials
8. Programme/agenda
9. Functional tools and equipment e.g. the public address system
10. Resources like transport and fuel
11. Refreshments
12. Politicians or civic leaders and security personnel on whom courtesy calls should be made upon reaching the communities.

APPENDIX 2: HUMAN RIGHTS BARAZA ASSESSMENT TOOL

1. Objectives of the baraza
 - a).....
 - b)
 - c).....
 - d)

2. Attendance – number of participants
 - a) Planned:
 - b) Actual:

3. Number of participants by gender
 - a) Male :.....
 - b) Female:.....

4. General level of participation
 - a) High:
 - b) Average:
 - c) Low:

5. The % level of participation by men and women in relation to their attendance
 - a) Male :.....
 - b) Female:.....

6. Quality of questions asked
 - a) Relevant:%
 - b) Irrelevant:.....%

7. Degree of achievement of stated objectives%

8. General Observations
 - a).....
 - b)
 - c).....

APPENDIX 3: REPORTING TOOL

The baraza activity report should have the following features:

Cover page

1. The institutional logo and name
2. Title of the activity
3. Date and venue
4. Theme where applicable

Structure of the report

1. Introduction: Answering the 5W & H (what, where, when, why, who and how)
2. Summary of remarks and presentations
3. Issues raised during plenary and responses given
4. Recommendations made by participants

Last page

1. Signature of the author
2. Name and title of the author
3. Date of submission of the report

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