

National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP)

What is a NHRAP?

A National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) is a national action plan that seeks to improve the state of human rights of a country within a certain timeframe. It is a public document that takes a systematic approach in advancing human rights by placing human rights in the context of public policy. It aims to achieve institutional and legislative reforms, aside from raising awareness and cultivating a stronger culture of human rights in the country. Ideally, a NHRAP would outline ambitious yet achievable human rights goals through practical measures, based on the country's historical, social, political and legal circumstances.

Why is it important?

A NHRAP is important for a number of reasons, including:

- It provides an objective depiction of the state of human rights in the country.
- It allows for a comprehensive assessment of human rights needs in the country, thereby enabling the identification of key areas of human rights concern in the country.
- It increases the Government's capacity to promote and protect human rights by strengthening administrative structures and promoting greater respect for the rule of law.
- It leads to greater incorporation of human rights standards in domestic laws and policies.
- It provides for the integration of human rights principles into other national programmes in areas such as development, business, education, healthcare, social services, and administration of justice, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all citizens.
- It helps strengthen existing institutions involved in the promotion and protection of human rights, including SUHAKAM.
- It encourages greater conformity between national human rights practices and international human rights standards.
- It raises public awareness on human rights, thereby encouraging a stronger culture of human rights in the country.

The NHRAP Process

Although NHRAPs differ from one country to another, the NHRAP process normally comprises five main stages, namely the preparatory phase, the development phase, the implementation phase, the monitoring phase and the evaluation phase. All the five phases are equally important in ensuring positive outcome.

Since the Government plays a central role in implementing the NHRAP, it is crucial that the Government takes charge of the NHRAP process. It is equally crucial for the Government to ensure, as far as possible, that the process involves active participation by all relevant

stakeholders such as government agencies, the civil society, enforcement agencies, the national human rights institution, parliamentarians, the judiciary, the private sector and the media. This would guarantee a more comprehensive, realistic and effective NHRAP.

Malaysia's NHRAP

Malaysia has yet to have a NHRAP. Nevertheless, the Malaysian Government had recently appointed the Legal Division of the Prime Minister's Department as the focal agency to prepare and develop Malaysia's NHRAP. This move by the Government is a significant milestone as it constitutes the first step towards having a NHRAP for Malaysia.

SUHAKAM's role in Malaysia's NHRAP

SUHAKAM has been advocating the development of a NHRAP for Malaysia since 2002. Now that the Government has decided to develop a NHRAP, SUHAKAM looks forward to playing two major roles in the NHRAP process, which are:

- To assist the Government, especially during the preparatory and development phases, by offering expertise and providing views and inputs to the Government, whenever possible.
- To monitor and assess the implementation of the NHRAP.