

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Following Human Rights Day held on 21 March, the various and compelling discussions about human rights still echo. We are a democratic society, with institutions structured according to human rights principles. Yet, the very nature of work done by many civil society organisations and NGOs speak of the long road ahead to truly give expression to our human rights aspirations as a society. (This is saying it in the nicest possible way!)



As we continue on our journey of becoming more ethics aware, we invite you to take the event of Human Rights Day 2021 as an opportunity to encourage individual reflection as well as discussion in your teams about the meaning and practice of human rights. Discussions of this nature stimulate awareness, critical thought, reasoning, and help us to fine-tune our ethics vocabulary. We encourage you to keep some things upfront in your mind in your discussions. Firstly, that it is useful to be practical. When we talk in abstract terms only, there is a risk of ending up not doing anything that is helpful. Secondly, there is no expectation on any of us to change the whole world, but to be human-rights-aware and accountable in our own every-day space. There where you are present, in any event, engaging with others, doing your work.

So, here we go ...

Firstly, back to basics:



When we talk about 'human rights', what does this actually mean?



We have a Bill of Rights. What are these rights afforded to human beings in South Africa? (For clarity, go to <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-2-bill-rights#>)

Now, reflect on the quote below:



"Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 – Chapter 2: Bill of Rights).



Pause, and consider the significance of this right.



According to you, what does this right mean?

And, if we would be invisible visitors at your organisation, what would we notice

about 'dignity' in the way people are thought about and engaged with?

Lastly, the 'so what' of your reflection and discussion ... What action can you and your team members take to practice dignity with even more awareness and effect?



With warm regards from Johanna and Zelda.