Advocacy and public engagement

The international human rights movement has also understood advocacy and public engagement as effective means by which to spread global literacy about human rights. This concern is dictated by the founding document of the movement, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which envisages “teaching and education” in its proclamation clause to be among the tools by which “every individual and every organ of society” shall strive to promote respect for the panoply of rights enumerated in the document. The goal of such human rights education, the document continues, is to secure the “universal and effective recognition and observance” of the enumerated rights, realizing that “disregard and contempt for human rights” are in large measure responsible for the many “barbarous acts” that have plagued and continue to torment human history. Research questions include:

- What are the various roles of transnational organizations—including human rights advocacy groups and corporations—in regard to the promotion of human rights at the international and local level?

- What impact are new information technologies having on human rights activism, public debate, political participation, accountability, and governance, and how can their benefits be advanced? How are transitional societies or those emerging from violent conflict governed? Whose “peace” should be built?

- In what ways do models of transitional justice and advocacy affect current values and legislation in post-conflict societies?

- How do social interests and values take on the rhetoric of human rights and global justice?

- How should local cultural norms figure in human rights advocacy and education?