



Science and Human Rights

MOOC Report

E-learning Department



Global Campus
of Human Rights



Foreword

The idea of the course was born out of a collaboration between UNESCO and the Global Campus of Human Rights aiming to address the knowledge gap in understanding the link between scientific freedom and responsibility and human rights. Both partners share a commitment to education, including through MOOCs. UNESCO and the Global Campus also share a commitment to 'good science', including both scientific freedom and scientific responsibility, and more generally respect for the right to science.

More specifically, by anchoring science in human rights we contribute to:

- promoting the adoption of a human rights-based approach (HRBA), including the mainstreaming of gender equality, to scientific freedom and scientific responsibility by scientists and policymakers
- building capacity on a HRBA to scientific freedom and scientific responsibility among scientific researchers and policymakers, including women scientists and young researchers, by harnessing the complementary expertise and resources of UNESCO and the Global Campus

The MOOC had the following objectives:

- to increase awareness about the connections between human rights, and the right to science in particular, scientific freedom and scientific responsibility, drawing inter alia on General Comment N.25 and the Recommendation on science and scientific researchers
- to highlight, by making reference to available data, the need to link science and human rights, including gender equality, in accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- to share robust knowledge on human rights principles, standards and practices in a free, open and user-friendly way
- to empower scientists, students of science, and policymakers through education on the HRBA to scientific freedom and responsibility
- to amplify dialogue on the relationships between human rights, ethics and law in the field of science



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Introduction

Scientific freedom and responsibility have to be enabled and practised. They benefit both scientists and policymakers; they also benefit all of us. Yet, these benefits will not be achieved if the status of **scientific freedom and responsibility as a human right**, as well as their linkages with other human rights, are not well understood or are plainly neglected.

At present, we have a **human rights knowledge-gap** that needs to be closed if science is to be objective, evidence-based, free from undue interference and accessible. Closing this gap will enable scientific researchers to claim and exercise their rights and responsibilities relating to the conduct of science, and will enable policymakers to meet their human rights obligations and create a healthy environment for rights-driven science, which is a cornerstone for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In order to help close the knowledge gap amongst scientific researchers, policymakers and others, UNESCO and the Global Campus offered a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC). The course was the **first dedicated educational engagement** on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to scientific freedom and responsibility, which was also accessible, at scale and cross-disciplinary in its engagement with human rights.

This report presents **data and analysis** on demographics, courseware, impact, highlights and recommendations.

The MOOC in a nutshell

Key information



10 Oct-13 Nov
2022



[Open EdX](#)



5+ h/week



[Webpage](#)



[Teaser and social media campaign](#)



5 discussions,
5 quizzes, 3 polls,
2 surveys,
2 word clouds,
1 ranking exercise

A snapshot

Our lecturers



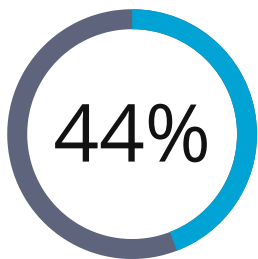
- **Gabriela Ramos**, UNESCO ADG for Social and Human Sciences
- **Thérèse Murphy**, EMA Chairperson and Queen's University Belfast
- **David Suzuki**, Right Livelihood Laureate
- **Changrok Soh**, Member of the UN Human Rights Committee
- **Yvonne Donders**, University of Amsterdam and Commissioner at the Netherlands Human Rights Institute
- **Mikel Mancisidor**, Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- **Vivi Stravrou**, Executive Secretary and Senior Science Officer, International Science Council
- **Veronica Gomez**, GC President and Judge at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights
- **Morris Tidball-Binz**, UN Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions
- **Victor Penchaszadeh**, Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero (UNTREF), Buenos Aires
- **Rob Terry**, Manager of Research Policy, WHO
- **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health
- **Marcos Orellana**, UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights
- **Joji Cariño**, Senior Policy Advisor, Forest Peoples Programme
- **Theresa Harris**, Program Director, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
- **Matthew Wallace**, Lead of UNESCO's STI ecosystems project in Africa, UNESCO Paris
- **Guillermo Anlló**, Regional Programme Specialist on STI, UNESCO Montevideo

Highlights

- **cutting edge**, introducing the human rights-based approach to scientific freedom and responsibility to a wide public (with focus on scientists)
- particularly **enriching** as based on a successful collaboration with UNESCO
- benefiting from extensive input from **high level** experts, including three UN Special Rapporteurs, one Right Livelihood Laureate, as well as UNESCO, WHO, ISC and AAS specialists
- **up-to-date** as focused on the latest legislative changes, topical challenges, ongoing trends in science and current events
- highly **adaptable** in different curricula, connecting across disciplines, well received by participants with different backgrounds

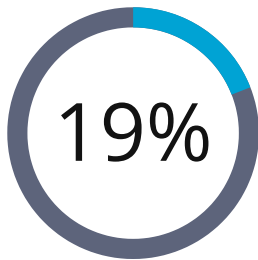


Professional profiles



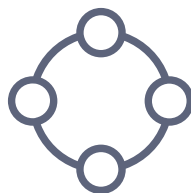
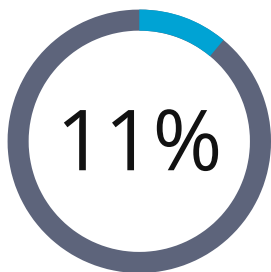
Students and education professionals

The biggest group of participants was made up of students (32%) and education professionals (12%)



Researchers and scientists

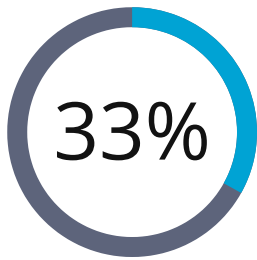
The course was also followed by researchers (12%) and scientists (7%)



NGO professionals

It also caught attention of NGO professionals (11%)

Audience



Participants with strong background

Peculiarly, most of the respondents found themselves already **well prepared** and informed on the topic (33%) and many saw the course as the possibility to complement their knowledge and skills (37%).

Expectations

Experience in science prevailed over that in human rights

'I expect to learn about human rights and the way they can be either protected or violated on scientific language and papers on the name of science.' (initial evaluation survey)

'I think it would be a great experience to conducting scientific research and social initiatives while taking in consideration the importance of Human Rights.' (initial evaluation survey)

In this respect, it seems that participants' expertise in science prevailed over that in human rights - in fact, many respondents expressed their high interest in receiving information about the possible **added value** of the human rights-based approach in their scientific work, thus proving that the course filled the gap initially identified.

The course attracted especially those in the health sector

'From the introductory video, my curiosity has been "tickled" towards learning the human rights based approach in achieving SDGs. As a public health professional and a researcher, I expect to become more competent, ethical and have increased output in all I do vis a vis this MOOC!' (initial evaluation survey)

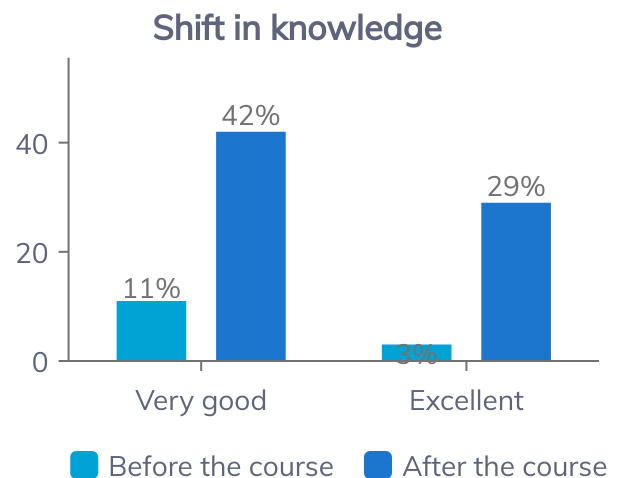
'[I wish] To gain new knowledge and experience within a field that is extremely relevant but alien to a medical undergraduate such as myself.' (initial evaluation survey)



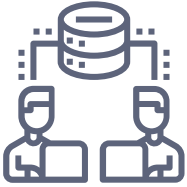
However, the course was also seen as an **eye-opener** for experts in human rights

'I focused all my studies on human rights, but never relating them with science. I hope to open my mind to another branch of my vast field.' (initial evaluation survey)

After the course the general knowledge on the topic **increased** from the initial 3% (excellent), 11% (very good) to 29% (excellent) and 42% very good.



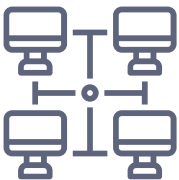
Impact



The course introduced the participants to different pathways to **connect** science with human rights, how to collaborate across disciplines and how to incorporate and align their respective activities with emerging global standards to strengthen human rights.



Designed around the fundamental elements of the human-rights based approach shown as a guideline for creating **change**, it also aimed at inspiring participants through further analysis of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals.



Within its highly **innovative didactic approach**, the course merged theoretical and practical approaches by presenting examples of ongoing projects and specific tools that may be applied in several sectors.

The course helped the participants to:

- understand how to claim and exercise their **rights** and **responsibilities** relating to the conduct of science
- identify relevant research topics at the intersection of different fields and evaluate their **potential** for innovation, as well as their possible negative and positive impact on society
- understand how their ways of working may contribute to **overcoming barriers** in implementation of human rights
- manage **interdisciplinary** projects (in research or development) by applying relevant HRBA tools and legislation to generate change
- identify the specific tools and innovations that could improve the **quality** of scientific work
- feel **motivated** to promote the HRBA in science
- **communicate** better about the relationships between science, human rights, ethics and law

At the end of the course, in the evaluation forms, participants claimed that:

- they have developed a growth **mind-set** and seem to be more willing to take on new ways of working
- the new approach will be **adaptable** in their work by incorporating sustainability and social impact factors in their future assignments
- there was a strong link and possibility of applying their new knowledge in **practice** in different work fields
- they were planning to include the new approach in the teaching curricula in many different **sectors**

- For some the course has been seen as essential to furthering their **careers** and deepening their **knowledge** - which remains amidst increasing demand for professionals who know how to apply human rights standards

'As a research scientist, I have come to understand the principles and importance of providing a holistic human rights-based approach when conducting scientific research.' (final evaluation survey)

'I am a journalist, social worker and environmental activist, this course will be useful for me in future endeavours, thanks.' (initial evaluation survey)

'I am passionate about empowering the girl child especially those undertaking STEM courses. The knowledge acquired in this course will help me educate my mentees on how to create an enabling environment for scientific freedom.' (initial evaluation survey)

'I am interested in specializing in disaster victim identification, and the course helped me understand that human rights are the bases of Forensic Genetics, and issues with identification.' (final evaluation survey)

'It allowed me to find out reports and research areas I must study more for policy and decision making regarding HR and STI policy.' (final evaluation survey)

Recommendations from participants



There was praise for the lecturers who presented their materials in a very **accessible** and **understandable** way

Some respondents also requested: more **interaction** with lecturers and the other participants during the course in general



Others suggested to relaunch the course in other **languages** (we are planning to launch the Spanish version in the summer of 2023)

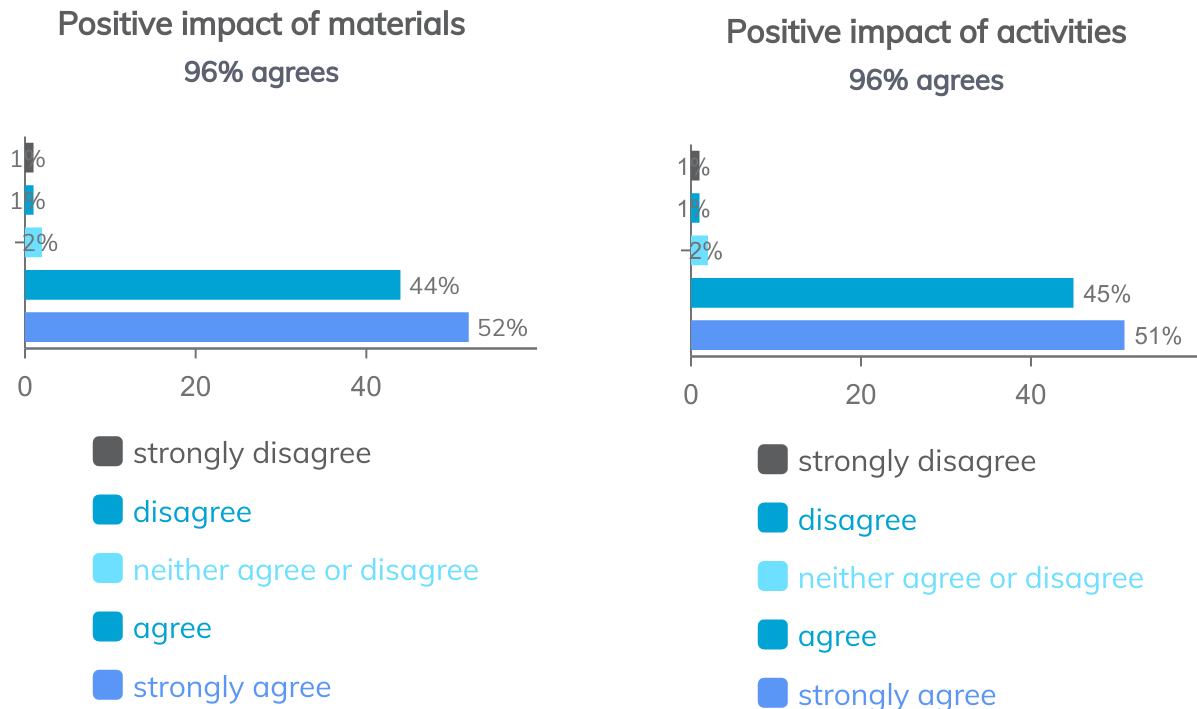


Suggestions for improvement concerned:

- easing the **workload**
- fixing **technical** hiccups

Evaluation

Impactful materials and activities made participants give a **very high rating** and **top recommendation**.



94% gave 4-5*

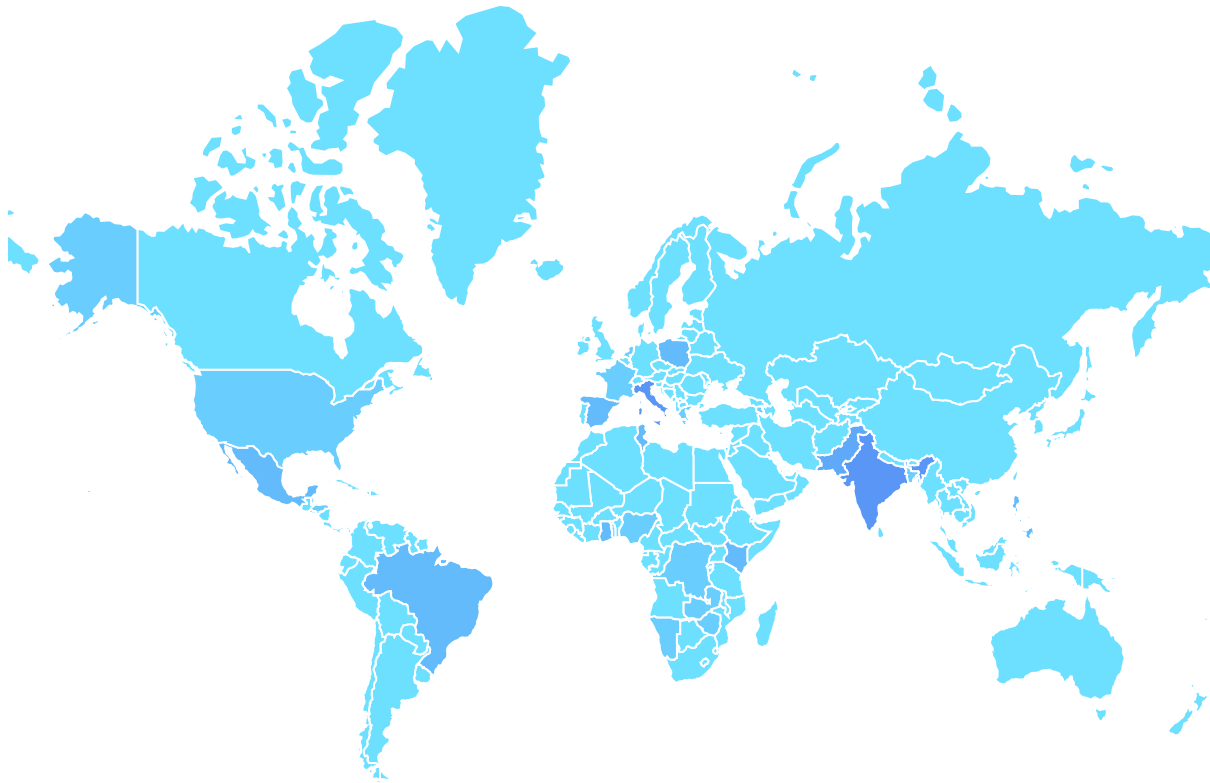
When asked to give an overall rating on a scale of 1 to 5, only 6% of participants gave 3*. The rest is shared between **33%** who assigned 4* and **61%** who gave 5*.

97% would recommend

We also asked how likely they were to recommend the MOOC to a friend. If 1% was neutral, the rest was **likely (10%)**, **very likely (39%)** and **extremely likely (48%)**.

Certificates

Our certificates, awarded to those who completed all course requirements, reached **122 participants** in **56 countries** around the world.



1005 Participants

12% Certificates

The most represented regions were: **Asia-Pacific (32%)** and **Europe (25%)**. Another region that fared well was sub-Saharan Africa (20%). Participation from Latin America (6,5%), MENA (6,5%), North America (6%), Central Asia (1%) and Southeast Europe (3%) was in line with previous courses.

The countries with the highest number of certificates were **India (15)**, **Italy (8)** and **Indonesia (6)**.

Selected comments

Improving education

'I'm a science professor at a Canadian University who has a career devoted to basic science research, as well as teaching science. By engaging in this MOOC, I have ideas and resources to help me convey to students (and colleagues) that good science must also do good. A human rights based approach to basic science teaching and research is not currently part of our curricula, but I see many ways that I can integrate it into course projects and discussions. Through informal discussions, I have already learned that many students are striving to make connections between social justice and science; after completing this MOOC, I see how much catching up I have to do to keep pace with these student ambitions, and I also see how impactful it can be to make a human-rights-based approach an explicit part of teaching and learning. One of my points of emphasis will be to provide better context for basic science, and how important it is to be able to communicate science. I recognize that it is work and ambitions of today's students that will allow us to meet the SDGs by 2030.'
(Dr. Kris Poduska)

Fighting human rights abuses

'I think the course informs me of different ways to help in sustainable development of my country by adopting certain measures. we will provide technical support, guidance and advocacy to increase the effectiveness of judicial and non-judicial accountability mechanisms and policies to address human rights abuses arising from economic activity, including in cross border cases; clarify legal options and identify practical measures to improve access to remedy for victims of human rights abuses that involve businesses and other economic actors, including in the technology and finance sectors; and strategically engage with business and other economic actors to enhance accountability and access to remedy.' (Prachi Priyanka)

Promoting sustainable development

'As a Master of Science and a professor of Active citizenship, I incorporate the foundations of sustainable development science into my lectures for students and explore how much students implement sustainable development in their daily lives. In our European country Slovenia, which already has the "I feel green" sign in its logo, sustainable development is considered and valued as essential. The capital city was also recently declared as the green capital of Europe. It means that citizens live and act according to the values that keep our planet green and sustainable not only for us, but more importantly for the next generations to come. In teaching young people, I will surely follow the goals that I've learned from MOOC and were pointed out as crucial for the future of good science.' (Sasa Cimperman)

Improving health technologies

'First of all, the MOOC allows me to understand the impact and role of sciences in a human rights. As a Researcher with a particular interest in digital health technologies, I am already committed to producing solutions focused on digital health applications and ICT systems. One of the cornerstones of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) initiative is access to health technologies. My country, like many other developing countries, is facing Universal Health Coverage, that's where I'm going to get more involved. I mean providing solutions that give access to health technologies. This is for example, the telemedicine/ehealth that will enable to connect medical expertises and care to populations at risk and with minimal medical resources.' (Eustache Muteba Ayumba)

Promoting inclusion

'In my professional context, I believe I can foster the inclusion of a HRBA by bringing this forward in the curricula design for future engineers. It is crucial that they are sensitised and trained early enough to reflect on the impact of their actions, and promote diversity, inclusion, a user based approach, and apply a sustainability lens in the knowledge generation process and related activities. Another way is through the organisation of awareness raising events and communication material on the crucial responsibility both for scientists and policy makers to create and support enabling conditions for an ethical science where human rights are not only considered but also strengthened.'
(Dr. Gabriela Tajeda)

'As a psychologist, member of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (NPM) in my country, this course has been very useful to me to the extent that I have been able to visualize from different angles the importance of the approach of human rights in relation to science, as well as the role of science in promoting human rights and sustainable development.'
(Ariadna Cheroni)

'I deal with economic migrants in my daily work and I am fully aware of how the lack of resources in some States of our planet has a devastating impact on the populations that live there. The negative impact does not concern only the people who remain in their countries of origin but also those who decide to emigrate. Those who remain are destined to experience a condition of devastating human rights poverty, those who decide to leave and arrive in Europe are very often exploited by criminal organizations. Here is that applied science in the poorest areas of the world would make a big difference for people. I deeply admired reading about the examples of projects carried out by UNESCO and would propose the same.' (Giovanna-iaHR)

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