



Concept Note

Human dignity is inherent to every human being, and human rights provide the framework for recognising, protecting, and upholding that dignity, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. These rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent, affirming the inherent dignity and equal worth of all human beings. While the core values of human rights remain constant, their interpretation and application continue to evolve in response to changing historical, socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts, as well as emerging global challenges.

Although human rights frameworks have adapted to changing global realities, their effectiveness is increasingly tested by significant challenges. Across Asia, a complex interplay of political, economic, and social forces is reshaping the human rights landscape and exposing persistent gaps in the protection of human dignity. Geopolitical tensions, economic insecurity, political repression, religious polarisation, and increasing militarisation are contributing to growing human rights concerns across the region. Marginalised communities continue to experience discrimination and exclusion, while access to employment, housing, education, healthcare, and other basic rights remains unequal.

Large-scale migration in South and Southeast Asia is increasingly driven by necessity rather than choice. Conflict, insecurity, poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and rights violations compel people to leave their homes in search of safety and livelihoods. At the same time, human trafficking, forced labour, and modern slavery continue to affect vulnerable people, including through transnational criminal networks and scam-centre operations.

In several contexts, authoritarian governance and shrinking civic space have further restricted freedom of expression and assembly and placed human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and civil society organisations under increasing pressure. Surveillance, repression, displacement, and limited access to justice continue to undermine human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

Rapid advances in digital technologies and artificial intelligence are also creating new challenges to human dignity and rights. These technologies are transforming how people live, communicate, work, and participate in society, while also enabling new forms of surveillance, discrimination, manipulation, and intrusion into privacy. The increasing digitisation of everyday life raises important questions about the protection of personal identity, freedom, autonomy, and dignity in an interconnected world. The growing use of artificial intelligence further raises concerns about algorithmic bias, unequal access to technological benefits, the displacement of livelihoods, and the use of automated systems in decisions that affect people's rights, opportunities, and well-being.

These realities raise important questions for churches. What does it mean for the church to affirm that every person is created in the image of God in contexts where people's dignity and rights are denied? How can churches respond faithfully and effectively to injustice? How can theological conviction be translated into practical advocacy and action?

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has long been engaged in promoting human rights, justice, and peace across the region through advocacy, education initiatives such as the Institute on Human Rights (IHR), solidarity, and ecumenical action. Building on this commitment, CCA seeks to strengthen the capacity of a new generation of Christian and ecumenical leaders to engage critically and constructively with the challenges to human dignity and human rights facing Asia today.

The Training Programme on Strengthening Human Dignity and Rights in Asia, to be held from 29 November to 5 December 2026 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, provides an opportunity for emerging leaders to deepen their theological understanding of human dignity and its relationship to human rights, strengthen their understanding of contemporary human rights issues in Asia, and gain practical knowledge of international human rights principles, mechanisms, and advocacy processes. The programme also seeks to strengthen participants' capacity to analyse human rights situations, identify appropriate advocacy responses, and develop context-specific action plans, while building networks with other emerging ecumenical human rights advocates across Asia.

The training will bring together 25 young Christians from across Asia, providing a space for participants to learn from one another, critically reflect on the realities in their respective contexts, and explore how churches can exercise their prophetic role in defending human dignity and promoting justice. Through biblical and theological reflection, social and political analysis, human rights education, case studies, group discussions, and practical advocacy exercises, participants will be equipped to translate their commitment to human dignity and rights into meaningful engagement within their churches, organisations, and communities.

Who Can Apply?

The programme is open to young Christian leaders between the ages of 25 and 35 from across Asia who have an interest in and commitment to human rights, justice, and advocacy. Applicants should demonstrate an interest in bringing the learning from the training into their churches, organisations, or communities. All applications must be endorsed by a CCA member church, member council, or partner ecumenical organisation.

Selection of Participants

Twenty-five participants will be selected based on their demonstrated commitment to human rights advocacy and their engagement in the ministry of their respective church or organisation. The selection process will also seek to ensure gender and confessional balance, as well as fair national and sub-regional representation across Asia.

Participation Support

CCA will cover board and lodging, as well as local transportation in Chiang Mai, for all selected participants for the duration of the training programme.

Participants are expected to arrive in Chiang Mai, Thailand on Sunday, 29 November 2026 and plan their departure for Saturday, 5 December 2026, to ensure full participation in the training programme.

Limited international travel bursaries may be available, upon request, to selected participants from countries in South and Southeast Asia, in accordance with the CCA Travel Subsidy Policy. Sending churches

and organisations are encouraged to contribute towards participants' international travel costs where possible.

The deadline to receive completed applications is 4 October 2026.

All applications, with complete supporting documents, must be submitted via Google Forms: [Application Form - Training Programme on Strengthening Human Dignity and Rights in Asia](#)