



SIKH HUMAN  
RIGHTS GROUP

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[www.shrg.ngo](http://www.shrg.ngo)



[info@shrg.ngo](mailto:info@shrg.ngo)

The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) was established in 1985. Since 2015 it has had Special ECOSOC Consultative Status at the UN. It is formed on principles of Sikh worldview and philosophy of pluralism, respect, dignity, diversity, reverence for nature and governance by consensus. Until 1993 SHRG focus was on human rights violations in India with particular focus on Panjab. After 1993, SHRG widened its interests in Diversity and Sustainable Development. The areas of interest further increased to incorporate Sewa and Governance. Currently the broad areas of SHRG work are,

- 1 Human Rights, Responsibilities and Duties
- 2 Sustainable Development and Environment
- 3 Diversity
- 4 Governance and Pluralism
- 5 Sewa.



**AIR IS THE GURU,  
WATER IS THE  
FATHER, EARTH IS  
THE GREAT MOTHER.**  
GURU NANAK

The Sikh Human Rights Group is an international entity with central office in UK. It has members in Canada, USA, India, Brazil, South Africa, Spain and Thailand.

Sikh Human Rights Group is a non political organisation and does not seek to represent any particular community or group. It promotes Sikh perspectives in international issues on current and prospective issues facing the world in general, together with its volunteers and affiliates

SHRG will be seeking accreditation to other international bodies.



# ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

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SHRG has members from several communities.

**SHRG day to day work is run by a Director.**

The structure of SHRG is:

## Voting members

- **A Board of Governors** who decide on broad policy
- **An Executive Board** that decides specific policies in their areas of speciality
- **Members** These are generally individuals who have worked with SHRG for 3 years on a project or in its administration and can vote on their area of interest.



## Non Voting members

- **Volunteer Members** are individuals who work on special projects or fields of interest without remuneration.
- **Supporting Members** are individuals and institutions who give financial and occasional support to SHRG
- **Affiliates:** these are voluntary sector organisations in their own right who have similar interests to SHRG and coordinate as well as network their work of interest with SHRG

SHRG will be setting up a board of Patrons, Advisors and Consultants in time.

## Staff

The paid staff work under the Director.

# AFFILIATES OF SHRG.

- ▣ Khadur Sahib Nishan-e-Sikhi
- ▣ IKS Dept Kwazulu Natal University work in the field of sustainable development
- ▣ ACAO MATA Atlantic project
- ▣ EUBIOS a large international organisation specialising in Bioethics
- ▣ Sikh Welfare Research Trust
- ▣ British Sikh Consultative Forum
- ▣ Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

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There are many ways to get involved with Sikh Human Rights Group. As an organisation with ECOSOC Special Consultative Status at UN, SHRG offers a platform and opportunities to take issues to the United Nations and its bodies, to engage in debates at the UN where new policies, international norms and instruments are being developed. It also gives opportunity to engage in UN coordinated work in fields such as poverty alleviation, zero hunger, helping in disasters, environmental work and much more.

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Supporting members

Supporting members usually make a financial contribution to SHRG or arrange meetings with the community for fund raising



## VOLUNTEERS

### Volunteers can get involved in various ways

1. Take up a project in the field of their interest and
  - i. Do back ground research
  - ii. Coordinate a project
  - iii. Represent SHRG at international venues
  - iv. Represent SHRG related events and conferences in your region or State
  - v. You can represent SHRG at Universities and think tanks and even hold joint events
2. Work as intern at UN Geneva or at UN New York
3. Analyse State or UN reports for SHRG
4. Assist in writing a position paper on an issue
5. You can align your masters or PhD work with our work and have access to UN
6. Join our online groups in discussions, meetings and conferences that seek to develop positions and understanding on various issues
7. Help to implement SHRG position and international norms in institutions you are engaged in
8. Set up practical programmes such as tree planting, water preservation, access to clean water, healthy food, energy saving strategies, education, training etc.
9. You can help to lobby your government
10. Fund raise
11. Help with marketing and social media

**You can simply donate to SHRG on a monthly basis, yearly or with an endowment and get reports of our work, engage in online events, attend any dinners and special events and send your comments.**

You can work with one of our affiliates and hold conferences with them



**Volunteers who wish to engage actively in our projects will be encouraged to attend our online course on UN and SHRG work**

## **GET IN TOUCH**

**After deciding what you would like to do, please get in touch with us and let us know. Fill the form on our website which will assist us to understand how you wish to engage.**

## **AREAS OF WORK AND PROJECTS**

**There are many treaties and Declarations at the United Nations covering several fields. Many are inter related. It is difficult to list all of the work we do with various sections of the UN. This is a broad list.**

# **OVERARCHING THEMES**

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## **▪ HUMAN RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

Most of SHRG work initially focussed on documenting violations in Panjab. These were extrajudicial executions, torture, disappearances, illegal and involuntary detentions, refugees, asylum cases, review of legal instruments etc

Most current work is on thematic issues such as Death Penalty, Convention on Torture, Right to Fair Trials, cultural aspects of human rights etc

SHRG is also looking at principles of responsibilities and duties that have historically been the basis of ensuring human dignity and respect as well as good governance in some civilisations. SHRG is researching whether these have the same outcomes as human rights.

## **Transnationals and Human Rights**

SHRG has been promoting accountability of Businesses particularly Transnational Corporations in the field of human rights since 1996. It is an active participant in the sessions on Business and Human Rights as well as Transnational Corporations and Human Rights at the UN.

## **▪ DIVERSITY**

After participating in the World Conference Against Racism in which SHRG contributed to three themes, namely Cultural Diversity, Diversity and Sikhs, SHRG has developed a substantive interest in diversity and pluralism.

SHRG is trying to promote a UN Convention on Diversity and a UN Day on Diversity.

SHRG considers diversity to be a natural phenomenon in its various manifestations, such as race, colour, ethnicity, culture, gender, lifestyles, freedom of thought and feels that States should adopt pro active programmes of action in making society at ease with diversity.

## Minorities

SHRG attends the Forum on Minorities and promotes that minorities should be able to self describe themselves rather than through current lenses of religious, ethnicity etc.

## Neurodiversity

To make those with lifelong neurological characteristics further accepted in society and integrated successfully with the world. To make the world more meaningful, pleasant and accessible environment for children and adults with neurodiverse characteristics.

### • GENDER

SHRG promotes dignity and respect for every human being irrespective of their gender, lifestyle and background. We work to remove gender based discrimination of any form. We look at alternative concepts to equality, women's rights etc that have worked successfully for hundreds of years in some civilisations.

Specific projects

Menstrual empowerment project, removal of tampon tax, improving education and knowledge around menstruation based on cultural perspectives, improving access to sustainable products for menstrual hygiene. Removal of stigma.

Integration of gender perspectives in Community organisations, policies and implementations

### • PLURALISM

SHRG believes that peace in the future of the world will be dependent on accepting pluralism and coexistence of civilisations rather than universalism. It is looking at several aspects of how civilisations' pluralism can be incorporated into international institutions.

Civilisations go back more than 10000 years at least. Many civilisations have well developed concepts on many aspects of human life and human relations with each other, environment and other species. They all try and promote a better and sustainable world. However their concepts and worldviews are different and have developed differently although attempting to achieve the same goals. Sikh Human Rights Group believes that the plurality of worldviews, concepts and practices need to be nurtured and promoted for sustainable future with dignity, respect and coexistence.

SHRG is working with some other organisations in exploring broadening terminology so that the essential features of different civilisations and worldviews can best be understood to promote a plural world at peace with itself.

## ▪ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

SHRG supports most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations for common welfare and development of humanity, biodiversity and the earth. SHRG is working to try and make SDGs civil society friendly so the work of civil society can be appreciated at the international level.

SHRG feels that most UN conventions and policies on environment and climate are based on the outlook of one civilisation and culture. It feels that climate change and threats to environment will be taken more seriously by communities around the world if they are encouraged to develop ethics based on their own cultures and civilisations. We believe that the environmental and climate crises is too urgent and threatening to engage in politics of hegemony. Examples include Indian cosmological perspectives, African Ubuntu systems, Chinese Confucian approach, Islamic perspectives, western perspectives and so on.

SHRG is also working on issues of small farms. It takes the view that small farms are better for the environment, climate, biodiversity, communities, families, poverty reduction and food sovereignty. SHRG believes that small farms should have subsidies and be protected. SHRG wishes to see changes at WTO or bring the Agreement on Agriculture under UNCTAD.

### **Projects in pipeline under Sustainable Development.**

Worldviews of nature website and library. An online library and database of different approaches and practices around environment. The library will have academic papers, write up on practices, views of experts and civil society.

#### **ecoworlds.com**

A website to be a world platform for news, views and interactive debates on environmental, climate and related issues with focus on conferences, good practices, technology and debates. The website will also encourage partnerships

SHRG wrote the book Universalism and Ethics of Environment for UNESCO.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000188607>



## ▪ GOVERNANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

SHRG takes the view that power has to be accountable and the best form of governance is that which has the widest consensus. It sees majoritarian democracy as one of the options in this but also problematic in some civilisations and cultures. SHRG looks at whether power is accountable. SHRG also feels State governance policies can tackle Poverty reduction, Housing, Inclusivity. Minority rights

Conflict Resolution. SHRG has been engaged in conflict resolution. Currently it is assisting in resolution of conflict between India and Sikh separatists.

### **SEWA.**

This is voluntary work without rewards.

SHRG has its own project called GURSEVA PROJECT which incorporates activities of some voluntary sector organisation in self less voluntary work on reducing hunger, social issues, housing etc



## CURRENT ACTIVE PROJECTS

### ▣ BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Volunteers can research into latest UN position in any particular field of Business and Human Rights, assist in formulating a position and attend a UN meeting.

These areas can be for instance how countries ensure human rights compliance by Businesses, how individuals can get redress from Transnationals in third country, whether an international Court should be set up on conduct of Transnational Corporations.

Volunteers can learn about discussions going on at UN and get an idea of latest developments in international law on Transnational Corporations.

Volunteers can lobby countries and other NGOs to support SHRG position that Transnational Corporations should be more accountable.

### ▣ DIVERSITY

Volunteers can take up one or other areas within Diversity, such as Race and Ethnicity, Gender, Disability, Culture. Lifestyles etc

Volunteers can look at legal framework, loopholes, or compliance among countries.

Volunteers can lobby countries and NGOs

Volunteers can get engaged in the Declaration on Diversity project

Ensuring gender perspectives in policy and implementations

Removing barriers to gender equity

Neurodiversity – education and integration within community set ups, make neurodiverse people acceptable in society and integrate successfully in the world. To make the world more meaningful, pleasant and accessible environment for children and adults with neurodiverse characteristics.

### ▣ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Volunteers can coordinate work with other NGOs and UN Bodies
- Volunteers can assist in writing position papers for Affiliates
- Volunteers can get involved in Worldviews of Nature Project
- Volunteers can attend UN sessions
- Research into Sikh practices that are compliant with SDG goals
- The effect of langar on tackling hunger and poverty
- Work with team to encourage civil society compliance with SDGs



## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

- Volunteers can take one of the many issues arising from climate
- Effects of Climate change on development
- Climate change and Poverty
- Climate change and Health
- Climate change and extinction of species
- Effects of Climate change on women and children
- Mitigation proposals for effects of Climate Change
- How communities can adapt to Climate change
- Community resilience to Climate change
- Assist with work for COP conferences

## DEBT

- The crises of Sovereign Debt
- Sovereign Debt financing and effects on poverty
- Sovereign Debt crises and adapting to climate change
- General effects of Sovereign Debt
- Alternative models of Development
- Punjab is one of the sub States in debt, work on this will be welcome

## FARMING

- WTO and small farms
- The benefits of small farms
- Supporting small farms
- Making UNDROP a mandatory treaty



## SOCIAL ISSUES

- Rights of elderly
- Obligations towards elderly
- Protecting children
- Education and children
- Children and poverty

## ▣ HUMAN RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

- Volunteers can look at UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD and various other treaties
- Particular areas of interest are
- Conventional Against Torture
- Rights of the Child
- Rights of Older People
- Debates around Religious Rights
- Right to Food, Right to Adequate Housing, Right to Health, Right to Water and Sanitation, Right to Social Security, Right to Education and Cultural Rights, Right to Development
- Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- SHRG also thinks that human rights are successful in some civilisations and not others. We think this may be because those civilisations put emphasis on responsibilities and duties. We encourage exploring this as well. We do not support the idea of superior civilisations and inferior civilisations.

## ▣ HUMAN RIGHTS AND SIKHS

- Work on an annual report on legal issues facing Sikhs
- Document human rights cases involving Sikhs around the world
- Network with other Sikh organisations working on issues of Sikhs
- Documenting past cases

## ▣ RESEARCH

- Volunteers and academics can research into any of the topics that benefit human society, ecodiversity, climate, environment and general welfare

## ▣ SOCIAL MEDIA

- Volunteers can assist in promoting the work of SHRG through social media
- Volunteers can help to manage website

## ▣ DOCUMENTATION

- Volunteers can learn to document violations of human rights
- Teach documentation of human rights violations
- Learn where to send human rights violation documentation and get it into reports
- Redress for human rights

## ▣ ADMINISTRATION

- Volunteers can assist in promoting work of SHRG, assist in its administration and fund raise



## ▣ EXPECTATIONS FROM VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers are expected to work without remuneration
- We prefer volunteers who may have an interest in a specific areas or may be doing a post graduate study in the area of work
- Volunteers in undergraduate degrees can also help in research, lobbying or promoting SHRG
- Volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality and sign appropriate confidentiality document
- Volunteers are expected to finish the project they take on

## ▣ WHAT VOLUNTEERS WILL GET

- An opportunity to do focussed research or work
- A certificate of completion
- An opportunity to engage with UN conferences relevant to them
- An opportunity to meet with other NGOs and experts
- An opportunity to expand your understanding of how the international community functions

## ▣ AFFILIATES

- Affiliates are autonomous NGOs who wish to take up the SHRG UN platforms and engage with UN in its various activities as long as their work and policies are consistent with SHRG constitution, work and policies.

