

Strategic Plan 2011–2015



Vision

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee envisions a world free from oppression and injustice, where all can realize their full human rights.

Mission

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee advances human rights and social justice around the world, partnering with those who confront unjust power structures and mobilizing to challenge oppressive policies.



UUSC's Unique Approach

Human rights and social justice

The ideal of universal, inalienable, and indivisible human rights — as codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) — provides the ethical framework that guides UUSC's work and a concrete means to hold the powerful accountable and make justice real. The 2011–2015 strategic plan represents a solid recommitment to the values articulated in the UDHR.

Today, for the millions around the world who do not enjoy the rights set forth in the UDHR, its promise is unrealized. Human rights cannot be considered to be universal when disability, ethnicity, gender, HIV status, nationality, race, class, and sexual orientation are highly correlated with the fulfillment of rights. They can't be considered inalienable when millions of people are denied their rights by oppressive regimes, poverty, or civil conflict. And they can't be considered indivisible when social and cultural rights are denied in favor of economic and political privilege.

The human-rights system is an expression of people's dreams for justice and dignity, a product of centuries of human struggle against inequitable structures and abuses of power. Rights are not charity; they are won by a continuous process of human struggle. Rights

also do not guarantee justice; the ability to exercise one's rights is shaped by societal forces that work to privilege some and exclude others. Overcoming such discrimination and inequities requires change strategies that strengthen the political awareness and voices of marginalized communities so that they can access their rights fairly. At the heart of this evolving struggle for rights and justice is the challenge of transforming power relations and building alternative forms of power that are more collaborative.

UUSC's integrated approach

UUSC pursues its mission to advance human rights and social justice through three mutually reinforcing tactics:

- ▶ Grants and technical assistance for local partners on the ground, who are confronting unjust power structures
- ▶ Direct involvement of grassroots constituents, many of them members of Unitarian Universalist congregations, in the struggle for human rights
- ▶ Advocacy for public and corporate policies that support human rights



Strategic Plan 2011–2015

UUSC's strategic plan for 2011–2015 builds upon the organization's solid foundation of 70 years championing human rights and social justice around the world. The new strategic plan reaffirms the four principal program areas that have anchored UUSC's work since 2000:

- ▶ **Civil Liberties** — addressing the deepening polarization between the Islamic and Western world and working against torture, wherever it is found
- ▶ **Economic Justice** — defending the right to work in dignity for a living wage and to organize in defense of that right
- ▶ **Environmental Justice** — promoting the human right to water
- ▶ **Rights in Humanitarian Crises** — supporting marginalized populations in the response to disasters, both natural and those caused by humans

UUSC's new strategic plan is composed of substantive elements to lead the organization in exciting directions. In summary, UUSC staff and board have renewed their commitment to the mission of advancing human rights and social justice worldwide. The plan takes us closer to accomplishing this goal by laying out tactical decisions to strengthen relationships with key constituents, reach out to youth, develop the College of Social Justice, significantly expand electronic communications capacity, measure success, and plug into global networks of social change. By 2015, with the implementation of this plan, UUSC will have come even closer to helping realize its vision of a world free from human-rights violations.

Youth: a new generation of activists

UUSC sees the need to nurture the next generation of social-justice leaders by reaching them early in their

lives and providing them opportunities for lifelong involvement. To that end, as part of expanded outreach activities, UUSC will invest heavily in a new youth program that seeks to reach three core groups: late elementary- and middle-school students, by developing tangible, readily accessible curricula for educators; high-school students, by creating a nationwide network of UU youth to engage in UUSC campaigns and programs; and college and graduate students, by offering hands-on opportunities to learn about human rights through experiential learning trips and internship placements at UUSC.

College of Social Justice

Among the many resources in UUSC's tool kit are its training materials, curricula, workshops, sector-specific expertise, and hands-on service opportunities. To package this rich collection for both youth and adults, UUSC will launch the College of Social Justice, which will house education and training programs, experiential learning and volunteer opportunities, and youth and young-adult programs. UUSC envisions that this exciting new venture will be fully rolled out during this five-year strategic-planning period.





Increased engagement with Unitarian Universalists

UUSC's 45,000 members, most of them Unitarian Universalists, bring with them an unflinching passion for social justice. Increasing the size of that membership, tapping its energy, and harnessing its capacity to influence social change are critical to UUSC's success. UUSC will therefore create more opportunities for congregations and members to become activists. It will expand its online activism resources, including its rapid-response program. It will establish a "continuum of engagement" to mobilize everyone, from the occasional website browser to the activist involved in long-term direct action. And it will more strategically build relationships with ministers, religious educators, volunteer network leaders, and others in order to better connect with the grassroots.

As part of this, UUSC will seek to cultivate more thorough and intentional engagement with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). To help realize such greater cooperation, we will place special emphasis on collaboration focused on service learning and expanded social-justice training for congregations. Both UUSC and the UUA envision a robust program of experiential learning that provides congregations the opportunity to learn about social justice in action and devises means to apply these "lessons in activism" at the congregational and personal levels.



More robust electronic communication capacity

UUSC has lagged other organizations in its use of Internet technology and social-networking opportunities. The agency needs to bring its capacity for internal communication, integrated systems, and online outreach up to speed as quickly as possible. Moving forward, UUSC will prioritize staying current with media trends and making effective use of electronic channels that include e-mail, social media, video, website, webinars, and other state-of-the-art technologies that emerge as beneficial and cost-effective. This will be undertaken as part of a communications strategy that acknowledges the importance of a comprehensive mix of electronic, print, and person-to-person communications.

Measuring success and growth

Social-justice organizations are often reticent to try to measure or evaluate their success. Recognizing the importance of measuring success in concrete and tangible ways so that lessons learned can be effectively incorporated into further work, UUSC will strengthen its efforts to do this. Thus, UUSC will implement a strong system of regular reporting on the measurable impact of services and programs offered by the agency. Work has begun on identifying key impact indicators for each program area and will continue during this strategic planning cycle, with regular agency-wide review, assessment, and revision as needed. Financially, this plan takes into account the current economic conditions facing UUSC's very dedicated and loyal donors and makes modest and realistic predictions for overall agency growth.



Eye-to-eye partnerships

A hallmark of UUSC's approach to advancing human rights is the eye-to-eye partnership, in which UUSC works as equals with grassroots program partners, members, supporters, volunteers, and others. Drawing on many perspectives and diverse knowledge, collaborations with partners enhance the effectiveness of everyone's work. Key ingredients of a successful partnership include trust, mutuality, respect, and open communication and decision making — and UUSC is dedicated to fostering all of these in its partnerships. UUSC's eye-to-eye partnership model is about learning, about solidarity, and about achieving together what cannot be accomplished alone. After all, advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands. Join with us by contributing your time and resources to these new directions and initiatives!

Visit www.uusc.org or e-mail info@uusc.org to find out how you can get more deeply involved in UUSC's work.

