

Geneva Reporter

Nelson Mandela Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

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Nelson Mandela's cell on Robben Island. Photo credit: Kim Nowacki/flickr

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners were recently revised, and renamed in honor of Nelson Mandela. QUNO's Laurel Townhead explains why the revisions were needed and the potential implications for prisoners.

What are the Nelson Mandela Rules?

As the full title suggests, the UN Standard Minimum Rules (SMR) for the Treatment of Prisoners are minimum standards for prison management. [Originally adopted in 1955](#), they have been used ever since to guide national penal policy and in advocacy for penal reform. Recently updated, they are now to be known as the Nelson Mandela Rules.

Why did the Standard Minimum Rules need to be revised?

A lot has changed since 1955 in how prisons are run. There have been significant developments in healthcare and the adoption of original Rules predates the adoption of all the international human rights treaties and other human rights standards.

How were they revised?

In 2010, the UN Crime Congress in Brazil called for a targeted revision process to agree [new text](#) and, to allay fears that some standards might be lowered, nothing that weakened the existing standards could be included.

Why are they called the Nelson Mandela Rules?

The 2015 Intergovernmental Expert Group meeting was held in Cape Town and the hosts arranged for all those participating to visit Robben Island where Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years. His commitment to the dignity of those deprived of their liberty helped inspire the final stages of negotiations and a draft text was agreed at the end of this meeting. It was decided to name them the Nelson Mandela Rules in honour of him and as a reminder of the humanity of all prisoners.

(continued on page 2)

Mandela Rules *(continued from page 1)*

What are the biggest improvements?

The very first rule now says, “All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.” Making this a grounding principle of the Rules is an important in overcoming the dehumanization of prisoners and reframing the way prisoners are viewed and treated. The Rules on health have been significantly improved and now state that healthcare in prisons should be equivalent to that available in the community and freely available. The Rules on solitary confinement, an issue not originally covered, are now defined and the circumstances in which it can be used are limited, including being prohibited for women and children. Rule 29 now states that decisions about whether a child should reside in prison with their parent should be based on the best interests of the child.

Did QUNO have any role in the revision process?

We worked closely with [FWCC](#) representatives to the UN’s criminal justice bodies on several issues, including the inclusion of language in Rule 1, on safety in prisons and on how the issue of children residing in prisons would be covered. Sharing developments on the rights of children of incarcerated parents from the Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Rights of the Child helped strengthen proposals for what became Rule 29.

What’s next?

We will celebrate these improvements and the successful conclusion of the targeted revision process...then get straight to work to ensure the Nelson Mandela Rules make a real difference in the lives of people in prison around the world.

Conflict Sensitivity in Business

Mihan Borhani shares her perspective on a conflict sensitivity programme hosted by QUNO and AFSC in Geneva.

China has become a lead investor in many developing countries and, while foreign investment has the potential to reduce poverty and strengthen governance, it can also reinforce factors that fuel conflict or destabilize the balance of local interests. For this reason, [American Friends Service Committee \(AFSC\)](#) and their Representative in East Asia, Jason Tower, have been engaging with Chinese businesses for several years on the topic of conflict sensitivity, to help reduce the adverse effects of investments and promote more peaceful and sustainable development.

QUNO saw an opportunity to build on their effective work in this area and complement our existing conflict prevention work by bringing new voices and perspectives to the peacebuilding community in Geneva. Diane Hendrick and I worked with Jason, AFSC and the [Peace Nexus Foundation](#) to organize a three-day conflict sensitivity programme in Geneva. The event brought together Chinese and Southeast Asian companies and civil society actors with Western businesspeople, peacebuilders and academics for exchanges of experience and mutual learning around this topic.

A key element of the programme was a presentation at the UN that allowed our participants to share their experiences with an audience of diplomats, peacebuilders, and other experts and practitioners. It is very rare to see Chinese investors and a representative of affected civil society on

the same platform. It was valuable to hear the viewpoints of people working at the local level, while familiarizing the Western peacebuilding and human rights audience with the experiences and perspectives that shape Chinese external investment.

For me, the most instructive elements of the programme were the off-the-record meetings at Quaker House. Each session was opened by an expert on a topic relating to conflict sensitivity, such as large-scale land investments or company-community engagement, and followed by informal discussions among the group of participants and other invited experts. These informal sessions gave way to frank and constructive discussions about the benefits and concerns of conflict sensitive investment in China and Southeast Asia, and how these challenges might be overcome to promote more conflict sensitive practices, with a view to preventing destructive conflict.

In addition to helping foster understanding across distinctive perspectives, the sessions led to the formation of many valuable connections, which will allow us to share expertise and provide support to one another in our future conflict sensitivity work. We view this productive programme as the beginning of a new stream of work in cooperation with our partners at AFSC, whose depth of experience and networks within China provide us with a unique expertise in Geneva’s peacebuilding community.



Project Brief: An interactive trade policy tool

Food & Sustainability

Navigating the relationship between food security and trade rules



QUNO has been developing an online tool to help explain the complex relationship between food security measures and the World Trade Organization's (WTO) trade rules. Susan Bragdon, our Food & Sustainability Representative, talks through her vision of the tool and how she believes it could benefit small-scale farmers, trade negotiators and food security.

Can you briefly describe this interactive policy tool?

The tool is a web-based program that explains and analyzes over 60 important food security policy measures. It defines each food security measure, why the measure is important, the circumstances in which its use might be needed, its relationship to other policy measures, and its relation to global trade rules. Eventually the tool will have a special area for moderated interaction, allowing users to share their own experience and information. In this way, it could act as an evolving resource for stakeholders to easily find clear, reliable information.

Why was the tool developed?

Small-scale farmers are critical to global food security. What they can do, are encouraged to do or are constrained from doing is often affected by national policy. Similarly, national policy is increasingly limited by international law. One area where experience and evidence-based discussion is proving difficult is the relationship between trade rules and various food security policy measures.

The conversation has become quite polarized, the rules complex and the terms and language used in each context very different. Policy-makers and small-scale farmers are often stuck in the middle, finding it hard to navigate options and possibilities. The tool is designed to help with this navigation.

These sound like challenging issues to address. How did you approach getting started?

We brought together representatives of small scale farmers, trade-negotiators and researchers for a series of consultations to identify food security policy measures that the group felt should not be constrained by international rules. We thought what might be needed is a context specific tool that describes the conditions under which the measure is likely to be useful. And, because policies do not exist in a vacuum, we wanted to show what policies are likely needed to complement the identified measure. For instance, a policy measure that raises the price for a farmer might require complementary measures to ensure food affordability for the urban poor.

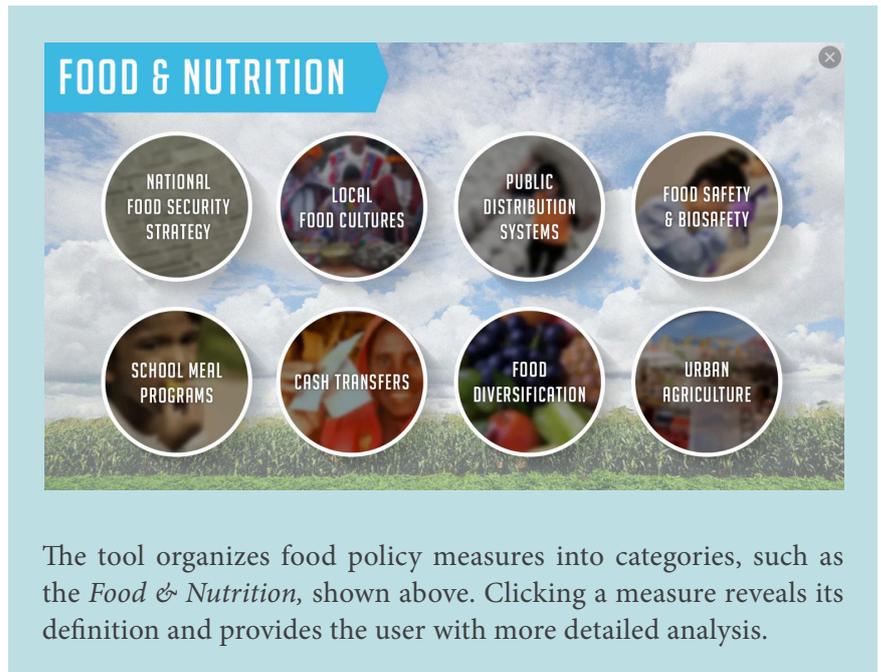
Who will use the tool?

The tool is designed for use by those wanting to influence policy at the national or international level to ensure that food security measures are not in conflict with trade rules and enable sufficient flexibility.

With the addition of a space for moderated interaction in the tool, small-scale farmers will be able to keep up to date on trade rules and potential challenges to desired food policy measures. They will also be able to share their experience with other users of the tool. Trade delegations from developing countries are often comprised of only one person, who can be overwhelmed by having to attend multiple meetings which are more easily managed by larger delegations. This tool will allow these trade negotiators to quickly see analysis of food security measures to global trade rules, and understand possible conflicts.

What is the potential impact?

The tool will hopefully increase effective advocacy for desired food security measures by small-scale farmers, national decision-makers and trade negotiators at both the national and international level. Ultimately, we hope the tool can be part of ensuring more coherent policy, specifically that trade rules are supportive of, and do not run counter to, the objectives of food security.

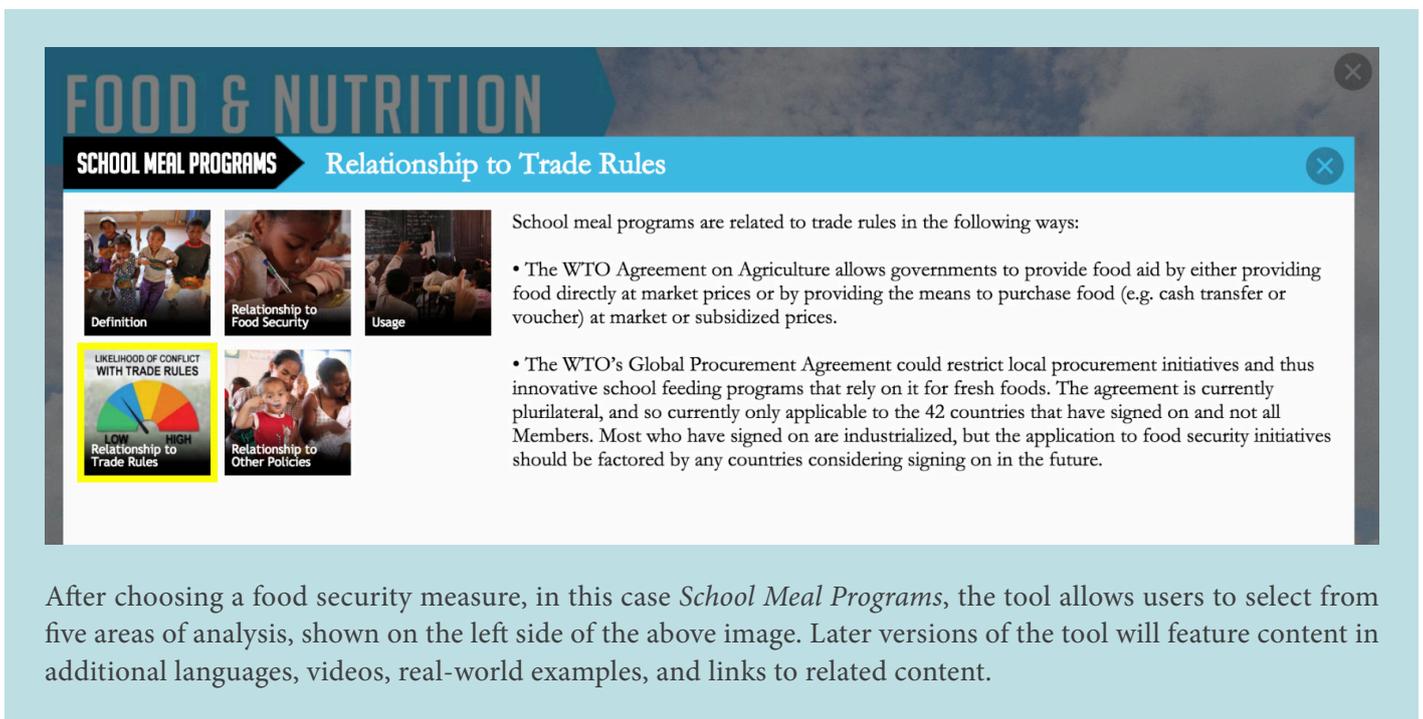


The tool organizes food policy measures into categories, such as the *Food & Nutrition*, shown above. Clicking a measure reveals its definition and provides the user with more detailed analysis.

Have you received feedback and what are the next steps?

We have shared the tool at different stages of development at a limited number of consultations. Now that we have a prototype, we are seeking wider feedback on the content and on the user experience. We introduced the tool at the World Trade Organization’s Public Forum, at a peer review event hosted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and at the World Committee on Food Security in October 2015.

Based on the feedback, we are continuing to revise the tool. The next phase will be to pilot the tool through case studies in developing countries.



After choosing a food security measure, in this case *School Meal Programs*, the tool allows users to select from five areas of analysis, shown on the left side of the above image. Later versions of the tool will feature content in additional languages, videos, real-world examples, and links to related content.

Highlights from QUNO New York

Every August we welcome two new Programme Assistants to our office in New York, to work in our main areas of Peacebuilding and the Prevention of Violent Conflict. Below, our new Programme Assistants share events of note from their first few months.

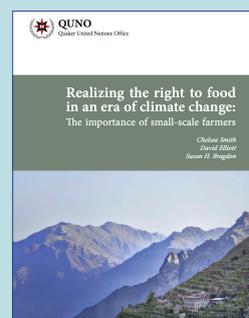
Hannah Larn: We recently hosted a meeting with Nonviolent Peaceforce at Quaker House, where they spoke about the use of unarmed civilian protection. In South Sudan they employ 150 staff from 27 different countries; this international presence can be protection for local people. For example, women who have to cross through an armed group's territory, where sexual assaults are frequent occurrences, experienced no sexual harassment whatsoever when accompanied by international staff. I found this meeting really interesting because this work has a high impact, and in some cases an international presence has certainly saved local people's lives. The meeting sparked a discussion about whether the UN could adapt such methods, which is especially relevant right now as the UN has just released its peacekeeping operations review.

Debbie Leter: A few days before the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September, I took part in an informal strategy session organized by QUNO. The session brought peacebuilding organizations, member states and UN officials together to discuss next steps for Goal 16, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on peaceful and inclusive societies. Everyone in the room contributed a unique perspective to the conversation, yet we all seemed to speak from a unified voice. It was clear that all participants want to see peace play a meaningful role in the 2030 agenda. The session was inspiring, but the challenges discussed were a reminder that dedication is not enough and statements must be followed by action. I am eager to see where the conversation on implementing the SDGs, particularly Goal 16, will lead to over the coming months.

Recent publications



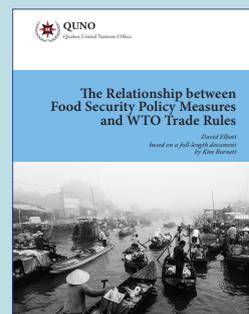
Preparing for Paris
Four briefing papers about the international climate change negotiations in Paris in December 2015. *QUNO (October 2015)*



Realizing the right to food in an era of climate change: The importance of small-scale farmers. *Chelsea Smith, David Elliott, Susan H. Bragdon (August 2015)*



Small-scale farmer (SSF) innovation
Lessons from a literature review and expert consultation on SSF innovation. *Susan H. Bragdon, Chelsea Smith (December 2015)*



The Relationship between Food Security Policy Measures and WTO Trade Rules
Kim Burnett, David Elliott (December 2015)

QUNO Q & A with Rachel Evans



In QUNO Q&A, we feature brief interviews with alumni about their perspectives on past QUNO work and experiences on staff, as Programme Assistants (PAs) or Summer School participants. For this issue, we spoke with 2015 Geneva Summer School participant Rachel Evans.

What led you to apply to the summer school?

One of the main reasons was simply that I felt rather ill-educated about the UN and international policy. Other than following the news regularly, I hadn't much idea of how international laws were formed or how governments were accountable to the UN. It was frustrating for me that foreign affairs were so frequently under reported and that huge events were sometimes happening abroad of which I was barely aware. I really had very little idea what to expect of summer school when I arrived. Some of the things that surprised me were the diversity of participants from whom I gained so much, the amount and variety of UN meetings we were able to observe and how summer school allowed me to find out about myself and personal relationships as much as about the UN itself.

What stands out the most from your experience?

Primarily the heat! It permeates every memory. I had never experienced weather conditions like that! I also have strong memories of evenings spent sitting out by the lake with my summer school friends, chatting long into the night.

What parts of the programme engaged you the most?

It was fascinating to sit inside a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Committee as they reviewed the situation on human rights in Canada. There was a challenge to pick through the language to see the times when questions were sometimes avoided by delegates through repeating information or talking about slightly different issues. Another provocative, but to my mind highly stimulating, session came in the form of Mukesh Kapila's talk. Many

participants were stirred by the uncompromising manner in which he delivered the story of his time representing the UN in Sudan. However, few could argue with his fundamental message, charging listeners to be proactive within their capabilities to oppose abuses of human rights.

Also, the team "trade game," which participants played together stands out as one of the most formative parts of the fortnight in Geneva. Many people, myself included, were shocked and somewhat perturbed by their behaviour during the course of the game as they fought competitively for resources and means of production, trying to produce the maximum profit for their team. If the monster that emerged from me during the course of that game is still around somewhere, I think I'll need to put measures in place to ensure it stays in check!

Tell us what you have you been up to since.

I'm currently in my first job as a primary school teacher and working hard to cope with being responsible for the well-being and education of 32 young children! I'm also doing a lot of work campaigning for the UK government to revise its decision to give all 4 year olds a test in maths and English as soon as they start school in reception. And I'm going to Quaker meetings of course!

News in Brief

David Elliott's term as Programme Assistant for Food & Sustainability and Human Impacts of Climate Change ended in August, though he continued to contribute as a consultant to several QUNO publications through December. We welcomed his replacement, Patrick Endall, in September, along with Daniel Cullen, our Programme Assistant for Human Rights and Refugees.



Sally Alderson, with assistance from members of Geneva Monthly Meeting, recently published *Quaker House - A Short History*. A printed copy is available to those wishing to donate to Quaker House renovations.

To donate to QUNO's work or our Quaker House renovations, please visit quno.org.