



HUMAN RIGHTS CITY

The Development of a Human Rights City for Thailand Based on International Standards



Overall Activities in Quarter 1-2

Between June and December 2025, the Human Rights City project team worked steadily to meet the project timeline and the commitments made to the Thailand National Research Council (NRCT). Key activities included completing an extensive literature review, initiating stakeholder coordination with international and national partners, and conducting field visits in Vienna, Lund, and York to study international models of Human Rights Cities. Domestically, the team facilitated the public declarations and formal establishment of **Human Rights City initiatives in Nakhon Pathom on 4 November 2025 and Yala on 18 November 2025**. These milestones mark significant progress in localizing global human rights standards into the Thai municipal context and advancing the project's objective of developing context-appropriate Human Rights City frameworks.

We would like to express our **sincere gratitude to our international partners** – the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI), the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York, and the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) in Gwangju—whose collaboration and support have been essential in making this progress possible. We also extend our appreciation to many others whose contributions, while not listed here, have been equally invaluable.

Topics

International Model
International models show that strong political will—expressed through formal declarations, institutionalised human rights structures, and cross-sector collaboration—is the essential driver that enables cities to embed human rights into governance and practice.

Thailand's Pathway:
bringing together government, academia, civil society, and local communities to co-design participatory, rights-based urban development and formalize commitments through declarations.

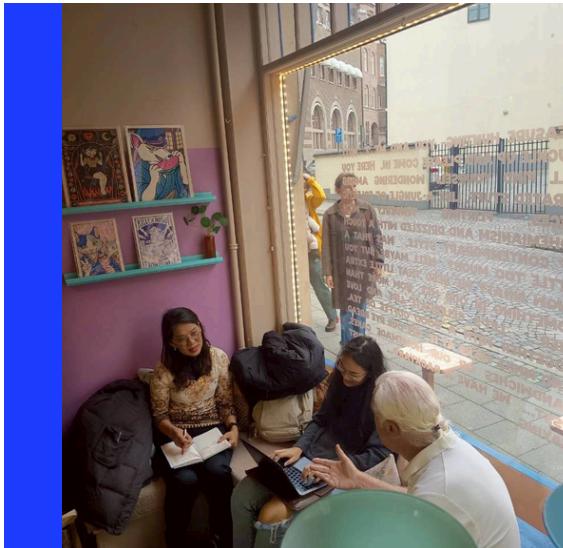
HIGHLIGHTS



From International Model

Vienna's model is driven by strong political commitment, formalized through the 2014 Vienna Declaration, which established a Human Rights Office and institutionalised human rights within municipal structures using a Human Rights-Based Approach (participation, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency). Lund's model is led primarily by academia, shaped by Sweden's welfare-state context and equality-oriented philosophy, and relies on self-assessment mechanisms facilitated by RWI to encourage multi-sector participation. York's model is powered by civil society activism, supported by academic partners, and strengthened by legal frameworks such as the Equalities Bill and Human Rights Bill; the city uses indicator reports and community mechanisms to monitor rights conditions and address violations. Together, the three cases illustrate diverse yet complementary pathways for developing Human Rights Cities based on political will, academic engagement, and strong civil society participation.

Dimension	Vienna	Lund	York
Administration	City-led, institutionalized	Academia-municipality collaboration	Civil society-university partnership
Core Values	Accountability & transparency	Trust & inclusion	Equality & participation
Mechanisms	Human Rights Office + Districts	HRBA self-assessment + training	Indicator Reports + HREB
Key Lesson	Institutionalize HRBA	Build trust & data systems	Empower civic networks



Story from Lund

The establishment of Lund as a Human Rights City has been driven primarily by its universities, with the city's unique local and national context playing a crucial role. Sweden's strong welfare-state foundation, Lund's identity as an international university town, and the Swedish philosophy of *lagom*—which emphasizes balance and equality—have collectively shaped its human-rights-oriented development. Following its declaration as a Human Rights City, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) advanced the initiative by introducing a self-assessment mechanism designed to promote broad-based participation and generate evidence-based insights into the city's human rights progress.

York's Journey

York's Human Rights City model, similar to Lund's academic-driven approach, is distinguished by the strength of its civil society and the UK's culture of volunteerism. Through collaboration between civil society and academia, York institutionalized its work within municipal structures such as the Human Rights and Equalities Board (HREB). Supported by key legal frameworks—the Equalities Bill and Human Rights Bill—York advances its agenda through annual Indicator Reports led by the University of York and community-based mechanisms that monitor issues such as disability access, refugee housing rights, and public service inclusion.



Thailand's Pathway

Drawing from international field visits and Thailand's evolving local context, the country's Human Rights City model should be built on three core pillars—government administration, academic actors, and civil society organizations—anchored by meaningful public participation at every stage.

Government provides political will, institutional structures, and cross-sector implementation; academia ensures evidence-based standards, monitoring, and human-rights-based methodologies; and civil society brings grounded experience, accountability, and community priorities. To make this mechanism truly alive, Thailand must institutionalize HRBA within municipal structures, establish multi-stakeholder boards, adopt shared indicators and evaluation systems, ensure protection and redress mechanisms, and integrate human rights into policy reform and service delivery. This interconnected structure—rooted in collaboration, transparency, and continuous participation—forms the pathway for Thailand to develop its own context-appropriate, sustainable Human Rights City model.



Nakhon Prathom: Equity

Insights from the Nakhon Pathom forum indicate that Thailand's Human Rights City model must prioritize universal protection for all residents, grounded in Thai cultural strengths such as community solidarity and mutual care. Participants emphasized the need for genuine, trust-based public participation—where local voices meaningfully influence decision-making—alongside clear yet flexible human rights standards that guide, rather than burden, local governance. Key urban challenges raised by the community, including safety, economic vulnerability, environmental concerns, and access to services, highlight the necessity of systematic, rights-based solutions supported by strong social protection mechanisms. Additionally, transparency, accountability, and accessible redress systems are essential for building trust, while equality must be addressed in a substantive way that tackles structural disparities rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions. Together, these insights suggest that Thailand's pathway toward a Human Rights City should be people-centered, context-sensitive, and rooted in everyday realities of local communities.



Yala: City for All

The Yala consultations reveal that developing a Human Rights City in the Deep South requires strengthening safety, coexistence, and equality in a multicultural context where trust-building is essential. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive participation that is not merely symbolic but genuinely empowers local communities—especially women, youth, religious groups, and vulnerable populations—to shape city governance. Yala's pathway must prioritize reducing everyday insecurity, ensuring fair access to services, and creating economic opportunities that do not leave anyone behind. The discussions highlight that Yala needs strong cross-sector collaboration between local government, civil society networks, health institutions, and religious leaders, supported by transparent communication and mechanisms to address discrimination and social stigma. Ultimately, the implication is that Yala's Human Rights City model must integrate cultural sensitivity, community-centered safety, economic resilience, and participatory governance to build a city where dignity, peace, and equal rights are embedded in everyday life.

