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**Front page picture:** Two women marching in Colombia on the 25th of November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Photo: Confluencia de Mujeres para la Acción Pública. All photos by the NHRF or grantee organisations, unless otherwise accredited.



Father Elias from Un Mundo Una Nación runs a centre for migrants in Mexico.

The mandate of the **Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF)** is to promote human rights internationally. The NHRF provides direct support to organisations working in the first line of defence for human rights and supports projects that aim to protect and promote the rights of marginalised and vulnerable groups.



The NHRF is anchored in Norwegian civil society organisations, which contribute both financially and professionally to human rights projects and the operations of the NHRF. In 2016, the following were the owner organisations: Amnesty International Norway, the Atlas Alliance, Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, and Norwegian Centre for Human Rights.

## Introduction by Chair of the Board



Kathrine Fauske  
Chair of the Board,

Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)

**FOR 28 YEARS**, the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF) has been a unique example of strong collaboration between different actors, pulling their resources and expertise together to support people on the ground in the struggle to promote and protect human rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Direct support to projects in areas where there is little funding available is a key feature of the NHRF. Another unique quality is the holistic approach to human rights work. This has enabled the NHRF to support actors working across various sectors and on a broad range of human rights issues that affect very diverse groups such as workers, migrants, minorities, people affected by armed conflict, and people living under authoritarian regimes.

**IN MARCH 2016**, the Board adopted a new five-year strategy that we believe is fit to meet the changing and challenging environment in

which the NHRF operates. Human rights are under pressure and international agreements are increasingly being called into question. The level of threats, criminalisation and hindrance in the work that our grantees face is high in many of our priority countries. Colombia is one of them, and in spite of the peace agreement signed in November, the killing of social leaders, trade unionists and human rights defenders tragically continues and is a reason for deep concern. This demonstrates that peace has to be won on the ground and that support to and solidarity with local human rights defenders, networks and organisations are more important now than ever before.

**IN 2016**, the NHRF supported projects in more than a dozen countries on three continents, all with a focus on better protection of rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. In this report we highlight some of the grantee organisations' achievements



NHRF's annual seminar in Bangalore, India, with participation from the Norwegian Embassy in Delhi, June 2016.

## Activity highlights in 2016

- 35 organisations in 12 countries and one global project supported with grants
- New overall strategy (2016–2020) approved in March
- Seminars with grantee organisations organised in India and Colombia. Security workshop sponsored in Colombia
- Five country visits carried out to NHRF priority countries – Colombia, Mexico, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand
- Networks in Norway: the Colombia Forum; Forum 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; the NGO Forum for Human Rights; and the Norwegian Dalit Solidarity Network
- International networks: Cooperation with the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN); and close networking with organisations and mandates working on security and protection of human rights defenders at risk
- Participation at Civil Rights Defenders' Defenders Days in Stockholm, Sweden, in April
- Oslo visit by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in May
- Participation at Forum Asia's 7th Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (AHRDF#7) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in November

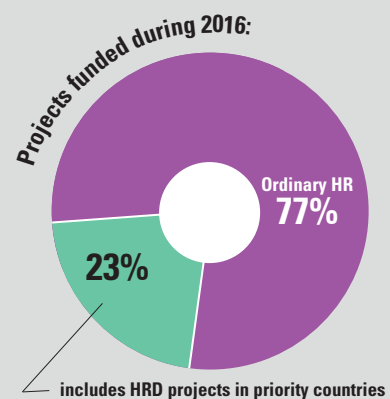
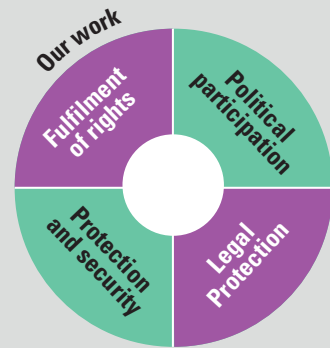


The NHRF supports the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC). Here, WHRDIC members at AVID International Forum in Brazil, September 2016.

Chair of the Board,  
Ellen Kathrine Fauske

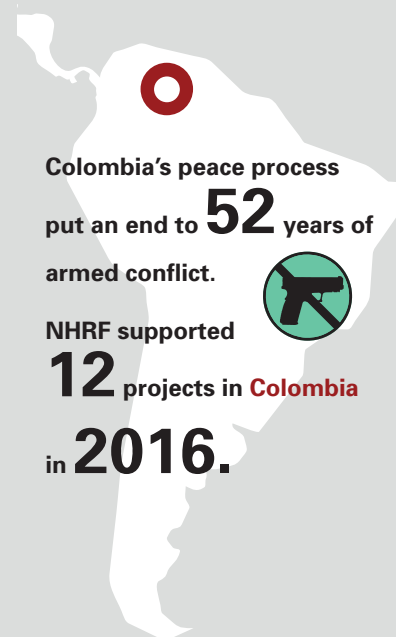
# 2016 at a glance

**68** projects were supported in **13** countries. **35** funded during 2016, of which **6** were new.

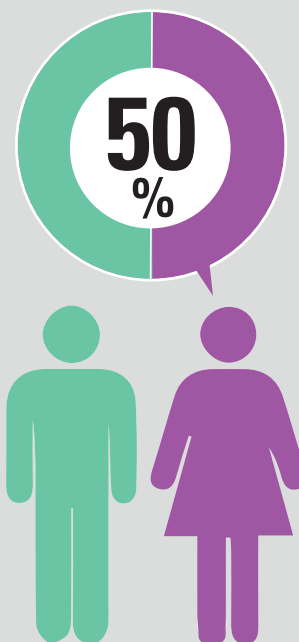


Organisations in Colombia, Mexico and Thailand use **strategic litigation** to promote respect for human rights.

In March **2016**, Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, presented the first comprehensive UN report on discrimination based on work and descent to the Human Rights Council. **9** out of **39** NHRF supported projects in 2016 focused on this issue.



NHRF supported organisations led by women



Front Line Defenders reported that **281** human rights defenders were murdered in **25** countries in 2016, **49%** of whom were defending land, indigenous and environmental rights. **128** of these defenders were in countries where NHRF provides support.

Supported projects per strategic priority\*:



Supported projects per target groups\*:



\*NHRF supported projects per strategic priority, priority methods and target groups overlap. Several of the projects fall within two or more of these categories.

**1** out of **5** supported projects supported by the NHRF had the protection of human rights defenders at risk at its core.



**22** countries have ratified the **ILO Convention 169** that ensures communities rights to consultation, participation and representation in all measures which may affect them directly. **Colombia, Mexico** and **Norway** are among those that have ratified.

Supported projects per NHRF's priority methods\*:



## 2016 overview

**IN 2016**, the NHRF secretariat had 68 active projects running. It handled 110 new project proposals, of which 35 received support, and in some cases, second instalments of grants approved in 2015. The NHRF communicated and corresponded with a great number of organisations and groups regarding opportunities for funding to human rights projects and follow-up of grants. In addition, the NHRF engaged in dialogues with organisations on issues of security and protection.

### New Strategy

In March 2016, the board approved a new strategy that will guide the NHRF priority and work for the next five years. In accordance with the new strategy, the NHRF will undertake three key initiatives: to continue to provide financial support to local human rights organisations, to strengthen the ability of human rights defenders at risk to safeguard their own security, as well as to connect local human rights defenders with national and international mechanisms and networks for increased visibility and influence.

### Financial support

In 2016, a total of 71% of the funds were allocated to 24 organisations working in

the NHRF's five long term priority countries: Colombia, Mexico, India, Pakistan and Liberia. In addition, 15% of the funds were distributed to organisations in eligible countries in Asia: Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. 23% of the funds were allocated to projects focusing on protection and security of human rights defenders, both in priority countries and independent of geographical priorities.

### Support to security of Human Rights Defenders

The NHRF seeks to have an open dialogue with all its grantees on their security and working environment. Since 2013, the NHRF has worked structurally to address the issue of security with its grantees through annual seminars, individual meetings and follow-up by consultants. For some organisations, the NHRF has linked them to protection mechanisms or protection networks and included funds in the grant for concrete capacity building. One example was the extra funds to Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CREDHOS) in Colombia for protection training through SweFOR where 30 of key staff and representatives of the network participated.

### Linking local HRD with national and international actors

In 2016, the NHRF organised annual seminars for grantees in two of the NHRF's priority countries, Colombia and India. Some grants had special emphasis on strengthening this connection to national and international actors, like the support to the Forum Asia's 7th Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (AHRDF) where a total 130 Asian human rights defenders from 19 countries joined.

### Financial base and way forward

Solid and predictable finances are a prerequisite for the NHRF's ability to operate with clout. The NHRF achieved its goal of economic growth during its last strategy period, and will continue its work to increase the NHRF's financial resources. It was with great joy that the NHRF entered into a new three-year framework agreement with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016. Together with the financial contributions from the NHRF owners, this will be a good base to continue the targeted support to local human rights defenders in the coming year.



Forum Asia's 7th Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (AHRDF) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, November 2016, where the NHRF both contributed and participated.

## The NHRF's new strategy

### Conversation with the NHRF's Executive Director Sandra Petersen



#### How did the strategy come about?

The strategy was finally adopted by the board in March 2016 as the result of a long process of discussions at the level of the NHRF's secretariat, board and owner organisations. The discussions were based on input from the external evaluation of the NHRF that was conducted in 2015, as well as interactions with grantees and human rights and donor networks, on how we should work and adapt to the current challenges and changes of our time.

#### What are some of the key points in the new strategy?

The new strategy builds on the previous one, which covered the period, 2011-2015. The new strategy maintains the NHRF's overall objective to increase respect for the human rights of vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups. It also maintains continued focus on the importance of supporting local human rights organisations and networks. Furthermore, it clearly stresses three activities with which we will engage in order to achieve our overall objective:

- Provide direct economic support to local human rights organisations' work for access to justice, mobilisation and advocacy;

- Strengthen the ability of human rights defenders at risk to safeguard their own security; and
- Connect local human rights defenders with national and international mechanisms and networks for increased visibility and influence

#### How does the new strategy differ from the old one?

In our previous strategy, we had a strong focus on the economic support we provide and capacity building of our grantees. In this new strategy, we have strengthened our focus on security, protection and networking, in addition to our continued financial support to local human rights work. The new strategy thus differs in that we have decided to increase our focus on security for human rights defenders and our efforts to connect local human rights work to processes at the national and international levels.

#### What does the NHRF mean by «linking the local to the national and international levels»?

This decision is based on the NHRF's experience from almost three decades of providing support to local human rights work across the world and the changes in recent years when it comes to civil society space in many countries. The NHRF believes that, in the current climate, enhancing human rights defenders' abilities to mitigate security risks and strengthening their networks beyond their local contexts are important ways of increasing local organisations' effectiveness and ensuring the

continuation of their work on behalf of the individuals and communities whose rights they are promoting and protecting. We also believe that the international mechanisms and interventions can be strengthened by creating a stronger link to grassroots human rights defenders on the ground. In this regard, we believe that our interventions are important and strategic, and that they may have an even greater impact in the long run.

#### What will be the NHRF's focus in terms of grant-making during this new strategy period?

The NHRF will provide support to projects focusing on the following three priority areas, or as we like to call them, strategic lines:

- Work against impunity and for access to justice;
- Work against discrimination and/or marginalisation of vulnerable individuals and groups; and
- Support to improved working conditions and security for human rights defenders

#### How did these priorities come about?

Thematically, these priorities capture the core of all NHRF supported projects during the last strategy period and the NHRF's mandate above. However, in the new strategy, the NHRF has decided to explicitly highlight these three strategic lines as a way of visualising the commonalities in the supported projects across priority countries and the NHRF's global support to human rights defenders at risk. Despite the particular circumstances of each project, local context and country, all NHRF grantees share one or more common goals in their human rights struggle: to ensure accountability for violations that have taken place; to know the truth and seek justice for what happened to their loved ones; to live a life in dignity with equal rights as those of other citizens; and to be able to conduct their human rights work without the fear of stigmatisation, retaliation or even loss of life.



« Increased respect for the human rights of vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups through support to local human rights organisations.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2016–2020

### Are there any changes in the NHRF's geographical priorities?

The NHRF did extensive work during the last strategy period on including new countries. For the new period, the board has decided to continue with the current geographical priorities of Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, Liberia, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. However, it was made clear that the NHRF's board may make changes to this if necessary. The NHRF's thematic support to improved working conditions and security for human rights defenders creates flexibility and possibility for expansion of the NHRF's portfolios and support to countries where the situation is critical for human rights defenders.

### How will the strategy be taken forward?

The strategy is a living document, and our aim is to translate words into action for changes to actually happen. During 2017, we will also revise other NHRF strategic documents, such as our country priorities, so that these are aligned with the new overall strategy. We have already spent substantial time in 2016 working on how the new strategy will be implemented and have adjusted our work accordingly. However, for full implementation of our new strategy, more funds are needed and networks and cooperation needs to be strengthened. We sincerely believe that continued support to local human rights work is an important contribution in the struggle to uphold civil society space and build resilience under difficult circumstances. Most importantly, this kind of support ensures that the voices of vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups are heard beyond their local context. As such, we believe that our continued assistance to locally rooted human rights work contributes to the recognition and future support of defenders. ■



# 7

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

«All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law (...).»

### NHRF's Support to

## Work against impunity and for access to justice

### What is impunity?

Impunity arises from a failure by States to meet their obligations to investigate violations; to take appropriate measures to prosecute, try and punish; to provide victims with effective remedies and reparation; to ensure their right to know the truth; and to take other the necessary steps to prevent it from happening again.

*(Principle 1, Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1)*

In line with its new overall strategy, the NHRF shall prioritise work against impunity and for access to justice. During 2016, the NHRF has supported projects in 13 countries, 10 in which the contributions went to 29 projects that either aimed to ensure the access to justice for individuals or groups, or used it as a means to end a discriminatory *status quo*.

Many of the organisations supported by the NHRF have taken on themselves the remarkable efforts of documenting human rights violations, promoting the visibility and empowerment of discriminated groups, preserving the memory so future generations will not forget and repeat the violations, and providing free legal assistance to ensure equal access to justice.

### Lawyers' networks and victims' groups

The NHRF grantees that work on impunity are very diverse. Some of the organisations supported are professional lawyer associations like dhColombia (Colombia), Indignación and i(dh)eas in Mexico, Good Thinkers Organization in Pakistan, and Human Rights Lawyers Association (Thailand). They work on strategic litigation, providing free legal aid to victims and showcasing emblematic cases affecting women, transgender persons, workers, and/or

farmers. Many of these groups are victims of both violence and criminalisation. In the case of Thailand, efforts are also pooled into creating a network of human rights lawyers across the country in order to strengthen the links between local communities, lawyers and universities.

Other groups, like Mothers of Soacha and the Relatives of the Disappeared in the Justice Palace (both in Colombia), and the Solidarity for Human Rights Violations Victims Central Sulawesi (Indonesia), are comprised of survivors and/or relatives of individuals subjected to human rights violations, such as detention, extrajudicial killings and disappearances. These support groups have themselves become human rights activists and are now engaged in documentation and awareness-raising to preserve the memory of the past and promote the fulfilment of the State's obligations.

### Capacity building and documentation

One of the difficulties many collectives face when they seek justice is the lack of knowledge of their rights and the instruments available for their protection. Strengthening the skills and capacities of the most vulnerable groups is a fundamental tool to promote and protect human rights. Thus, 70% of the projects



*Familiares de los Desaparecidos del Palacio de Justicia has received support from the NHRF since 2013 in the struggle for justice for their loved ones.*

supported by the NHRF during 2016 included building the legal capacity of civil society organisations and the communities in which they work. Rural women in Liberia are learning about gender-based violence and the existing legal mechanisms that are available to them, thanks to Rural Women's Rights Structure; migrants crossing Mexico are getting to know about the laws that protect them due to the work of Un Mundo Una Nación; and the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence of North Sumatera (KontraS SUMUT) in Indonesia are teaching villagers and farmers to defend and advocate for their land rights.

Two out of three projects across three continents supported in 2016 included documentation of human rights violations against women, religious minorities, migrants or farmers. In the case of CIDH Morelos in Mexico, the

documentation fed into a national database on violations against women human rights defenders, and the majority are using documentation as base for advocacy and seeking justice. Documenting human rights violations sheds light on injustice and helps contribute to change; it can establish truths and even show patterns of abuse, and to certain level provides recognition for the victims and even contribute to healing, when reparation is not obtained.

The NHRF strives to provide support to organisations engaged in claiming rights and challenging the status quo. In many cases, they face threats and criminalisation as a result of their work. By supporting work that aims to ensure that all individuals are equal before the law and have equal opportunities to obtain justice, the NHRF wants to contribute to combat impunity.



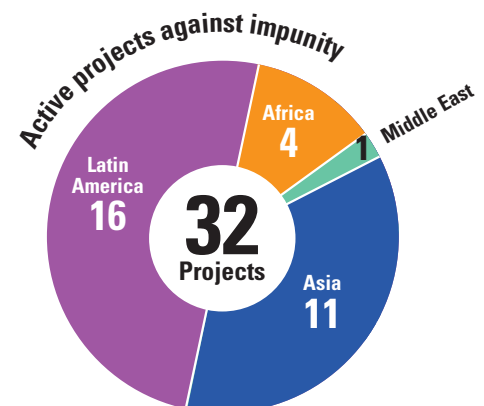
*Community members from the Mae Hong Song, Northern Thailand, represented at the Salween River Festival in Chang Mai in November. Human Rights Lawyers Association is providing legal services and assistance to local communities in the area on Salween river issues.*

### Key elements in work against impunity and access to justice:

**JUSTICE IS A** key component to combat impunity. Ensuring full and equal access is fundamental in the protection of human rights. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals also recognised, in Goal 16, the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on the respect for human rights, rule of law and good governance.

**DESPITE NATIONAL AND** international laws formally ensuring the protection of human rights, access to justice is, in many cases, a difficult road to tread. Some of these obstacles are based on the discrimination of certain groups on grounds of gender, religion, or ethnic background. Other obstacles are rooted in the absence of a normative framework, administrative weaknesses, or the lack of political will.

**IN ORDER TO** combat impunity, it is not enough to reform all norms and institutions that contribute to it. Victims must be taken into consideration: their right to know what happened, the right to see justice accomplished, and the right to obtain reparation.



NHRF's Support to

# Work against discrimination and marginalisation

Work against discrimination and marginalisation of vulnerable individuals and groups is at the core of the NHRF's mandate and overall objective and has been reaffirmed in the new strategy.

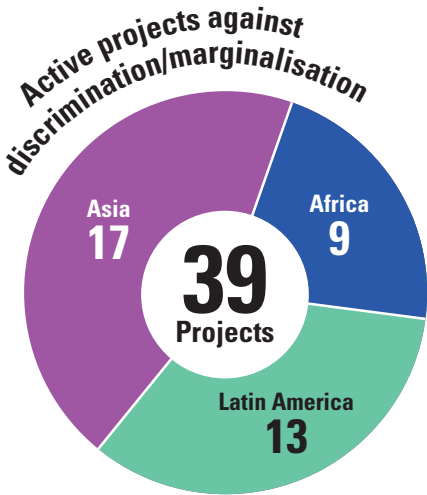
**Multiple forms of discrimination**

20 out the 35 projects that were provided financial support in 2016, and 39 of the 68 projects active that year, were in various ways engaged in work against discrimination and marginalisation. The projects were spread across Liberia, Mexico, Colombia, Pakistan, India, Indonesia and Cambodia. Human rights issues covered include the rights of women, migrants, workers, indigenous peoples, children/youth, LGBT persons, people with disabilities and Dalits. All supported projects within this thematic priority were engaged in advocacy work, while the vast majority were also involved in legal capacity building, outreach and mobilisation. The NHRF gives priority to projects where vulnerable or marginalised groups

themselves mobilise and take the lead in the struggle for their own rights. In many contexts, these groups are subject to multiple forms of discrimination where both social and economic factors come into play. These factors relate to issues such as gender, work, income and descent, amongst others.

**Strong focus on women**

In Liberia, the majority of projects are run by and for women, but with the important participation of men, in their fight against sexual and gender-based violence. After two decades of support to organisations in Liberia, impressive results have been achieved by the strong women and men involved in the projects (see pages 14-15). The rights of women and girls are also the main focus of several organisations supported in India, Colombia, Pakistan and Indonesia. Out of the 68 active projects in 2016, 26 focused their work on gender equality and/or women's rights.



In India, the majority of projects focus on combating discrimination based on work and descent. Here, Dalits and other marginalised communities have themselves mobilised based on the many challenges they face in Indian society on a daily basis. Dalit women face severe discrimination from being both a Dalit and a woman, and they are often victims of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights violations, including sexual abuse and violence. It is in this context that the organisation San-chaya Nele in Karnataka provides Dalit women with leadership training and capacity building within advocacy and existing legal frameworks in their struggle against caste discrimination.

A recent interview with the leader of the organisation Centro de Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos del sur del Veracruz «Bety Cariño» AC in Mexico also sheds light on the challenges of being an indigenous woman (see page 17). In Indonesia, the organisation Kalyanamitra works on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), with a strong



Training Policy Analysis by Using CEDAW for women communities in Jakarta, Indonesia, 29th of February – 2nd of March 2016.



Indigenous women human rights defenders from «Bety Cariño» in Veracruz, Mexico, preparing for a community meeting.



# 1

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

«All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.»

engagement in advocacy towards the local governments in the Jakarta and Bandung regencies.

**Seeking access to justice**

Several of the NHRF supported projects combine their struggle against discrimination and marginalisation with efforts to combat impunity and seek access to justice for the affected communities. This includes organisations such as Indignación. Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos working for the rights of indigenous peoples in Mexico, Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo working for the rights of children and youth in Colombia, Good Thinkers Organization in Pakistan supporting the rights of transgender

persons and the organisation Evidence in India. Evidence is assisting affected Dalit and Adivasi communities and individuals in the state of Tamil Nadu in seeking justice, compensation and rehabilitation for atrocities committed against them. Their work has now transformed into a people's movement for Dalits' rights, and they have intervened in more than 350 atrocity cases during the last five years of NHRF support (see page 16). Also in Liberia, several of the projects are involved in seeking access to justice for the affected women and girls.

**Long-term struggle**

The NHRF will continue its support to work engaged in the struggle against discrimination and marginalisation, where affected communities themselves mobilise and take the lead. Challenging the status quo and existing social, political and economic hierarchies in order to create changes requires perseverance, courage and long-term engagement. Through almost three decades of providing support in this field, the NHRF recognises that changes are possible and that local human rights defenders can make a real difference. Through this kind of support, marginalised individuals and groups are given a voice and the courage to claim the rights to which they are entitled.

**NHRF support to work against discrimination and marginalisation can be related to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda:**

- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – with a particular focus on ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.
- SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- SDG 10: Reduce inequality – with a particular focus on empowering the social, economic and political inclusion of all; eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices; and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

NHRF's Support to

# Better working conditions and protection of human rights defenders

In line with the NHRF's new strategy, the NHRF shall prioritise projects focusing on better working conditions for and protection of human rights defenders. During 2016, the NHRF provided financial support to eight projects in this portfolio, while a total of fourteen active projects carried out the main bulk of their activities in 2016.

Results and achievements

In June 2016, the NHRF conducted an internal assessment of the grants given under the human rights defenders strategy during the period 2013-2015. The mapping showed that the NHRF had met the main aims of the strategy. These were to support projects working for better protection of human rights defenders at risk; projects focusing on better working conditions for human rights defenders; and projects providing support to human rights defenders where the situation is critical. Over 90% of the funded projects focused on two or more of these three aims and almost 14% of the projects covered all three.

In addition, the internal assessment showed that over 200 human rights

defenders at risk received legal aid and practical support through the work of local human rights organisations supported by the NHRF. Furthermore, over 50 % of the grants were provided to human rights defenders in countries where the freedoms of association and expression are limited or almost non-existent. Based on these results and experiences, the NHRF will continue with the same priorities for the next three-year period (2016-2019).

Support to network building for human rights defenders

Network strengthening for the protection of local human rights defenders was a key element in several of the projects supported in 2016. A highlight in 2016 was the support to the bi-annual Asian Human Rights Defenders Forum (AHRDF), Toward Effective Protection for Human Rights Defenders/Women Human Rights Defenders, held in Sri Lanka from the 14th to the 16th of November. 130 HRDs from 19 countries in Asia participated, including several former and current NHRF grantees from the region. Among others, the NHRF support made



# 1

UN Human Rights Defenders Declaration

«Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.»

possible the participation of 40 local human rights defenders from Sri Lanka and the organisation of exchange visits in the field to various parts of Sri Lanka for human rights defenders from different parts of Asia. Representatives from several national protection networks and international mechanisms were present, including the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst. A declaration was adopted at the end of the conference highlighting the need for sensitivity towards the ground



In October 2016, the National Human Rights Defenders Network in Pakistan was launched. At the end of the year, 250 organisations were included in the network.



Human rights defenders from remote regions in Indonesia conducting risk management and mitigation organised by ELSAM (Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy).

level realities for human rights defenders, including women, in the Asia region. The declaration also highlighted issues that women and LGBTQI human rights defenders face regionally. Furthermore, a special section concerning Sri Lankan human rights defenders was also included, focusing on opportunities and challenges with regards to transitional justice processes, constitutional reform and economic policies.

Legal and practical support to human rights defenders

The NHRF continued the allocation of grants to projects that gave immediate relief and support to local human rights defenders. Among others, defenders who faced risks and threats were supported in their campaigns for justice through court visits, accompaniment, mentoring, psychosocial support and legal aid. Several of the projects included communication on cases with UN bodies and committees, such as urgent appeals to the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, communication with the Special Rapporteur on Torture, and appeals to national human rights institutions.

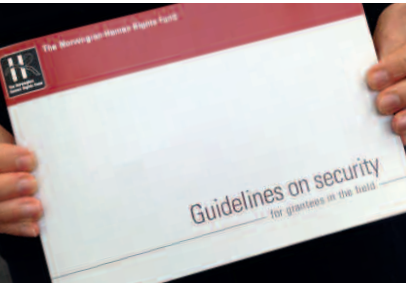
Crucial support to human rights defenders in Pakistan 2013–2016

During the course of three years the Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD) and the NHRF has jointly carried out a three-stage project, which started as a Human Rights

Defenders Organisations Capacity Building Pilot Project. The first step was to get a better understanding of how local human rights groups perceive their own security and to analyse more systematically which threats the organisations face. The research, which involved more than 400 organisations, showed that 62% of organisations had at some point received threats.

The research highlighted that even those organisations that believe they are able to deal with security threats, show a severe lack of understanding of their own capacity in this field. Important measures such as compensatory insurance policies and security plans were lacking in a majority of the organisations.

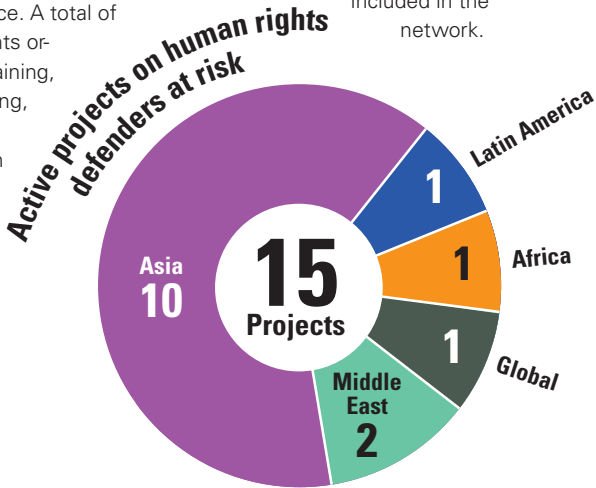
The second step in the project was to provide the organisations with the necessary strategies of how to deal with the risks and threats they face. A total of 40 high-risk local human rights organisations thus received training, follow-up and capacity building, and put in place their own security plans, covering both physical and digital security. Another important outcome of the research was 97% of the organisations responding positively to the need for a national human rights defenders network in order to improve cooperation and



**IN ADDITION TO** providing grants, the NHRF strived to implement its «Guidelines on security for grantees in field» throughout the year and had regular contact with embassies and diplomatic staff and organisations working on protection, in order to strengthen the support to local human rights defenders at risk.

advocacy, with regards to the challenges faced by human rights defenders – especially those related to security.

The last year of support, which ended in 2016, focused on establishing a three-tier joint strategy for human rights defenders' protection mechanisms, focusing on the state, the international community and local civil society organisations. In order to achieve the involvement of all of these actors, regional consultations and a national convention involving hundreds of human rights defenders in Pakistan were organised. In October 2016, the National Human Rights Defenders Network in Pakistan was launched, and by the end of the year, 250 organisations had been included in the network.



# Changes in local communities in Liberia

Interview with consultant Aloysius Toe

**THE NHRF HAS** supported local human rights work in Liberia for two decades. In the spring of 2016, the NHRF's local consultant Aloysius Toe made field visits to seven current grantee organisations in Rivercess, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado counties to learn more about the project results from the last four years. The interactions focused on changes experienced by women engaged in the projects and the impact the work has had in the local communities. Aloysius spoke with 77 individual key informants, such as project staffs and those benefiting from the projects. Community members, including law enforcement officials, local leaders, women and youth groups, were also interviewed, and five focused group discussions were organised.

**What were the overall impressions from your interactions in the field?**

Most grantees reported positive and notable changes in the communities as a result of interventions between 2013 and 2016. Overall, the work has led to increased awareness amongst women about their rights and provided them with a voice. The interventions have given courage to many women who are no longer passive but are asserting themselves to claim protection of and respect for their rights.

**Can you give some examples of how the projects have contributed to change for women in the target communities?**

Many organisations reported a reduction in cases of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in the target communities, as there has been a reduction in number of reported cases. In the past, an average of eight complaints were made daily on SGBV issues, but now an average of two complaints per day is made. A Town Chief in Rivercess County reported, «I no longer receive too many complaints about domestic

### The NHRF in Liberia 1996–2016

- Two decades of support to local human rights organisations (1996–2016)
- Support to over 100 projects across over 40 organisations from 1998 to 2016, with a total of USD 1 716 645 distributed
- Thematic priorities included: wrongful arrests, police brutality and torture; prison conditions and the rights of accused and convicts; juvenile justice and court monitoring in rural areas; human rights education in schools and local communities; judicial and security reform; and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)
- NHRF activities in 2013–2015 covered by an earmarked grant from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) of 3 million NOK (1 million NOK per year)
- In 2013–2015, the NHRF supported work that contributes to increased respect for and observance of women and children's rights in Liberia, especially outside the capital Monrovia where government presence is limited.

For the full NHRF report *Two Decades of Support to Human Rights Work in Liberia*: [www.nhrf.no](http://www.nhrf.no)



Workshop by Rural Women Rights Structure in Bong county, Liberia.

violence.» The reduction is further supported by the courage of many women to file complaints against male transgressors. This has created fear in men who are unwilling to face

interrogation by human rights groups and possible investigation by the police. Men being afraid to violate women's rights, is positively impacting communities.



NHRF consultant Aloysius Toe in Oslo in 2013.

**Can you describe some of the working methods used by the grantees in their interventions?**

Many grantees have established beneficiary-led clubs and networks. These networks and clubs are combating SGBV and harmful traditional practices (FGM) in schools and communities. As a result of this, parental resentment to discuss early marriage and FGM has reduced considerably, and frank and open discussions are now held. Before, parents never used to attend meetings, and if they did, they never talked as a sign of protest. But now, they are talking, and those in authority, the commissioners and town chiefs, are now accepting discussion.

Getting them involved makes them feel a part of it. Diversity has taken roots in these discussions. Local groups, traditional elders and school children, young and old freely come together to discuss sensitive issues, an exercise once considered a taboo.

**Do you see any possibilities of lasting change in the target communities?**

Yes. Previously, many women were weakened by their status within the household and community. Their ability to assert themselves and be active participants in decision making has now been strengthened. Some of the women I interviewed reported that awareness about their rights has opened their eyes

and empowered them to defend, claim and use their rights to land and other natural resource tenure rights. This shows how the interventions have helped rural women to challenge oppressive gender relations that are justified under the name of culture. Women who benefited from the trainings have been able to claim power from men who rule in their name. Many women are now also taking leadership in rural communities, including being named paramount chiefs which is rare. Women are now contesting for traditional leadership seats and are active in decision-making. The beneficiaries I interviewed attribute these developments to the interventions by NHRF grantees. ■

## Evidence in Tamil Nadu, India

**THE NHRF HAS** supported the organisation Evidence in the state of Tamil Nadu in India for the last five years. Evidence's mission is to fight caste and gender discrimination in Indian society. The organisation engages in human rights monitoring, legal and media interventions and has launched several campaigns against discrimination and «untouchability». Evidence's Director, Kathir@Vincent Raj, is a Dalit himself and has been a human rights defender for over 18 years. His witnessing and experiencing of discrimination from his own childhood triggered his determination to devote his life to human rights work.

### What is your mission at Evidence?

Evidence works with the rights of Dalits in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Our mission is to ensure that there is no discrimination based on caste, gender or class in Indian society. We focus on collecting evidence of any kind of discrimination taking place through fact-finding. Our organisation runs a human rights monitoring project. Its team has documented numerous cases, supported victims, and increased awareness in local communities. On average, 50–70 cases are taken up by

Evidence every month, including murder, gang rapes, sexual abuse and exploitation. We also engage in research-based monitoring of why and how incidents happen in the first place. This leads to an analysis of policies that must be changed in order to challenge existing structures in society. Our data collection is accessible through Evidence's library, which has proven to be useful not only to the victimised Dalits, but also to politicians, professionals, the media and campaigners.

### What are the main challenges Dalits in India face today?

The practice of «untouchability» forbids Dalits from entering public spaces and using public infrastructure. Dalits usually live in slums and ghettos and are kept outside the rest of the community. Dalits' access to justice, education and health services are hampered and they constitute a socially, politically and economically weaker part of the population. Though there are many languages spoken and many religions practiced in India, it is the language of caste that divides Indian society. Therefore, Evidence has launched an antidiscrimination campaign where both Dalits

and non-Dalit activists are involved in raising awareness in local communities and helping individuals to access justice.

### Can you tell us more about the «untouchability» campaign?

The «untouchability» campaign we conducted was only made possible with the grants from the NHRF. In this campaign, we see that besides the Dalit community, also non-Dalit women, students, civil rights activists, tribal communities, minorities, and political parties are actively involved and visiting places where discrimination takes place to try to help the affected people get justice. I am proud to say that 35% of the Dalit cases monitored by Evidence are being brought to Tamil Nadu courts. However, we still need to fight corruption and fanaticism. As a human rights defender and Dalit myself, I know the problems that Dalits face and the pain they suffer. I think I have to be louder in voicing injustice. I want to do this for Dalits without power or money because they believe in justice. Dalits keep preserving their values and are conscientiously striving for equality. Our work is to install in them the confidence to keep fighting for their human rights.



Evidence's Founding Executive Director, Kathir@Vincent Raj, and Programme Director, R. Thilagam, in their office in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

## Centro de Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos del Sur de Veracruz «Bety Cariño» in Mexico

**ONE OF THE CORE** mandates of the NHRF is the support to groups and organisations working to redress the discrimination they face for reasons of gender, religion or race, among others. To accomplish this, and to defend and protect their economic, social and cultural rights, the supported initiatives tend to include awareness raising, advocacy, competence building and legal assistance.

Latin America has been experiencing an alarming rise of violence and criminalisation against human rights defenders and environmental activists. Even though Mexico ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 in 1990, which ensures communities' rights to consultation, participation and representation in all measures which may affect them directly, the indigenous communities in the state of Veracruz face exploitation of their land through the protections afforded to corporations through the country's energy policies. These policies, along with the increased urbanisation and mega-projects (including mining concessions and fracking), pose major dangers to the territories and threaten indigenous peoples' environmental and cultural rights.

Bety Cariño works intensively with local communities on promotion of rights in matters of territory and natural resources. The organisation, mainly run by indigenous women, focuses on raising awareness to defend their land before the mega-projects are implemented. After seeing the destructive effects these have provoked in other communities, the centre tirelessly works on organizing people to take up cooperative action where there is still time to prevent more damage. Bety Cariño has established a dialogue with municipal and community authorities and has enabled agreements to be made on plans of

action: «We succeeded in producing a petition in which we request the cancellation of the mining in one of the municipalities. We gathered around 5 000 signatures and got also the mayor to sign it.»

« (...) as an indigenous woman, I am aware of how we have been treated unfairly for thousands of years. This is where my motivation comes from. It gives me energy and inspires me to do something. I do not stop. I just keep working to make a change.



Photo credit: Maribel Cervantes Cruz, indigenous Popoluca and human rights defender.

# Glimpses of NHRF network participation in Norway

In addition to information sharing with other relevant human rights actors, the NHRF participates in networks to share experiences from NHRF grantees' perspectives and connect these local experiences to the national and international levels.

## A historic year for Colombia

The NHRF continued its involvement in the Colombia Forum in 2016. The Forum brings together various Norwegian organisations with activities in Colombia for experience sharing and coordination. The Colombia Forum has regularly met with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for discussions about the human rights situation and the ongoing peace negotiations since 2012. With the signing of the peace accord between the government and the FARC and the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to President Santos, the year 2016 marked a significant year in Colombia's history.

## Visit by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

On the 26th of May, the NHRF, in collaboration with the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), hosted the seminar «Human Rights Defenders Protection and Security – Past and Present». Michel Forst gave an insightful presentation of his work as Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, emphasizing, among others, the importance of good practices in the protection of defenders and the need for States to develop and implement specific national legislation and mechanisms to provide the necessary protection. Together with the NGO Forum for Human Rights, the NHRF also hosted a round table meeting with Michel Forst and members of the Forum for dialogue and interaction.

## Caste based discrimination – dialogue with Norwegian stakeholders

Between the 18th and 23rd of November, Ramesh Nathan and Asha Kowtal from the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) visited Norway. With the NCDHR being a Rafto laureate from 2007, Nathan and Kowtal participated in the 30th anniversary of the Rafto Foundation in Bergen and the Rafto Laureates Forum. NHRF Executive Director Sandra Petersen was also present, together with participants from high offices in the UN, the EU, the Norwegian government, and a number of major international human rights organisations. Furthermore, the NCDHR representatives held meetings with the Norwegian Dalit Solidarity Network (DSN) members and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to highlight the work being done in India and the region.



The Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and the NGO Forum for Human Rights, Oslo



NHRF grantee Luz Marina Bernal from Madres de Soacha (Colombia) in Oslo April 2016. Here with Torstein S. Taksdal (NHRF) and Diego Marin from the Support Group for Peace in Colombia.

## The NHRF is currently active in five networks in Norway:

- NGO Forum for Human Rights
- Colombia Forum
- Forum for Central America
- Forum 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- Norwegian Dalit Solidarity Network

In addition, the NHRF has regular meetings and joint events with owner organisations.



Ramesh Nathan and Asha Kowtal (NCDHR, India) together with representatives from DSN-Norway, Sandra Petersen (NHRF) and Einar Tjelle (Church of Norway), Oslo.

Photo: Monica Orjuela



Conference «Together for Peace in Colombia», 9th of December 2016, Oslo

Photo: Støttegruppen for Fred i Colombia

# Administration and organisation

### The Secretariat

The NHRF has three full-time positions, as well as a part-time accountant.

Work on Asia has been shared between Executive Director Sandra Petersen and Project Coordinator Liv Hernæs Kvanvig. Kvanvig is in charge of India, Thailand, Indonesia and the Liberia portfolio. Petersen is responsible for Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the grants on human rights defenders at risk, while Project Coordinator Torstein Taksdal Skjeseth and after August, Vanessa Colorado, is responsible for projects in Latin America and Nigeria. Zoë Eunjae Lee has worked on contracts during the year on project management and work on the new grant management database. Bjørg Haugstulen is the NHRF's accountant.

As in previous years, the NHRF has continued its agreement on internships with the Master's Programme in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights at the Norwegian Centre for

Human Rights, University of Oslo, and the Secretariat would like to express its gratitude for invaluable assistance of Nina Púpalová and Sarah McMains from March to the end of the year. The Secretariat is also extremely grateful for the help provided by Mónica Orjuela, who has also interned with the NHRF from October 2016 to February 2017 with a focus on communication and social media.

Amnesty International Norway has hosted the Secretariat since 2007. The sharing of offices with Amnesty continues to provide the Secretariat with an inspiring work environment, both professionally and socially.

Travels and follow-up: during 2016, the Secretariat conducted project visits to India, Colombia, Mexico, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The NHRF has continued a close contact with funders from the Nordic countries and global funders in 2016, including contact through participation in the following conferences and meetings:

- April (Stockholm, Sweden): Defenders' Days, organised annually by the Swedish Organisation Civil Rights Defenders, including a working day with the Nordic funders.
  - June, Seminar and meeting at the Peace Brigades International's 30th anniversary in London Building Enabling Environments for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.
  - July (New York, USA): the International Human Rights Funders Groups (IHFG) annual convening «Sustaining the Human Rights Movement».
  - October (Berlin, Germany): Global Perspectives conference, «The future of civic space».
  - (Bergen) Participation at the Rafto Prize 30th Anniversary Ceremony and the Rafto Laureates Forum.
- Petersen continued her participation in the International Dalit Solidarity Network's (IDSN) Executive Group (EG). She participated in the IDSN council meeting in Geneva in March, in the EG meetings in Geneva in June, and in Copenhagen in October.

**NHRF consultants**

In order to ensure a high level of accuracy in the selection of projects, the NHRF operates with local consultants in most of its priority countries. The main tasks of the consultants are capacity building of grantee organisations, monitoring of projects, and providing advice to the Secretariat on strategies and project applications. The NHRF also uses international

networks and references from likeminded donors and national and international human rights organisations in the selection of projects. All NHRF consultants are qualified human rights activists with extensive experience from working with grassroots organisations in their respective countries. The consultants work on a contract basis.

**PAKISTAN:**  
Zulfiqar Shah,  
(NEW) since  
june 2016



**LIBERIA:**  
Aloysius Toe,  
since 2004



**COLOMBIA:**  
Elena Rey Maquieira Palmer,  
since 2011



**INDIA:**  
Mathews Philip,  
since 2013



**MEXICO:**  
Agnieszka Raczynska,  
since 2015





The Secretariat: (From left) Nina Púpalová, Liv Hernæs Kvanvig, Sandra Petersen, Zoë Eunjae Lee and Vanessa Colorado.

# Accounts

The total income in 2016 was NOK 8 295 700,- (US\$ 990 513). The majority of the budget was covered by a general grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The remaining part of the budget was covered by the owner organisations of the NHRF and other donations.

The total program costs NOK 7 831 776,- of which NOK 5 556 922,- (US\$663 501) was granted to human rights projects during the year.

NOK 482 497,- (US\$ 57 611) was spent on follow-up and capacity building of grantee organisations through the NHRF's local consultants, seminars in priority countries, work on security and field trips by the secretariat in Oslo.

NOK 85 710,- (US\$ 10 234) was spent on communication, reporting and strategy.

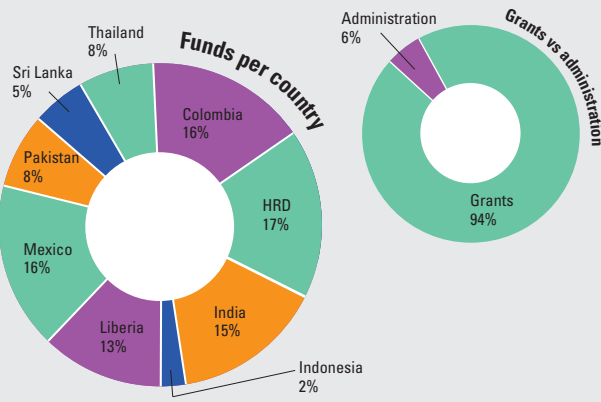
NOK 461 697 (US\$ 55 127) of the total income was used for administrative costs such as office costs, admin follow-up, audit, electricity, etc.

- The Board of the NHRF**
- The Board has held four meetings in 2016 as well as an extra working group meeting before the adoption of the strategy. There was also a working group on updating the NHRF guidelines and by-laws.
- The main tasks of the NHRF Board are to make strategic decisions and supervise the NHRF's economy and administration. In March 2016, the annual report 2015 was launched. In June, the main focus was around the annual risk and vulnerability analysis of the NHRF. In September, time was allocated for budgets discussions, implementation of strategy and governance. The last Board meeting in December focused on the budgets and plans for 2016, and worked on updating the guidelines and by-laws to be finally approved at the Board meeting in March 2017.
- Members of the Board of the NHRF in 2016 have been as follows (one representative for each of the five owner organisations):
- Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations: Gina Lende (Deputy Board member, Einar Tjelle);
  - Amnesty International Norway: Sidsel Stanmore Andersen (Deputy Board member, Gerald Folkvord);
  - Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions: Ellen-Kathrine Fauske, Chair of the Board (Deputy Board member, Terje Kalheim);
  - The Atlas Alliance: Trine Riis-Hansen (Deputy Board member, Morten Eriksen);
  - Norwegian Centre for Human Rights: Cecilie Figenschou Bakke (Deputy Board member, Nils A. Butenschøn).



Picture from the NHRF board meeting in December 2016: (From left) Cecilie Figenschou Bakke, Morten Eriksen, Sidsel Stanmore Andersen, Kathrine Fauske (Chair of the Board from September 2016) and Gina Lende.

ACCOUNTS IN 2016	USD	NOK
<b>Total income</b>	<b>990 513</b>	<b>8 295 700</b>
From owners	92 536	775 000
From government	895 506	7 500 000
Other income	2 472	20 700
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>990 248</b>	<b>8 293 473</b>
<b>Total Program cost</b>	<b>935 121</b>	<b>7 831 776</b>
For grants	663 501	5 556 922
Communication, report, strategy	10 234	85 710
Personnel cost	203 775	1 706 647
For follow-up, capacity building and travels	57 611	482 497
<b>Total admin costs</b>	<b>55 127</b>	<b>461 697</b>
Personnel, audit and office costs	48 763	408 401
Fundraising	1 113	9 322
Database and other	5 251	43 974



# LIST OF ORGANISATIONS AND COUNTRIES WHERE PROJECTS WERE ACTIVE DURING 2016

## Global

- OMCT SOS Torture
- Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC)

## Mexico

- Centro de Derechos Humanos de los pueblos del sur del Veracruz Bety Cariño AC
- Centro de Derechos Humanos Digna Ochoa AC
- Colectivo Contra la Tortura y la Impunidad (CCTI)
- Conservación Investigación y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Naturales (CIARENA)
- Un Mundo Una Nación (UMUN)
- Litigio Estratégico en Derechos Humanos - i(dh) eas
- Indignación. Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos

## Colombia

- Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina (ANZORC)
- Asociación Red Juvenil del Suroccidente de Barranquilla
- Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo (CISCA)
- Confluencia de Mujeres para la Acción Pública
- Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CREDHOS )
- Familiares de Desaparecidos del Palacio de Justicia
- Madres y familiares de los casos de ejecuciones extrajudiciales en Soacha, Bogotá y otras ciudades de Colombia
- Red de Defensores y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos - dhColombia

## Kenya

- Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC)

## Israel

- Human Rights Defenders Fund

## Afghanistan

- Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO)

## Liberia

- Self Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD)
- West Point Women for Health and Development (WPWHDO)
- Women Actions Network (WAN)
- Women Solidarity Inc. (WOSI)
- Women's Rights and Democracy Centre (WORD Centre)
- The Forum for Women Rights Defense (FORWORD)
- Rural Womens Rights Structure (RWRS)
- Women and Children Rights Organization (WOCRIFO)

## Pakistan

- Association of Women or Awareness and Motivation (AWAM)
- Democratic Commission for Human Development
- Encourage the Human Development
- Good Thinkers Organization
- Sujag Sansar Organization

## Cambodia

- Minority Rights Organization (MIRO)

## India

- K.G.F. Womens Association
- Marpu
- Prarambha
- Sanchaya Nele
- The Empowerment Centre for Nomads and Tribes (TENT Society)
- Centre for Promotion of Social
- Concerns (CPSC)
- Evidence

## Sri Lanka

- Inform Documentation Centre

## Thailand

- Human Rights Lawyers Association (HRLA)
- Thai Poor Act (TPA)
- Community Resource Centre (CRC)

## Indonesia

- Commission for the 'Disappeared' and Victims of Violence of North Sumatra (KontraS SUMUT)
- Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM)
- The Solidarity for Human Rights Violations Victims Central Sulawesi (SKP-HAM)
- Yayasan Kalyanamitra



María Ciro from Comité de Integración Social del Catatumbo (CISCA), Colombia.

**Change** Accountability  
**Human rights** Protection  
Local **defenders**  
**Empowerment** Dignity  
Mobilisation

## ABOUT THE NORWEGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FUND (NHRF)

■ Established in 1988, the NHRF works to protect and promote human rights internationally through direct support to organisations working in the frontline of defence for marginalised and vulnerable groups where the situation is critical.

■ The niche of the NHRF lies in its ability to be a flexible donor that can take risks by supporting nascent initiatives which are targeted and smart, without intermediary links or time-consuming procedures. The NHRF can provide support in politically sensitive contexts, thereby acting as a daring contributor in the struggle for the respect for human rights.

■ The NHRF is financed by contributions from owner organisations and from the Norwegian Government.

■ The NHRF is anchored in Norwegian civil society organisations, which contribute both financially and professionally to human rights projects and the operations of the NHRF.

### OWNER ORGANISATIONS DURING 2016:

- Amnesty International Norway
- Atlas Alliance
- Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations
- Norwegian Centre for Human Rights
- Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions

### POSTAL ADDRESS:

The Norwegian Human Rights Fund,  
P.O. Box 6890 St. Olavs plass, N-0130 Oslo, Norway.

### VISITING ADDRESS AND FOR EXPRESS DELIVERY MAIL:

The Norwegian Human Rights Fund,  
c/o Amnesty International Norway, Grensen 3, Oslo, Norway.

### HOMEPAGE:

[www.nhrf.no](http://www.nhrf.no)