



NORWEGIAN
HUMAN RIGHTS FUND

SOLIDARITY – INCLUSION – RESILIENCE – SUSTAINABILITY – CHANGE
Strengthening the human rights movement together

STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION (2021-2025)



The Norwegian Human Rights Fund was established in 1988 by a collective of Norwegian civil society, academia and workers' unions. As of 2021, the following organisations and institutions contribute strategically, professionally and financially to the NHRF's work and are represented in the NHRF's Board:

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

www.nhrf.no

Front cover photo: Confluencia de Mujeres para la Acción Pública
Back cover photo: Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Francisco de Vitoria

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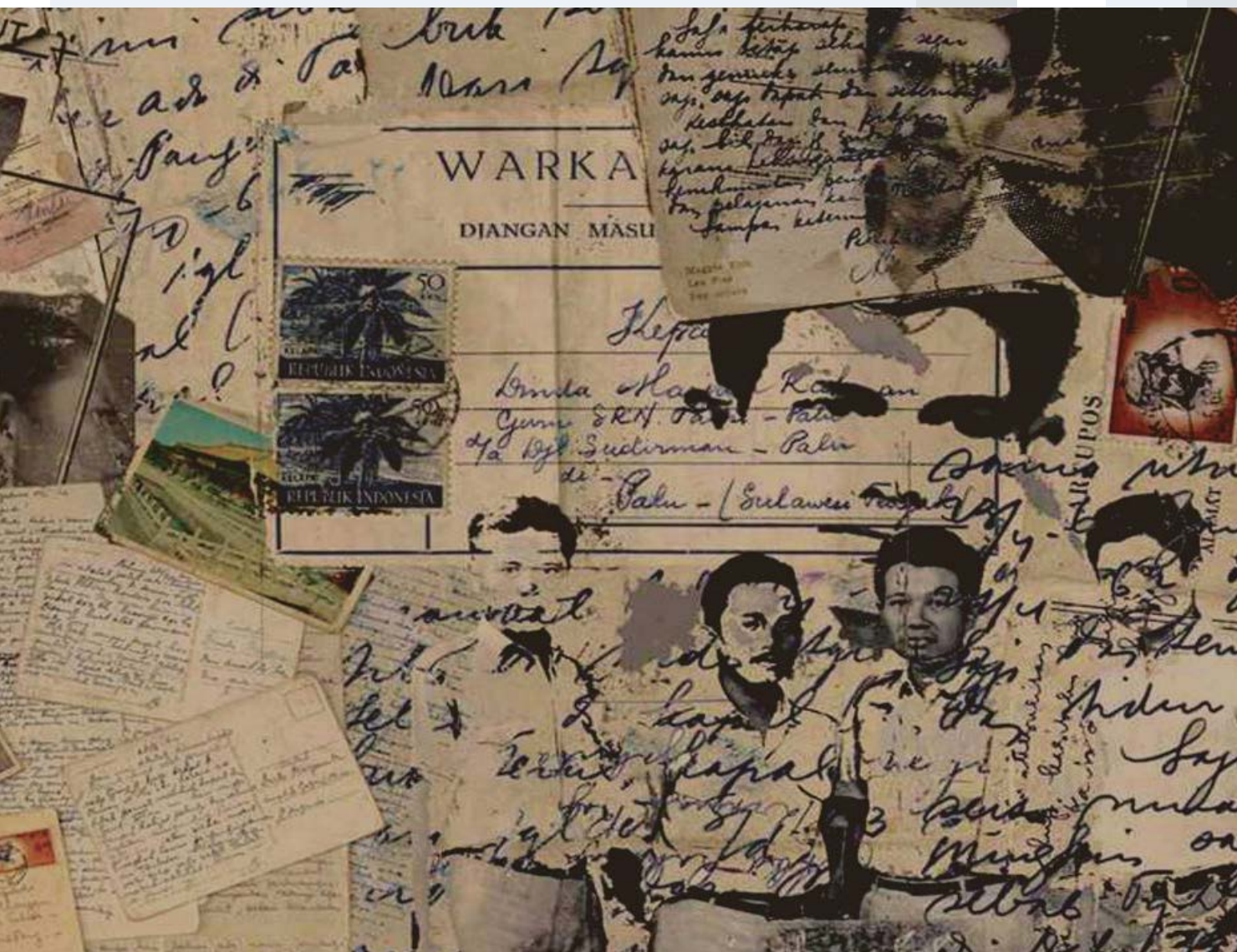


Photo: Solidaritas Korban Pelanggaran-Hak Asasi Manusia

WHO WE ARE

OUR MANDATE

The Norwegian Human Rights Fund's mandate is to protect and promote human rights internationally by being a flexible and courageous actor that provides support to local and front line organisations and movements.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is that marginalised and vulnerable individuals and other groups who experience human rights violations and injustices are able to claim their rights and have them fulfilled.

WE BELIEVE THAT

Civil society and human rights organisations have a role in the promotion of sustainable and peaceful societies. We believe that support to human rights defenders and human rights work will lead to mobilization on the ground and the creation of robust, secure and resilient movements that can influence positive change.

ABOUT THE NHRF

The NHRF is a unique organisation that fills the dual role of a grantmaker and an international human rights actor. The NHRF strives to be informed and supportive of the work of our grantee partners and to provide flexible funding with an agenda driven by the needs of the organisations and defenders on the ground who are leading and mobilizing in the struggle for human rights. The NHRF stands apart with its identity based in and linked to Norwegian civil society, its connections to the international human rights community and to the local and national human rights organisations we work with. The NHRF leverages these relationships to work in solidarity with the human rights defenders and organisations we support.

The following NHRF strategy was developed through a participatory method that included NHRF staff, consultants, Board and Advisory Board members, and select grantee partners. By taking a participatory and inclusive approach, the NHRF seeks to cultivate a culture of learning that produces new ideas, ways of thinking, knowing and practices that can strengthen our work and support.

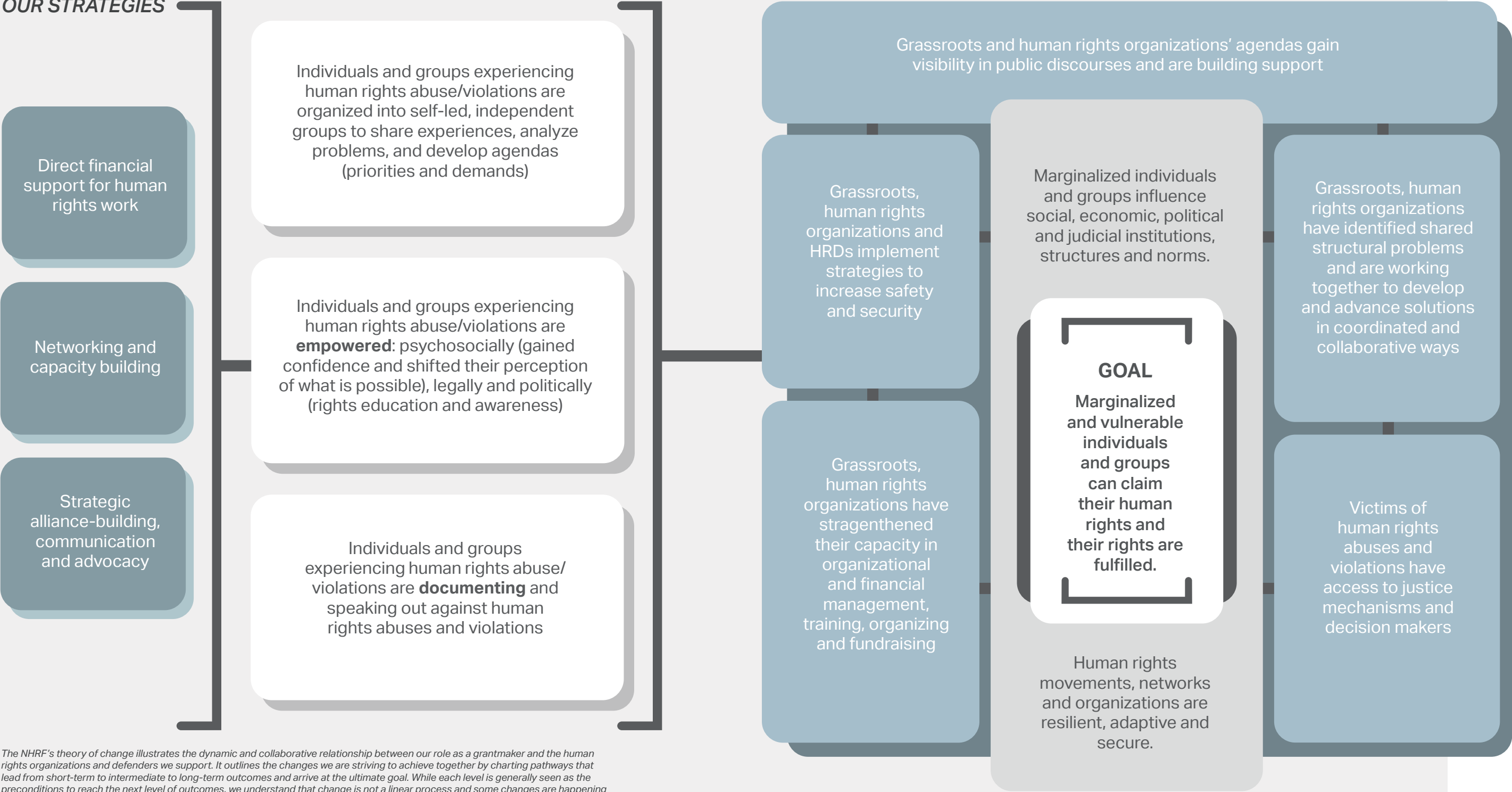
The NHRF will apply a gender perspective to the implementation of this strategic plan. Information about our commitments to gender can be found in our policy on gender and gender equality.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

THE CHANGE WE ARE WORKING FOR

This strategic plan and the NHRF's theory of change are complementary and work together to guide the NHRF in its work to reach its key goal: "Marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups can claim their human rights and their rights are fulfilled".

OUR STRATEGIES



The NHRF's theory of change illustrates the dynamic and collaborative relationship between our role as a grantmaker and the human rights organizations and defenders we support. It outlines the changes we are striving to achieve together by charting pathways that lead from short-term to intermediate to long-term outcomes and arrive at the ultimate goal. While each level is generally seen as the preconditions to reach the next level of outcomes, we understand that change is not a linear process and some changes are happening simultaneously and/or reinforcing one another. For more information about our theory of change please refer to the accompanying narrative.

1 THE CONTEXT FROM WHERE WE STAND

THE NHRF PERSPECTIVE ON THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

GLOBAL CONTEXT AND TRENDS

2020 has been a devastating year for human rights and human rights work. Developing a strategic plan to support critical human rights work in the midst of a global decline in respect and commitments for human rights that preceded a global pandemic that is exacerbating structural inequalities requires us to extend our understanding, imagination, and solidarity. There is much uncertainty moving into the coming years, but there is certainty in the dependability of human rights – those who defend them, those who work to see them fulfilled, those who promote them, and in the foundational international and regional legal frameworks that exist.

In our previous strategic plan (2015), we wrote that “Despite comprehensive ratification of international conventions over the past three decades, the implementation of important human rights conventions is weak in many countries.” This, unfortunately, remains the reality for today. A reality which is being further eroded by a global backlash against human rights that threatens many hard-won victories. This backlash, the result of extreme polarization and rising authoritarianism in many countries, is paving the way for opportunistic actors to take advantage of the global pandemic to further curtail legitimate human rights work and suppress those who defend them. Fortunately, strong civil societies and human rights defenders across the globe and some leading States continue to push for human rights and to build on the progress made.

Despite persisting and increasing human rights challenges, we have witnessed during the last decade that financial support to human rights work in many parts of the world is diminishing as a result of changing political priorities, shifting donor priorities, and State budget cuts or shifts, and now further decreased funding due to COVID-19 – an unfortunate consequence as the pandemic has only increased the need for resources on the ground.

The NHRF recognizes that full, equal, and meaningful implementation of the vast human rights and other relevant frameworks continues to be essential in order to reach equality and a sustainable future for all. We also understand that there is a need to make human rights tangible and relevant on a personal and community level, beyond the frameworks which are often opaque and inaccessible. And we know that grassroots organisations, social movements and their allies can bridge the realms of advocacy and social mobilization.

COVID-19: DEEPENING CRISES OF INEQUALITY

The ongoing global pandemic and the severe economic and social consequences of it are an urgent and central concern. Inadequate and troubling State responses have only deepened existing issues of inequality and discrimination.

By the end of 2020, the ILO estimates that a total of 500 million jobs could be lost and the UN estimates that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy are currently at risk of or have lost their livelihoods.¹ Additionally, an ITUC study published in July 2020 found that 80 percent of the world’s countries have violated the right to bargain collectively, and that there has been an increase in the number of countries that deny freedom of association.² Women across the world make up the majority of workers in the informal economy, and in some regions they make up an overwhelming majority, as in South Asia where women constitute 80 percent of the informal workforce.³

1 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

2 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_755910.pdf

3 <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-rights-index-2020>

This reality is one of many examples of the gendered consequences of the pandemic as women bear the brunt of the hardships of the pandemic. Another consequence of the exacerbation of existing harmful gender norms during the pandemic is the alarming increase in cases of gender-based violence. Such violations compound and create new lived experiences of inequality, deepening the human rights crises.

Marginalised communities – such as indigenous, racial minorities, displaced persons, LGBTIQ, and especially those living at these intersections of these identities– have been the most severely impacted, the first to feel the effects of shocked and regressing economies, the first to lose livelihoods, and those whose recovery will be the most challenging.

These and other consequences for human rights will have lingering impacts that we expect we will be responding to and our partners will be addressing directly in the coming years.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY IN THE DIGITAL REALM

One volatile and persisting issue facing global and local human rights communities is that of digital rights and security. Technology is evolving at a staggering pace with promises of offering empowering tools for civilians, while simultaneously equipping governments, corporations, non-State actors, and other power-holders with tools that can be used with destructive costs to human rights and the rights of those who defend them – creating a cycle of asymmetric needs and ability between civilians and States and power – holders. Laws on digital security and protection fail to adequately protect civil society and human rights defenders from those who use digital tools against them with tactics like surveillance, digital sabotage, misinformation, online smear campaigns, election interference, and harassment of human rights actors and defenders. All these tactics are significant threats that too few have the tools or knowledge needed to combat. Civil society watchdogs and human rights actors have monitored and reported that such tactics have been used to suppress defenders during the pandemic. Using digital tools for widespread promotion and defence of human rights must be done in conjunction with promotion of digital rights and security. The NHRF will provide support to improve and strengthen human rights defenders’ skills and knowledge for digital security in the coming years.

HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE MOVE

The 21st century has been characterized by unprecedented levels of migration due to conflict, climate change, human rights violations, a more global workforce and other factors. International and regional human rights frameworks have had their limits tested to the fullest extent and have been found wanting, given their inability to safeguard the rights and protections enshrined within them and to provide safe passage and guarantee human rights at the destination. State accountability and legal recourse for violations against refugees and migrants remains inaccessible for most.

Poor policies, discriminatory rhetoric, and an overall lack of political will towards safe migration has created situations of extreme insecurity and instability in many regions and within countries. Given the current situation and the increasingly severe consequences of climate change and unemployment, migration will continue to be a pressing human rights issue that is interlinked with and often the direct result of myriad human rights violations and inadequate national and international policies and action to address them.

The NHRF has and will continue to support human rights work addressing various human rights issues related to migration, including internal migration, namely migrant labor rights, environmental rights and climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our lifetimes. The environment impacts every detail of our lived experiences and shapes State (in)action for or against human rights, and it will continue to frame our ideas of sustainable change indefinitely. The NHRF supports organisations and projects that work to protect their environmental and land rights and sovereignty, those who fight to reverse or prevent destructive “development” policies and business practices, those who seek justice for environmental damage, and fight for sustainable climate policies.



Photo: Human Rights Lawyers Association

CIVIC SPACE UNDER PRESSURE

As promoters and watchdogs of human rights, local organisations and HRDs play an indispensable role in bridging the gap between rhetorical and symbolic commitments on paper to tangible and meaningful realisation of human rights. Although the international community has strengthened its commitments to the protection of human rights defenders and more organisations and States are becoming allies, in many parts of the world human rights defenders, civil society organisations and trade unions are subject to pressure, surveillance threats, criminalization, smear campaigns, abuse, and killings from both State and non-State actors. We see that human rights defenders, civil society and trade unions are fighting against the deterioration of the situation and to prevent harmful laws and policies.

In recent years, the international community has witnessed several States use national legislation to thwart or prevent human rights work by taking overt measures to convolute procedures for registering organisations, to limit opportunities for receiving foreign funding, to conduct surveillance and use security and anti-terror legislation to limit the rights to freedom of speech and association. Together, with allies in Norway and the wider international community, the NHRF will work for the right to enabling environments and the right and ability to promote and defend human rights as stipulated in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

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.

- UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

MAINTAINING HOPE THROUGH OPPORTUNITY

The human rights framework has a vast network of mechanisms for accountability to and implementation of the rights enshrined within it. The framework and its processes and entities that work to translate words into action and accountability on an international and national level continue to provide opportunities to advance human rights work and agendas across the world.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework and targets for addressing these pressing human rights issues and a framework for accountability for States to meet their targets. Linking the foundational human rights framework to an actionable plan for States is a way forward for human rights realisation. The SDGs are a part of the human rights agenda but are a more outward and actionable expression of the fundamental rights enshrined in the core international and regional conventions, which remain powerful tools for demanding rights and holding State and non-State actors accountable for human rights violations. By the end of this five-year strategic period, the SDGs will be only five years away from their 2030 goals, and the NHRF plans to monitor linked contributions to meeting the SDG targets.

The UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda with UN Security Resolution 1325 as the founding document both celebrated anniversaries in 2020. A renewed commitment and sense of urgency to close the gaps in gender inequality have been the prominent response to this celebratory time to reflect and consider next steps. The NHRF plans to monitor linked contributions and direct use of the Beijing and WPS agendas in the coming years.

The field of business and human rights is expanding and recognition of the role of businesses in closing the gaps in human rights realisation is increasing. Coordinated, multi-stakeholder efforts are essential to holding business to account for better, more equal and fair business practices at all levels. This field is and will continue to be critical especially for the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic as workers across the globe have been among the most severely impacted by the pandemic.

Intersecting across all human rights issues is the need for more inclusive and diverse human rights movements and leaders. With more voices represented, our collective understanding of the issues, needs, and how to address them is strengthened. As inequality worsens and crises like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic threaten communities across the globe, there is a pressing need for a community-driven positive vision of the world we want to create. We are witnessing movements come together on a global scale on shared issues like protection of human rights defenders, gender equality and gender-based violence, racial justice and environmental justice. The NHRF will promote and support stronger, more diverse human rights movements and leadership with an emphasis on women, people of diverse identities, youth, workers, and persons with disabilities.

All of these opportunities are the product of the unrelenting work behind commitments to an equal, secure, and sustainable future made by generations of HRDs, civil societies, and leading nations on human rights across the globe who refuse to allow backsliding on human rights. The NHRF places action and solution driven hope and courage first as we move into these next five years.

The NHRF will build on its three decades of experience and continue to prioritise support to the human rights work of marginalised and vulnerable groups and support to human rights defenders in the front lines of defence for human rights. Our support will be guided by the core human rights instruments and other international instruments such as relevant ILO conventions, the women, peace and security agenda, and the overall goal of the SDGs – “leave no one behind”.



Photo: Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha.

2 KEY THEMATIC AREAS FOR SUPPORT FOR 2021-2025

The NHRF will direct its support to human rights work within the following interlinked thematic areas:

1. **Fight against impunity and for access to justice**
2. **Dismantling discrimination, inequality and marginalisation**
3. **Protecting human rights defenders and the right to defend rights**

This section will outline the overall support and work of the NHRF within these thematic areas, while the NHRF country strategies outline our support within these thematic areas as they pertain to the context of each priority country. Below we have provided a non-exhaustive list of our target groups, but they are also further defined within the country strategies.

For each thematic area, we outline the work we plan to support, the change we are working for (how the thematic area links to the NHRF Theory of Change), and key outcomes that the NHRF aims to contribute to during this five-year strategy period. The key outcomes balance the NHRF's current capacities and knowledge with our ambition to push ourselves further and explore new opportunities for growth and learning within each thematic area. The NHRF will apply a gender lens and approach to each thematic area and its outcomes.

TARGET GROUPS

For thematic lines of support 1 and 2: Victims/survivors of human rights violations in conflict and post-conflict settings; marginalised and vulnerable groups, including indigenous communities, minorities (e.g. religious, ethnic, racial) HRDs, women, LGBTIQ, persons with disabilities, workers, migrants, youth, and Dalits and others experiencing caste-based discrimination. We recognize the intersections of these identities, which have been made more vulnerable due to multiple and compounded layers of discrimination.

Thematic line of support 3 has the following target group: Human Rights Defenders who identify as or who are defending the human rights of marginalised communities, LGBTIQ, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous, and environmental Human Rights Defenders.

The NHRF will seek to fund and undertake regional and international exchanges of best practices and joint actions related to all the thematic areas and constructive engagement with the UN Special Rapporteurs.



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF

Human rights organisations is an encompassing term for any organisation, collective, group, etc. that conducts work related to human rights.

FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY AND FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE

In the last three decades, the NHRF has placed programmatic emphasis on addressing issues of grave human rights violations like work against torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and work for access to justice and the legal system for people affected by armed conflicts, including families of the disappeared and civil society actors that address entrenched practices of impunity.

Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence are prevalent in many conflict and post-conflict settings, and thus there is much to be learned from the coordination of international exchanges of experience and knowledge from respective pursuits of justice and accountability for these violations. Such coordination will contribute to the important process of human rights actors learning from each other and making connections to work on an international level to create awareness of the lingering impacts and cross-cutting human rights impacted by these violations. Victims/survivors will be centred throughout this process. During this period, the NHRF will aim to increase its support to these complex issues, including in coordination with likeminded donors and partners to help build a stronger front of action to push States towards justice, to end the practice of impunity and to bolster the international human rights conventions and their corresponding committees and UN special procedures that work on these issues.

The work supported within this thematic area will contribute to the achievement of SDG 16 and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action and other commitments related to women's and girls' rights (e.g. women's participation and representation in all levels of decision making in areas of peace and security, protection of women's rights in conflict situations, and a survivor-centred approach to prevention of and justice for conflict-related sexual violence).



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF

The change we are working for

- Those who have experienced or who are experiencing human rights violations are empowered and taking action to fight for their rights
- Victims of human rights abuses and violations have access to justice mechanisms and decision-makers
- Communities and organisations influence social, economic, political and judicial institutions, structures, and norms including transitional justice mechanisms

Key Outcomes

- Human rights documentation collected by human rights organisations is used to secure justice for victims of grave human rights abuses and to hold perpetrators accountable
- Individuals and communities who have been harmed as a result of conflict are getting the psychosocial healing, healthcare, including reproductive rights, legal, and social support and mentorship needed to continue their front line struggles
- Individuals and communities who have been harmed as a result of conflict are actively participating in, using, and creating initiatives to seek truth, justice, non-repetition, reconciliation, and historical memory
- Grassroots organisations and their allies are mobilizing communities to act for peace and to strengthen the practices of formal institutions that work for peace and reconciliation.
- Learning, knowledge and experience exchanges are used to identify and share best practices across regions and countries between victims' families, survivors of violence, including gender-based violence, and organisations and networks working on impunity and for access to justice.

DISMANTLING DISCRIMINATION, INEQUALITY AND MARGINALISATION

Historically, the NHRF has supported a diverse array of projects within this thematic area. In recent years we have focused our support to areas that connect to the field of business and human rights, including labour and workers’ rights, land/territory and indigenous peoples’ rights, and the environment/ climate change. These will remain our focus areas in the next strategy period but with a recognition of their linkages to other compounding forms of discrimination and the structures that uphold such practices. Caste based discrimination affects an estimated 260 million people worldwide, and the NHRF has a strong history of supporting Dalit led groups working to end caste-based discrimination. This will continue throughout the next strategy period, the NHRF will support organisations working on the labour rights and working conditions of vulnerable workers, both in the formal and informal sector.⁴ Many workers, including migrant workers, at the lower end of supply chains are trapped in insecure and often unsafe jobs with poverty wages, long hours, informal work, forced overtime. The NHRF will contribute to work against slavery-like conditions, including combating contemporary and new forms of slavery. Connections to the evolving field of business and human rights will be explored and supported when relevant. The NHRF will proactively support and remain cognizant of issues related to the inequalities resulting from recent mass unemployment levels and the social and economic impacts that are, in part, due to the lack of protections that existed before the pandemic. Gender disparities and norms at home, in the workplace and society at large are key drivers of the lack of labour rights and protections afforded to women workers who make up the majority of the informal sector workforce and are the most unprotected workers in the world. This work aligns with SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on economic growth and decent work, with a specific focus on SDG 8.7 on eradicating child labour and forced labour. This also aligns with the International Labour Organisation’s agenda on decent work and economic growth.

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time and the links **between land/territory, indigenous peoples’ rights and the environment** are inextricable. The NHRF supports communities and local grassroots organisations working in this area and recognizes them as stewards of rich environments that are critical to our global climate, as part of the 5% of indigenous peoples who live in areas that represents 80% of the world’s biodiversity. These movements are directly connected to the environment, working where the effects of climate change are felt first and more severely, at the intersections of marginalisation, poverty, and livelihoods that depend upon the natural resources. The NHRF supports communities fighting against the impositions on and destruction of their land and land grabbing by national and transnational businesses - namely the exploitative extractive and agricultural industries - States, and other actors.

Rights to land and natural resource management are important struggles, and we recognize the interconnectedness between the issues and struggles for environmental and land rights and business and human rights. The work the NHRF supports in this area aligns with SDG 15 on protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and target 16.7 of SDG 16 - ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

Gender discrimination is pervasive and a key impediment to achieving true equality in our societies—from the family to the workplace to the government. The NHRF is committed to achieving **gender equality** and thus supports those who resist and dismantle destructive gender norms and fight for recognition and equality for all. Variations on the struggle for gender equality that the NHRF will support include and are not limited to: tackling violence against women and girls; discrimination in the workplace and at home; digital security for women; WHRDs, and gender diverse people; equal access to and opportunity in the social, political, and economic spheres of society; advancing feminist agendas.

⁴ A survey conducted by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has shown that 50 of the world’s largest companies directly employ just 6% of the workers in their supply chains – the remaining 94% are part of the hidden workforce of global production as part of their **global supply chains** – equivalent to 116 million people.

The change we are working for

- Economic, cultural and social⁵ rights for marginalised and vulnerable groups are being supported in public discourse
- NHRF grantee partners are organizing into self-led and independent groups and working together in coordinated and collaborative ways with local communities and people affected by human rights violations

Key outcomes

- Progress in the fulfilment of rights to land, territory, the defence of the environment, and natural resource management, particularly for indigenous communities
- Workers (particularly those in informal sectors and vulnerable workers) are able to safely exercise their right to freedom of association and conduct collective bargaining to achieve stronger labour rights protections
- Women workers are empowered, organised and raising awareness on the gender-based discrimination and violence they experience with the aim of practical and legal protection and workplace improvements towards equality.
- Businesses (national and transnational) are demonstrating respect for local land preservation, ownership, and management and are meaningfully consulting with local and indigenous communities on their land and environmental rights
- Businesses are improving and aligning practices with national and international labour standards and transnational companies are advocating for and ensuring compliance along the supply chain.
- Supported organisations are using connections with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and other UN Special Procedures mandates to inform context analyses and to make international/national priorities reflective of their key concerns
- Women and gender diverse persons are collectively confronting patriarchal structures and reshaping social and cultural norms and attitudes towards women and their role in the family and society

⁵ In this strategic priority, the NHRF has chosen to focus its support on projects working on the realization of economic, cultural and social rights. However, we recognise the link to civil and political rights in this work, in order for civil society including trade unions and workers groups in using their freedom of expression and associations in order hold governments accountable for realisation of rights.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
AND THE RIGHT TO DEFEND RIGHTS

Supporting Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and their right to defend rights has emerged as a critical and evolving thematic area for NHRF programming in the last decade. Working closely with HRDs and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs has helped strengthen our understanding and competency for supporting HRDs in all their diversity and unique needs, including how to better support networks and initiatives that strengthen the ability of HRDs to continue work in the front lines in rapidly changing contexts. We are applying lessons learned on the importance of a holistic approach to security and protection for HRDs by supporting projects that focus on psychosocial and multifaceted support for HRDs.

Throughout the next strategy period, our support to HRDs will have a dual focus – direct and added value support to HRDs to increase their personal, and as part of a community, capacities for protection and security, and that of advocacy towards States to push for better models of protection that lead to tangible, measurable results for HRDs. The NHRF will also aim to be among the standard-setters of human rights funds and will continue to develop our role ambitiously as a key actor and partner for protection, solidarity, increased visibility, building new partnerships and promotion of the role and legitimacy of human rights defenders. The NHRF will support advocacy efforts aiming to create more visibility for HRDs and recognize their role, value and need for security and visibility efforts that also serve a protective purpose. HRDs are in dire need of support and solidarity through funding, capacity building, State commitments and pressure on other violating State and non-State actors, and the NHRF will provide flexible support or links to support in these areas. Resilience and psychosocial support are key elements to avoiding burnout that can effectively undermine the ability of HRDs to make sound and safe decisions. The NHRF will contribute to efforts to build resilience in mind and body and on an organisational level for HRDs. We will be particularly attentive to how organizing in the digital realm and new technologies impact HRDs and enhance our support for digital security and how to respond to technologies being used against HRDs.

We will continue to work closely with specialized partners on protection for HRDs both at a national and international level, including rapid response funders, the UN system, embassies, municipalities, Shelter Cities and universities. Overall, a flexible approach to support to HRDs will be used to meet the current moment of needs for HRDs during the global COVID-19 situation and to adjust to their shifting needs as impacts from the pandemic continue to develop. The work the NHRF supports in this area cuts across the broad human rights field as HRDs are diverse and fight against all human rights injustices.

The NHRF uses the term “HRDs” inclusively with reference to human rights defenders that identify and/or fight for the human rights of women, LGBTIQ, persons with disabilities, indigenous, environmental human rights and their intersections. The NHRF is aware that among HRDs there are groups such as those mentioned here that face additional forms of marginalization and discrimination and who are tackling some of the most urgent social and political human rights issues.

The change we are working for

- Grassroots and human rights organisations and HRDs implement strategies to increase safety and security
- Human rights movements, defenders, networks and organisations are resilient, adaptive and secure
- Measurable increase in respect for and commitment to HRDs and their critical role in society and the protection of both by States, businesses and the international community

Key Outcomes

- Increased digital capacity and psychosocial support to HRDs and greater awareness of these critical needs in the field of protection for HRDs
- Local HRDs and grassroots organisations are able respond to and counter new and increasing restrictions on civil society.
- Governments and businesses support an enabling environment for defending rights by recognizing and affirming the work of HRDs and strengthening or implementing legal protections for HRDs
- New partnerships and collaborations are created between different types of defenders and allies and incorporate the distinctive needs and experiences of HRDs in the periphery (WHRDs, LGBTIQ, environmental defenders, trade union activists).
- Local HRDs and grassroots organisations can continue their work, mitigate risks and implement protection and prevention strategies with support from networks and connections with international support mechanisms (UN Special Rapporteur, Embassies, etc.)
- Effective action on protection and security are taken by local communities as a result of support and capacity building

GEOGRAPHY

- ✓ The NHRF will continue to accept proposals for human rights projects working within and between these three thematic areas through both closed and open calls for proposals from our priority countries: Colombia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand .
- ✓ The NHRF’s Board may adopt changes in the selection of priority countries during the strategic period. Country strategies will guide the support in thematic areas to ensure support is reaching the most critical issues, organisations and HRDs.
- ✓ The thematic area of support to “protecting human rights defenders and the right to defend rights” will continue to be open and not limited to our priority countries. However, we will develop and update our thematic strategy in this field and include focus areas, priorities and new areas to support. This will go hand in hand with strategic and ambitious resource mobilization.
- ✓ Possibility to support regional and international initiatives and learning across countries
- ✓ Having a local presence in Colombia with the newly established NHRF Colombia office, we will take the opportunity to explore the possibilities for regional expansion in grantmaking and to assess if this model can be used in the regions of our other priority countries.



Photos: Left: North Sumatra Commission for the Disappearances & victims for violences (KONTRAS); Right: Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado

3 KEY STRATEGIES FOR REACHING OUR GOALS

The NHRF has identified the following three key strategies to reach its objectives and goals:

1) Direct financial support for human rights work

Financial support (grantmaking) to grassroots organisations working in these thematic areas:

- Fight against impunity and for access to justice
- Dismantling discrimination, inequality and marginalisation
- Protecting human rights defenders and the right to defend rights

Funding priorities: We prioritise organisations led by women with expectations that at least 50% grants will be provided to women-led organisations. A reinforcing and additional prioritization is for organisations with diverse and equitable leadership that have representation of target groups in decision-making positions. Our target for this priority is higher as it is directly linked to our mandate to support grassroots organisations and individuals who take the lead in the struggle for their own rights.

The NHRF supports human rights work that involves many different methods including but not limited to: advocacy; national/international networking and linking to relevant actors; leadership development and mentorship; mobilization; monitoring and documentation; accompaniment; legal empowerment, legal competency development, and legal aid; and tools for access to justice.

2) Networking and capacity building

The NHRF will support grantee partners beyond financial support with added value actions. Priorities for networking and capacity building will be developed in close dialogue with our partners and feedback from the human rights defenders we support.

We will:

- Directly link grantees and local defenders with other networks, institutions and actors for visibility, increased protection and to enhance their work (e.g. embassies and diplomatic missions)
- Provide tools and resources to strengthen grantee partners' financial and administrative management, security, safeguarding, organisational development and other capacities to help build resiliency, operational sustainability and effectiveness to increase funding opportunities
- Engage in innovative, responsive and critical initiatives and events to connect grantee partners and/or amplify their work and priorities

3) Advocacy, Communication and Strategic Alliance-Building

Many NHRF grantee partners express a need for more solidarity, advocacy support and strategic communications support. In this strategy period, the NHRF will explore and take advocacy opportunities connected to Norway's role as a Member of the UN Security Council and to Norwegian and likeminded governments policies and guidelines on human rights and human rights defenders. We will use the networks we belong to as a primary platform, strategic cooperation with member organisations, and we will develop plans for direct engagement with diplomatic missions and embassies. We will remain open to developing our approach with this strategic activity and will develop it further by defining goals and implementation plans. The extent to which we can provide communications support will depend on additional resource mobilization.

We will:

- Utilize our networks and links with policymakers to support and develop innovative initiatives for increasing security for HRDs and their ability to defend rights.
- Conduct sensitive and effective advocacy for the protection of HRDs and to promote respect for and enabling of the role of HRDs in society and the right to defend rights.
- Work with Norway, likeminded countries and the UN on issues related to the situation of HRDs and our thematic priorities that are addressed by the Human Rights Council, General Assembly and the UN Security Council
- Design advocacy efforts to increase visibility of the thematic issues supported by the NHRF and specifically on the situation for HRDs
- Work to communicate and create empathy and solidarity for HRDs among people who do not normally engage in human rights work
- Explore partnerships with other organisations and media outlets to fight hate speech and detect false and negative narratives about HRDs



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF

4 ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

The NHRF has an ambition to grow and expand our ability to support front line human rights work during this crucial time and to further develop our role as a flexible, courageous and pioneering human rights actor and grantmaker. In the next strategy period, we will:

- ✓ Mobilise and increase financial resources from diverse sources to enable growth in programmatic work, staff and local presence
- ✓ Strengthen communication infrastructure and advocacy work
- ✓ Advance our accountability framework with more inclusive, participatory initiatives and support
- ✓ Advance monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)

By prioritizing these activities, the NHRF will fulfil its organisational aims to be an ambitious, sustainable, and compassionate human rights organisation with the fortitude to support people in the front lines of defence for human rights.

STRUCTURE AND GROWTH

The NHRF has a lean structure with a Head Office and secretariat in Oslo, Norway and an office in Bogota, Colombia. In addition, the NHRF operates with local resource persons and human rights consultants in our priority countries. Our office in Bogota operates under the NHRF's mandate but also has specific objectives and goals that are directly linked to the Colombian and regional context.

In the coming period, we will assess and act on opportunities to synchronize our growth and learn from the Colombia models of grantmaking and operations. To start, we will assess how the Colombia model of local grantmaking and setup should be expanded regionally in Latin America and possibly other regions.

Internally, we will work to promote a culture of learning, unity, transparency, and teamwork with staff and our local consultants.

The NHRF will develop a resource mobilization strategy with specific fundraising targets. All fundraising will ensure that NHRF has the capacity and resources required for the administrative support needed to undertake the programmatic work and the associated capacity needs for communication and MEL work. We will ensure diversification of funds and seek to reduce dependency on traditional donors.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

The NHRF is committed to build upon our organisational competency as the human rights sector and donor best practices evolve. We will exchange knowledge and experience with other funders and those who support human rights defenders.

The NHRF will focus on implementing and sharpening its policy on gender and gender equality. We will enhance our capacity and that of our grantees to ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion in our work.

We will continue to strengthen our financial systems and routines and that of our grantee partners as well.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The NHRF is designed to support people in the front lines of defence for human rights and we recognize the responsibility and trust given by the NHRF members, donors, taxpayers, human rights defenders and our network partners. The NHRF will hold ourselves accountable to our guidelines and policies and the fulfilment of our mandate, all of which have been imbued with our core values. These will be routinely updated and assessed.

The NHRF's Board of Directors is composed of civil society representatives. It oversees the work of the NHRF strategically, professionally and financially and has a pivotal role in the NHRF's identity and in ensuring compliance. The Board members provide a strong link to different civil society institutions and organisations which are major contributors at the national level in Norway and internationally. During this strategy period, the Board will work to ensure the organisation's overall ability to implement this strategic plan. We will bring the voices of our grantee partners and wider network to the Board, as well as in the development of sub-strategies and MEL work to strengthen our work overall.

To ensure we are successfully implementing our strategic plan and affirm its relevance to our grantee partners, we will conduct a mid-term assessment. The assessment will also be a tool used to identify areas for improvement and adjustment.

COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

During the previous strategy period, the NHRF increased our resources and capacity to build out a more intentional and strategic communications infrastructure. This infrastructure enables the NHRF to contribute to positive narrative building on the critical role of HRDs in civil society and to enhance the work of our grantees through our communication platforms and initiatives.

Our first priority in the coming strategy period will be to develop our communication strategy, including specific fundraising targets. We aim to increase our online and physical reach through social and traditional media, including local media outlets, participate in events with promotional media materials and use innovative tools, including the "I Defend Rights" initiative. We will also work to expand our reach and engagement in spaces where citizens who are not normally involved in human rights work are exposed to human rights defenders' stories and images through exhibitions, cooperation and use of local radio stations, libraries, museums, city halls and other venues. A key part of this work will be to work with local artists, designers and photographers to highlight the work of defenders and create empathy and solidarity for their work.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

The NHRF is committed to a MEL system that will efficiently balance the requirements of a broad spectrum of donors with the need to capture the essence of the contributions made by our grantee partners. To do so, we will set clear and relevant outcomes that align with donor requirements, and establish learning routines, reflection and feedback processes as part of a culture of learning for the NHRF and our grantee partners. A key principle that will guide the MEL work will be an inclusive, participatory approach; we will include our grantee partners in our MEL processes and learning with mutually beneficial, non-extractive methods to the extent possible.



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