



NORWEGIAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS FUND

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

OUTLINE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION (2021-2025)





This copy of the NHRF's strategic plan of action outlines the full strategic plan, which you can find on our website at [nhrf.no](http://nhrf.no)

## WHO WE ARE

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### **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.

### **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 mobilisation on the ground and the creation of robust, secure and resilient movements that can influence positive change.

### **OUR GOAL**

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

### **ABOUT THE NHRF**

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

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. The NHRF stands apart with its identity based in and linked to Norwegian civil society and its connections to the international human rights community and to 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.

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

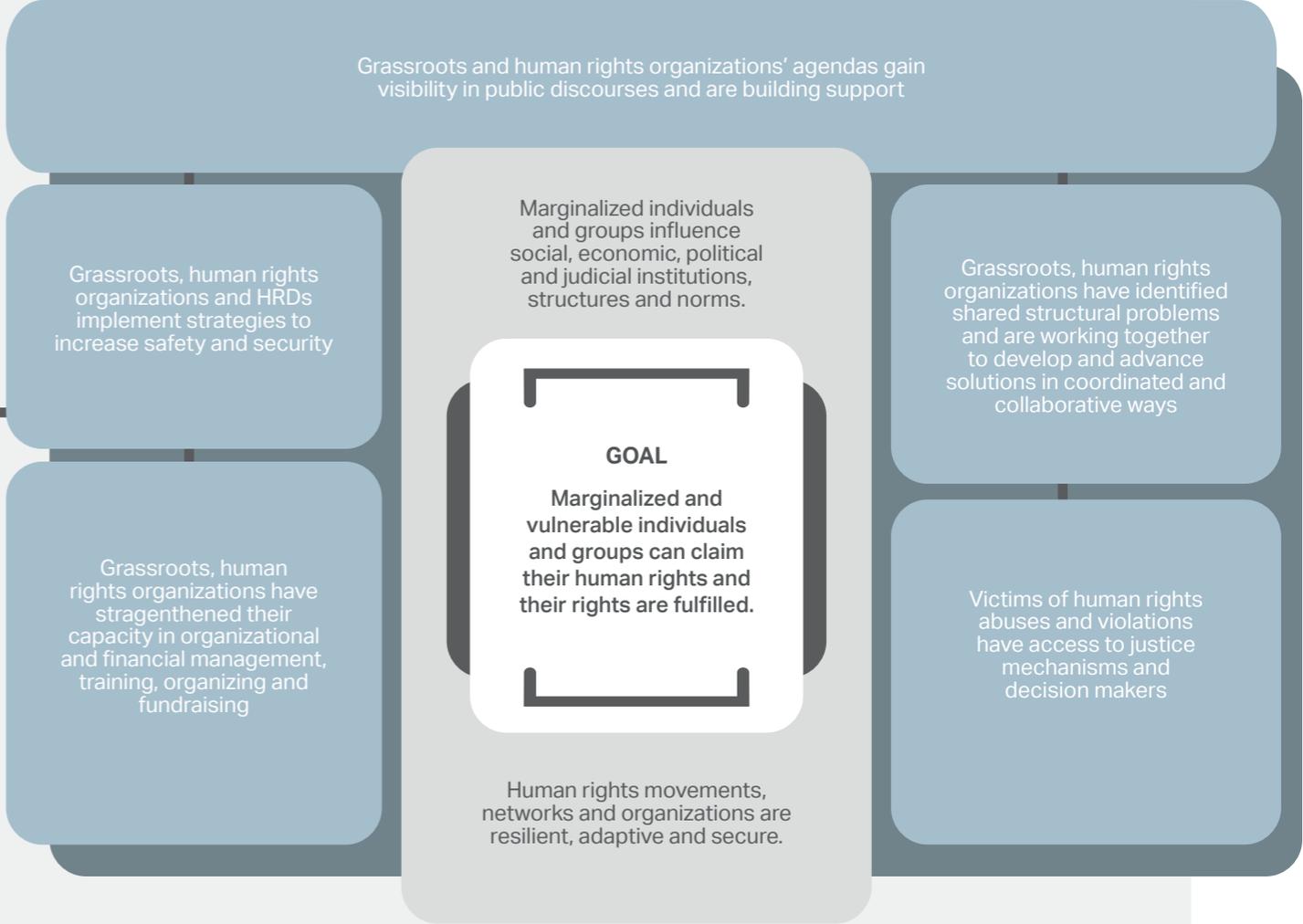
## THE CHANGE WE ARE WORKING FOR

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

- Direct financial support for human rights work
- Networking and capacity building
- Strategic alliance-building, communication and advocacy

- Individuals and groups experiencing human rights abuse/violations are organized into self-led, independent groups to share experiences, analyze problems, and develop agendas (priorities and demands)
- Individuals and groups experiencing human rights abuse/violations are **empowered**: psychosocially (gained confidence and shifted their perception of what is possible), legally and politically (rights education and awareness)
- Individuals and groups experiencing human rights abuse/violations are **documenting** and speaking out against human rights abuses and violations



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.

# THE CONTEXT FROM WHERE WE STAND

## 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.

The current reality for human rights is their continued and, in some areas, rapid erosion 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.

Another concern is that despite the persisting and increasing human rights challenges we have witnessed during the last decade, 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 needs 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.

**The following are the pressing human rights issues that the NHRF will focus its support to throughout the next strategy period:**

### 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. Human rights violations committed during the ongoing pandemic only compound and create new lived experiences of inequality and worsen the human rights crises that have resulted from it. 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.

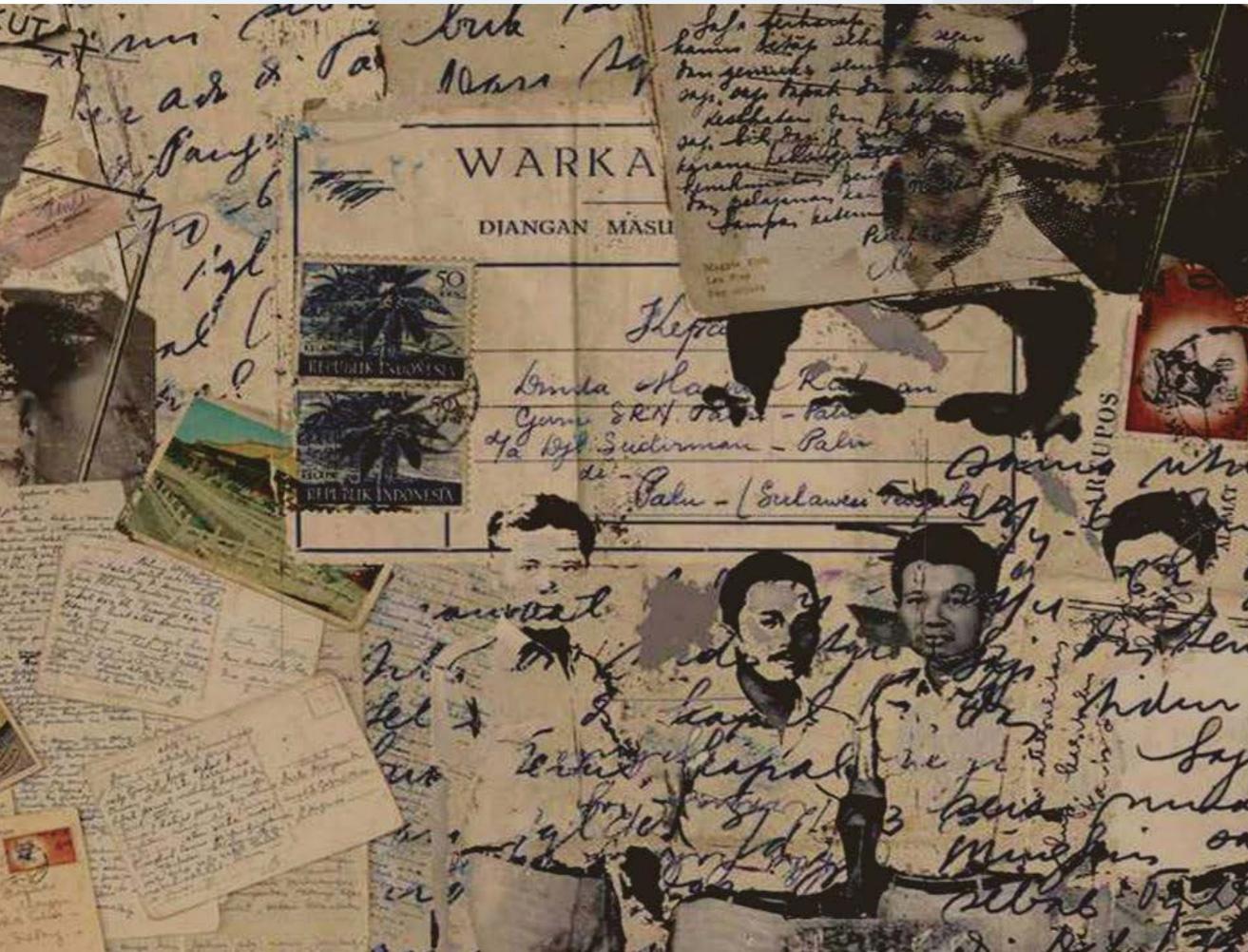


Photo: Solidaritas Korban Pelanggaran-Hak Asasi Manusia

## SECURITY IN THE DIGITAL REALM

One volatile and persisting issue facing global and local human rights communities is that of digital rights and security. 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. Using digital tools for widespread promotion and defence of human rights must be done in conjunction with promotion of digital rights and security, and the NHRF will provide support to improve and strengthen human rights defenders' skills and knowledge for digital security in the coming years.

## MIGRATION

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. Given the current situation and the increasingly severe consequences from climate change and unemployment, migration will continue to be a pressing human rights issue. The NHRF has and will continue to support human rights work addressing various human rights issues related to migration, including internal migration.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the most pressing issue 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.

## CIVIC SPACE UNDER PRESSURE

As promoters and watchdogs of human rights, local organisations and human rights defenders 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. 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.

## MAINTAINING HOPE THROUGH OPPORTUNITY

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.

The human rights framework has a vast network of mechanisms for accountability to and implementation of the rights enshrined within it. Specialized committees monitor State adherence and implementation of the UN human rights conventions and some are able to process cases on human rights violations related to human rights conventions. In addition, the NHRF views the following frameworks of action as opportunities to not only counter the backlash against human rights, but to also be proactive with implementing long-term visions of change.

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- The UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Women, Peace and Security agenda
- Work around business and human rights

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.



Photo: Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha.

*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**



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF

# 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
2. Networking and capacity building
3. Communications, advocacy and strategic alliance building

## 1. DIRECT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WORK

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

We will support:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Projects in our priority countries: Colombia, Mexico, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand
- ✓ Projects working in the thematic area of “protecting human rights defenders and the right to defend rights” outside our priority countries and projects forwarded by donors and members can also be supported
- ✓ Women-led organisations
- ✓ Organisations with diverse and equitable leadership that have representation of target groups in decision-making positions
- ✓ A variety of methods including but not limited to: local mobilization, monitoring and documentation, legal empowerment, legal aid and tools for access to justice, networking, leadership development, and others.

## 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
- ✓ 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 strategic actors within and outside our networks.

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

## NHRFS ORGANISATIONAL 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 defense for human rights.



Photo: Mónica Orjuela/NHRF



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