



**Norwegian Human Rights Fund
Support to Human Rights Defenders in 2013-2015**

June 2016

Background

The NHRF provides direct support to local organisations working to protect and promote the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Since the NHRF's inception in 1988 it has aimed at being a flexible, risk taking and responsive contributor to human rights defenders working in the frontline of defence for human rights. Due to the nature of the work, human rights defenders are often vulnerable when they undertake their work. Since 2011, the NHRF has enhanced its focus on working conditions for supported human rights organisations and defenders by: working closer with more organisations specialising in security; creating "Guidelines on Security for Grantees in Field"; and providing capacity building and extra funds, so grantees can address their security issues while undertaking their work.

In addition to the country- specific grants, the NHRF has supported initiatives and started to build a programme on protection of human rights defenders at risk in the period 2013-2015. This document is an attempt to make an overview of the efforts supported, to visualize to what extent it has fulfilled the aim of the strategy to this programmatic support as well as to look forward.

The NHRF is pleased to see that the aims of this three-year strategy have been fulfilled. Through reports and meetings with the supported organisations, it is evident that the efforts have been timely and important to both individual human rights defenders included in the projects and to local human rights organisations that are facing high risk and security issues.

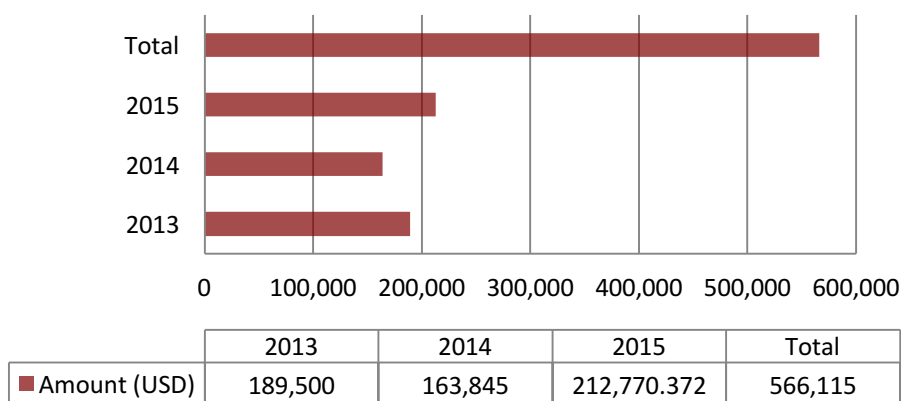
While the projects have addressed the urgent situation of human rights defenders at risk in a reactive manner, a fair number of projects have also focused on preventive security. The NHRF has thus supported efforts that addresses security from a more structural point of view. Through this thematic support, organisations have reported, among others, that:

- *Human rights defenders that faced attacks, arrests, threats and smear campaigns were able to carry on their work through close mentoring and support;*
- *Local human rights defenders were able to obtain support and protection by national and international networks;*
- *Increased visibility on the situation of local human rights defenders and to the general trends in relation to human rights defenders to concerned actors;*
- *Concrete measures taken by high-risk organisations to address their security issues as a result of capacity building;*
- *Local organisations and human rights defenders from marginalized groups were able to share their struggles, positive strategies, existing remedial/reparative tools, and thus, able to build solidarity and networks;*
- *Legal aid and practical assistance was provided to over 200 human rights defenders;*
- *Information was disseminated from the ground on the situation of human rights defenders at risk to human rights mechanisms both nationally and internationally.*

Overview

- 22 human rights defenders (HRDs) projects have been supported in 11 different countries.
- A total of 566 115,37 USD funded projects supporting HRDs in 2013-15.

Funding to supporting HRDs, 2013-15



^ Figure 1: Amount of funding to HRD-supporting projects in USD by year, 2013-2015

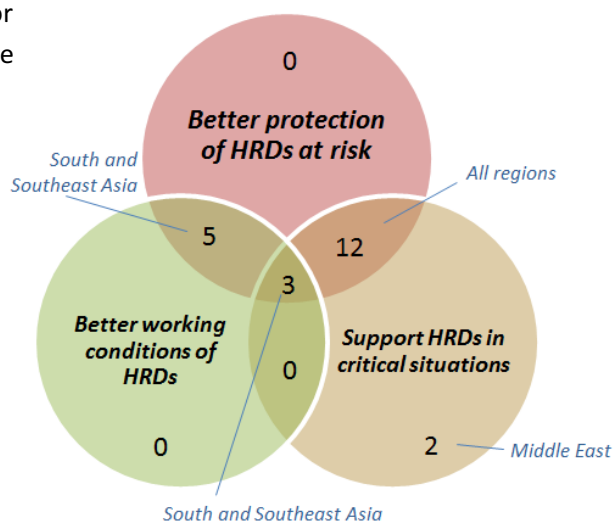
Aims

According to the 2013-2015 Strategy on the NHRF support to protection of human rights defenders, the aims of the NHRF support to protection of HRDs are as follows:

- ✓ *Better protection of human rights defenders at risk*
- ✓ *Better working conditions of human rights defenders*
- ✓ *Support human rights defenders where the situation is critical*

Over 90% of the funded projects accomplished two or more of the above three aims, with almost 14% of the projects accomplishing all three aims.

- 20 of the 22 projects supported providing better protection of HRDs at risk.
- 8 of the 22 projects supported providing better working conditions of HRDs.
- 17 of the 22 projects supported HRDs in critical situations.



^ Figure 2: Aims supported, indicated by the number of funded HRD projects with geographical area



Figure 3: Aims supported by HRD projects in specified countries¹ by project

#	Grantee Country	Aim supported		
		Better protection of HRDs at risk	Better working conditions	Support HRDs in critical situations
22 total		20	8	17
1	Cambodia	✓		✓
2		✓	✓	✓
3	Confidential country a	✓		✓
4	India	✓		✓
5	Indonesia	✓	✓	✓
6	Israel	✓		✓
7		✓		✓
8		✓		✓
9	Mexico	✓		✓
10		✓		✓
11	Pakistan	✓	✓	✓
12		✓	✓	
13	Philippines (global initiative)	✓	✓	
14	Sri Lanka	✓		✓
15		✓		✓
16		✓		✓
17	Confidential country b	✓		✓
18	Confidential country b/c	✓	✓	
19	Confidential country b/d	✓	✓	
20	Confidential country b/e	✓	✓	
21	Confidential country f			✓
22				✓

¹ According to CIVICUS and Freedom House, more than half of these countries have limited to no freedoms, limiting space for HRDs. Even in the remaining countries, the change in laws and other government interventions are shrinking the space for HRDs to do their work freely. See: [CIVICUS Civil Society Watch Report 2015](#), [Freedom House Freedom in the World 2016](#).

Methods and activities

According to the 2013-2015 Strategy on the NHRF support to protection of HRDs:

The NHRF will fund organisations that work with activities like (and not only); legal aid and support to defenders, activities that strengthen networks and the capacity of defenders, advocacy projects and the empowerment of human rights defenders.

For the purposes of data collection, this strategy is split into the following methods/ activities:

- ✓ Access to justice: legal aid and support
- ✓ Practical assistance
- ✓ Network strengthening
- ✓ Capacity building
- ✓ Advocacy and empowerment of HRDs



^ Aug 2015: Cambodian organization, MIRO, held legal training for Khmer Krom HRDs.

All of the funded projects have used two or more of the five methods, with almost 70% of the projects using three or more methods. Over 36% of the funded projects have made effort to increase HRDs' access to justice. These efforts include:

- Supporting legal cases;
- Lobbying to find lawyers for HRD prisoners;
- Providing direct legal representation in courts of different levels;
- Representing HRDs in complaint case submissions to the International Court of Justice;
- Providing legal representation to women HRDs or individuals belonging to vulnerable or marginalized groups.

More than 86% of the funded projects made the following efforts to advocate for and empower HRDs:

- Monitoring and advocating for cases;
- Lobbying with the local, congressional, national government;
- Making submissions to various monitoring bodies, including national commissions and international bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Universal Periodic Review, and UN Special Procedures;
- Engaging with international actors, including the Special Rapporteur on HRD and the Special Rapporteur on Torture and putting specific causes on their agenda;
- Making publications and reports, documenting and analyzing various incidents and/or systematic violence faced by HRDs;
- Establishing an organisation for legal aid within an existing organisation;
- Making urgent appeals and public statements;
- Holding press conferences, resulting in news coverage and articles;
- Launching an online advocacy site with a detailed database on HRDs.



^ December 2014: The report «Human Rights Defenders Organizations in Pakistan: Risks and Capacity Assessments» was launched as a result of a 21 month-long pilot project undertaken by the Democratic Commission for Human Development in strategic partnership with the NHRF.

31.8% of the funded projects provided practical assistance to HRDs through:

- Providing HRDs with direct services in risk prevention;
- Responding to threats, attacks, and restriction incidents;
- Assisting HRDs in safe traveling, communication, and relocation;
- Equipping HRDs with secure communication equipment.

More than 68% of the funded projects made the following efforts towards capacity building, including:

- Holding training-of-trainers workshops;
- Conducting legal training workshops on various international and national protection mechanisms;
- Printing and distributing HRD manuals in various languages;
- Creating and maintaining databases;
- Giving risk and capacity assessments to organisations;
- Holding workshops to mentor and advise HRDs on facing and preventing threats.



< Grantee organization, the Human Rights Defenders Fund has supported the case of HRD Mohammed Khatib. Picture: Khatib being re-arrested in February 2015 by the Israeli authorities at a weekly demonstration in Bi'lin. Although charges have never been filed, Khatib is the target of the systematic use of arrest proceedings against leaders of the protest movement.

Over 68% of the funded projects made efforts towards strengthening the network among HRDs:

- Facilitating discussions amongst HRDs from different ethnic, religious communities and geographical areas;
- Holding networking meetings with relevant civil society organisations;
- Cooperating with a network of non-government organisations to create a working group;
- Cooperating with other organisations to hold press conferences;
- Developing a database of relevant organisations;
- Holding consultation workshops for organisations;
- Cooperating with other HRDs to hold briefings and meetings for diplomatic missions and other international organisations;
- Conducting advocacy work in Geneva;
- Participating in the UNHRC sessions.



< Sri Lankan HRD Ruki Fernando engaged in discussions with the NHRF Board in December 2014.

✓ Figure 4: Methods and activities used by HRD projects in specified countries by project

#	Grantee Country	Methods and activities				
		Access to justice: legal aid/ support	practical assistance	HRD network strengthening	capacity building	advocacy and empowerment
		8	7	15	15	19
1	Cambodia	✓			✓	✓
2		✓			✓	✓
3	Confidential country a	✓		✓		✓
4	India			✓	✓	✓
5	Indonesia		✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Israel	✓				✓
7		✓				✓
8		✓				✓
9	Mexico				✓	✓
10				✓	✓	✓
11	Pakistan			✓	✓	✓
12				✓	✓	✓
13	Philippines (global initiative)			✓		✓
14	Sri Lanka		✓	✓	✓	✓
15			✓	✓	✓	✓
16		✓	✓	✓		✓
17	Confidential country b	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18	Confidential country b/c			✓	✓	✓
19	Confidential country b/d			✓	✓	
20	Confidential country b/e			✓	✓	
21	Confidential country f		✓		✓	✓
22			✓	✓		✓

Other factors

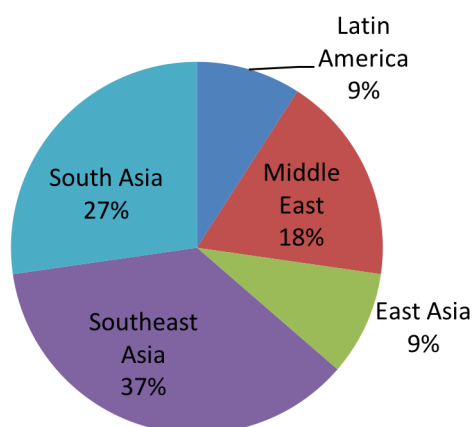
- 20 of the 22 (91%) of the funded projects supported women HRDs and/or HRDs of other vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- 45% of the funded projects provided immediate relief to HRDs.
- Over 90% of the projects created meaningful links between local, national, and/or international levels of HRD work.



Picture: Woman HRD Alma Biblash, the Executive Director of the Human Rights Defenders Fund in Israel, shared experiences from the situation on the ground at a regional consultation meeting in Florence. The event was hosted by Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs.

Looking ahead

In the period 2013-2015 the NHRF set out to support the protection of HRDs without geographical limitations. The supported projects in 2013-2015 reflect the NHRF's intention and commitment to support HRDs regardless of their location, as shown in Figure 5. However, the NHRF also recognises its limitations both in terms of funds as well as in its reach and capacity. To this end, the NHRF plans to make a Spanish version of the application available for HRDs in Latin and Central America in the next strategic period to strengthen its work in this region. Further building upon the positive experiences gained, the NHRF is currently in the process of writing a new strategy for the support to Human Rights Defenders at Risk (2016-2019). To be able to strengthen its direct support to local HRDs at risk, the NHRF will work to secure more resources to ensure flexible and strategic funding.



^ Figure 5: Supported HRD project location countries by global regions, 2013-2015