

1997 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1997 was the last year of the HURIDOCS Five-Year Strategic Plan for the period 1993-1997. This Plan was developed by the Continuation Committee on the basis of the discussions and resolutions of the third General Assembly of HURIDOCS, which was held in Crete in May 1992.

HURIDOCS continued to carry out in 1997 the resolutions which were adopted and best practices which were identified during the international trainers workshop **Towards More Effective Human Rights Information Handling: International Workshop on HURIDOCS Training Services** held in 1994 in Pattaya, Thailand. Several training courses and workshops were conducted at various levels (introductory and advanced; national, sub-regional and regional).

To further improve the HURIDOCS tools for monitoring human rights events, an international conference was convened in Mexico. A primary topic of the conference was EVSYS, the HURIDOCS software for the documentation of human rights violations. The conference brought together the designers, testers, trainers and users of the software. As a result, plans were made for the revision of the tools, as well as for the creation of a new software that can generate softwares like EVSYS, to complement the present tools.

HURIDOCS engaged in many other activities in the areas of Training, Tool Development, Communication and Outreach, as well as internal Management. These activities are outlined below.

A. TRAINING PROGRAMME

1. Course on Human Rights Documentation for the East Timor Human Rights Centre

This course for the East Timor Human Rights Centre was held from 20 to 25 January in Melbourne, Australia. The main topic was EVSYS. Also given was an introduction to the INDEP / SERIAL databases, used for recording bibliographic information on human rights. Resource persons were James Lawson, member of the HURIDOCS Continuation Committee, and Agnes Camacho of the University of the Philippines Psychosocial Trauma Programme.

There were around 10 participants consisting of staff and volunteers of the East Timor Human Rights Centre.

2. Eastern and Southern Africa Course on Human Rights and Refugees Documentation

This course was co-organised with the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA) and held from 1 to 10 February in Namibia. Agnethe Olesen and Aida Maria Noval, both members of the HURIDOCS Continuation Committee, were the main resource persons together with Genèvieve Bador of the UNHCR Centre for Documentation of Refugees. A major topic was EVSYS, although the course also covered other topics such as the situation of refugees in Southern Africa and the international refugee thesaurus.

There were 18 participants who came from 11 countries (Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

3. African Workshop on Human Rights and the Media

This workshop which brought together human rights and media practitioners was organised by IPS-Africa and was held from 20 to 22 February in Uganda. Judith Dueck of the HURIDOCS Continuation Committee was among the resource persons, speaking on the topic of fact-finding and documentation of human rights violations. It was attended by around 60 persons from media and human rights organisations.

4. Internships at the Arab Institute for Human Rights

A series of internships by members of organisations affiliated with the Arab Human Rights Information Network (AHRINET) was hosted by the Arab Institute for Human Rights. Nejib Ghali of the HURIDOCS Secretariat provided training in two internship periods (one in May and the next in June) benefiting 4 interns.

The series of internships was undertaken in lieu of a regional course. It was seen that more intensive training can be achieved in this manner.

5. Meeting with German Organisations

Some 25 members of the German Forum for Human Rights came to Geneva from 8 to 10 October where they met with various organisations. Bert Verstappen of the HURIDOCS Secretariat made a presentation on HURIDOCS, its tools and training activities. Interest in training was shown, and training for users of human rights information was identified as a follow up activity.

6. Visit to Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)

Bert Verstappen of the HURIDOCS Secretariat visited EKD on 30 June to evaluate their information work and to suggest ways that it can be improved. Follow-up is likely to be combined with training for German organisations.

7. Rwanda National Training Course on Documentation of the Genocide

This was held in Rwanda, from 2 to 14 August, co-organised by HURIDOCS and International Alert. There were 18 participants. The course was on the documentation of the genocide, and for this, GENOSYS, an adaptation of EVSYS was introduced. Bert Verstappen and Nejib Ghali of the HURIDOCS Secretariat were the primary resource persons, assisted by two Rwandans who were interns at the Secretariat earlier.

8. Preparations for a course in India

S. Varatharajan of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies conducted a needs assessment mission for HURIDOCS from 10 to 15 July in India. He visited a number of human rights NGOs in the state of Orissa. Potential participants and the site of the planned course were identified during the mission.

9. Regional Course on Human Rights Documentation for Francophone Africa

Co-organised by the Rancontre Africaine pour La Défence de Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO), the course was held from 14 to 19 December in Dakar, Senegal. It was attended by 16 participants from 10 countries (Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal and Chad). The main topic was the use of the software EVSYS. The resource persons were James Lawson and Mireille Messmer of the Council of Europe.

The course was also seen as a means to train NGOs from Guinea-Bissau, who have earlier requested HURIDOCS to organise a course for NGOs from Portuguese-speaking Africa. As it was not possible to organise such a course within the year, representatives from Guinea-Bissau, who also spoke French in addition to Portuguese, were invited to the course in Senegal instead.

10. Preparations for the Regional Course on Human Rights Documentation (Central Europe) to be held in Romania

Plans were put in place towards the holding of a regional course for Central European NGOs, to be held in Romania in February 1998. Preparations such as the sending out of invitations to prospective participants were undertaken. The coorganiser for the course is APADOR, a human rights NGO based in Bucharest, Romania.

11. Internships at the HURIDOCS Secretariat

Six interns were received at the Secretariat during the period. They are:

a. Katherine Clarin-de Jesus

b. Kathleen Maltzahn

Both are members of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. The two came in the month of April, as follow up to the course held in Manila in 1996. They worked on adapting the standard formats and EVSYS for use in monitoring violence against women. Later, after the internship, the two have organised familiarisation and training sessions for their network members in the Philippines and Australia.

c. Charles-Louis Bigabiro

d. Ernest Mwiza

The two are survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. They came as interns from 9 to 30 June, in preparation for becoming assistant trainers for the national training course on documentation of the genocide, held later in Rwanda itself.

e. Amigo Ngonde Funsu

Funsu comes from AZADHO in Zaire. He was an intern at the Secretariat for the most part of July and August.

f. Barbara Monty Cano

Ms. Monty Cano has worked before with human rights NGOs in Peru. She has moved residence to Belgium and has done voluntary work and internships with some European human rights

organisations.

Ms. Monty Cano is an intern with HURIDOCS for six months, to be trained on the HURIDOCS tools and techniques, at the same time that she provides administrative support to the Secretariat.

12. Training Modules

The twenty-one training modules of HURIDOCS continue to be developed in terms of content, methodology, duration and suggested materials. The modules are currently being integrated into a trainers' manual.

B. TOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

1. Events Standard Formats and EVSYS

The software EVSYS was further developed by Ricardo Cifuentes, its programmer. A team has been organised to direct the ongoing development of EVSYS. This consists of Cifuentes himself, Bjorn Stormorken and Romilly Gregory, both database design experts, and the HURIDOCS Secretariat.

The team met from 26 to 27 July 1997. It evaluated the current EVSYS and proposed new directions for its development, such as the design of a generic software-generating tool which can produce a database like EVSYS.

An international conference on computerised documentation of human rights events was held in Mexico from 11 to 13 November. It has as participants the developers, trainers, users and testers of EVSYS. The theme in general is computerised documentation of human rights events, with stresses on the use of formats and EVSYS. Very interesting accounts were heard from various participants. For instance, a representative of South African NGOs shared on how they used a modified version of the formats in their work in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

An adaptation of EVSYS to be used in documenting genocides, called GENOSYS, has been produced in the Secretariat while it had two Rwandan interns. GENOSYS was taught and disseminated in the Rwanda training course. After the course, GENOSYS was revised on basis of the comments of participants, and sent to all participants.

In mid-1997, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women organised meetings among members of its network in the Asia-Pacific region as follow-up to the internship of two of its members, Katherine De Jesus and Kathleen Maltzahn, who were interns at the Secretariat earlier in the year. The meetings were aimed to echo the learnings of the two, as well as to generate discussions on how the HURIDOCS tools can be adapted for the purpose of the network, which is to set up a regional system for monitoring violence against women. Results of the discussion in the network are to be forwarded to HURIDOCS, so that the HURIDOCS tools can be accordingly modified.

2. Bibliographic Standard Formats and INDEP / SERIAL

The INDEP / SERIAL database software, a computerised application of the HURIDOCS bibliographic standard formats programmed in CDS-ISIS, continued to be distributed, together with a users' manual, to organisations which requested it.

3. Task Forces

The Task Force on Software, led by James Lawson, met in Mexico on 13 November 1998. It decided to conduct a study on the actual and potential needs of the HURIDOCS network in terms of information technology, for which it developed a questionnaire.

At the same time, the Task Force on Communications, led by Debra Guzman, had also come up with a questionnaire to evaluate the needs of members of the HURIDOCS networks in terms of electronic communication.

It was seen appropriate to integrate the two questionnaires. Copies of the joint questionnaire were distributed by the end of 1997. The findings are to be presented at the Conference / General Assembly of HURIDOCS to be held in 1998.

4. Translations

The French translations of the contents of three HURIDOCS books (Standard Formats on Events, Bibliographic Formats, Supporting Documents) are finished and are ready for publication. The Spanish translations of the Events book and the Supporting Documents book are likewise ready.

Translation into Arabic of the Events book and the Supporting Documents book is ongoing. The translation of EVSYS into Arabic has also been incorporated into the program of the Arab Human Rights Information Network (AHRINET).

A group of St.-Petersburg-based human rights activists, co-ordinated by Leonid L'vov of the Harold Light Centre for Human Rights, is working on the Russian translations of the various HURIDOCS tools.

5. Project on monitoring economic, social and cultural rights

This project is jointly administered by HURIDOCS and the Science and Human Rights Program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

A "brainstorming" session on labour rights was held in January in Washington, D.C. It was meant to gather ideas and suggestions for the implementation of the project.

The first Advisory Committee meeting was held on 31 January and 1 February in Washington, D.C. Some members were not able to attend the Washington D.C. meeting but met together in Maastricht, where a big meeting was held to come up with guidelines on how to interpret the Limburg principles meant for monitoring economic, social and cultural rights.

Several papers have been commissioned to be written by different authors, and some of these have been finished and submitted. Also, a list of violations of economic, social and cultural rights has been compiled which has become quite comprehensive.

The second Advisory Committee meeting was held from 6 to 8 December in Geneva, right after the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights meeting. The meeting looked into specific projects like the popular resource on monitoring economic, social and cultural rights, being written by Allan McChesney, as well as the various commissioned papers such as those on the effects of globalisation.

6. Other tools

HURIDOCS has provided assistance to the Moscow Helsinki Group for the updating of a directory of human rights NGOs found in countries from the former Soviet Union.

C. OUTREACH AND INFORMATION PROGRAMME

1. Regional networking / focal points

a. Arab Human Rights Information Network (AHRINET)

The Steering Committee of the network met on 14 October, to evaluate activities in the past year and to come up with a plan of action for 1998.

b. Canada-U.S. Human Rights Information and Documentation Network (CUSHRID Net)

The Steering Committee of the network met in October. It planned for the conduct of a general meeting in the spring of 1998.

c. Red de Informatica y Documentación en Derechos Humanos para America Latina y el Caribe (REDHUALC)

Preparations, including fundrasing, are being undertaken by the network secretariat, which is APRODEH in Peru, towards the holding of a regional network meeting in combination with a conference on impunity. As only partial funding has been guaranteed, the meeting is postponed to early 1998.

2. Liaison / collaboration with IGOs, NGOs and INGOs

a. Meetings

The Workshop on Human Rights Defenders, organised by the Fédération Internationale des Liges des Droits de l'Homme and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, was held in April in Lund, Sweden. Among the topics was the establishment of procedures in aid of human rights defenders. The HURIDOCS Standard Formats on Events was introduced as a tool that can be used in this regard.

b. Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders

HURIDOCS continued to carry out secretariat functions for the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

The laureate for 1997 is Msgr. Samuel Ruiz Garcia of the Diocese of Chiapas in Mexico. The award ceremony was held in Mexico City on 13 November 1997. It was a very well-attended event, as members of local human rights groups and the indigenous populations came out in large numbers to witness the ceremony.

c. Others

HURIDOCS' request for consultative status with UNESCO was approved during the year.

3. Newsletter

HURIDOCS Newsletter No. 21 came out in the mid-year, as usual in English, Spanish and French. A

good response was received on the questionnaire asking organisations to indicate their interest to continue receiving the newsletter (more than 700 responses). The HURIDOCS database on organisations was updated on basis of these responses.

4. Other information work

The HURIDOCS home page continued to be maintained. It has several documents, including the HURIDOCS Bibliographic Standard Formats and the Supporting Documents.

D. Management

1. Continuation Committee

The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee (CC) met twice in the year in Geneva. In both meetings, the CC evaluated past and ongoing activities, and started preparations for future training courses and workshops, regional meetings and other projects. The final CC meeting also took up the preparation for the General Assembly in 1998, as well as other activities for the coming year.

2. International Advisory Committee

A mailing list for the International Advisory Committee has been set up. Advices from several members have been sought, especially in connection with training activities in the various regions.

3. General Assembly

An announcement of the HURIDOCS General Assembly and the *International Conference on Human Rights Information, Impunity and Challenges of the Post-Conflict Healing Process*, both aimed to be held in March 1998 in Tunisia, has been made (such as through the newsletter and the homepage). Over 200 applications have been received. The Continuation Committee had come out with the criteria for the selection of participants. Other preparations have already been made, such as the choice of a hotel in Tunis, invitations to speakers, etc.