HURIDOCS

Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International

Annual report of activities 2008

The HURIDOCS team

The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee (Board):

- Kofi Kumado (Ghana), Chair
- Judith Dueck (Canada), Vice Chair
- Agnethe Olesen (Denmark), Treasurer and Co-ordinator
- Jonathan Kuttab (Palestine) Jur. Dr.
- Aurora Javate de Dios (Philippines) Ph. D.
- James Lawson (France)
- Aída María Noval (Mexico)

The staff:

- Bert Verstappen, Programme Coordinator
- Daniel D'Esposito, Training Officer
- Nejib Ghali, Administrative Officer
- Tom Longley, consultant for the OpenEvsys project
- The interns over 2008: Max Baurs-Krey, Michael Harris (throughout the year), Aja Roddy

From left to right: Daniel D'Esposito (training officer), Jonathan Kuttab (Palestine), Nejib Ghali (administrative officer), Judith Dueck (Canada), Bert Verstappen (programme coordinator) Agnethe Olesen (Denmark), Kofi Kumado (Ghana), James Lawson (France), Aida Maria Noval (Mexico), Aurora Javate De Dios (Philippines)

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- the Norwegian Agency for Development Co- operation (support for the overall programme)
- DANIDA and the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN in Geneva (OpenEvsys)
- Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE (HuriSearch partner)
- Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland (HuriSearch and Advanced Workshop 2008)
- German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Advanced Workshop 2008)
- Open Society Institute, Budapest (Advanced Workshop 2008)
- British High Commission in Bangladesh (capacity building project)
- OxfamNovib, Netherlands (2009 Conference)
- Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN in Geneva (2009 Conference)
- International Development Research Centre and Mennonite Central Committee Canada (support for the participation of Judith Dueck, HURIDOCS Canadian Board member, in HURIDOCS activities)

as well as Fast Search & Transfer (HuriSearch partner that provided in-kind support)

HURIDOCS also thanks all network members, partners, volunteers and professionals who contributed time and expertise to HURIDOCS, and in particular:

- The members of the Continuation Committee (Board) and the members of HURIDOCS International Advisory Council.
- The various regional networks and their Secretariats
- James Lawson, Judith Dueck, Fast Search & Transfer (FAST), and ODIHR for continuing advice and support on the HuriSearch search engine
- Trainers at the various HURIDOCS training courses
- Hans Thoolen for representing HURIDOCS on the Board of the Martin Ennals Award, as its Executive Chairman
- Nidelven-IT (Norway) for helping to maintain the HURIDOCS website and HuriSearch
- Several volunteer translators

This report provides a brief overview of main activities carried out by HURIDOCS in the year 2008.

2008 was the first year of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2012. This Plan contains four goals:

- Develop and Adapt Human Rights Information Handling Tools for Action
- Build Capacity and Empower organisation to manage information
- Link Human Rights Communities to foster synergies
- Provide Advisory and Support Services to sustain initiatives

I. Build Capacity and Empower organisation to manage information

a. Geneva Advanced Workshop, January

The *HURIDOCS Advanced Workshop on Human Rights Documentation* brought together information management specialists from NGOs with which HURIDOCS has been working in recent years. The main output of this workshop was a definition of requirements for the new Open Evsys software for documenting human rights violations. The Workshop also included presentations of various other software applications and of different methods for analysing and communicating information. The participants were introduced to the indicators approach to documenting violations, and to the basics of information design.

b. Mexico, February

A workshop on documentation of violations was provided to NGOs at the request of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the context of a project on Human Rights of Women.

c. Kenya, April

A documentation training for members of the trainers pool of the Special Programme on Africa (SPA) of Amnesty International was held in english and french. These trainers provide training on the Ukweli manual for fact-finding and reporting. The training focused on the documentation of violations and the WinEvsys database system.

d. Switzerland, May

A training course on *Monitoring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, was held in collaboration with the Geneva Institute for International and Development Studies. It provided know-how which allowed participants, mainly advocates of South-based NGOs, to start monitoring ESC rights.

e. Zimbabwe, September 2007 to December 2008

HURIDOCS worked with Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), whose 240 field based monitors investigate and document politically-motivated violence in Zimbabwe. HURIDOCs helped ZPP assess their information handling processes, and re-designed their monitoring approach in line the Events documentation methodology. ZPP established a high-capacity documentation centre in Harare based on the WinEvsys database.

f.   Bangladesh, Bangladesh, August 2007 to June 2008:

HURIDOCS and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) partnered to offer capacity building. The participating organisations include BRAC and BLAST. The project includes a training of trainers in fact-finding, and a training on techniques for documenting violations. The project also included a one-day workshop for

managers, to introduce the techniques and tools to them, and to facilitate coordination and collaboration in the area of documenting violations.

g. Nepal, July

HURIDOCS responded to a request for capacity building by Save the Children and provided training to human and children's rights organisations on fact-finding, monitoring and documentation.

h. Belgium, July

Judith Dueck was resource person at a training course on documentation and advocacy, organised by the *International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA).*

i. Thailand, November

A training course for monitoring and documentation of violations of indigenous peoples' rights was organised in collaboration with the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and DoCip. The participants were representatives of indigenous peoples' organisations in Bangladesh, north-east India and Indonesia.

j. Capacity building initiative in Russia

A new initiative emerged in discussions with the Open Society Institute (OSI) concerns a Capacity Building Initiative. This Initiative seeks to provide advice and support, tools and training to a range of middle-sized human rights organisations. It envisages an in-depth, long-term collaboration with a limited, carefully selected number of partners. The project is to include needs assessment, negotiation, implementation, closing and learning, and also strategic partnerships with key funders. HURIDOCS and OSI agreed that this project would be started through a needs assessment mission in Russia, in January 2009.

II. Develop and Adapt Human Rights Information Handling Tools for Action

Human rights organisations need tools and techniques on human rights monitoring, information management and communication which are flexible for adaptation to local use. These tools are developed in consultation with the network, ensuring availability in various forms and languages as well as ease of installation. In order to cover the full range of documentation needs, HURIDOCS has developed a large number of tools and continues to develop new ones.

a. OpenEvsys

OpenEvsys will be a free, open source web application for managing information about human rights violations, based upon HURIDOCS' Events Standard Formats and Micro-thesauri. It will have

- Easy to customize formats, fields, and terms to suit user's needs.
- Easy browsing of data: events, persons, violations, documents.
- Can handle hundreds of thousands of events, persons, violations.
- Powerful multi-entity advanced search, to identify patterns and trends

Funding was obtained from the Danish Mission in Geneva for the development of OpenEvsys. Tom Longley was engaged as coordinator, and a request for proposals for the development of the database was issued. Respere (Sri Lanka) was selected. A Project Management Plan was agreed upon, and the Requirements Elicitation was elaborated during a one-week meeting in Geneva. The programming work was started in November.

Evsys was translated into Bahasa Indonesia, while translations into Khmer and Bengali were largely completed.

b. HuriSearch

In collaboration with the leading enterprise search provider Fast Search & Transfer, HuriSearch was developed by HURIDOCS to facilitate access to human rights information on the web. HuriSearch, the Web search engine for human rights, is available at: http//:www.hurisearch.org. It provides the human rights community and others concerned with human rights with a powerful web research tool. It also aims to increase the visibility of information published by human rights organisations and to encourage webmasters to use metadata[1] systematically, thus making human rights information searching on the Internet much more reliable and efficient.

c. HuriTools

HuriTools is a CD ROM that contains the complete collection of HURIDOCS tools – handy in particular for those without fast and cheap Internet connection. In 2008, the update of HuriTools was completed. It now has a tabbed interface, more modern look, and contains more tools: some slideshows, forms and other resources. It is compliant with relevant W3C Web standards.

III. Link Human Rights Communities to foster synergies

In 2008, HURIDOCS prepared a major conference which will be held in Geneva in February 2009. The theme of the Conference is: *International Criminal Court and Human Rights Council: the New Challenges for Human Rights Communications* and it is followed by a General Assembly. During 2008, financial support was sought and obtained from various donors. The programme was developed, and speakers and participants were invited.

IV. Provide Leadership, Advisory and Support Services

HURIDOCS carried out different outreach activities which make the HURIDOCS network and its work better known. This included producing and updating information material and representation at relevant meetings and events.

The HURIDOCS Secretariat continued to maintain and disseminate information on three public (*HURIDOCS Open*, *huridocs-tech*, *indi-health-l*) and three private mailing lists. It daily receives requests about HURIDOCS tools and training activities and it provides prompt responses to these requests. The Website www.huridocs.org was regularly updated.

The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee provided overall guidance and directions. It met twice, from 10 to 12 May in Versoix and from 24 to 26 October in Strasbourg, to discuss progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and devise future activities.

As from October, Agnethe Olesen was appointed Executive Director of HURIDOCS. She took up this function on a voluntary basis.

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[1]   Meta-data are data about data. They are used to facilitate the understanding, use, management and retrieval of data.

HURIDOCS in brief

The *Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International (HURIDOCS)* is a global capacity-building network of organisations that use documentation techniques, monitoring methods, information management systems and technologies in the defence of human rights and the prevention of abuses. HURIDOCS was established in 1982, and has provided many valuable practical tools and linkages between organisations in the network.

Our vision: A world where the power of information and communication is harnessed in the service of human rights.

HURIDOCS has four programme areas:

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HURIDOCS has:

- Consultative Status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council
- Operational Relations Status with UNESCO
- Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

For up-to-date information about HURIDOCS and its activities, consult our Website http://www.huridocs.org.