Narrative Report 2010

HURIDOCS
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HURIDOCS Board member and ACDHRS Director Hannah Forster at the ACHPR NGO Forum

"HURIDOCS helps human rights NGOs get the right information, to the right persons, in the right form, at the right time."

HURIDOCS Board member and ACDHRS Executive Director Hannah Forster

HIGHLIGHTS

HURIDOCS mission remained the same since its beginnings in 1982: to help human rights NGOs achieve better impact at their work through better management of their information.

However, 2010 was a special year for HURIDOCS, being its second transition year to a new strategy based on a capacity building approach, and a widening of our scope of expertise to include websites and litigation systems.

Capacity Building approach leads to results
We consolidated our new capacity building approach, building on initial projects started in 2009. This approach proved to be successful, in that it leads to lasting change in terms of organisational practice. We believe that this approach is more sustainable than providing introductory training courses. Therefore, we plan to continue with this approach and improve our model in the years to come.

Focus on Africa
Our capacity building work started in 2009 in Russia, with funding from Open Society Initiative. In 2010, we invested heavily into bringing this approach to Africa, using our Norad funding, and building relationships and partnerships. We started with two projects, one in Zimbabwe (helping Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum record and analyse 6000 violations) and the second one of continental impact (a Caselaw Analyser website – see below). In 2010 we also initiated a relationship with the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights, to develop a new and modern website to improve access to their reporting, desperately needed by activists all over the continent. This project will start in 2011.

Caselaw Analyser: easy access to human rights jurisprudence
We also noted that lawyers were having difficulties accessing the jurisprudence they need for their litigation, as current systems, for African and Inter-American caselaw in particular, are very hard to navigate. In partnership with the Institute for Human Rights and Development Studies in the Gambia, we developed a very innovative website for accessing African caselaw, which has been called "a dream come true for human rights lawyers" by some of its users.

CaseBox: a new tool to manage litigation cases
We expanded our scope to include litigation management, with CaseBox, an open source database system to support NGO litigation, allowing them to track ongoing cases, manage documents, interactions with courts, and case deadlines. After nearly one year exploring the needs of these NGOs, we started developing a first version of CaseBox in December 2010, for the Committee against Torture in Russia.

Financially, 2009 was difficult – we ended with a loss of 26'000 USD. It was the recession, and also we had only started the transition and had few results to show. By end of 2010 however, we improved our financial situation, ending the year with a surplus of 43'000 USD.

Also, the positive results of our work started to be recognized by donors. The Open Society Institute provided us with institutional funding, and in 2011 the MacArthur Foundation gave HURIDOCS significant project funding for our work in Africa.

Strategy 1 & 2: Focus on capacity building projects in the South and former Soviet Union

Goal: Shift our capacity-building strategy from general trainings towards long-term projects targeting specific organisations, as these projects have proven to be very successful in terms of impact.

In 2010 HURIDOCS consolidated its 2009 experimentations with capacity building projects. We developed and adopted a five-step process to structure our capacity building, which we now use for all our interventions, based on the DEMIR terminology and concepts (Definition, Exploration, Modelling, Implementation, Review) developed by researcher John Lannon:

1. **Definition**: comprises an onsite mission, to establish a working relationship with the beneficiary, assess problems and needs, and define priorities for interventions.
2. **Exploration**: deeper discussions with beneficiary to better understand the requirements; researching and exploring appropriate solutions.
3. **Modelling**: involves framing the project more precisely, leading to a full project proposal and agreements for the beneficiary organisations on mutual roles and responsibilities.
4. **Implementation** of the activities and outputs described in the project, under the supervision of a project manager.
5. **Review**: this multi-stakeholder assessment of impact of intervention: documenting impact, extracting learning and best practices, and collecting requirements for future projects.

We also reviewed ways and means on how to measure the impact of our capacity building work, and how to improve it on an on-going basis. This analysis showed impact at three levels:

- Beneficiaries enjoy the benefits of better information systems, allowing them to collect, store, analyse and communicate information more efficiently and with greater effect. More time is available for substantive work, and less time is wasted on fishing for the right information.
- Beneficiaries gained more autonomy in understanding how their information systems work, and how to improve them: how to plan a web project or a database, how to improve information flows, how to work with developers to get good results at a good price.
- We also noted unexpected positive effects, such as beneficiaries getting increased funding as a direct result of working with HURIDOCS.

We now need to invest more into building a more formal monitoring and evaluation framework for our work, with the mentoring of experienced consultants in this area, and this will be starting in 2011.

Capacity building in Africa

In 2009 we put into place our capacity building approach, and testing it with first series of projects in the former Soviet Union (Russia, Armenia), financed by the Open Society Initiative.

In 2010, we did the groundwork for expanding our capacity building programme into Africa, using our Norad funding. Our strategy was to focus on collaborations with regional organisations as a first stage, to achieve some first success stories, and to leverage these successes to fundraise for an expansion of the program, in particular to support NGOs at national level.

The activities and results for 2010:

- We started systematically attending the sessions of the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** and the **NGO Forum** that precedes it. This allowed us to network and build relationships with over 200 NGO representatives that take part in these events. We also delivered plenary presentations on various aspects of information management, such as using low costs technologies to build powerful advocacy websites.

- The most fruitful relationship was with **Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)**, a pan-African NGO involved in promoting and supporting the African mechanisms. This led to a very fruitful project, the output of which was the African Human Rights Caselaw Analyser, an innovative online research tool for all the African caselaw.

- We also developed a working relationship with the ACHPR itself, leading to the leading African mechanism entrusting HURIDOCS with the re-development of their website using a modern content management system, allowing easy access to their rich documentation. It was finally the quality of the Caselaw Analyser which led

- We started discussions with donors, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Netherlands as well as the MacArthur Foundation, in view of expanding our Africa program and recruiting an Africa support coordinator. This led to success in 2011: MacArthur Foundation has just awarded us 340'000 USD over a three year period to support pan-African NGOs, mechanisms and CSO networks.

Finally we also provided support to the NGOs at national level:

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum: HURIDOCS provided assistance to the Forum which had recorded 6000 violations over a 10 year period, and wanted to give an evidence-based analysis of the political violence in this country. This was done in partnership with Stataid.org.

HURIDOCS assisted a small African NGO in creating powerful yet easy to handle Websites. We created a new site for the **Ligue Rwandaise pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme (LIPRODHOR):** http://www.liprodhor.org. We used the Wordpress platform for this. This was the first step in a program to educate NGOs on how to create simple and scalable websites, where it is easy to find and disseminate the numerous articles, reports, statements, and press releases that these NGOs tend to produce.

Oswald Madziwa of the **Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe** did a one-week internship during which he familiarised himself with various tools and techniques for monitoring human rights violations.

Interestingly, considerable experience and technology from our work in Russia was also directly transferred to projects in Africa in 2010, which shows how HURIDOCS can offer economy of scale by tackling information management problems at a global scale. It also shows how it is hard to account for funding on a geographic basis, because investments in one region will often directly benefit others. Two concrete examples:

- The AeroCMS technology we developed for large human rights websites was first conceived for the Sova Centre in Russia, but will now be used for the African Commission's new website.

- The conceptual work for caselaw analysers was initially intended for the European human rights caselaw (HUDOC) but was finally first implemented in Africa for the African caselaw.

Capacity building in former Soviet Union

Armenia

At the request of the local Soros Foundation and the Open Society Institute in New York, HURIDOCS engaged itself in a project to strengthen the information management capacities of NGOs in Armenia. After initial discussions with potential local partners and a needs assessment mission, four organisations were identified as priority partners for the first round of projects: **Victims of State Need**, **Court Monitors (PRWB), Asparez** and **Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor (HCAV)**.

In consultation with the targeted organisations, HURIDOCS led interventions in all four organisations, among others in the fields of documentation management, website development, as well as databases for monitoring violations, legal consultations and freedom of information. Over the course of the project, HURIDOCS also collaborated with local developers in order to facilitate a higher standard of accompaniment to the beneficiaries, build technical capacity in the region and facilitate work with Armenian data.

Russia

Continuing progress was made on implementing and completing three on-going interventions in the Russian Federation with **SOVA Centre,** the **International Protection Centre (IPC)** and the **Mothers' Rights Foundation (MRF)**.

SOVA Centre, a research and monitoring centre, relies heavily on its *website* for communicating with its target audience. HURIDOCS' intervention focused on SOVA's needs surrounding the redesign of their website for improved information architecture and digital advocacy and establishing a secure and convenient system for storing and sharing documents. In addition, HURIDOCS provided a violations tracking system integrated into SOVAs website, connected to a statistical module that provides website visitors with automatically updated visualizations of the situation of racism and xenophobia in the Russian Federation.

The intervention at the IPC focused on improving its system for secure storage and sharing of documents and reviewing IPC's litigation information flow and developing a more systemized approach to case management. HURIDOCS also developed an advanced online contact database for IPC.

The intention of the *MRF Modernization Project* was to conduct a 6 month intensive upgrade of the **Mothers' Rights Foundation's** (MRF) technical equipment, data security and approach to information management.

There were also contacts with other organisations, such as **Russian Justice Initiative, Public Verdict** and **JURIX**, with whom HURIDOCS discussed the larger need of Russian litigation NGOS for databases to help manage caseloads on the national and European level.
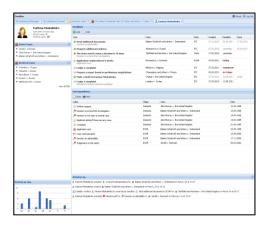
HURIDOCS recently carried out a mission to Georgia (June 2011) and is planning a visit to Mongolia (September 2011) to conduct needs assessments with OSI grantees in those countries and plan similar group capacity building projects.

Capacity Building in Asia

In January, Daniel D'Esposito took part in the **Documentation Affinity Group Meeting** that was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This international meeting brought together groups involved in documenting human rights violations from various countries, with a particular focus on Burma.

Daniel D'Esposito was resource person at a regional workshop held in June by the **Coalition against Trafficking in Women-Asia-Pacific**. He introduced the "events" documentation methodology and the OpenEvsys software for documenting violations, as the start of an ongoing project involving collective documentation of the problem of trafficking, involving NGOs from Nepal to New Guinea.

HURIDOCS discussed with human rights organisations in Russia, such as **Russian Justice Initiative, Public Verdict** and **JURIX**, with whom HURIDOCS discussed the larger need of Russian litigation NGOS for databases to help manage caseloads on the national and European level.

HURIDOCS developed a formative concept for **Casebox**, a case management database that allows litigation NGOs to track the life cycle of cases, assign lawyers to cases, monitor deadlines, and produce reporting templates and more.

Casebox will be a useful tool for organisations who are actively involved in international litigation, such as **Track Impunity Always (TRIAL)** in Geneva, Interights in London, OSI's **Justice Initiative** as well as regional and national human rights groups in Africa and Latin-America.

Casebox – Interface for lawyers

Continuous support and advice were provided to present and new users of OpenEvsys. Tomoko Kashiwazaki of the **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development** did a one-week internship with HURIDOCS in Geneva, focusing on documenting violations and OpenEvsys.

Capacity Building in Latin America

Support was given to Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU) with regard to transferring data from a previous version of the software.

But overall, the amount of capacity building and networking in Latin America was very low, due in part to a language barrier as none of the staff speak Spanish or Portuguese, and a lack of funding and human resources for exploration and networking. This will be addressed in 2011.

One strategy or 2011 is to leverage the Caselaw Analyser technology to develop a better caselaw research database for the Inter-American human rights caselaw. This would be the most significant impact that HURIDOCS could have, as the current Court and Commission databases are not easy to navigate, and the benefit of such a project would be felt continent-wide. This project would also showcase HURIDOCS potential in the region, and open the door for more projects and collaboration.

Capacity Building in the Middle East

In September, Daniel D'Esposito was invited by the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** to participate in the *Regional Expert Workshop on the Future Vision of the UN Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region* in Doha, Qatar. HURIDOCS also provided initial advice to OHCHR to plan a website for the documentation centre, but this was postponed by OHCHR as the democracy protests across the region erupted early the following year.

But overall, the amount capacity building and networking in the Middle East was very low, due in part to a language barrier as none of the staff speak Arabic, and a lack of funding and human resources for exploration missions and networking. This will be addressed in 2012.

On strategy would be closer partnership with an organisation like the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, with which initial contacts have been developed (HURIDOCS provided advice on website redevelopment and arranged for the participation of a CIHRS staffer to a security training course organised by Frontline Defenders).

Strategy 3: Aggregate and disseminate learning

Goal: Build a mechanism to aggregate and disseminate learning and solutions from our capacity building work, as well as the experience of other network members, to make it easily accessible to all.

The new HURIDOCS **Website** went live in August. It is based on WordPress, has a new look and feel and contains a clear overview of HURIDOCS activities and tools. A new component is a Resource centre with about 150 references to publications, organisations and sites in the field of human rights information management. The Website is a key component of the new communication strategy of HURIDOCS, which seeks to …

The new site received an increasing amount of traffic.

Strategy 4: Drive innovation in standards, techniques and tools

Goal: Continue to drive innovation to ensure that human rights organisations have the tools and techniques they need for documenting violations and managing and communicating information strategically, in particular in the use of web technologies for organizing, protecting, visualizing and communicating information for advocacy.

Caselaw Analyser: making caselaw research easy

HURIDOCS developed the **CaseLaw Analyser**, a web-based system for human rights litigators to research case law in order to prepare their court cases. It allows them to easily browse inter-related court decisions, to quickly access the primary case law for a given type of violation, to highlight and comment relevant sections of a decision, and to share their commentary with their colleagues and work collaboratively on case research. HURIDOCS is developing CaseLaw Analyser together with the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA).

The Caselaw Analyser holds IHRDA's carefully curated collection of decisions from the African Commission for Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). The Caselaw Analyser was launched on 8 November during the NGO Forum of the African Commission and received positive feedback both during the meeting and thereafter.
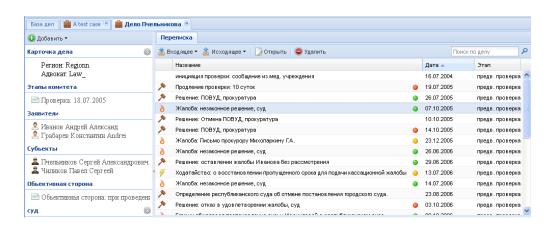
In November, Daniel D'Esposito, Executive Director of HURIDOCS, Bert Verstappen (Programme Coordinator), Oleg Burlaca (programmer) and Brooke Hunter (intern) participated at the NGO Forum of the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights** as well as at the 48th Commission session itself. These events provided an excellent opportunity for HURIDOCS to engage in collaboration with a number of new partners in the region.

The African Commission was impressed with the Caselaw Analyser, and this provided a sound basis for HURIDOCS to propose to the Commission to carry out a *website and digitisation project*, which seeks to develop an improved website for the ACHPR, and digitizing the backlog of documentation currently not available online.

CaseBox: database system for international and domestic litigation

In December 2010, HURIDOCS and the Interregional non-governmental organization **Committee Against Torture (CAT)** in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia came to an agreement to create **CaseBox,** a case management database that offers the following functionalities:
- Analysis of trends and patterns of abuse to support CAT's understanding of the phenomenon of torture in Russia and support its advocacy reporting.
- Management of the overall active caseload of CAT: upcoming deadlines for all cases, which lawyer works on what case, etc.
- Management of court deadlines and internal tasks for the preparation and follow-up of cases.
- Storage and sharing of case documents: legal briefs, powers of attorney, etc.
- Management of routine correspondence with the court and clients.

CaseBox – domestic litigation version for CAT

OpenEvsys: recording and analysing violations and interventions

HURIDOCS continued to provide advice and support to present and new users of the **OpenEvsys** software for documenting cases of human rights violations.

OpenEvsys

HURIDOCS continued its collaboration with **Respere** in Sri Lanka in the development of the **OpenEvsys** software for documenting cases of human rights violations. The search function of OpenEvsys was substantially improved.

HuriSearch

HURIDOCS continued to maintain and develop its search engine http://www.hurisearch.org. At the end of 2010, HuriSearch indexed and crawled the websites of about 5,500 human rights organisations.

For the technical side of this project, HURIDOCS continued its collaboration with http://www.wiizio.com, a small French company that provides expertise on Open Source search solutions.

HURIDOCS provided searches on NGO documents at the **Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System (TANDIS)** http://tandis.odihr.pl/ of the **Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)** of the **Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE)**. It also developed an internal search tool for Tandis.

Strategy 5: Promote and advocate for good information management practices

Goal: Promote and advocate for good practices in effective handling of human rights information for better advocacy and impact, to ensure that NGO managers are able to undertake appropriate long-term investments in their information systems.

Monitoring economic, social and cultural rights

HURIDOCS organised a Workshop on *Bridging the gap between human rights advocates and scientists: improved measurement of the realisation of ESC rights,* with the purpose to discuss the IBSA process for more effective implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. IBSA provides a framework for accountability of State actors when reporting on their progress on implementing ESC rights, through a process of setting **Indicators**, setting **Benchmarks** that are to be reached, a period of **Scoping** during which these benchmarks are agreed upon at national level by stakeholders including civil society, and finally an **Assessment** of the process. The Workshop was attended by almost 30 participants, mainly from international human rights NGOs and also representatives of UN agencies, academic institutions and Permanent Missions.

Human Rights Electronic Evidence Study

In November and December 2011, HURIDOCS FSU project manager, Katherin Machalek, collaborated with the Centre for Research Libraries-Global Resource Network as a lead researcher for the Russia portion of a two-year study on electronic documentation among human rights NGOs in Rwanda, Mexico and the Russian Federation. The study involved conducting interviews with Russian NGOs on the use of electronic documentation for recording human rights violations and advocacy work. Katherin met with and interviewed staff from eleven human rights organizations.

In addition to gathering information for the study, Katherin also provided pro bono advice on free and available solutions to email and document management to several of these organizations. The meetings provided a great opportunity for HURIDOCS to learn more about the issues facing Russian NGOs with regards to electronic documentation.

European network: ECCHRD

In October, Daniel D'Esposito and Bert Verstappen took part in the meeting of the **European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation (ECCHRD)**, hosted by the **Fundamental Rights Agency** in Vienna, Austria. The meeting discussed topics such as *Managing and sharing information about human rights cases with case law browsers; Building terminologies on-line; Creating on-line human rights libraries;* and *Using human rights archives.*

Strategy 6: Equip ourselves with the appropriate human resources and expand regionally

Goal: Equip ourselves with the appropriate human resources and carefully grow our team to scale up our capacity to offer services at a global level.

The position of Project Manager for former Soviet Union was created as part-time post, then full-time post as of 1 January 2011. It was filled by Katherin Machalek.

HURIDOCS continued to receive interns from Boston University, through the EUSA exchange programmes. Interns in 2010 were Elizabeth Bleuer and Brooke Hunter.

At the end of the year, the HURIDOCS team was comprised of the following persons:

- Daniel D'Esposito: executive director, fundraiser, capacity building coordinator for Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America, oversight of tools development. 100%.

- Bert Verstappen, deputy director, senior documentalist, support for OpenEvsys, financial administration. 70%.

- Katherin Machalek, capacity building coordinator for former Soviet Union.

- Anna Gulyaeva, accountant. 20%.

Needless to say, this team, although very productive, is still too small to deliver the full potential of what HURIDOCS can provide. The priorities for 2011 will be to augment the team with the following human resources:

- A capacity building coordinator for Africa: the potential for impact in Africa is huge, and HURIDOCS urgently needs a capacity builder based in the region to increase the level of support and proximity.

- A communications and fundraising officer: the person will allow us to expand and increase our fundraising, but also to integrate a strong communications into our capacity building work: learning from our projects will be extracted and shared with the community.

Strategy 7: Strengthen our leadership and governance

Goal: Strengthen our leadership and clarify our governance procedures for increased accountability to our board, network and stakeholders.

Recognising the need for leadership in the organisation, the HURIDOCS Continuation appointed Daniel D'Esposito as Executive Director as per 1 June 2010. Daniel had been Training Officer with HURIDOCS as of 2006.

The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee (Board) met in September in Versoix-Geneva and had regular contacts through e-mail and Skype.

Strategy 8: Change our resource development strategy to ensure financial sustainability

Goal: Change our resource development strategy to ensure financial sustainability, by making a more effective demonstration of our impact, expanding our base of core funders, and generating income from projects to finance growth and innovation.

Norad provided HURIDOCS with general support for its activities in the South, but ended its support in December 2010. After more than 15 years ongoing support, Norad decided to change its portfolio. However the two institutions continue to remain in contact, with possibilities for collaboration on country-specific projects at Embassy level.

HURIDOCS sought to replace this multi-year core funding with other funding relationships:

- The Open Society Institute provided HURIDOCS with a bridge grant for the first half of 2010 and with an institutional grant for the period 1 September 2010-31 August 2011.

- A promising relationship was initiated with MacArthur, in the context of a multi-year grant covering capacity building activities in Africa (note: this grant was awarded in 2011).

However HURIDOCS needs to pursue its fundraising efforts, to secure at least 5 long term funding relationships, with donors who understand and support the need for human rights NGOs to manage information effectively.

HURIDOCS is satisfied with the progress it made with regard to implementing particular activities as well as with the insights gained in to the effectiveness of various methods of collaborating with and accompanying NGOs in strengthening their information management practices in the field of human rights.

Strategic planning and thinking

The HURIDOCS Continuation Committee approved the **Strategic Plan 2011**, with forecast for 2012 and 2013. This Plan builds upon the Strategic Plan 2010-2015 and has the following themes as main scope:
- Support to human rights defenders
- Capacity building and training
- Global scope; focus on Africa
- Innovation in ICT
- Human rights and democratisation

While collaborating with a variety of partners, HURIDOCS gained additional insights into what constitutes a durable impact for interventions in the field of human rights information management. We concluded that the only thing that really works is close accompaniment of a specific NGO over a period of time, to help them identify their needs and devise a solution together with them, improve their understanding and use of technology, and often developing the tech part of the solution for them.

HURIDOCS started implementing a five-step process to structure its capacity building, which we use for all our interventions, and which is based on the DEMIR terminology and concepts (Definition, Exploration, Modelling, Implementation, Review) developed by researcher John Lannon (University of Limerick, Ireland). HURIDOCS also engaged John Lannon to do initial work for new projects in Indonesia and Russia.

On basis of the recommendations made in June 2010 by Rustem Tagybergenov, Senior Internal Auditor at the Open Society Institute office in Budapest, HURIDOCS continues to improve its financial administration policies. This relates to how to draw up the annual budget, financial safeguards, and responsibilities of the Board with regard to finances, procurement policies and conflict of interest policies followed up by the HURIDOCS staff. In the financial administration of HURIDOCS, relationships are now created between expenses, projects and grants.