HURIDOCS

2018-2020 Strategy

April 2018

Organisational Description

Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems, International (HURIDOCS) is deeply rooted in the human rights movement, with decades of field experience and a high level of expertise in using information and technology. We are a global group of human rights researchers, documentation experts, information security specialists and software developers out to empower defenders to act strategically on human rights information.

Our work started in 1982 by helping grassroots organisations understand how to classify and manage their documents. Thirty-five years later, HURIDOCS has become a field leader in developing innovative tools, methodology and resources for human rights defenders. We have designed reporting standards and thesauri; created open source software tools for documenting human rights violations, managing cases, and curating, annotating and sharing document collections; and delivered capacity building to organisations worldwide.

HURIDOCS believes that small, locally based organisations are the backbone of the global human rights movement: they provide direct support to victims, monitor crises first hand, and mobilise communities. Since 1982, we have built a remarkable network and level of trust with human rights organisations in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and North America.

During that time, information formats, uses to which data are put, and technologies have transformed. Other things have not: human rights defenders continue to rely on information for advocacy and litigation. That information continues to be difficult and dangerous for them to obtain. Too often, that hard-won information continues to be siloed or trapped.

HURIDOCS exists to provide human rights activists and organisations with customized solutions and services that enable them to gain an edge over adversaries and put information and technology to work for their beneficiaries.

Principal Areas of Work

HURIDOCS strengthens human rights organisations in three ways, each offering an opportunity to turn information into action.

❖ **HURIDOCS Advise** partners with human rights defenders to design and implement technology-based information management strategies and practices that target their unique needs.

Rationale: Human rights defenders operate in volatile, often insecure settings with limited resources, technical skills and infrastructure. These conditions put pressure on their ability to think about integrating sound information management, powered by technology, into their work. As a result, information is lost, through neglect or attacks; opportunities are missed, because analysis is too cumbersome; and insights on systemic issues remain buried, because information is not gathered. HURIDOCS absorbs this pressure and identifies with defenders smart, efficient strategies and solutions that advance their cause.

We understand defenders' successes and shortfalls, and they know we are not "outsiders" imposing solutions. We are allies, who care.

Our approach is open and dialogic. We bring expertise in information science, organisational development methods, and information technologies, while human rights defenders bring expertise in issue areas and unrivaled contextual understanding.

❖ **HURIDOCS Design** builds reusable, free and open-source software tools that give defenders swift, deep insight into their documents and data.

Rationale: HURIDOCS supports human rights defenders working in every region of the globe on advocacy and litigation campaigns. As we work with defenders across geographic boundaries and issue areas, we come to recognise defining challenges for the field. When we identify a widespread need that available tools do not address, we create groundbreaking solutions that "move the movement."
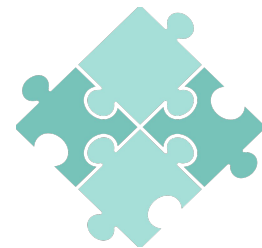
Our track record includes the Events Standard Formats methodology for documenting human rights violations, and a suite of free and open source software tools:

- **OpenEvsys** for documenting human rights violations;

- **Casebox** for managing cases in human right law; and

- **Uwazi** for curating, annotating and sharing large document collections.

HURIDOCS tools are user-driven, community-owned and accessible.

- ❖ **HURIDOCS Exchange** fosters a living resource hub for the growing community engaged in human rights documentation, information management for advocacy, and fact finding.

Rationale: Sector expertise on using information to advance human rights is significant but scattered. Human rights defenders can benefit greatly from having a safe space in which to exchange knowledge with others working on similar causes and in different contexts. HURIDOCS offers webinars led by staff and invited experts, and posts manuals and articles on standards in human rights documentation methodologies.

These ongoing conversations and trainings support rapid response and build the field's resilience, strategic capacity and access to expertise over time. Our **Collaboratory** pilot project gives defenders a platform on which to share lessons learned and unlock the potential of peer exchange.

Mission, Vision, Values

Our Mission

HURIDOCS helps human rights defenders use information and technology to shine a light on abuses and promote justice for both victims and perpetrators of violations.

Our Vision

A global movement uses information to advance human rights for all.

Our Values

- **Openness** – HURIDOCS promotes access to knowledge, the collective wisdom of human rights defenders, transparency, and accountability. We believe in open dialogue, open source software development, and open innovation.

- **Collaboration** – HURIDOCS co-creates effective solutions with human rights organisations. We see defenders' contextual knowledge, agency and capacity as vital to winning strategies.

- **Agility** – HURIDOCS listens carefully to those who drive human rights change and seek tech and information support. We provide solutions and services that are driven by demand and ready to meet emerging needs. We believe that problem solving for human rights change agents requires in-depth understanding of people, goals, and contexts.

- **Perseverance** – HURIDOCS understands the complexity and potential of direct support to human rights defenders, and of open source software tool development. We first ask ourselves which challenges we are best prepared to address; then we tackle

those challenges with determination.

- **Sustainability** – HURIDOCS balances our commitment to an organisational culture of innovation with an equally strong commitment to financial and programmatic sustainability.

2018-2020 Strategies and Key Activities

1. Strategies to Strengthen Human Rights Organisations

Strategy 1.1 Partner with defenders to create and implement strategies that turn information assets into human rights impacts

Impacts include:

- Compensation for torture victims and legal action against their torturers;

- Prosecution of perpetrators of forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, and other crimes against humanity;

- Termination of business practices that systematically discriminate, or tolerate discrimination, against vulnerable populations such as migrants; and

- Accurate historical records that strengthen human rights defenders' credibility and contribute to transitional justice mechanisms by establishing facts and vindicating victims' suffering.

Key Activities:

1.1.1 Strategy Mapping and Targeted Support. HURIDOCS will collaborate with human rights organisations to plan an information strategy that ensures they collect what they need for their advocacy or litigation goals. We will evaluate their existing information management practices, workflow and support needs; identify the best technologies and techniques to organise their information; and train staff and volunteers on those technologies and techniques.

1.1.2. Research and Documentation. HURIDOCS will support human rights organisations in conducting research, documenting violations, monitoring, and fact-finding. We will provide software solutions tailored to organisations' data entry and analysis needs; help organisations define terms and references for their projects; and train staff and volunteers on human rights documentation principles and best practices.

1.1.3. Security and Resilience. HURIDOCS will consult with human rights organisations on holistic security, in the context of our other training and consulting, software deployment and customisation work. We will connect organisations with resources and trainers on holistic security for human rights defenders and help them mitigate information security threats and

create emergency response mechanisms, in order to protect their information assets and staff as vigorously as possible.

Strategy 1.2 Remove barriers to collecting, extracting, analysing, visualising and publishing human rights information

Key Activities:

1.2.1. Design and develop Uwazi Reveal, the "next generation" analytic tool, with human rights defenders

Human rights defenders depend on and derive their greatest strength from information—accounts, testimonies, reports, investigations, lists, records—that they can transform into insights and outcomes. They need tools that empower them to do this effectively and safely. Present-day analytic tools fall short in one of two ways: either they prescribe an inflexible structure built around a certain workflow, or they offer too little structure to get to meaningful results.

HURIDOCS will design and develop Uwazi Reveal, a tool for documenting and analysing human rights violations. The tool will build-in proven methodologies and innovative features such as machine learning (described below), a graph approach to surfacing relevant connections in complex data, integrated investigative tools, and more. Organisations will be able to keep their sensitive data secure and support their often complex validation and authorisation workflows.

1.2.2. Harness the power of machine learning for human rights

Machine learning is a breakthrough tool for data analysis, enabling users to extract information efficiently and discover patterns in semi-structured or unstructured data. HURIDOCS seeks to improve the way that human rights organisations analyse document collections by combining human expert knowledge with machine intelligence. Machine learning can unlock serious investigative capacity for defenders—for example, finding traces of discriminatory sentencing in large collections of court decisions.

HURIDOCS will continue applying machine learning features to our Uwazi software, concentrating on enabling automated extraction of key variables, automatically identifying and displaying keywords to offer insight into document contents, and surfacing patterns in collections through topic modeling. We will integrate these features seamlessly, offering straightforward user interfaces that make complex technology accessible to almost anyone. We will balance this emphasis on usability with an equal emphasis on transparency, to ensure that users are able to understand clearly what the algorithms are suggesting and applying.

1.2.3. Open and connect collective datasets

Common bodies of human rights information remain trapped in difficult-to-access PDFs and stacks of paper. This situation affects many actors within the global human rights movement, from lawyers litigating cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to advocates lobbying states at the United Nations Human Rights Council. HURIDOCS has partnered with

the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) and the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) to address this issue. Our Uwazi software solution is meanwhile introducing a customisable tool that is making opening and connecting datasets considerably easier.

HURIDOCS will tackle this persistent challenge, one human rights mechanism at a time. Typically, this process will begin as a collaboration with an NGO or coalition of NGOs invested in accessing information that is currently trapped; that access in turn will support advocacy efforts with relevant mechanisms. Those mechanisms may include information bodies from the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe, UN treaty bodies, and ASEAN's Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights.

We will connect these collective datasets when appropriate, to facilitate trans-regional learning and to maximise opportunities for advocates and lawyers to access information that could strengthen their causes and filings. Since many of the challenges involved in this work are similar to ones experienced by the open data and civic technology movement, we will seek to expand our connections within that movement.

1.2.4. Unify the HURIDOCS technology stack, with functionalities that can be remixed

HURIDOCS will unify the technology stack (the group of programming languages that we use in developing our tools) that it supports, in order to exploit the opportunities for creativity and collaboration that a unified stack opens. Once HURIDOCS software tools share a common codebase, human rights defenders will be able to select features and functionalities developed for any of our tools and "remix" them, optimising our technology to advance their information management goals.

Our developers will be freed from time-consuming maintenance of several different tools and more able to drive collaboration and innovation.

Strategy 1.3. Share free, practical and applicable resources on human rights information management

Key Activities:

1.3.1 Capture and share lessons learned, and strategies co-created with defenders, through HURIDOCS Advise projects

Through sharing case studies and process documentation, as well as rigorously honest impact assessments, HURIDOCS will begin to build an open knowledge base on addressing today's changing technology landscape, volatile political contexts, and mounting threats to human rights defenders.

1.3.2 Invite contributions of knowledge and skills from the global network of human rights practitioners, information wranglers, and technologists

While recent initiatives have created "toolkits" that capture the human rights community's knowledge regarding information management techniques and practices, that approach yields

static resources that may provide answers but cannot engage new questions. Technology is changing so rapidly that the sector needs a curated space, where practitioners share information in real time.

With the HURIDOCS Collaboratory as a pilot platform, we will provide the infrastructure and community management expertise for defenders to share practical wisdom, technical know-how and direct insight into human rights information management challenges. We believe that by informing and engaging this remarkable community, we can catalyse the creation of new projects, knowledge and strategies. We can bust silos. A community of practice gives members a structured way to reflect, regroup, plan and build solidarity.

2. Strategies to Strengthen HURIDOCS as an Organisation

Strategy 2.1 Identify and align resources to support our impact goals

Key Activities:

2.1.1 Deepen our project management "bench"

In 2016, our existing team led projects with more than 40 organisations. We aim to increase this number to 50 organisations supported annually by 2020. HURIDOCS will expand and develop our team of project managers, who have expertise in how to organise and preserve human rights information, and how to integrate new workflows into organisational practices.

2.1.2 Seek smart paths to scale

Supporting small, locally based human rights organisations is in our DNA. Yet opportunities sometimes appear to address sectoral challenges, such as improving access to case law, by working with human rights mechanisms and larger organisations.

HURIDOCS will seek smart paths to scaling our support of effective information management in the human rights sector. We will undertake major projects with large human rights organisations when the anticipated outcomes have potential to be directly beneficial to smaller human rights organisations.

We will continue to offer initial advice *pro bono* to all organisations reaching out to us. This initial dialogue helps to orient organisations regarding their priority needs, identifies useful resources and tools, and connects them with best-placed service providers. These conversations advance organisations' understanding of the problems that they are facing; over time, this improved understanding accelerates the process of finding solutions.

We will explore serving as a mentor or facilitator to share our methodology and reach more organisations than we could provide with hands-on support.

2.1.3 Engage human rights networks

Human rights work is increasingly networked. Membership in networks is critical to building relationships of trust with frontline defenders and to understanding the emerging information

challenges (and solutions) of human rights coalitions, networks and platforms.

HURIDOCS project managers will embed themselves in the human rights networks that operate in the regions where they work. Examples include Civic Solidarity Platform, the African Commission NGO Forum, the European Coordination Committee for Human Rights Documentation, and The Human Rights Council Network (HRCNet). Networks offer references to consult when vetting potential partners and opportunities to evangelise about information management with leading human rights defenders.

2.1.4 Increase financial resilience

HURIDOCS will strengthen our financial resilience by continuing to diversify our revenue sources, increase earned income, improve cost recovery on grants and contracts, and plan and budget for gradual growth. We will explore how a blended business model—one that covers operating costs through a combination of donated revenue (like grants) and profitable services (like software development contracts)—could support long-term innovation and sustainability. We will critically examine whether a blended model could dilute or undermine HURIDOCS' mission focus.

Our financial sustainability commitments will include developing and approving budgets that keep expenses in line with actual revenues; maintaining an operating reserve; and closely reviewing the financial and mission impact of proposed projects on our overall portfolio.

Strategy 2.2 Define and measure progress toward our impact goals

Key Activities:

2.2.1 Set organisational standards for screening potential projects and strategies

HURIDOCS will develop clear project selection criteria and a rigorous evaluation methodology to ensure that resources are put to best use and that approaches are suited to the particular settings in which individual staff members operate.

Screening criteria will include: fit with the HURIDOCS mission and unique expertise, potential for human rights impact, sustainability, availability of funding, and a context-sensitive risk analysis.

2.2.2 Design an internal monitoring, evaluation and learning methodology

HURIDOCS will co-create impact indicators and evaluation methods with human rights organisations, as a key internal change initiative. By partnering with human rights organisations to develop indicators, we will ensure that how we define and measure success corresponds to actual needs. We will ensure successes that defenders themselves achieve are properly acknowledged.

Desired Outcomes

The strategies outlined above are designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Organisations gain the resources, skills and capacity needed to gather, analyse and preserve human rights information effectively. They can continuously evolve existing solutions and design new ones.

- Organisations critically examine and redefine their strategies, leveraging their capacity to harness information in order to increase their impact.

- Organisations successfully implement human rights documentation methodologies in their work and utilise HURIDOCS tools, relying on our clear guides and standards and our quick, low-touch support.

- Organisations are able to use trustworthy data in their advocacy campaigns and transitional justice efforts.

- Information published by human rights mechanisms (such as the United Nations (UN), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), courts, and commissions) is more accessible to the human rights defenders who need it.

- Practitioners share and jointly hone skills and resources on human rights documentation for use in advocacy, litigation, transitional justice, and memorialisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

HURIDOCS will monitor and evaluate our progress in advancing the strategies herein outlined. Activity milestones are listed by strategy below.

Strategy 1.1 Partner with defenders to create and implement strategies that turn information assets into human rights impacts

- Support 50 organisations annually by 2020.
- Work with 10 organisations to plan an information strategy to ensure that they collect what they need for advocacy or litigation.
- Support 10 organisations in configuring and using an existing technology solution to meet their needs, such that the solution is in use after one year.

Strategy 1.2 Remove barriers to collecting, extracting, analysing, visualising and publishing human rights information

- Build Uwazi Reveal for documenting human rights violations with input from at least 10 human rights organisations.
- Pilot Uwazi Reveal with four organisations.
- Launch Uwazi Reveal.
- Integrate machine learning features into Uwazi and Uwazi Reveal.
- Work with partners to improve access to the information of two human rights mechanisms by 2020.

- Provide guidance for users of our tools, including guides, video tutorials, and presentations.

Strategy 1.3 Share free, practical and applicable resources on human rights information management

- Organise four curated events, programs, and conversations that convene human rights practitioners, information wranglers, and technologists.
- Document five replicable solutions for human rights documentation needs.
- Update and improve the HURIDOCS manual on human rights documentation.

Strategy 2.1 Identify and align resources to support our impact goals

- Improve risk management by incorporating scenarios and sectoral best practices in the HURIDOCS budgeting process.
- By 2020, maintain a reserve equivalent to three months of operating costs.
- Develop a process to review closely the financial and mission impact of proposed projects on our overall portfolio.
- Embed HURIDOCS staff as active participants in at least 10 professional networks by 2020.
- Strengthen our team of project managers through professional mentorship and development opportunities and peer exchange.

Strategy 2.2 Define and measure progress toward our impact goals

- Develop a monitoring, evaluation and learning system for HURIDOCS, to be implemented in phases (development of partner feedback mechanisms, development of indicators, integration of indicators into system, testing, and enhancement) with the first stage of roll out in 2018.
- Develop and apply clear project selection criteria by 2020.

Appendix. Our Strategy Development Process

HURIDOCS Executive Director Friedhelm Weinberg initiated a strategy review process soon after assuming the organizational leadership role in February 2017. The process was informed by numerous conversations with partners and donors, aimed at identifying longstanding and emerging challenges, as well as visions that have not yet been realised. The conversations also explored changes in the global environment that the human rights movement now confronts.

HURIDOCS supplemented these interviews with research on strategies of peer organisations in the field of human rights, information and technology, as well as a survey of major themes presented at relevant conferences (such as Internet Freedom Festival, RightsCon and TICTec).

At a staff retreat in April 2017, team members worked on articulating impact goals. Staff also reviewed feedback from partners, reflected on how the organisation needs to evolve, and mapped work plans for technology, projects and communications. An external consultant, Dirk Slater of FabRiders, facilitated the retreat and has continued to help HURIDOCS identify organisational development challenges and effective ways of addressing them.

A draft strategy document was developed in Fall 2017. HURIDOCS solicited feedback from partners and donors, as well as staff and Board, and incorporated their valuable guidance into this draft.