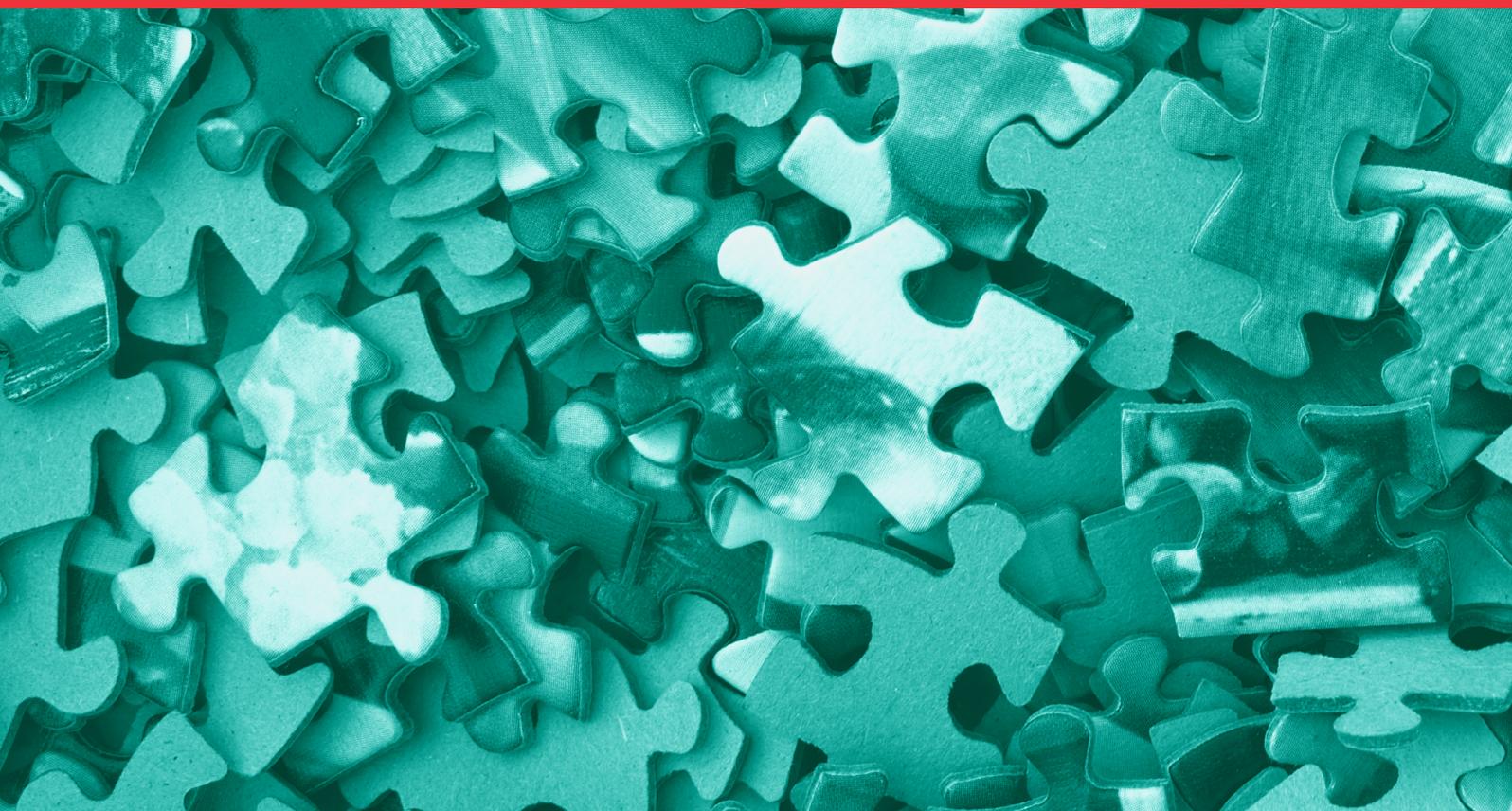


HURIDOCs

2019 Annual Report



In the realm of human rights, accessible information is power. That sentiment has long underpinned our work at HURIDOCS, and it was as true as ever in 2019.

It was a year of tragedy and injustice, but also one of victories that deserve celebrating. To name just a few, the world saw the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Taiwan, the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Kyrgyzstan, the landmark ruling in Ecuador protecting the Waorani people's Amazon territory from exploitation, and the announcement of plans to abolish the death penalty in Equatorial Guinea.

These positive developments weren't an accident, but the result of strategic and sustained efforts by those building a fairer, more just world for us all.

One element that fuels these efforts? Accurate and relevant information in the hands of activists, advocates, researchers and policy makers who turn it into action. With knowledge of legal mechanisms that support justice, with evidence of abuses captured in a secure way, and with spaces for defenders to share their hard-won learnings with each other, the movement for human rights is all the more effective.

For the better part of four decades, HURIDOCS has labored to ensure that such knowledge is accessible, such evidence is preserved and such spaces exist for human rights defenders. And while the tools, strategies and approaches of this work are important, so is commitment to the cause—and each other. It's why we do what we do.

So we at HURIDOCS would like to say thank you to our partners, who have given us the gift of trust and the honour of supporting their initiatives.

Thank you to the people who brave risks to investigate and document human rights violations, and to the curators who put their precious time and energy into organising collections of human rights information that so many benefit from.

Thank you to our peers and allies who contribute crucial advocacy, support and tools to the human rights community.

And thank you to our donors and funders who recognise the importance of not only preserving human rights information, but making it accessible and actionable.

In solidarity,
The HURIDOCS team

50+ **Organisations** that HURIDOCS supported with systems to manage information, hosting of information, training and advice

32 **Countries** in which HURIDOCS's partners work

Visits to collections of human rights information that are hosted by HURIDOCS
86,865

1,996
"Commits", or times that changes were saved to the core code of Uwazi, HURIDOCS's flagship platform for hosting collections of human rights information

HURIDOCS in 2019

13,000+
Documents across all Uwazi-based collections that are hosted by HURIDOCS

243 **"Merged pull requests"**, which represent new features or resolved issues within the core Uwazi code

Years since HURIDOCS was founded **37**

HURIDOCS's budget in Swiss francs
1.28 million

20 **People** working on HURIDOCS's staff

Human rights defenders need to be able to easily access relevant laws, rulings and resolutions.

Why it matters Human rights policies and recommendations made at the regional and international levels aren't just lofty ideals destined to live on dusty bookshelves. They lend very real power to local advocacy that holds authorities to account and advances protections for basic dignity and freedoms. Much of this information already exists but is hidden in plain sight, trapped in hard-to-navigate databases or PDF dumps. Making this information public is important, but only a first step—it must also be available in a way that allows human rights defenders to easily find what they need to lead change in their communities.

What HURIDOCS accomplished in 2019

In 2019, we kept up our commitment to equipping human rights defenders with tools and strategies to improve the accessibility of human rights information.

Of particular interest to us throughout the year was the opportunity to turn our ideas for how machine learning could support this effort into action. Many of our partners put human rights information in the hands of those who need it by curating relevant but otherwise scattered laws, rulings and resolutions into user-friendly databases hosted on our web-based platform Uwazi.



HURIDOCS staff attend the kick-off of the Google Developers Launchpad Accelerator program for Google AI Impact Challenge grantees in San Francisco.

Organising such a vast collection of documents is normally time-intensive and requires manual entry of metadata, but with machine learning we can automate parts of the process, lessening the burden on human rights defenders and facilitating richer analysis of the information they curate.

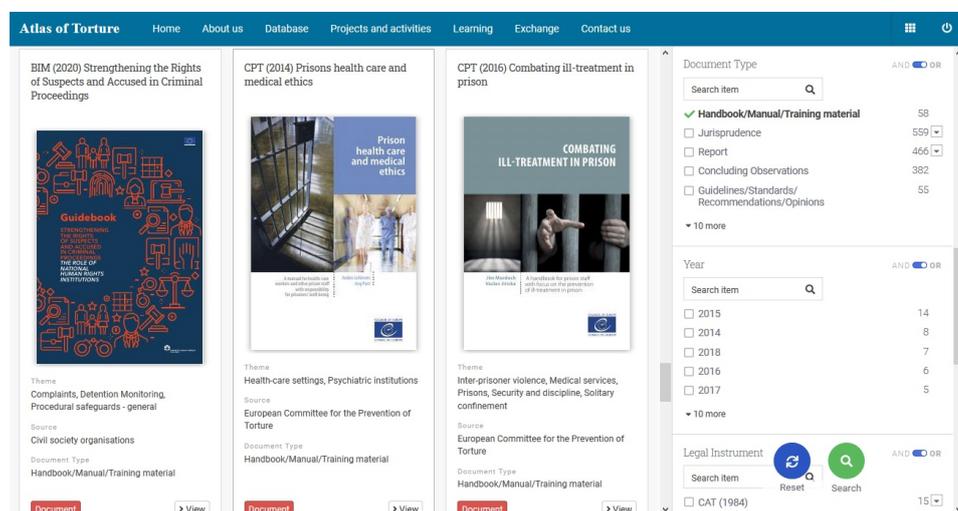
Thanks to a grant from innovation foundation NESTA, throughout part of the year we were able to run an experiment on the potential positive impact of machine learning-based semantic search, a technique that seeks to deliver better results by understanding the concept that a user is searching for. For example, if a user were to search the topic of "education," related terms such as "schools" and "universities" would also appear.

With the participation of the CYRILLA Collaborative, which maps legislation and case law that affects human rights in digital environments, we examined which contexts and roles

would most benefit from semantic search. One emerging insight? This technology might be able to bridge the gap for researchers who aren't familiar with the legal language of human rights.

And later in the year, with support from the [Google AI Impact Challenge grant](#) and a group of seven Google.org Fellows, we made progress on further developing machine learning solutions including semantic search, automatic extraction of a document's title, and suggested categories for a document based on its substance. We did so in close collaboration with some of our partners, including the [Center for Justice and International Law \(CEJIL\)](#), the [Institute For Human Rights And Development In Africa \(IHRDA\)](#), [UPR-Info](#) and [Plan International](#).

Beyond machine learning, in 2019 we assisted several organisations to create a new collection of human rights information or enhance an existing one. For example, the CLEEN Foundation launched the [Nigeria Court Digitisation Project](#), an anti-corruption initiative that [uses Uwazi to publish courts proceedings](#) in order to promote accountability and transparency.



The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute's Human Dignity and Public Security team expanded and relaunched their [Atlas of Torture](#) with our help. The project seeks to cultivate more cooperation among the members of the global anti-torture movement in order to bolster its effectiveness, and takes advantage of new Uwazi features like a public submission form.

The Uwazi-based [Atlas of Torture](#) curates laws, reports and learning materials about torture, and offers a forum for exchange among anti-torture practitioners.

IHRDA and HURIDOCs worked together to move the [Sexual and Gender Based Violence \(SGBV\) database](#)—an extension of their [African Human Rights Case Law Analyser](#) collection—to Uwazi for increased ease of use and better visualisations of data. Similarly, we made updates to [Action on Albinism's Uwazi-based platform](#) to visualise data on how well countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are implementing the Regional Action Plan to end discrimination and violence against persons with albinism.

As part of our ongoing support for CYRILLA, digital rights advocacy organisation Derechos Digitales and the Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (CIPIT) at Strathmore University started to use Uwazi to host their document collections.

And we continued to maintain the [RightDocs database](#), making United Nations Human Rights Council resolutions, amendments, votes, reports and more available in one easy-to-search location.

Human rights defenders need secure, adaptable and efficient ways to document violations.

Why it matters Change doesn't happen overnight. When the worst abuses occur, evidence must be collected in the now, even if opportunities for justice are often years—if not decades—down the road. The people who document these issues are often under extreme pressure, if not outright threat, because of the quantity, sensitivity and value of what they gather. It's not enough to simply preserve information—it must be captured in a way that maximises future admissibility, keeps documentarians and subjects safe, and protects against breach or loss.

What HURIDOCS accomplished in 2019

Throughout the year at HURIDOCS, we lent our support whenever we could to activists, advocates and researchers working to document human rights violations and seek justice.

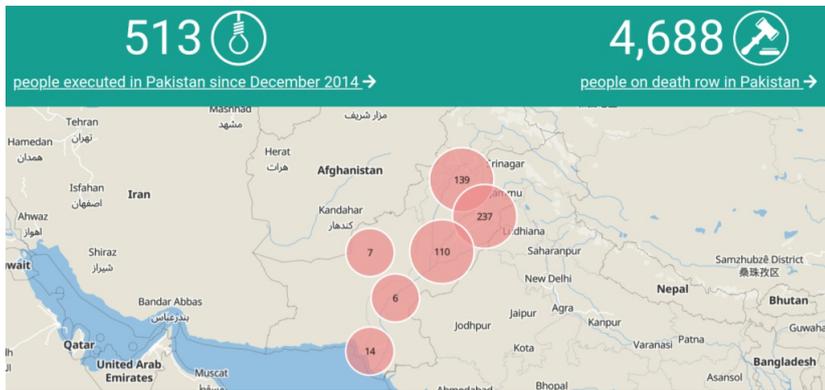
For example, Justice Project Pakistan and HURIDOCS partnered to shed light on the use of capital punishment in Pakistan, home to one of the world's largest death rows. The resulting database brings together details about prisoners awaiting execution and the 513 prisoners who have been executed since 2014, revealing how individuals with disabilities, juveniles and other vulnerable people bear the brunt of the situation.



Participants learn about documentation during a HURIDOCS training in 2019.

And with our support, women's journalism organisation CIMAC launched their project Geographies of Violence Against Women Journalists, which uses Uwazi to make visible the structural violence faced by women journalists and communications professionals in Mexico. The database shows that in about half of all the registered cases, the violence comes from institutional sources.

Following the announcement in 2018 that Benetech would be sunsetting its well-regarded Martus software for human rights data collection, organisations that had come to depend on the technology found themselves in need of an actively developed alternative. To this end, HURIDOCS assisted two such documentation groups to migrate their collections from Martus to Uwazi in 2019.



Justice Project Pakistan's database offers insight into who is sitting on death row in Pakistan and how they got there.

has proved to be an important feature, as many human rights documentation projects begin not on specifically designed platforms, but in spreadsheets.

We were also able to explore how Uwazi might support other use cases too, notably complaint management and detention centre monitoring within several national human rights institutions (NHRI) in the South Pacific and Francophone Africa.

People whose rights are violated often turn to national human rights institutions for recourse, so it's essential that the complaints made to these bodies are registered efficiently and securely. Furthermore, a better system for receiving and analysing complaints contributes to increased visibility of these institutions' impact, which in turn generates public confidence and support.

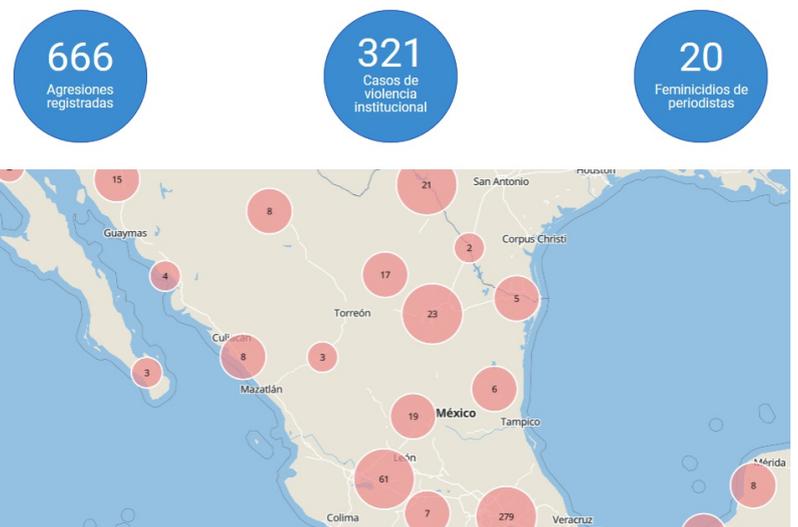
As our flagship platform, Uwazi received several updates throughout the year so that it would better serve the information and security needs of human rights defenders. We rolled out two-factor authentication, made improvements based on a third-party security audit, added right-to-left language support, and implemented an activity log.

We also made progress on developing the capability to make parts of a collection public while others remain private, as well as to assign admin or editor levels of permissions to different users.

Security doesn't begin and end with Uwazi, however. We offered guidance to nine organisations that document human rights violations on how they can strengthen their team and information security practices. And we continued to provide dozens of partners stability by hosting and maintaining their data.

We started to pilot the use of Uwazi for organising and analysing information about human rights violations with our partners Hafiza Merkezi, Transgender Europe, FORUM-ASIA and the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

Additionally, we collaborated with several partners to develop a streamlined way to move data from spreadsheets to Uwazi. This



In Mexico, CIMAC tracks structural violence with their project Geographies of Violence Against Women Journalists.

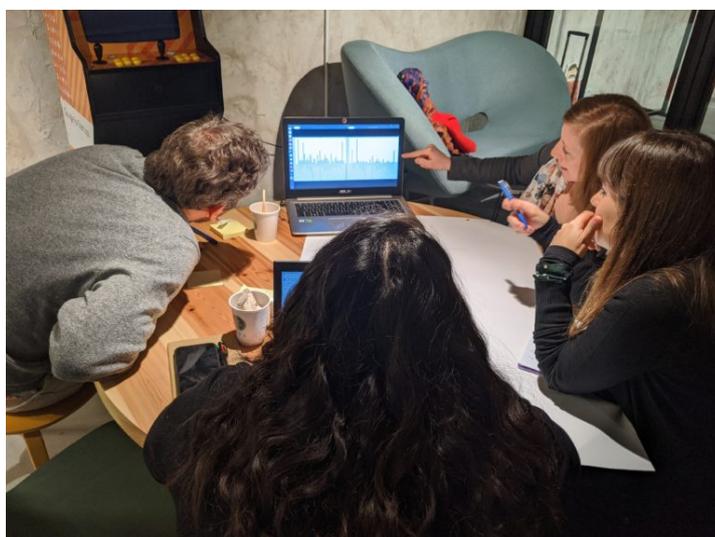
Human rights defenders need a community where data is shared, learnings are reflected upon, collaboration is common, and achievements are celebrated.

Why it matters Human rights work isn't the exclusive domain of any one individual or organisation. Advocates all over the world are continually finding creative ways to find and preserve information, but these hard-won insights often remain siloed. When the human rights community operates with openness and solidarity, we generate new ideas, unite our efforts around common causes, and ensure that our differences are complementary. Importantly, we also leverage the power of the collective as a measure of protection for human rights defenders under threat.

What HURIDOCS accomplished in 2019

Community and openness are central components of what we do at HURIDOCS, and we continued to bring such an approach to our work in 2019.

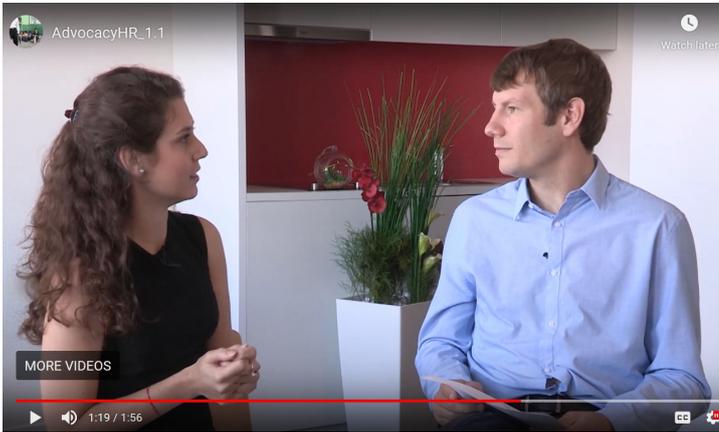
We piloted an integration between Uwazi and Digital Evidence Vault, a service that assists investigators, journalists and others working on public interest projects to preserve digital content according to standards that make it more likely to be admissible in court. Legal advocacy group Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and their partners put it to the test by capturing and organising social media evidence of airstrikes that target civilians in Yemen.



HURIDOCS staff and partners collaborate on machine learning features at a meeting in Madrid.

The integration represented our commitment to fostering an interoperable ecosystem of tools that complement each other and adapt to changing circumstances, so that human rights defenders and investigators can do their job in an effective and agile manner. For this to become a reality requires greater cooperation among those who develop human rights tools. Consequently, at RightsCon we convened a discussion around the very topic to chart a way forward with allies like OpenArchive, Center for Justice and Accountability, Meedan, and Digital Evidence Vault. Throughout the year gone by and into 2020, we've been actively exploring other possible integrations to bring this vision to life.

In 2019, we saw opportunities for greater collaboration among human rights defenders themselves, as well. That's why we co-organised a side event at the 41st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council around strengthening the anti-torture movement. The event created space for key stakeholders to exchange strategies and learn about better



A still from our [course with Advocacy Assembly](#), "[Researching Human Rights Law for Advocacy](#)".

ways to work together via technology, such as the Atlas of Torture platform.

It's also why we began to pursue the ambitious idea of a joint database of human rights law: one place where defenders can find information about regional and international human rights legislation and jurisprudence. At the end of the year in Madrid, we [kicked off the co-creation process](#) with representatives from some of our partners, including CEJIL, IHRDA, UPR-Info and Plan International.

At HURIDOCS, we believe that knowledge is most powerful when it's in the hands of many, not a few. To that end, we hosted a series of in-person trainings on information security and management with a group of women labour rights defenders from various states in Mexico, in collaboration with Proyecto de Derechos Económicos Sociales y Culturales (ProDESC).

We helped to co-sponsor the Coconet II convening of 120 digital rights defenders from across the Southeast Asian region and participated in several sessions about digital security, artificial intelligence and information management. We also partnered with Advocacy Assembly to launch a free online course on "[Researching Human Rights Law for Advocacy](#)". Our hope is that it will [serve as a useful resource](#) for activists, advocates, policy makers and researchers trying to navigate the landscape of international human rights law.

We experimented with our [Collaboratory](#), a forum for human rights defenders to come together around questions of information management and documentation. And we [organised a live discussion](#) on the "events" method for documenting human rights violations, which helps defenders capture the information they need to better understand patterns of violations. The webinar is [available for free online](#) and has been viewed more than 170 times thus far.

For those who risk their lives to build a more just world, there is strength in solidarity. As such, we were once again proud to be on the jury for the [Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders](#), celebrating individuals who promote human rights in challenging contexts. The 2019 laureate, Abdul Aziz Muhamat, is a refugee from Sudan who has [advocated for humane living conditions](#) within Australia's "offshore" detention centres—all while being detained himself.



Abdul Aziz Muhamat [accepts](#) the Martin Ennals Award.

The 2020 finalists, announced in the later half of 2019, are Huda Al-Sarari, Norma Ledezma and Sizani Ngubane, who have all [made exceptional contributions to human rights](#) within their countries of Yemen, Mexico and South Africa, respectively.

Human rights defenders need tools and strategies that they can trust as technology advances, circumstances change, and threats evolve.

Why it matters Human rights work isn't a short-term or one-off endeavour. It's long-term, labour-intensive and often dangerous. When capacity is precious and lives are at risk, it's no simple matter to learn yet another system and migrate data once more, when time and resources could be spent on creating real-world change. Organisations upon which human rights defenders rely must make sustainability a priority—because disruption comes with a devastating cost.

What HURIDOCS accomplished in 2019

Dozens and dozens of human rights organisations have come to rely on HURIDOCS—to help preserve and organise their information, to maintain our platforms that host their collections of information, to safely host their data. As such, throughout the year we strengthened the resilience of HURIDOCS to prevent any interruption to these tools and services, now or in the future.



HURIDOCS staff in Chamonix, France, at a team retreat in 2019.

In 2019, we had a budget of 1.28 million CHF, while building 195,000 CHF of reserves. This was only possible due to the hard work of the team, as the budget growth is thanks to considerable efforts to welcome new donors and to expand our service income.

These positive developments were particularly welcome, after 2017 and 2018 had required the use of reserves. Therefore, we decided to set aside a relatively high amount in 2019, and are planning to continue building at least another 115,000 CHF in 2020 to reach a minimum reserve level of three months of operational costs.

The income growth was evenly distributed among core, project and service income, as well as donations, reflecting diverse demand and interest in our work. We were particularly happy that services and donations made up 30% of our income (compared to 26% in 2018), showing that our work is relevant to partners and individuals, in addition to institutional donors. More than 25 partners have trusted us by directly paying for our services, from large international NGOs to smaller or specialised organisations like the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression or Helm Studio in India.

In a similar vein, we owe many thanks to the long-term commitment of our institutional



HURIDOCS staff gather in Chamonix, France, for a team retreat in 2019.

supporters. The Open Society Foundations and the Oak Foundation have both supported us for more than five years with six-figure annual contributions that allow us to cover operational expenses.

We are thrilled that in 2019 Google made a commitment worth 1 million USD over three years with the AI Impact Challenge, which is the largest grant HURIDOCS has ever received.

Equally, we are thankful for the three-year support from

the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and annual contributions from the Principality of Liechtenstein and Capital Group.

We are also grateful for project grants from the City of Geneva, HIVOS, the DADI Foundation, the Pacific Community (SPC) and NESTA.

All of this generous support allowed us to grow the HURIDOCS team in 2019 to include several new staff in software design and development, project management and communications. We also introduced policies for staff well-being, such as equal parental leave and a budget for training and personal development.

In 2020, we will continue exploring ways to ensure that team members are supported, connected and appreciated.



Harnessing the power of human rights information

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