STRATEGY 2022-2026

huridocs

human rights information and documentation systems

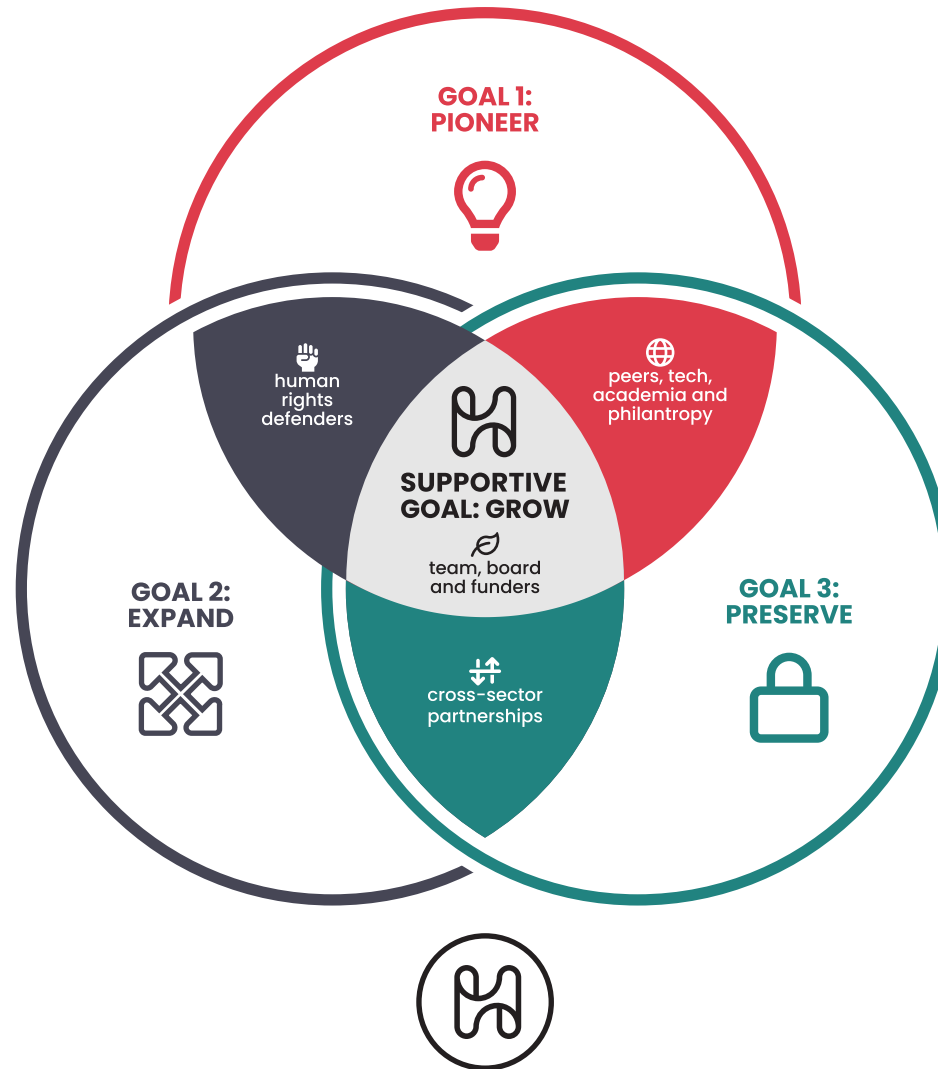## OUR GOALS: 40 YEARS ON
Pioneer. Expand. Preserve. Grow.

HURIDOCS was **founded 40 years ago** to help human rights groups gather, organise and use information to create **positive change** in the world. We develop tools and strategies that make evidence, law and research more accessible to those who promote and protect human rights. Our **goal now** is to build on the successes of the past 40 years, but also to reflect on how we can have **more impact**, contribute to a **healthy ecosystem** to sustain this work and **continue to learn**.

GOAL 1: PIONEER
Explore technologies and methodologies with human rights defenders

- **Research and development**, including on machine learning and usability.
- Facilitate **cross-sectoral explorations** between human rights defenders, tech companies, academia and government.
- Co-create and share **knowledge resources**.

GOAL 1: PIONEER

GOAL 2: EXPAND

GOAL 3: PRESERVE

human rights defenders

peers, tech, academia and philantropy

SUPPORTIVE GOAL: GROW

team, board and funders

cross-sector partnerships

GOAL 2: EXPAND
Support human rights defenders to harness the power of information

- **Support organisations** with their informational, methodological and technological needs.
- **Improve Uwazi** to address needs at scale.
- Provide risk assessment and targeted support on **digital security**.
- **Increase access** by co-creating knowledge resources and providing starter templates for tools.
- Obtain **deeper reach** on key human rights issues and geographies.

GOAL 3: PRESERVE
Manage, protect and preserve information long-term

- Invest in **scalable and reliable infrastructure** for information storage and preservation.
- Focus on **authenticity by design** for robust and easily proven provenance of primary information.
- Improve **accessibility of infrastructure**, both with regard to cost and usability.
- Continuously **enhance security practices** and perform independent audits or bug bounties.

SUPPORTIVE GOAL: GROW
Strengthen HURIDOCS' capacity to provide needed long-term support

- **Grow the budget** through a mix of philanthropic and fee-for-service income.
- **Explore a spin-off of Uwazi**, while remaining mission-focused.
- **Clarify pricing structure and pro bono policy** with respect to access, offering and service.
- **Revise policies and procedures** relating to operations, security and MEL.
- Improve **staff development** to support defenders, as well as each other.
- Maintain and enhance a **culture of respect**.

Background

Civic space is under threat in many parts of the globe. Repressive laws prohibit or punish advocacy. Sophisticated spyware is deployed against activists and journalists. Reprisals follow when human rights defenders speak out at the United Nations.

It is the same defenders that have spearheaded unprecedented progress and positive change in recent decades. It is because of their success that they have become the target of authoritarians, war-mongers and populists.

Fighting torture. Achieving accountability for abuses. Setting up mechanisms for truth and reconciliation. Changing laws to recognise that love is love.

Information has been at the heart of these successes. Preserved evidence is essential to winning cases in court and holding perpetrators to account. Meticulous documentation is the foundation of campaigns to convince policy makers and the public that change is needed. Services to victims are more effective when they are supported by reliable archives and record keeping. Advocacy addressing systemic inequalities relies on data-driven insights on how vulnerable groups are further marginalised in their access to education, health and other social and economic rights, and disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.

Information will be at the heart of a rights-respecting future. Truths will allow humanity to grow, learn and reckon with its past. Persuasion will lead to the realisation of rights of the vulnerable and marginalised. Accountability will deter abuse of power.

HURIDOCS was founded 40 years ago to help human rights groups gather, organise and use information to create positive change in the world. We develop tools and strategies that make evidence, law and research more accessible to those who promote and protect human rights. In 2021 alone, we supported 70 human rights organisations – and it is these, often small, organisations that continue to lead the successes described above.

Our unique support to these groups is to help them manoeuvre through the possibilities and pitfalls in gathering, managing, preserving and analysing information. Demand for our support has skyrocketed, with more than double the requests we have received in 2021 compared to 2020.

We have added to our globally distributed team of human rights experts and technologists and we grew to more than 30 staff for the first time in our history. We have improved Uwazi, our flagship software tool, used by and created with more than 150 organisations across the globe. We explored new technologies, including machine learning, and made them useful in practical ways to save time and gain new insights.

Our goal now is to build on these successes, but also reflect on how we can have more impact, contribute to a healthy ecosystem to sustain this work and continue to learn. In the next years, we want to scale our team and operations to be able to meet the demand from human rights organisations and expand our reach to adjacent communities that increasingly intersect and jointly lead change.

To reach this, we will prioritise initiatives that will allow us to lower barriers to access to our services and tools. In particular, we seek to achieve this by focusing on more available knowledge, a clearer user experience in our tools and an equitable cost structure. As a result, we aim to not only leverage economies of scale, but to broaden access for the diverse actors leading change across the globe.

We know that this change will take time. Human rights organisations will need a reliable partner, who is there, if need be, for decades. This requires a dedicated focus on infrastructure on the one hand, and continuous exploration of new possibilities on the other hand.

"Only when information is accessible in the long run, can it be of use. Only when human rights defenders are part of the exploration of new technological advances will they be able to fully use them to their advantage."

⚠ Our Mission

At HURIDOCS, our goal is to develop tools and strategies that make evidence, law and research more accessible to those who promote and protect human rights.

⚿ What is Uwazi?

Our flagship tool is called 'Uwazi' and means 'openness' in Swahili. It is a web-based database application designed for capturing and organising information in one easy-to-search place.

🎁 HURIDOCS at 40

HURIDOCS was founded in 1982, when computers weren't widespread and human rights defenders struggled to efficiently and effectively organise their information. Forty years ago, the aim was to take advantage of information and communication technologies for the benefit of the human rights community. Although the circumstances have shifted over the years, accessible information remains crucial to protecting the dignity and freedom of all people.

Goal 1: Pioneer

Explore technologies and methodologies with human rights defenders

WHY?

- HURIDOCS is a trusted actor with a global network.

- The needs and context that human rights defenders experience, and the risks they face, need to guide the integration and co-creation of dedicated technologies.

- There remains untapped potential to make the work of human rights defenders more efficient, collaborative and safe in an increasingly digitised world.

WHAT?

- Research and development, including on machine learning and usability.

- Facilitate cross-sectoral explorations between human rights defenders, tech companies, academia and government.

- Co-create and share knowledge resources.

WHO?

- Human rights organisations and defenders, technologists and tech companies, academics, government agencies, international organisations, networks of regional and local civil society organisations and philanthropy.

☑ KEY INDICATORS

- ✓ Knowledge resources and dedicated technologies are co-created with defenders (as observed in surveys where their satisfaction with participation is asked)

- ✓ Efficiency gains from new technologies, in particular machine learning, lead to at least of 5 million work hours saved annually across processing, annotating and analysing at least 75,000 documents and media files.

- ✓ HURIDOCS experiences 15% audience growth across major channels annually.

⬡ Goal 2: Expand

Support human rights defenders to harness the power of information
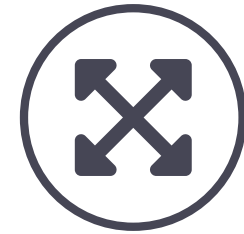
⑦ WHY?

- Information has been a key to human rights activism and advocacy for more than 40 years - the power of facts, evidence and persuasion are at the heart of the movement's success.

- Information is used in regional human rights courts, truth commissions, at the United Nations – and, consistently, civil society's documentation is an essential ingredient in all of these fora.

- HURIDOCS has built a track record of commitment, effective partnerships and innovation: Demand from civil society for our support has more than doubled in 2021 compared to 2020, and our global team is well-placed to support the movement.

⑦ WHAT?

- Support organisations to structure information, improve methodologies and integrate technologies strategically into their work.

- Improve Uwazi, as the flagship software solution, to address needs at scale through a powerful and intuitive tool.

- Risk assessment and targeted support is provided on digital security as part of partner support, with referrals to specialised organisations made in case of more extensive needs.

- Co-create knowledge resources and starter templates for tools to lower the barrier of access.

- Put intention into partnership portfolios to have deeper reach on key human rights issues and geographies.

⑦ WHO?

- Focus on small and grassroots organisations – because we believe they are the backbone of the human rights movement, reflect a diversity of experiences and have the strongest need for outside support.

- Adjacent communities that intersect with human rights – because feminist, queer, environmental and transparency activists often pursue similar goals and tactics.

☑ KEY INDICATORS

- ✓ Organisations supported annually grows significantly (it was 49 in 2020); a majority of this growth is with small and grassroots organisations, reaching 75% of the portfolio by 2026 (this is currently not measured).

- ✓ The most frequently used knowledge resources and the Uwazi interface are localised into at least 10 non-English languages by 2026.

🔒 Goal 3: Preserve

Manage, protect and preserve information long-term

⊘ WHY?

- Human rights progress takes time, so information needs to be available in the long term.

- The amount of available information is growing rapidly, as the world is increasingly connected, digital devices are ever more widely spread and people use them in novel ways.

- Reliable infrastructure is needed to secure sensitive data and to scale with growing bodies of information.

- There are considerable threats against sensitive information on human rights.

- Manipulation and misinformation are used to undermine the notion that truths exist.

- Human rights defenders need processes and tools to demonstrate that the information they collect, verify and share is trustworthy.

⊘ WHAT?

- Invest in scalable and reliable infrastructure for information storage and preservation.

- Focus on authenticity by design, so that primary information held on infrastructure have robust and easily proven provenance.

- Improve accessibility of infrastructure, both with regard to cost and usability.

- Continuously enhance security practices and perform independent audits or bug bounties.

⊘ WHO?

- Partnerships with infrastructure providers and other technology for human rights organisations to offer streamlined and accessible solutions.

- Partnerships with lawyers, archivists and information governance experts on the evolving needs for preservation and authentication.

☑ KEY INDICATORS

- ✓ HURIDOCS never loses any partner data.

- ✓ HURIDOCS infrastructure is up and running at least 99.5% of any given year.

- ✓ Records preserved on HURIDOCS' infrastructure and with the help of dedicated tools reach 5 million by 2026 (it stood at just under 1 million records at the end of 2021). We expect this to result from new collections being set up that have the goal of long-term preservation, and from existing collections being expanded to cover a more holistic view of past events.

Supportive Goal: Grow

Strengthen HURIDOCS' capacity to provide needed long-term support
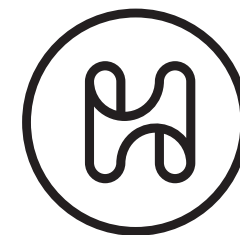
WHY?

- To achieve the three goals and to sustain work long-term, HURIDOCS seeks to grow its team and thus budget.

- With staff and budget growth, HURIDOCS will benefit from policies and practices to ensure health, efficiency and resilience.

- There is potential and need to diversify the funding model in light of the limitations of traditional funding has been for continuously improving technology solutions.

- Direct accountability to those using our services and tools is desirable – users directly paying is one way to help achieve that.

WHAT?

- Grow the budget through a mix of increased philanthropic income and a dedicated focus on fee-for-service income.

- Explore a spin-off of Uwazi to further sustain work, while remaining mission-focused.

- Clarify pricing structure and pro bono policy to ensure equitable access, sustainability of offering and ability to provide the highest level of service.

- Revise policies and procedures, especially with regard to people operations, security and MEL.

- Improve staff development to ensure the team is equipped to support defenders in volatile contexts, as well as each other.

- Maintain and enhance a culture of respect for each other across a distributed team from diverse backgrounds.

WHO?

- The HURIDOCS team and board .

- Funders who take a long-term view to success, access and accountability of our field.

☑ KEY INDICATORS

- ✓ Staff survey indicates HURIDOCS is a happy, fair and inclusive workplace.

- ✓ HURIDOCS is financially healthy by 2026. Reserves increase to provide a buffer of at least 4 months of operating cost (by the end of 2021 it provided a cushion of 2 months). Fee-for-service income increases to 30% of the annual budget (in 2021 it comprised 25% of the total budget).

🗒 Annex

Who are our partners, who we will not work with and how this strategy was developed

❓ WHO WILL WE WORK WITH?

As an organisation that has service to others in its core mandate, choosing who we decide to support is critical to be intentional about what impact we want to support, ensure we negotiate politics of inclusion and exclusion, and build up our own capacity to be excellent at addressing a defined set of needs and opportunities.

- Small, locally-based human rights organisations. They are the lifeblood of the movement, taking the greatest risks and leading positive change, often against significant odds.

- Organisations pursuing movement-bridging perspectives to address key global challenges including the climate emergency and migration that intersect with traditional human rights advocacy. We will particularly seek to strengthen our bonds with feminist and queer groups.

- Organisations that fulfil our portfolio criteria.

❓ WHO WILL WE NOT WORK WITH?

- Organisations that do not accept the universality and indivisible nature of human rights.

- Organisations that do not (need to) hold substantial amounts of information to achieve their goals.

- Government entities that request our services, unless they are part of a wider coalition with civil society or an independent national human rights institution. We will particularly not work with any law enforcement.

- Political parties.

- Law firms, unless their activities are solely focused on (strategic) human rights litigation.

- Organisations requesting custom software projects that are not reusable for a wider community.

❓ STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- Setting up a group that owns and drives the strategy development process, composed of staff and board members.

- Facilitated reflections with the HURIDOCS team, as well as visioning exercises (which were in part externally facilitated and also joined by board members).

- A scan of the external environment, analysing and summarising key opportunities and threats to HURIDOCS and its work.

- An external evaluation that reviewed the impact of HURIDOCS' work in the previous strategic period, and that addressed key questions for decision-making for the upcoming strategy.

- Consultations with stakeholders to validate findings from the evaluation and to discuss strategic opportunities.

- Research interrogating the impact assumptions of HURIDOCS' theory of change.

- Several rounds of feedback on initial drafts of the strategy with the board and staff of the organisation.

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