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Human Rights House Foundation and the HRH-Network

Evaluation Report

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Summary

The Human Rights House (HRH) in Oslo was established in 1989. A few years later, in 1992, the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F) was created with a mandate to help establishing Human Rights Houses in other cities. In 1994 four Human Rights Houses (Oslo, Moscow, Warsaw, and Ljubljana) created a network for Human Rights Houses with the HRH-F in Oslo as its secretariat. While establishing new HRH and elaborate the network has always been part of the mandate of the HRH-F, it is only the last 6 years this has been its prime goal.

Since the creation of the network in 1994 one HRH has quit the network (Ljubljana), while two newly established Human Rights Houses have joined the network (Open Word in London and Rafto in Bergen). In addition, HRH-F together with a few HR based NGOs in Sarajevo established a new Human Rights House there in 1998; a house that became member of the network at its creation. Thus, in January 2006 the network consisted of 6 existing Human Rights Houses. Adding up to these 6 houses are the 8 Human Rights Houses presented by the HRH-F in January 2006 as emerging Human Rights Houses (Baku, Bogota, Istanbul, Kampala, Minsk, Nairobi, Tirana, Zagreb).

To improve collaboration between HR NGOs within the Human Rights Houses (both existing and emerging) but also having in mind that HRH-F has not finalised any new Human Rights House since 1998, this evaluation was decided undertaken. Thus, the main goals of the evaluation have been to find strengths and weaknesses with the Human Rights House as a concept, and with the networking between the different associated NGOs. In addition, and as important, has it been to find reasons for the difficulties in finalising new Human Rights Houses and look into the priorities of work at the secretariat. In short, the evaluation should answer what the added value of establishing Human Rights Houses is, what the secretariat can contribute with and how its work can be made more efficient.

Benefits with a Human Rights House – the concept

The rationale for establishing a Human Rights House given by the HRH-F is to reduce costs, increase collaboration, enhance visibility and accessibility, improve security and create a working environment that provides moral support for human rights defenders.

This evaluation concludes that the most important benefit from working together in a Human Rights House for all NGOs interviewed is the moral support within a house; the feeling of being seen, being respected and being surrounded by people valuing the genre of work one is doing. This seems of special importance to human rights defenders who often work under harsh conditions with harassments, low or no salaries and uncertain job situations. When it comes to cost reduction the evaluation concludes that a common location is not necessarily less expensive for all NGOs but it is for some, especially where a Human Rights House is established and bought by foreign donors and made available to the NGOs (Sarajevo). While the direct cost is not reduced for all the NGOs in the other houses, common equipment and/or common conference venues make it easier and more convenient to work for the organisation within a physical Human Rights House.

When visibility is discussed, in some countries it is not possible to be visible due to oppressive political regime (Minsk, but also to a certain degree in Baku). In places where Human Rights Houses have been established, public visibility has enhanced (Oslo, Bergen, London, Warsaw, Sarajevo). Increased visibility strengthens the influence and profile and broadens the scope for the HR NGOs.

Collaboration however, does not seem to be much easier for NGOs within a Human Rights House than for those outside. The human rights NGOs within the network collaborate if they are working on similar issues and also if people in the different organisations know each other. However, collaboration seems more likely to happen out of personal knowledge, sympathy and the experience of having a common cause than as a consequence of coming physically closer together and sharing facilities in a Human Rights House. However, the former, more likely triggers of cooperation have been seen to grow out of the establishment of Human Rights Houses.

With the exception of Moscow, security does not seem to be an issue for the already established Human Rights Houses. In some of the places where there are emerging houses, however, (especially Minsk, Baku) increased security for those working in the HR NGOs and their clients is regarded as very important.

Networking

Another important goal of the HRH-F is to make different organizations at different houses collaborate and to increase collaboration between organizations within a given house. This is done by different means, the most important being the annual meeting of the existing and emerging Human Rights Houses, the web site of the network, and developing and fundraising for different common HR activities. The evaluation concludes that networking between the different Human Rights Houses in the network is complicated. The annual meeting is the main forum for meeting and discussing and learning about common issues. This meeting is very important for the network, but the evaluation questions the formal power of the annual meeting and also the mixes of people on different hierarchical levels of the NGOs present. The website is extremely little used by the employees of the different NGOs in the various Human Rights Houses. The website contains news about human rights related issues in the countries where Human Rights Houses exist or are emerging. The web contains very little information related to the NGOs connected to the network and their preoccupations and qualifications. Even if the website has an increasing number of daily users outside the network, the evaluation recommends changing substantially the way the web is run and the resources used on the web.

Outside of the annual meeting, contact between individual members and organisations associated with the international network is very limited. Common projects between houses are few. The evaluation concludes that the network should be strengthened by way of re-allocating resources from the website to the exchange programmes with funding from other sources than the NMFA like e.g. Fredskorspet. Funds should also be made available for members of the network wanting to participate in campaigns or training sessions of the other members.

Establishing a new Human Rights House

HRH-F has not finalised any new Human Rights House since 1998. This is mainly due to lack of funding. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is for the time being the most important financial supporter for HRH-F. The Ministry has not followed up demands from the HRH-F in

due time. This has created insecurity and sometimes also fatigue for the HRH-F and the NGOs within emerging Human Rights Houses. Other state donors seem reluctant to provide funding for a new Human Rights House if it is not supported by Norway through its embassy or Ministry. Thus, the evaluation recommends that HRH-F establishes closer working relations with the Norwegian Embassies and Ministry when starting to establish a new house. If these are reluctant to the idea of establishing a Human Rights House in the place in question, it is recommended not to continue the process. Also, due to formal constraints for international donors concerning timing of their commitments and disbursements, HRH-F should concentrate its efforts on a reduced number of emerging houses at any one time. Due to limited resources, former successes and relatedness in human rights issues at stake, it is also recommended that HRH-F tries to establish new houses only in Eastern Europe, including the former USSR, for the time being.

The Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F)

The mandate of the HRH-F is to facilitate establishment of new Human Rights Houses and contribute to the networking between NGOs associated with the established and emerging Houses. This evaluation suggests that this should also be the case for HRH-F's work within the Oslo Human Rights House. To promote human rights issues from member NGOs or the countries where these members are located, HRH-F should make the Human Rights House as a whole, and not its own foundation, visible. The HRH-F should serve the network as its secretary and never act as a competitor of bringing human rights issues to the public sphere.

Introduction

From the mid 1980s, democratic civil movements emerged more or less openly in Eastern Europe and in different countries in Africa. The rise of civil democratic movements was followed in the early 1990s by the creation of a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) after the fall of the Soviet Union, and democratic openings in most African states.

Civil society, often organised as NGOs, gained momentum as an agent of development. Hence, it was also often seen as a sign of democratisation in different regimes. Some international state forums opened up for participation from different NGOs and the number of NGOs grew worldwide. Norway was no exception.

Many of the newly created NGOs in former authoritarian regimes worked with human rights issues. These human rights defenders sought, and still seek, the promotion and protection of civil and political rights as well as the promotion, protection and realisation of economic, social and cultural rights. The majority of human rights defenders work at the local or national levels. However, increasingly, human rights defenders also work on the international level making contacts with regional and international mechanisms that can support them in improving human rights in their own countries or regions. The HRH-F aims to facilitate collaboration between different human rights organisations both nationally and internationally.

In Oslo, the Human Rights House (HRH) was established in 1989. The HRH, the physical building, was owned by a private person, but made available for free to relatively small and activist based human rights groups in the Oslo area. The same year MIRA foundation was created primarily to work with HR education in Albania. Interested also in the establishment of human rights houses internationally, MIRA started collaboration with human rights activists in Warsaw and Moscow. In 1992, the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F) was created in order to establish new Human Rights Houses in other cities. That same year, a group of human rights activists established The Research Centre for Human Rights, also known as the Human Rights House in Moscow. The following year, different human rights groups moved together under the same roof in Warsaw. And in 1994, a fourth Human Rights House was established in Ljubljana, Slovenia with the help of HRH-F in Oslo¹.

Together with human rights activists in Albania, these four Human Rights Houses formed the Human Rights House Network (HRH-N) in 1994, on the initiative of the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F) in Oslo. In 1995 the MIRA foundation in Oslo and the HRH-F merged into one NGO, named HRH-F. At the time, HRH-F only consisted of one paid employee².

In 1998, a new Human Rights House was established in Sarajevo on the initiative of Human Rights Groups in Sarajevo but with significant support from the HRH-F. The establishment of a Human Rights House in Sarajevo was financially backed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) and received moral and institutional support also from other Norwegian human rights based NGOs, in particular the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. The law students in Oslo's annual humanitarian campaign, HUMAK, also supported the establishment of the Human Rights house in Sarajevo financially, through the HRH-F.

¹ This Human Rights House was dissolved in 1996 due to various problems caused by the Balkan wars.

² In fact, HRH-F had only one paid employee until 1997. From 1997 to 2003, two persons received a salary from HRH-F. In September 2005, HRH-F had five full-time members of staff.

For the last eight years, due to problems of different nature³, the HRH-F has not finalised the establishment of other houses. These problems will be dealt with in this report. However, quite a few houses (in Baku, Bogota, Istanbul, Kampala, Minsk, Nairobi, Tirana, Zagreb) are presented as emerging human rights houses at the www.humanrightshouse.org⁴. Yet the Rafto Human Rights House in Bergen joined the network in 1999 and the Open Word Network in London joined the HRH network in 2004. Thus, in March 2006, six houses are attached to the international network run by the HRH-F (secretariat) in Oslo. In addition, eight emerging houses are reported as attached to the international network.

Rationale and methodology

In 2002, the HRH-F decided to evaluate their own work, the concept of a Human Rights House, and its network. Principles and methods for the evaluation were discussed during the annual network meeting in 2002. Two of HRH-F employees carried out an internal assessment of the HRH network in 2003. Their report was discussed at the network's annual meeting in Bergen in 2003 and formed the basis for the HRH-F application to the NMFA for funding of an external evaluation. In 2004, HRH-F received funding from the NMFA for the external evaluation. Dr. Ketil Fred Hansen from the University of Stavanger was selected as evaluator in June 2005 (see annex 1 for the 'Terms of Reference'). The evaluation process started at the annual network meeting in Baku in September 2005 and will end with a presentation and feedback on this draft report (see annex 2 for a time table)⁵. Documentary studies consisting of correspondence between the HRH-F and the NMFA, minutes of board meetings and annual meetings, correspondence between HRH-F and members of the network together with feasibility studies, 'the Manual' and the last years' annual reports make up the written material consulted (see annex 3 for documents consulted).

Interviews with representatives from close to all organizations within the network in Oslo, Minsk, Moscow and Nairobi (four days in each city) during January, February and March 2006 and interviews with close to all delegates at the annual meeting of the HRH-Network in Baku in September 2005, together with interviews with the board in HRH-F and participation in two board meetings and interviews with representatives from the NMFA, form the basis of this report (see annex 4 for people interviewed and annex 5 for a sample of the question guide used). No reference is, however, made to statements that can be traced back to a particular person. All information given is reproduced and analyzed here as general statements specifying the degree of consensus⁶.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) specifies the purpose of this work. In short, the ToR states that the purposes of the evaluation are to assess whether the supposed benefits of being located in a common building, a human right house (HRH), has been achieved, whether the international

³ One should however, not forget that it is only within the last 5-6 years that the main priority for the HRH-F has become to facilitate establishment of new Human Rights Houses internationally. Before year 2000, human rights education in Albania, establishment of the radio station Voice of Tibet and management of the Norwegian campaign Dugnad 1998 were prioritised work for the HRH-F. The number of employees at the HRH-F has varied from 2 to 5 during the last 8 years.

⁴ All information in this evaluation is collected between September 2005 and February 2006. Changes occurred after September 2005 are not always taken into account here.

⁵ Thus, as far as possible this report's information, analysis and recommendations are due to situation of the HRH-F and the HRH-Network as of September 2005.

⁶ To specify further, "some" means 2-3 persons, "many" means 4-5 persons, "close to all" means all but 1 or 2 persons.

network between the HRH is perceived as advantageous and what support the members of the network get and expect to get from the HRH-F in Oslo. Thus, the ToRs 16 questions and/or statements can be grouped under four main headings: the concept of a human rights house (ToR q. 1,2,7,15), the need and functions of the network (ToR q. 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,15) and the establishment of HRH facilitated by the secretariat (ToR q. 14,16), and the work and functions of the secretariat (ToR q. 9,13,16). This understanding of the ToR indicates the value, structure and content of this evaluation report.

It is important to underline that this evaluation does not involve any assessment of projects or programs, nor other work accomplished by any single organization within a HRH in the network, except for the HRH-F. As far as all other organizations are concerned, it is as partners and collaborators in the HRH-network, with a focus on the networking activities within and outside their own HRH, that are highlighted in this evaluation.

Concept

Goals of a Human Rights House

In many countries, human rights organisations work under difficult conditions. They often lack adequate funding and working facilities. Human rights defenders are in many countries harassed and persecuted in their efforts to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Human Rights House Foundation was established to meet such challenges. (Opoku-Mensah & Krokan 2002). “When a Human Rights House is established, human rights organisations co-locate their activities in one building in order to:

- create an environment that stimulates collaboration and co-operation
- enhance networking, moral support and solidarity among organisations
- cut costs and free funds for projects and activities
- put human rights on the agenda and make human rights issues more visible to the public and decision-makers
- increase the security of human rights defenders by providing a stable and secure base of activities

(Manual 2004: 5-6).

Collaboration and co-operation

The point of collaboration and cooperation is considered so important by the ToR that this is treated under a separate heading called ‘Network and collaboration,’ on pages 13-21.

Costs

For client-based organisations to be in one and the same location is both time-, money- and energy-saving and also encouraging for the clients. This is because it usually takes more than one organisation to help with all the problems each client has. A client often first seeks the attention of an organisation that turns out not to be the right one. Hence, with multiple organisations under one roof, it is much easier to redirect the client to where his or her problems can be dealt with in the most adequate and efficient way possible. Thus, for the client or user of the services provided

by one human rights NGO, it is a big advantage with a Human Rights House also when one considers the cost of transport and time spent by the client. This has been emphasised especially by the Human Rights Houses in Sarajevo and Warsaw.

In Moscow, there is no longer one physical building regrouping all the organisations in the Human Rights House. Due to increased number of personnel in some of the organisations and reduced number of offices made available by the owner to the members of the Human Rights House, the organisations had to find other offices outside the first established Human Rights House in Moscow. Today, three different rented locations in downtown Moscow houses the members. In two locations different human rights groups are resembled, while the Moscow Helsinki Group has its own location. Thus, in a very strict way of understanding the concept of a Human Rights House⁷, the one in Moscow does not exist. Here, we may understand the Moscow Centre for Human Rights more as an umbrella organisation of like-minded human rights groups, operating only very seldom as one actor, but making use of each other's competences and contacts sporadically. In Moscow, the cost is for the time being low due to officially regulated rent for the offices the Human Rights House occupy.

In the Oslo Human Rights House, all organisations claim that their rent has risen when they regrouped in the city centre in 2004. This is of course due to the fact that a private owner made the former Human Rights House in Oslo available for free to the NGOs and that the new location is more central. The NGOs share office facilities and some of the equipment, meeting and conference rooms, and the lunchroom. Most organisations express the motivation of being in the house as a combination of moral support for their cause, social contacts at work and access to human rights related information and knowledge. For the organisations in Oslo, therefore, the benefits from a being a member of a Human Rights House is neither security nor cheaper rent. The benefits, thus, are rather the ones mentioned above; sharing common technical support, common seminar rooms and lunchroom, and the informal contact with other people interested in issues similar to those of one's own. In Sarajevo as well, a common seminar room and office resources are shared and costs are significantly reduced for all the NGOs located in the Human Rights House. Thus, cost reduction is one factor important to some of the NGOs in the different Human Rights Houses. However, better physical and moral working conditions for the amount paid to office rent is important to all the NGOs in all the different houses.

Renting or buying a house?

Confronted with the alternative of renting or buying a house to locate all the HR NGOs within the HRH-N, every single person interviewed argues, of course, for the option of buying. To own a location is cheaper and more secure and thus leaves the organisations with better opportunities to work and finance their prime activities.

Yet, it has shown to be very difficult to raise the amount of money necessary for buying a house. Most international donors are reluctant to spend their development aid money buying real estate and prefer instead to support activities, including the administrative costs of those activities. Also NGOs within emerging Human Rights Houses seem to be more interested in trying to get funds for activities rather than real estate.

⁷ Understood as one physical building regrouping the different human rights organisations in order to draw all the benefits of being regrouped (like visibility, easier contacts with clients, informal daily contacts between employees in different human rights NGOs...)

For the NGOs in the emerging Human Rights House in Nairobi, for instance, no-one expresses a willingness to prioritise a common and collectively owned house at the expense of their own running activities. Some of the NGOs in Nairobi argue that it is not their job to fundraise for the common house, others say they will lose their credibility within the donor milieu if they ask for the amount necessary to buy a house in downtown Nairobi. Most NGOs in Nairobi argue that the work of the coordinator and the HRH-F is primarily to lobby for funds from international donors. Thus, funding the house is not seen as a common activity.

In Moscow, the amount necessary to buy a relevant building is considered too heavy for all the related NGOs. The smallest NGOs are not considering the option of working for real estate funds at all, but will support the idea if anyone else takes the lead. Some of the bigger NGOs are interested in buying a house, but express a lack of trust in the possibilities of making it happen. All NGOs in Moscow would, however, welcome funding initiatives from the HRH-F.

This illustrates one of HRH-F's main challenges: how to get funding for new human rights houses. Small NGOs within the network have neither the confidence nor the trust to demand huge sums of money from their regular donors. Most NGOs work on the edge of their subsistence concerning cash flow and are very reluctant to propose huge projects to their regular donors outside of their "normal share". Bigger NGOs within the network are reluctant to use their reputation and their goodwill to the benefit of the wider human rights-based NGO network. They argue that the donors have a basket of money and also a ready-set budget line for them and that they are always already demanding more than what the donors think they should have. Furthermore, the human rights NGOs are always asked by the donors to prioritise between their own projects and common huge projects like buying a house to regroup all the human rights based NGOs. As a matter of survival, such big joint projects will never be prioritised if that means letting go of each organisation's own activities. Thus, for the NGOs in a given emerging Human Rights House, HRH-F and the local contact person / coordinator will have to be the ones in charge and leading the initiatives to find potential donors. These donors will often have to be others than the involved NGOs' regular supporters.

Another problem experienced by many of the NGOs within the HRH network concerns the way international donors work. All donors will only donate money for a project if the project is fully financed. At the same time, no donor has been willing or able to finance a Human Rights House all by itself. Thus, even if e.g. Denmark commits a sum to buy a Human Rights House in a given town in a given year, the amount is not disbursed if the whole cost of the house is not committed by others in that very same year. This means that the total sum to buy or build a HRH has to be committed by the different donors the same year. If not, money donated is likely to be withdrawn. Since HRH-F is a Norwegian NGO, it is experienced by the NGOs within emerging Human Rights Houses that other donors are reluctant to finance parts of the Human Rights House unless the Norwegian Embassy or MFA do not contribute a substantial amount of money. In Nairobi, for example, where the Norwegian Embassy after several years' financial support changed its mind and rejected to carry on funding the development of a Human Rights House from December 2004, no other international donor is ready to go further with the project.

Most NGOs within the network, especially in Moscow and Nairobi, argue that it is the work of the coordinator to lobby for funds for a common house and that their coordinators will have no chance of success if they are not fully backed by the HRH-F. In Moscow, most people interviewed were of the opinion that it is the prime responsibility of the HRH-F to lobby for funds to buy real estate. The NGOs consulted in Nairobi see HRH-F primarily as a fund-finder,

while most NGOs in Baku and Minsk regard HRH-F primarily as an important international contact that may contribute with their own knowledge and competence but also in finding international donors.

Established and well-known NGOs normally have a fixed location, and are known by the public and their users at their present address. For these reasons, they are reluctant to move without having a long-term agreement, preferably in the form of a permanently owned house. When asked directly, a renting option secured for 1-3 years are considered uninteresting by close to all organisations already having an established office within the HRH-N. This is the case both in Moscow and Nairobi.

However, in places where a Human Rights House is established and known to a wider public as the Human Rights House, other human rights NGOs may see it as attractive to move in. This is the case with some human rights based NGOs in Oslo and Sarajevo. In these places, however, space is, for the time being at least, too limited for this to happen.

In countries where human rights activities are, or until recently have been, voluntary engagements carried out by activist or where officials intimidate members of human rights NGOs, a renting option may be of interest. In Azerbaijan and Belarus where this is the case with most of the organisations, it is argued that the renting option is better than nothing and that “nothing” is the alternative since buying a house to locate human rights NGOs is, for the time being, politically impossible. In Kenya, where most NGOs involved in the Human Rights House projects have existed for years and are settled in their own more or less well known locations, an option securing 1-3 years rent is of little interest according to close to all persons interviewed.

Thus, the concept of a Human Rights House does not have all the stated benefits everywhere. Even so, it goes for all the Human Rights Houses visited that some of the benefits are present and that these are considered very important by the members of the different Human Rights Houses.

Problems of financing a house are seen as a major obstacle to both HRH-F and the HRH-N. Only in Sarajevo one major donor, the NMFA together with HRH-F’s own collected funds, financed a whole Human Rights House. Since 1998, when the house in Sarajevo was established, this has never happened again.

During the last five years, it seems that the NMFA has not communicated with a single voice to the HRH-F. Politicians have stated other opinions than personnel at the embassies, as have personnel in the NMFA in Oslo. The NMFA has also spent too long responding to applications for funding from the HRH-F. This has of course created frustration both among the NGOs in the different HRH and the HRH-F.

Security

None of the members of the established Human Rights Houses argue that they have a security problem as human rights defenders in their country. Yet, some of the members of emerging houses seriously phase the problem of security (Baku, Minsk). Human rights defenders in these places risk being harassed by officials and have their equipment confiscated. Sometimes they even risk violent attacks or imprisonment. In these places, being in a common location will increase their security. However, for their security it is of equal importance to establish and maintain connections to an international network of human rights activists including the HRH-F. Through regular contact with the HRH-F, the rest of the network and the NGOs in such places,

have their sense of security reassured. The security issues are by most member organisations identified as a matter of having an international network of contacts and collaborators.

Visibility

For some NGOs, to be visible in the public sphere is considered very important. For others, the less publicity the easier their work to better the human rights situation in their country may continue. For some, the most important thing is to have a central location to be accessible by their (normally poor) clients. Thus, in different countries, there are different needs and also different advantages / disadvantages that stem from being visible and working from a well-known location.

For all human rights NGOs in the network, however, to be visible internationally is considered important. The reasons given for this emphasis, though, vary considerably. For human rights NGOs working in their own country, being part of an international network of human rights organisations is an important way of signalling to their discretionary powers that they are known and have contacts outside of their of country and also enjoy international support. As well as providing their employees with enhanced physical security, this fact, often also brings further financial security to human rights NGOs. For the human rights NGOs working predominantly outside of their own country, international visibility within a network of human rights-based NGOs increases the credibility and effectiveness of their work within the countries where the network is present.

One important activity of the network - either the whole network as is the case at each annual meeting, or parts of the network at specific occasions - is to write letters of concern or protest to relevant authorities when different human rights issues are at stake. Examples during the last few years are letters of protest concerning the human rights situation in Chechnya, Belarus, and Azerbaijan written to the relevant presidents and other official bodies, by the entire network during their annual meetings. Especially by Human Rights House members in Belarus and Azerbaijan, these common letters of protest are considered very important since they are thought to contribute to bring their own, national human rights concerns to an international level.

Moral support and solidarity

One of the most important benefits for organisations being located within a Human Rights House is the feeling of moral support, common understanding and shared interests. To work as human rights defenders can sometimes be rather unrewarding; you may suffer physical threats towards yourself and your family, you may work at low or no income, or in poor working conditions, and so on. Hence, the importance of being located together with people and organisations working in the same area and on similar issues cannot be emphasised enough. All interviewees, without exception, argue that the moral support from others within their Human Rights House and from others within the international network of Human Rights Houses is of primordial importance to the continuation of their work. It is considered important also as a source of encouragement to continue and for their own belief in their own work. Not to feel marginalised and forgotten is possibly even more important for human rights defenders working in small organisations, on little or now salary, doing regime-critical work with an element of personal danger, than it is to others.

Being a human right defender is often a lonely and long-term involvement. Not to feel that one is doing it alone, the feeling that someone else is interested in the problematic may seem as a small benefit, but this evaluation has established beyond any reasonable doubt that this is considered

one of the most important benefits stemming from being located within a human rights house and from being a member of an international network. Moral support can be given at different levels, from sending a new years' greeting with encouragements to keep in weekly contact and be a discussion partner for the NGOs' projects. For human rights defenders working in difficult environments, the moral support is of great importance. Moral support is also one of the major benefits of being within a Human Rights House, especially for the smaller NGOs with few employees.

Recommendations

In places where the human rights environment has recently become active and where organizations are in an early stage of their work, one should consider renting a house instead of buying (Baku, Minsk). Where human rights NGOs have existed for many years and their work is grounded, the benefits of regrouping under the same roof is not considered by the involved organisations' leaders as more important than keeping the individual organisations' current, and separate locations. One should therefore avoid working with a renting option in these locations (Nairobi, and probably Kampala).

When the investigative and pre-project phases are done, HRH-F should prioritise to work with funding for a specific house. Since commitment to fund a Human Rights House has to be placed by all donors within the same year, and 100 % of the budget has to be committed before any disbursements can be made, even more energy, time and people from the HRH-F should be working with international funding. It is important to make maximum use of the momentum during the time when people believe in a project. It is of primordial importance that the NMFA (Oslo and / or Embassy) is supportive of the project. Without their support, both financially and morally (at least by letters of support), HRH-F's chances of success are, judging from the organisation's own experience, very limited. Thus, HRH-F should try to get the consent and commitment from the NMFA before starting to work seriously with establishing a new HRH.

To increase support for human rights and the different NGOs within the HRH-N, HRH-F should make a possibility for both associated Human Rights Houses and independent persons, to send letters of encouragement and support to different organizations. One can for instance imagine that every month, one organization within the network was selected for particular promotion on the website. An easy way of sending letters of support to other members within the network should be available on the web.

Network and Collaboration

Goals of the network of HRH

One important goal of the HRH-F is to make different organizations in different houses collaborate and to increase collaboration between organisations within a given house. In some countries where the HRH-N is present, operational and functioning umbrella organisations regrouping most of the human rights NGOs in the country already exist. This is the case in e.g. Uganda where HURINET-U holds that function with a permanent staff and office. In other places a HR umbrella organisation is a more loosely organised alliance without paid employees and acting more ad hoc when the different NGOs find it useful to make common statements or meetings. This is the case e.g. in Norway. In other countries again, a human rights umbrella organisation does not function due to various difficulties of organisation. This is the case e.g.

with Kenya, where HURINET-K has tried many times to get functional but where disagreements over positions, membership and organisational structure have so far come in the way.

For all Human Right Houses and NGOs associated with the HRH-Network, the HRH-N is only one of multiple other human rights networks, -affiliations and -groups they are connected to or members of. For some NGOs the HRH-N is one of the most important and supportive outside collaborators. This is the case with many of the human rights NGOs connected to the network in Baku and in Minsk.

However, for many NGOs within the HRH-N outside Minsk and Baku, to be associated with the international network of Human Rights Houses has been of modest importance. This is the case for most of the NGOs within the Oslo, London, Warsaw and Bergen Human Rights Houses. Nevertheless, for HRH-F the network is one of the main reasons for their existence. As previously mentioned, the HRH-F has two main goals: 1) to facilitate the establishment of Human Rights Houses and 2) to increase networking between the organisations that are members of the different Human Rights Houses. Hence, the differences in importance of the network are great between different organisations within the same network, ranging from the prime importance of the network for HRH-F to the close to non-existing knowledge about the HRH-N for some of the organizations involved. This, however, should neither surprise nor disappoint anyone. In all networks such differences exist. Most of the members in the different Human Rights Houses in London, Sarajevo, Zagreb, Warsaw and Moscow, wish that the network continue to be a loosely organised network with few duties but with possibilities to gain international contacts, moral support and funding for common projects.

To increase collaboration between NGOs within a given Human Rights House, HRH-F encourages the associated NGOs to make common project proposals and tries to fundraise for these projects, historically most often from the NMFA, but lately also from other international possible donors. To the different NGOs within the HRH-N this possibility of getting common projects funded is seen as an essential part of the HRH-F's contribution to their collaborative efforts. One might argue that the HRH-F should not try to fundraise for common projects within a Human Rights House because part of the rationale in favour of establishing a house is exactly that collaboration is made much easier and that the organisations should, thus, no longer need such outside support. However, HRH-F prioritises projects from newly established houses to support recent initiatives of collaboration to enhance trust and confidence in a given house.

Recommendations

Since collaboration at least in the beginning demands extra efforts, this practice should continue. However, to strengthen the international network, HRH-F should prioritize common projects between different houses to in-house projects. To make it easier for the donor to respond quickly and thus stimulate small-scale projects further, HRH-F should continue to ensure that these projects are kept modest (5.000 - 30. 000 US\$). HRH-F should also continue to follow up by phone-calls and requests for meetings to try to get an answer within a maximum of eight weeks.

Annual meeting

To increase collaboration and contact between the different Human Rights Houses, the network has different means at its disposal, the two major being the annual meeting and the website. To the annual meeting, directors, head of boards, program officers and contact persons are all candidates for an invitation. This makes the annual meeting a special meeting place. While some

of the participants argue that this mix of levels is very stimulating, others, particularly among the directors, find it problematic because the delegates' interests and competence differ too widely. To try to overcome such criticism, the HRH-F has a special theme to be discussed and best practices demonstrated at the annual meetings. This is well received by most delegates. Furthermore, for the last years, the annual meeting has been made to coincide with the Network's annual conference where a politically actualized human rights theme has been explored. Both members of the network and invited external guests have contributed to these conferences.

A key problem with the difference in hierarchical level among the delegates at the annual meeting is the questions this raises about the decisional mandate of the meeting. At the last annual conference, held in Baku in September 2005, the delegates from the different Human Rights Houses represented a very heterogeneous group of people when it comes to function, level and competence. Some were board members of their respective Human Rights Houses, others were project coordinators, administrators, NGO leaders or so-called network contact persons representing the Human Rights House where they work. Under such circumstances, can the annual meeting make decisions on behalf of the network or on behalf of the HRH-F? This needs to be clarified.

What is the role of the annual meeting? If it is to discuss the strategy of the network, it should have decisional power over HRH-F. Is the annual meeting only a consultative body? With the current structure of the HRH-N, the annual meeting has no formal decisional power over the HRH-F or how it works with the HRH-N. Formally, all powers are within the HRH-F's board in Oslo. Yet, morally, HRH-F may feel that it should listen to the annual meeting. Still, to enhance collaboration between different NGOs, the delegates should share the same particular interests within a human rights issue e.g. electoral observation, freedom of speech, legal aid, violence against women, prisoners' rights...

Recommendations

The annual conference of the HRH-N is the main arena for making contacts between different NGOs from different Human Rights Houses. Relevance is enhanced if the people are at the same level and are dealing with practical issues where best practices can be shared, good ideas exchanged and human rights issues discussed. One option is to call the advisory team consisting of Human Rights House leaders to Oslo once or twice a year for the annual meeting and other discussions as was decided at the annual meeting in Baku in September 2005. Then the annual conference could be devoted to a theme chosen by the advisory team. The directors could meet at the advisory team meeting once or twice a year in Oslo to assess, guide and advice on the secretariat's work and priorities. Yet, the board of the HRH-F will continue to be the formal body of power over the HRH-F.

Structure/organization of the network

The secretariat of the HRH-F is located in Oslo. The board of the HRH-F is entirely composed of Norwegians. As long as this continues, the HRH-F will continue to be considered a Norwegian NGO by both donors and human rights activists. Moreover, for as long as an ever-increasing part of the budget of the HRH-F derives from the NMFA, the HRH-F will continue to be regarded outside Norway as a Norwegian initiative close to the Norwegian official foreign policy. This being the situation, at least for the time being, it is of primordial importance to the HRH-F that working relations with the NMFA and the Norwegian embassies in the countries where HRH-F

facilitates the establishment of Human Rights Houses are as good as possible. Based on the successful experience from Sarajevo and unsuccessful experiences from Kampala and Nairobi, both seen as such by NGOs associated with the (emerging) Human Rights Houses and HRH-F, it seems as if official Norwegian support to the establishment of a Human Rights House can actually make the difference. Put differently; when Norway takes the role as lead donor, other like-minded donors are more likely to follow. Conversely; if the Norwegian Embassy does not support the idea of a Human Rights House, HRH-F has never managed to establish a new Human Rights House. E.g. from interviews carried out in Nairobi both with potential donors and human rights NGOs, it is evident that without active support from the Norwegian embassy, no other donor is eager to fund a Human Rights House there.

Recommendations

The HRH-F should continue to ensure that they have the support of both the NMFA and the relevant Norwegian embassy before even engaging in a feasibility study in a new country. The only exception to this should be the cases in which the HRH-F with high probability can manage to fundraise the necessary sum without help from the NMFA and embassy.

Common projects

A few common projects are documented between the different organizations within some of the Human Rights Houses. Cooperation and collaborations are mostly based on ad-hoc and personal contacts. The relevance of working together, even if the number of formal cooperative projects are restrained, are emphasised by everyone interviewed. Most people interviewed stress the significance of relevant international contacts to gain new knowledge, get new ideas and get moral support for their work. All focus on the importance of getting ideas by studying and learning how other NGOs within the network exert on the same issues as oneself.

Every organisation in all countries emphasise that they have already too much work to do. They constantly feel short of time to accomplish their prime work tasks. To elaborate and run common projects are seen as a supplementary duty and will add to the workload of the organisations. In the existing houses, the NGOs focus on the ad hoc contacts, the knowledge of being within a frame of HR organisations and the moral support as most important. Various common projects are elaborated by a few different NGOs within a single house. Some of these projects are run without external financial support while most for the time being, need financial support to be able to engage in common in-house projects. Collaboration demands more work when NGOs are not under the same roof and will largely benefit from financial support from outside.

For the clients of the NGOs it is considered very beneficial to have all the NGOs under one roof. The different NGOs fill different needs for different people and can thus redirect the clients to the right organisation or one can help with a specific problem while the other deals with another issue.

Contact between members of the network

Very few had any contact with other members of the network. Few, except those persons regularly present at annual meetings, could mention any organisations member of a HRH outside their own country. Many expressed an interest in exchanging best practices with similar organisations, or organisations dealing with the same genre of problems as their own. Few

expressed any knowledge of what the HRH-F has as their mandate or what their work actually consists of.

To have any chances of developing a strong international network, personal contacts between members of the different NGOs are essential. To make these contacts possible, the annual meeting is very important. When prime contact is developed, however, the network should facilitate possibilities of working together or learning from each other.

Recommendations

Make contact possible between NGOs or persons working with the same issues by organizing workshops, making funds available for shorter exchanges between the houses, using the network members' competence to train the others. Make available funding for internships or trainee positions. The HRH-F is the only body with competence and knowledge of all NGO members in the network. Hence, the secretariat has to actively promote these exchanges.

www.humanrightshouse.org

Aims and realities

The web site www.humanrightshouse.org was launched in December 2001 by the HRH-F in order to make the work of the different NGOs in the HRH-Network known to the other members of the network and to a larger public. Public statements from the Network and from the different organizations should be published here as well as information on the members' organizations with links to their own website, when existing⁸. Links to relevant human rights issues and organizations ought to be included as well as international news regarding human rights issues⁹. According to the report from HRH-F from 2002 to the NMFA¹⁰, www.humanrightshouse.org should contain links to external human rights bodies, information about the Human Rights House concept, links to all organizations within the network, and information about ongoing activities in the different Human Rights Houses.

To be able to make the web site as planned, HRH-F got funding for the established HRH to employ a coordinator in a part time position. The coordinators were employed by mid-2004 in all existing houses. Later all emerging houses also employed a network coordinator with a main duty to publish on the common web site.

In the beginning all coordinators were supposed to publish at least monthly human rights related news from their country and report on activities from their houses on the web. Yet, the rationale for the website was still to make the Human Rights House visible internationally, be of use in contact with donors, exchange news, best practices and knowledge¹¹. By the end of 2004, the duty of the coordinator or contact person increased to include publishing at least one human rights related news story per week from the country in question. This evaluator is sceptical to the level of resources used on the web and also in the change of content on the web. This scepticism is due to the results presented hereafter.

⁸ In 2001, according to HRH-F, few of the NGOs in existing or emerging Human Rights Houses had their own website. In 2006, more than 75 % of the organisations involved in the HRH-N have their own website.

⁹ "Søknad om støtte til utvikling av det internasjonale MR-hus nettverket" from HRH-F to NMFA (dated 26.06.02)

¹⁰ Dated 15 December 2003.

¹¹ Fax dated 8th of April 2003 to all existing HRH from HRH-F.

News provider

Today, www.humanrightshouse.org has become mainly a news provider of selected human rights related issues from countries where Human Rights Houses are established or emerging. Only a small part, even though increasing, of the news published has any direct link to a member organization. News published on www.humanrightshouse.org is generally taken from other media and re-edited by the HRH-F itself or a national Human Rights House contact person or coordinator to suit the editorial standards that have mostly been set jointly during the four main trainings of the network contact persons that have taken place since 2003. Considering the fact that none of the coordinators are journalists, news published on the www.humanrightshouse.org is generally soundly written, updated and apparently reliable. The training sessions, all conducted by educated and experienced personnel at the HRH-F, can thus be said to have had good impact on the quality of the published articles.

Yet, considerable differences in news coverage from the different countries represented by the different Human Rights Houses remain. News is 100 % dependent on the availability and competence of the contact person. When on leave, sick or performing other duties, news from a given country is not updated. During 2005, four of the eight contact persons quit their job for various reasons. As a result, coaching and educating new contact persons may be resource- and time-demanding for the secretariat. Being a news provider is resource-demanding for the HRH-F and Network. All coordinators and contact persons with 30 % positions report that close to all their time devoted to the HRH-Network is spent on what they do on the website. To update the web site www.humanrightshouse.org mostly with news, HRH-F uses altogether more than three full time positions¹². According to this evaluator, the HRH-F does not have the resources, nor the competence or the mandate to be a prime human rights news provider from the countries where Human Rights Houses are established or emerging. The purpose of the HRH-F is mainly to network between members, get to know the other members of the network, get ideas, hint and best practices from each other, link up relevant human rights documents and inform about upcoming human rights issues in different countries.

NGOs' own websites

To have a web site is considered very important for most of the NGOs within the network. The primary goal of the web for many members of the HRH-Network is to reveal competence, activities, strategy and contact information to potential donors and other interested individuals outside their regular constituencies.

In the established Human Rights Houses, out of a total number of 39 organizations existing, 31 have their own web site in their own language, while eight do not¹³. For the large majority of NGOs thus, to publish on www.humanrightshouse.org will be a supplement to their regular web publishing activities. All organizations state that if they had to prioritize, their own web site will receive their attention at the expense of www.humanrightshouse.org. Few contact persons and coordinators report that the member organizations within their Human Rights House actively provide them with human rights related information to be published on the web. Quite a few members of NGOs within a Human Rights House, especially in Oslo, Nairobi and Sarajevo,

¹² 80% position (50 % + 30 %) in Oslo, 30 % position in Sarajevo, 30 % position in Minsk, 30 % position in Moscow, 30 % position in Zagreb, 15 % position in London,, 30 % position in Nairobi, 30 % position in Kampala and 30 % position in Baku.

¹³ As of March 2006, even a few more NGOs within the HRH-N were in the process of getting their own websites.

argue that they are not eager to publish news on the www.humanrightshouse.org because their articles are re-edited without their consent. One Norwegian NGO even argue that it will not publish on these webpages because the articles are published as stories from the HRH-N's secretariat, and not as stories from a particular member of the HRH-Network. The possibilities to publish member NGOs' own human rights related stories without major changes are by this NGO viewed as limited due to the strict layout imposed by the HRH-F. For HRH-F, however, this is not viewed as restrictions, only as a question of cohesive layout.

Hits from where?

According to HRH-F "[t]he www.humanrightshouse.org is used by schools, universities, NGOs, bureaucracy, and research institutions"¹⁴. It is however, impossible to know exactly who uses the website. Statistics gathered from the site provider suggest that close to 50 % of the hits from October 2003 to January 2005, up to 500 per day, comes from the server connected to the HRH in Oslo¹⁵. Yet, hits are registered coming from very many different places in the world. Within the network, Oslo excluded, the use of the www.humanrightshouse.org is very limited. Only two of the participants at the annual conference in Baku acknowledged to have read any of the webpages of any other member of the network during the last 6 months¹⁶. Interviews with other members of the different Human Rights Houses confirm that very few persons within the network read any news provided by the contact persons of other houses. No one has the www.humanrightshouse.org as their preferred web site for information about the human rights issues in their own country, nor in any other given country they are interested in. Some members of some Human Rights Houses in Nairobi, London and Moscow acknowledge not knowing about the website of the network at all. No one, except the coordinators and contact persons, reads the www.humanrightshouse.org regularly¹⁷. Even though the website obviously is quite well known as it has more than 30.000 hits per months¹⁸, information gathered through the interviews suggests that the web serves others than the members of the network.

If being a HR news provider on the web is the main duty of the network, HRH-F may choose to continue to use their resources as today. However, this evaluator suggest that the project coordinator in Oslo should publish human rights news stories translated or adapted from the associated organizations' own websites with a link to the full and original stories.

As one example, the Russian website www.hro.org, run by one of the latest arrivals at the Human Rights House in Moscow, covers the human rights situation in Russia in an exemplary way and is used at least weekly by close to all human rights NGOs within the Human Rights House in Moscow.¹⁹ Information here is in Russian only and is used also for Russian speakers outside

¹⁴ Søknad om tilskudd fra UD til informasjonstiltak på internett om europeisk samarbeid" dated 28th of January 2002 and repeated since.

¹⁵ See statistics provided by the webmaster of www.humanrightshouse.org, provided by Intenor web solutions on January 9, 2006.

¹⁶ Yet, everyone reported to have access to Internet and to use it close to daily in their activities.

¹⁷ Understood as at least one full story read every second week.

¹⁸ Statistics from Intenor Websolutions (the webmaster of www.humanrightshouse.org) accessed on 9th of January 2006 and based on average hits per months during the last six months. The number of daily hits is still increasing. By June, this number had risen to more than 90.000 hits.

¹⁹ Most organisations in the different HRH, both established and emerging, have their own web sites. Most of them are regularly updated. For Kenya see e.g. www.khrc.or.ke, (the site of Kenya Human Rights Commission), for Belarus see e.g. <http://www.spring96.org/en> (the site for Viasna), for Polen see e.g. <http://www.hfhrpol.waw.pl/en/index.html> (the site of the Helsinki foundation in Poland).

Russia. Human rights related information from this page could be translated by the HRH-F and published on the www.humanrightshouse.org with reference to their original website.

Most of the contact persons provide decent HR related news but very few are good at producing information from the members of HRH. E.g both Kampala and Nairobi are active and quite fine news producers, nevertheless Kampala have no presentations of any member organisation of the network on the web while Nairobi only presents three out of seven²⁰. This despite both having been “emerging houses” for three and eight years respectively, while the common website has existed for more than four years.

Visibility of the network and ability to make contacts

Only the Rafto House of Human Rights has any visible sign on their web site telling people that they are part of the HRH-N. None of the other organizations has any visible sign of being part of the HRH-N. Very few of the NGOs members of the HRH-Network have any links to the network or logo of the network on their own web sites.

Many NGOs use the web mostly in contact with donors and international audience and not for their prime clients or users. Checking out the restricted space on the www.humanrightshouse.org deliberately accorded to the network coordinators and contact persons tips, hints, suggestions, comments, discussions there has been no activities during the last six months²¹. This was supposed to be one of the major functions of the common website. Basic contact information is lacking or not updated for very many of the NGOs within the network. This information is essential to get easily in touch for members of other houses, or for interested individuals or potential donors²². Many within the network report that they miss possibilities of interaction and involvement within the site.

Recommendations

Stop being a general human rights news provider from the countries where Human Rights Houses are established or emerging. Increase the visibility of the network and make it better known to both the general human rights interested public and potential donors, the Human Rights House logo should be available at every website of NGOs associated with the network, with a link to www.humanrightshouse.org. Keep the HRH-N website extremely basic with information and links to the member organisations’ own web pages.

The website could be used as a way of involving yourself, NGOs associated with the network could post appeals or statements that could be e-mailed or posted to relevant bodies. Human rights quiz, human rights education, human rights courses and other things could be posted on the web. This could be the job of the contact persons in the different houses.

Make a possibility for all those hitting the www.humanrightshouse.org to promote human rights. Create a “take action” page that leads those visiting the site to the different member organisations. Provide the visitors with a menu of options, including protest letters, letters of recommendation, letters of moral support, letters to newspapers, press releases, letters to remember someone, a human rights defender, to the family of threatened human right defenders.

²⁰ As of February 2006.

²¹ As of January 2006.

²² The Moscow HRH being a very positive exception here.

Where security situations permit, employees within the different organizations should have photo with phone, e-mail and main competence to facilitate contact between the associates of the network.

Make a list of main competences within each and every NGO; (e.g human rights education, prisoners' rights, soldiers' rights, electoral observation, freedom of speech, international advocacy, conflict resolution, legal aid). This will make it easier for people to get in touch with others having the same or complimentary competence to themselves. See some of the NGOs from the Moscow house as excellent examples (e.g. Right of the Child, Human Rights Network Group, Mother's Right Foundation).

Establishment of a Human Rights House

Since its creation in 1992, the main goal of the HRH-F has been to establish new Human Rights Houses worldwide. “Establishing new Human Rights Houses will also in the future be first priority for the HRH-F”²³. “HRH-F has 14 years’ experience with establishing Human Rights houses in newly emerged democracies”²⁴.

Strategy for establishing a new HRH

Decisions on where to get involved in processes to determine whether or not to go ahead with an actual attempt to establish a Human Rights House, are made on the basis of own (HRH-F) assessments, demands from human rights organisations in a country, international organisations, demands from politicians in Norway or any combination of these²⁵. If the HRH-F is asked by local human rights NGOs to assess the possibilities of establishing a Human Rights House and receives funding for a feasibility study from a donor, HRH-F is normally ready to accomplish the first phase. Yet, due to the fact that HRH-F has not successfully facilitated the opening of any new Human Rights Houses since the one in Sarajevo in 1998, it is imperative to look into the difficulties and constraints encountered when establishing a new house.

Geography

The HRH-F is, according to their website accessed in January 2006, engaged in establishing new Human Rights Houses on three different continents and eight different countries (Azerbaijan, Albania, Colombia, Croatia, Kenya, Turkey and Uganda). Considering that the secretariat consists of five persons, this seems very ambitious. The board of the HRH-F has been doubtful about these ambitions. On multiple occasions the board of the HRH-F has encouraged the secretariat to review its engagements in East Africa²⁶, to be careful about engaging in new pre-assessment studies of new Human Rights Houses and to make geographical priorities²⁷. However, the secretariat has always secured the board’s formal support before engaging in any phase of establishing a new Human Rights House. The NMFA also seems to be hesitant when receiving demands for funding of HRH-F engagements in very disparate countries. Furthermore, HRH-F has itself used the limited possibilities for networking to argue in favour of geographical concentration²⁸. Suggestions from network members in already established HRH argue that collaboration, co-operation and exchanges are easier within a limited geographical area. Most

²³ ”Søknad om støtte til drift og videreutvikling av det internasjonale nettverket av menneskerettighetshus” from HRH-F to NMFA dated 17 December 2003.

²⁴ ”Søknad om støtte til forundersøkelse i Aserbadjan,” dated 15 December 2003.

²⁵ “Søknad om støtte til drift og videreutvikling av det internasjonale nettverket av menneskerettighetshus,” dated 17 December 2003.

²⁶ See e.g. board meeting HRH-F 10 March 2003.

²⁷ See e.g. board meeting HRH-F 15 December 2004.

²⁸ E.g. in the application from the HRH-F to the NMFA for funding the pre-assessment phase for establishing a HRH in Uganda (dated 02.09.2002), HRH-F argues that they considered three alternatives for their African intervention a) stronger emphasis in Kenya, b) regional HRH in West and southern Africa to support and collaborate with the one to be established in Nairobi (East Africa) and c) another HRH in East Africa for regional focus. Option b) was left out due to “geographical distance, cultural and language differences” together with higher competence on East Africa at the HRH-F. HRH-F argued that these issues would make networking more demanding both for Oslo and Nairobi.

also suggest that the organisations have more to learn from neighbouring countries speaking the same languages and facing the same genre of HR related problems as themselves. Already existing collaborations between different NGOs in different Human Rights Houses show a clear tendency to establish contacts that are both geographically and culturally close to oneself²⁹. Networking is expensive. The further the distance, the more expensive will be to meet. Different languages will need translations and thus be costly and limit the possibilities of ad-hoc collaboration.

Recommendation

HRH-F should emphasise one geographical area at a time when trying to establish new Human Rights Houses. For the time being this region should be Eastern Europe including the former USSR countries. Here, initiatives are strong, needs evident and support from potential donors, including the NMFA, apparently positive. Furthermore, among its staff, HRH-F has valuable human capital concerning these countries.

By abandoning Istanbul, Bogota, Kampala and Nairobi, the HRH-F will save substantial human energy and time. These resources can be used to enforce the networking activities of the remaining Human Rights Houses and to focus more energy on facilitating funding for the emerging houses. HRH-F should not start any new pre-assessments before the emerging houses in Zagreb, Baku and Minsk are established.

Funding

According to all NGOs within the emerging houses, funding is the most difficult part of the establishment process. Fundraising is stated to be an important part of the work for HRH-F³⁰. Participants at the annual meeting in Baku were asked what the secretariat in Oslo was doing for them. All mentioned that they worked with funding the annual meeting. "Funding other human rights houses" was also among the most frequent answers. Most NGOs within the emerging HRH express frustration over the lack of progress to fundraise for their house. HRH prime objective for 2004 was to establish HRH in Zagreb and Nairobi and continue the process of establishment in Minsk, Baku, London, Istanbul and Kampala. Yet, in January 2006, only the London House has been established, apparently without much effort from the HRH-F³¹. Yet, as previously mentioned, no houses have been established since 1998. In Zagreb, the major obstacle is a legal document of the building. In Minsk, the major obstacle is the dictatorial politics of the regime in Belarus. In Nairobi, the major obstacle is the lack of funding and the fatigue of the NGOs associated with the Human Rights House project.

For these reasons, the HRH-F is under pressure from their back donors. The NMFA seems a bit sceptical towards the HRH-F due to the relatively high percentage taken up by salaries and administration costs in its projects³². In general terms, the Norwegian National Audit Office also questions the use of development aid money used in Norway to pay Norwegian salaries.

²⁹ Collaborations between HRH based NGOs in Moscow and Warsaw exists as well as willingness to collaborate between Minsk and Baku and Moscow.

³⁰ See e.g. "Søknad om støtte til utvikling av det internasjonale MR-hus-nettverket" dated 26 June 2002 from HRH-F to NMFA.

³¹ "Søknad om støtte til drift og videreutvikling av det internasjonale nettverket av menneskerettighetshus" from HRH-F to NMFA dated 17 December 2003.

³² Various examples in letters from MFA to HRH-F dated in 2003-2005.

However, the Norwegian Parliament supports the idea of establishing Human Rights Houses internationally and recommends both an increase in the financial support of HRH-F and further collaboration between the ministry and HRH-F³³. Prior to having the footnotes in which this recommendation is expressed worked into the national budgets, HRH-F has had meetings with members of the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs within the Norwegian Parliament. These meetings, and the budgetary footnotes they have resulted in, have proven important for the NMFA's funding of HRH-F.

Who is supposed to fundraise?

While all NGOs within the network see HRH-F's main task as to provide funding for their houses or their common projects, only the executive director at the HRH-F sees it as her main task to be a fundraiser. Yet, all other employees at the HRH-F acknowledge that some of their work is to initiate and follow up dialogue with potential donors, but no-one regards this as their highest priority. In the Manual, it is stated that the HRH-F does not fund new Human Rights Houses. Yet, funding is still mentioned as an important activity accomplished by the HRH-F:

“[W]e have been active in fund-raising in all former established Human Rights Houses, in co-operation with the local partners. In addition, the Human Rights House Foundation may provide advice, consultancy and project co-ordination, if so desired by the participants. We may also be partners and assist in fundraising in other projects carried out by the new Human Rights House and their member organisations.” (Manual 2004: 28).

Many of the organisations within the different houses and emerging houses, clearly states that the main interest in the network for them consists of the funding of a house or the of funding of common projects. Funding is thus seen as essential, both from the point of view of emerging houses and from existing houses.

Nairobi as a case

I will here use the Nairobi case to point to some general problems in the funding process³⁴. In Nairobi, there is not a common understanding among the associated NGOs about the fundraising process. The HRH-F is said to be a facilitator in the establishment process. Yet, funding is the major problem. After a long period of active but not satisfactory fundraising due to problems discussed elsewhere in this report, HRH-F has not developed a new funding strategy for Nairobi. A funding strategy is not developed by the human rights NGOs connected to the emerging Human Rights House in Nairobi either. Through its embassy and NMFA in Oslo, Norway officially withdrew from the project in December 2004. One of the conditions emphasised by the feasibility study for the Human Rights House in Nairobi was that “it is necessary with a stronger involvement on the part of the Norwegian Embassy”³⁵. The feasibility study has proven to be totally rights on this point. When the Norwegian Embassy became reluctant to support the project, other donors became sceptical about the quality of the project since the lead donor was said to “left her baby”.

³³ See the National Budget 2003 and 2006.

³⁴ This case is based on the situation in Nairobi early 2006. Apparently, the situation was different a few years ago. HRH-F states that in 2003, half of the sum necessary to build a new Human Rights House downtown Nairobi was committed by different donors. Thus, one may claim that this example is unfair but the evaluator nevertheless see it as a valuable case to point at some problems that arises if the process of establishing a Human Rights House prolongs over many years.

³⁵ Baard-Anders Andreassen and Magnar Naustdalid: Feasibility study from Kenya, 1998.

Many of the Kenyan NGOs are very frustrated about having been an “emerging” Human Rights House for eight years. As one of the leaders in the emerging Human Rights House in Nairobi claims: “You Norwegians were the ones to launch the idea of a Human Rights House in Nairobi. So you have a moral responsibility to take the lead!” In Nairobi, no one sees any Human Rights House emerging. Another representative also uses the allegory of a mother and a child to explain the relationship between the HRH-F and the emerging house in Nairobi: “Don’t make a new child if you are not able to raise the ones you already have!”. Without the Norwegian Embassy as lead donor and facilitator for like-minded donors in Nairobi, the Kenyan NGOs do not see a potential for obtaining funds for the house. All associated NGOs are themselves searching for funds to their own projects and are, as previously mentioned, very reluctant to even mention the idea of the Human Rights House to their donors³⁶.

HRH-F seeks to promote the smaller and medium sized human rights NGOs into emerging Human Rights Houses. At the same time, the HRH-F rely on them to be the fundraisers for the Human Rights Houses they jointly try to establish. In this context, the problem arises that small NGOs rarely have the ability to collect the amount of money needed. Likewise, they rarely have the capacity to work on budgets of the size needed to buy a relatively big physical building. The smaller NGOs interviewed mention that the sum of money needed to build or buy the house is extraordinarily high compared to their regular demands. Therefore, they will feel ridiculous in front of potential donors if they mention the sum of money needed. The bigger NGOs, on the other hand, argue that if they are to fundraise that amount of money they will ensure that their organisation gain control over the Human Rights House. Since this is not the case, the associated members of the emerging Human Rights House in Nairobi leave the problems of funding to their coordinator. Yet, the coordinator does not represent any legal, registered institution and lacks leverage within the donor community. This is amplified by the fact that the Human Rights House project is not visible or known in town, and since the Executive Directors of the associated organisations do not prioritise the project of establishing a Human Rights House themselves.

In addition to these problems, the way official state donors are able to budget their official development assistance (ODA) and use their money poses a serious constraint. Donors’ development aid money are budgeted for one year at a time. If the amount budgeted and committed is not disbursed by the end of the year, the money is transferred to the donors’ state budget again. It often proves difficult, therefore, to put money that has been donated from one year’s budget aside for use the next year or the one after that. Official state donors are neither willing nor able to disburse money to a project that is not 100 % financed. Thus, even when the Human Rights House in Nairobi at one point had donor commitments for more than 50 % of the costs of the house, these funds were never disbursed because the remaining amount was not covered. As time went by, one commitment after the other was withdrawn and work to fund the house had to start all over again.

The problems described here are far from unique to HRH-F’s attempt to establish a Human Rights House in Nairobi. On the contrary, this funding policy applies to all ODA. This indicates that full attention and concentrated follow-up of an emerging house has to be taken care of with maximum intensity for about 1½ years to make all donors commit themselves within the same year and with sufficient money.

³⁶ The funds needed for the Nairobi Human Rights House equals more than the total annual budget of the biggest NGO associated with the emerging house.

Recommendations

The whole team at the HRH-F should work closely together with the NGOs in the emerging Human Rights House, on fundraising the emerging house the same year starting at least eight months prior to the fiscal year HRH-F wants the funds disbursed.

HRH-F should work more and harder to convince donors other than the NMFA, both multilateral donors, other governments and private institutions and businesses. However, the NMFA should always support the establishment of a Human Rights House at least morally but preferably also as lead donor. HRH-F must be able to rely upon this support, not only within the NMFA, but also at the embassies in question.

Appraisals and feasibility studies

“Our experience shows that it takes from two to three years from the first contact about a Human Rights House to the functioning of a Human Rights House.³⁷” Following requests and recommendations from the NMFA in the late 90s, HRH-F has divided the work of establishing a Human Rights House into three phases. The first is what is called the exploratory phase where a feasibility study is the central part³⁸. If the feasibility study is positive, the next phase, the pre-project phase, involves further planning, organising and, most importantly, the actual fundraising³⁹. Finally, the implementation phase is the last stage before opening the new Human Rights House⁴⁰. The HRH-F’s role is to facilitate progress in all these three phases. By the HRH-F this is understood as

“We can inform interested human rights organizations about the idea and concept of Human Rights Houses, introduce the project to potential donors, facilitate communication between the participants, and provide advice and consultancy whenever needed. When the House has been established we will pull out, and the ownership and management of the House will be with the local partners.” (Manual 2004:15).

By most of the NGOs in the emerging Human Rights House in Nairobi, the understanding is that the HRH-F first and foremost is an international fundraiser. In Baku and Minsk it is different as most organisations there, as previously mentioned, value HRH-F mostly as an important international contact and provider of opportunities to make the human rights situation in their countries known to the outside world.

To be a good facilitator in all the three phases described demands massive competence. At a very minimum, the project manager in the HRH-F must master the language spoken locally. In-depth knowledge about politics and political culture in the given country is also necessary to be able to make a decent feasibility study. Personal skills and ability to meet and discuss structure, organisation and funding with different human rights NGOs and potential donors are also necessary. All these qualifications demand a lot of time and intellectual capacity. Probably one single person at the HRH-F may only be able to follow up Human Rights Houses in 2-3 countries. If this includes an establishment process of an emerging Human Rights House, the number of Human Rights Houses to follow up should be even more restrained.

³⁷ From letter from HRH-F to the NMFA titled “støtte om forundersøkelse til Uganda”. Dated Oslo, 02.09.2002.

³⁸ See the Manual 2004: 15-18 for further details.

³⁹ See the Manual 2004: 18-25 for further details.

⁴⁰ See the Manual 2004: 25-26 for further details.

At the time of the undertaking of this evaluation, human resources at the HRH-F are impressive. For all employees, experience, education and commitment to human rights issues are remarkable. However, there is a need to concentrate their efforts. In addition to fundraise for emerging Human Rights Houses and projects proposed by one of the Human Rights Houses in the network, the value added by the work of the HRH-F consists for the networking NGOs of the ability of the HRH-F to support their work morally and let their work and the human rights issues in their countries become known internationally. To do this in a decent way requires direct contact with the relevant actors, if not always daily, then at least weekly. To be a valuable partner for the human rights NGOs within the network it is of primordial importance that the employees at the HRH-F possess up to date and relevant information about politics and human rights situation in the given country. It also (sometimes) requires time to make this information known to a larger public. Thus, there is a need for a small organisation like the HRH-F to concentrate its efforts in few countries and few and preferably connected, regions. To do this, HRH-F has to abandon some of the emerging Human Rights Houses that have been emerging for many years without seeing significant progress. This is the case with Nairobi and Kampala.

The manual

In Nairobi and Minsk, two places where Human Rights Houses are emerging, only a very few leaders of the member NGOs have actually seen and even fewer read, the manual on how to establish a Human Rights House. Thus, the evaluator is not fully able to answer the ToR question 13. According to HRH-F however, the manual was used extensively during the initial phase of the establishment of the Human Rights Houses in these places. To explain why few had ever seen the manual, one answer is that some of the leaders have changed positions / jobs. Another explanation is that the relevance of the manual decreases as the projects run closer to realisation, and thus that its distribution and use is more important in the beginning of the discussions among possible partners in a Human Rights House.

However, HRH-F has used a significant amount of resources to develop the manual, to update it and to translate it into different language (Azeri, Russian, Turkish and Spanish in addition to the English version). Even so, much of the information contained in the Manual is neither fully known nor understood by different leaders of member NGOs of emerging houses. Information in the Manual is essential to fully understand both the concept of a Human Rights House and the contribution that interested human rights NGOs could expect from the HRH-F. In places where the manual is not longer known by the people in charge of the emerging Human Rights House, misunderstandings and different expectations of what HRH-F actually can contribute have emerged. HRH-F should therefore assure that the content of the manual is discussed with all new leaders of the expected member organisations in emerging houses.

Recommendations

Make a project plan when starting to work on a new Human Rights House and set the overall time limit for the house to be finished to three years from the initial contacts. Set time frames also for the different phases of the establishment project, once again with a maximum of three years from the when initial contacts are made to the Human Rights House is up and running. Abandon emerging Human Rights Houses if the time frame is not met.

Work on few houses at the time, but with full capacity and strength towards funding.

To be taken seriously both by the NGOs in question and by potential donors and to respect the capacity of the employees at the HRH-F, it is primordial to work with only a limited number of emerging Human Rights Houses, with clear deadlines and project goals that are to be followed.

On the basis of the above, reduce the number of emerging houses to 2-3.

Make the Manual better known to the NGOs in emerging houses. Discuss with them whether or not the Manual is useful and if it should be updated and translated into different languages.

The Human Rights House Foundation (the secretariat)

To recapture, the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F) was established in 1992. The mandate of the Foundation is to assist the establishment of new Human Rights Houses and to strengthen the collaboration between human rights organisations in the different emerging and existing Human Rights Houses. The HRH-F is the secretariat of the Human Rights House Network. The HRH-F's mandate is thus also to be a financial facilitator and midwife for other human rights NGOs' projects. The HRH-F is located at the Norwegian Human Rights House in Oslo.

Visibility

Visibility of the HRH-F in Norwegian media is stated as a prime objective for the board and for the secretariat. This is seen in relation to the annual meeting in Baku in September 2005 which recommended the HRH-F to do more international advocacy work for Human Rights issues and more specifically for Human Rights Defenders. HRH-F personnel have been used as experts on different human rights situations in a selected number of cases, both on TV, radio and newspapers. This goal, however, is somewhat problematic.

First, because being an expert demands in-depth knowledge and close monitoring of the political situation in a given country. This demands time and competence. No employees will be able to serve as expert on more than 2-3 countries. Project managers at the HRH-F complain that there is too little time to gain deeper knowledge and develop analytical capacities during office hours. HRH-F has emerging Human Rights Houses in many parts of the world to follow up. The employees' time and sometimes competence to dig into further detail and get to know the political culture, follow the political situation and particularly the human rights situation in a given country is limited.

The second reason why the ambition to be visible in Norwegian media is somewhat problematic is that one other NGO in the Oslo Human Rights House experiences HRH-F as a competitor rather than a collaborator and facilitator. (For the non-Norwegian members of the network, this is not perceived as a problem. At the annual meeting in Baku in September 2005, HRH-F was recommended to do advocacy for Human Rights and specially Human Rights Defenders internationally). Yet, if HRH-F will change their mandate to also include advocacy for human rights issues on their own behalf and in their own name in Norway, this represents a rather important change in mandate and should be discussed openly within the Norwegian members of the network.

The third and final reason why it may be problematic for HRH-F to encourage its own visibility is connected to HRH-F mandate and function. The foundation's mandate is to open up new Human Rights Houses and facilitate networking between the NGOs associated with the houses. To do a good job, HRH-F will have to prove that it manages to help HRH to be established in different parts of the world and to prove that they facilitate networking between the different members of the different Human Rights Houses. The most important place for the HRH-F to be visible is thus for its members and back-donors. The NGOs within the network are those who are to fight directly for Human Rights and HR defenders. HRH-F is a midwife and facilitator for the HR NGOs associated in the network.

For the HR NGO associated with the network outside Norway, this is not regarded as a problem. However, for a one NGO within the Oslo HRH the visibility aspect of HRH-F is perceived as directly competitive to their own work. The Oslo-HRH internal discussion about the logo for the networks houses and the logo of the HRH-F has been delicate and difficult. One reason for this seems to be the wish of the HRH-F to be more visible in Norway.

To the evaluator the wish of HRH-F to be visible within the public sphere in Norway needs to be reconsidered. If not, the board will have to revise the mandate of the HRH-F.

Names and logos

In Oslo, very many different bodies and organisations have names and logos that are easy to misunderstand if not used very rigidly. The Oslo Human Rights House is itself an association using the same logo as the other Human Rights Houses. HRH-F is the secretariat of the Human Rights House Network and is an NGO within the Oslo Human Rights House⁴¹. On the web site www.humanrightshouse.org and in different annual reports, the Human Rights House Foundation (HRH-F) in Oslo is sometimes called HRH, sometimes HRH-F, sometimes the HRH network. Since there are many similar names and logos it is of primordial importance to use them accurately.

Many of the NGOs within the Oslo Human Rights House it is not clear whether the HRH-F is to be considered only as one among all the other NGOs that are members of the Oslo Human Rights House or whether the HRH-F also has special duties towards the collaboration and common initiatives within the Oslo Human Rights House. Some argue that the mandate of the HRH-F is to be the secretary of the HRH-Network and facilitate collaboration and cooperation between the NGOs associated to the network. This should include the NGOs in Oslo as well as in the other HRH. Others see the HRH-F as a regular NGO associated with the Oslo Human Rights House without any special responsibility to facilitate collaboration or servicing common projects. They see the mandate of the HRH-F to be exclusively collaborations with non-Norwegian actors.

Recommendations

The mandate of the HRH-F is to facilitate establishment of new Human Rights Houses and contribute to the networking between NGOs within the network. The HRH-F is not necessary supposed to run the daily administrative functions of the HRH in Oslo. However, networking being between their members being their prime mandate, HRH-F should take a special responsibility for common activities also within the Oslo HRH. For the time being, this is done by running the web, arranging seminars, writing protest letters where HR issues are at stake.... These initiatives should be emphasised and strengthened.

Since there are only minor differences between some of the denominations of different human rights bodies in Norway, it is very important that the HRH-F is explicit and concise when speaking and writing about itself. The Secretariat should be called the HRH-F, not to be confused with HRH, which is the denomination of any Human Rights House within the network, or the Oslo Human Rights House or the Foundation of the Oslo Human Rights House.

Leave out the newly established goal to be visible in Norwegian media and public debate.

⁴¹ It is to be called Human Rights House Foundation also in Norway, not to be confused with the entire Human Rights House – Oslo This was formally agreed upon by the board of the Foundation on June 14th 2004.

Focus on being a facilitator and a midwife for the other HR NGOs collaborative efforts and emerging HRH.

The Secretariat's functions

Despite the fact that very few representatives of NGOs within the network know what the Secretariat in Oslo has as its mandate, and do not know what the daily tasks there are, there seems to be very different views on the secretariat. Some representatives report to have weekly personal contact with the people at the Secretariat, either by phone or e-mail, while others say they rarely receive or give any information except the necessary reporting and irregular visit from the Secretariat. Many representatives suggest that regular contact, especially by phone but also by e-mail, is crucial "to feel in the same family".

Yet, the Human Rights House in Warsaw argues that the quite loose form of cooperation within the network of human rights houses fully suits them. It is not necessarily so that all participants within the network should have the same goals or level of engagement for the network. The flexibility of the network is one of its strengths. The Secretariat has also served as organizer of human rights defenders' visits to Norway and, among other things, facilitated their contacts with Norwegian media. In addition to this, the Secretariat helps Norwegian journalists to find experts on issues where they do not have the competence themselves.

In most reports,⁴² a major argument for the establishment of a Human Rights House is that human rights are under pressure in a given country. Yet, the last Human Rights House to be included in the network was the London Open Word network. Northern Human Rights House motivations for joining the network are to get contacts with human rights defenders in other countries, to learn from others experiences and to give moral support to human rights defenders in other countries. These are also the reasons given by human rights organisations in harsher regimes. However, the possibilities for funding are then added as an important motivation for joining the network.

Recommendations

These recommendations have all been launched during the interviews with different members of the various Human Rights Houses. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented.⁴³

-Use member NGOs of the different Human Rights Houses to enhance competence within a single Human Rights House by arranging even more internal seminars and workshops. Themes of common interests include central human rights issues, new regulations, laws and international initiatives concerning human rights regulations. But it also includes best practices from the different organisations. Such sharing of best practices will increase the sense of common identity within the house and can be used as a role model; one member organisation with an instructive best practice can be chosen from each house to present its case at the annual meeting.

⁴² Feasibility study reports, fact finding mission reports, and pre-assessment reports.

⁴³ This evaluation started up in the beginning of September 2005 and the final version of the text was handed in November 2006. Since September 2005, some of the recommendations are implemented or have been tried implemented without success due to formal constraints or other issues outside the HRH-F control. Therefore some of the recommendations may have little relevance by end 2006.

- Increase visibility by producing common products (pens, mouse mat, paper, envelopes, etc. with all the organisations' logos + HRH-F).
- Be even more active in encouraging the other organisations within the HRH-N to support protest letters or press releases made by single NGOs
- Produce a "What is a human rights house" leaflet to explain to visitors and new employees⁴⁴
- Small organisations with special country focus can use a common theme to create interest from different organisations and people. A person that can assist in different fact-finding operations for any of the organisations within the network for limited periods of time.
- The different Human Rights Houses should get hold of an accredited press card that could be used by different organisations in the house to get impasse in important debates.
- External seminars should be collectively arranged to raise public awareness of different human rights issues, but also to be known in the public and thus get legitimacy within the official circles of decision makers. Many of the organisations feel that the other organisations at a Human Rights House are not aware of or interested in the work they are doing.
- Arrange internal seminars, lunch breaks focusing on a specific organisation or project information from a single NGO within the Human Rights House will contribute to solve this problem. Use the competence of the other organisations in the house to educate the different NGOs internally; (e.g. one organisation specialising in conflict resolution and reconciliation can hold a session on that to the others; one being good at teaching about your own rights if suddenly arrested should teach others that one working with freedom of expression should be able to give a seminar on topics related to that.)
- Mark special human rights days like United Nations day, United Nations international day against torture, International day against slavery, by arranging common seminars or launch common press releases.
- Make funding available for Internships from different organisations within the network; exchange of personnel for a concrete job or a concrete project, exchange just to see how other houses and organisations function, to get and give best practises or good ideas how to work, to get moral support. Short term (1-2 weeks) should be made possible by HRH-F. Long term (6-12 months) exchanges could be made possible by HRH-F through Fredskorspet.
- Arrange additional common seminars to the general, interested public.
- Make common press releases on actual human rights issues or abuses for the different houses.
- Create better and easier possibilities for the HRH-N NGOs to support actions or campaigns driven by any other NGO within the network.

⁴⁴ This is done by the HRH-F. However, very few of the member NGOs dispose of any such leaflet.

Appendix 1 Terms of References (ToR)

1 How / to what extent does your Human Rights House work in accordance with / reach the added value targets / ambitions set by the HRH Network and described in HRH's folder, manual on how to establish a House and elsewhere?

2 From the point of view of your own organisation, what advantages and disadvantages are there of being part of a Human Rights House?

3 How does the cooperation between the different organisations in the House work? Is there a further potential for cooperation? If so; why, how, in what areas and to what effect?

4 In terms of how your organisation reach out and cooperate with individuals and organisations outside your Human Rights House, has the establishment of such a House worked to make such contacts easier to get and maintain or not? Regarding your contact with partners outside the House, what positive and / or negative effects have your organisation experienced from becoming a member of a Human Rights House?

5 Who are your most important coalition and cooperation partners, locally, nationally and internationally? Has your membership of a Human Rights House had any effect on who these partners are?

6 What kind of contact and cooperation do your organisation and your House have with the other organisations and Houses within the HRH Network?

7 In your opinion, what is unique about the Human Rights House Network? What is this Network's potential?

8 What is it that your organisation can contribute to the HRH Network? How can your Human Rights House play a part in further consolidating and strengthening the Network?

9 What do you get from the Network's Secretariat in Oslo? What is the role of this Secretariat? In your opinion, is this role different from what it ought to be? If so, what is it that you expect the Secretariat to do or to provide you with that you don't get? How can this be amended?

10 What are the roles, the effects and the potential of HRH's annual Network meeting?

11 From the point of view of your House, is there a need for a Network Coordinator? What are the tasks and what is the added value - if any - of having a Network Coordinator? If you think the potential of the Network Coordinator's position is insufficiently developed, defined and utilised; can you describe how you think this can be improved?

12 Some of the emerging Human Rights Houses have combined the positions of Network Coordinator with a more general position of Coordinator for the Interim Board of organisations involved in the establishment process. Is there a need for such IB coordinators? What is your understanding, impression and assessment of the IB coordinator's mandate? Does the combination of functions work? Do you see any room for improvement of the IB coordinator's role?

13 Give us your assessment of the information produced by HRH; the folder, the manual, the annual report, the website and its electronic newsletters. How can this portfolio be improved? What other information material might HRH need?

14 Considering the organisational structure of the HRH Network; do you think it serves to optimise the causes and ambitions of the Network? If not, how can the structure be altered or improved to achieve this? Is there a wish / a need for increased participation in decision making processes?

Added by NMFA

15) What are the added values of a Human Rights House?

16) What are the added values from the HRH in Oslo towards the other houses and organizations?

Appendix 2 Time table for the evaluation

6-11. September – HRHN annual meeting, Baku, Azerbaijan.

Oct, Nov Dec, 2005; part time document studies and interviews in Norway.

January, February 2006. Visits to Minsk (4 days) and Moscow (4 days) March visit to Nairobi (4 days)

March 2006 Hand in of first draft of the report

April 2006 Hand in of additional background material for the four HRH visited

June 2006 Comments on the first draft from HRH-F

August 2006 Hand in of second draft of the report

November 2006 Hand in of final report

Appendix 3 Documents consulted

Minutes from the boards meeting of HRHF (all in 2001,2002,2003,2004,2005) Web pages of www.humanrightshouse.org (at least weekly from June 2005 – March 2006) “Søknad om støtte til drift og videreutvikling av det internasjonale nettverket av menneskerettighetshus” dated 17.12.2003

”Human Rights House Project – Nairobi – implementation progress report June - December 2004, dated January 2005.

Narrative report on the work of the polish network coordinator in the period January – April 2004.

Narrative report on the work of the polish network coordinator in the period may- December 2004.

Narrative report from HRH- Minsk June- December 2004

Report from the London Human Rights House, November 2004-January 2005.

Progress report on the utilization of the grant of the HRH of Sarajevo dated January 14th 2005

Narrative report for the emerging HRH in Baku, dated 03.02.05

Annual report 2004 the Norwegian Human Rights house foundation support project HRH network coordinator” from Russian Research Centre for human rights

Narrative report form the emerging HRH in Zagreb, dated February 2005

“Forundersøkelse av mr hus i Aserbadjan”, Desember 2003

Establishing a Human Right House in Azerbadjan. Feasability study” undated

“Intern report fra prosjektreise til aserbadjan July 2003.

Activits under attack” 2004

various documents related to funding, program and reports 2003

Various documents related to HRH-F application to MFA for funding, including “videre utvikling av det internasjonale nettverket av mr-hus I 2003”

Agreement between the Human Right House Foundation (HRH) and Raftohuset 2003

Agreement between the Human Right House Foundation (HRH) and the Moscow Helsinki Group, 17th of September 2003.

Søknad om tilskudd fra UD til informasjonstiltak på internett om europeisk samarbeid” dated 28th of Januray 2002.

Various documents concerning ”For equal opportunities”, Bosnia Hercegovini 2002-2003

Various documents concerning Election project in BiH in 2002-2003

Various documents (MFA and HRH-F) concerning the establishment of a HRH in Kroatia 2002, 2003, 2004.

Various documents concerning the pre-assessment of HRH in Uganda 2002, 2003, 2004,

Various documents related to the pre-assessment and pre-prjojetc phase of the establishment of a HRH in Kampala, Uganda January 2003. 2002. 2003. 2004.

“Establishing a human right house in Uganda: an exploratory study” by Paul Opoku-Mensah.

Various documents related to the network meeting of the HRH in 2002.

“Meeting the sustainability challenge: an exploration of the Human Rights House initiative” by P. Opoku-Mensah and B. Krokan, paper presented at ARNOVA annual conference 2002

“Report on the Human Rights House Network Meeting. January 17 – 19 2003, Moscow”

Various documents related to HRH-F.... Most often includes budget, accounts, applications for funding to the Norwegian MFA, schedules, travel reports, feasibility reports, final reports to the Norwegian MFA.

Appendix 4 List of people interviewed

Oslo Human Rights House –Foundation

Maria Dahle, Executive Director (continuous, specially 24.10.05; 16.02.06)

Niels Jacob Harbitz, Project Manager (East Africa) (continuous, specially 02.02.06)

Ane Tusvik Bonde, Project Manager (Former Soviet Union) 03.02.06

Borghild Krokan, Project Manager, 03.02.06

Lars A. Christensen, Chairman of the board, HRH-F (24.10.05)

Mette Newth, Member of board, HRH-F (24.10.05)

Human Rights House - Oslo

Chungdak Koren, Norwegian Tibet Committee (03.02.06)

Ingrid Vik, Executive Director, Nansen Dialogue Centre (02.02.06)

Nora Sveaas, Secretary General, International Society for Health and Human Rights (03.02.06)

Vibeke Hermanrud, Director, The Norwegian Burma Committee, (02.02.06)

Marte Graff Jensen, The Norwegian Burma Committee (02.02.06).

Carl Morten Iversen, Secretary General, Norwegian Pen, (02.02.06).

Bjørn Engesland, Secretary General, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, (16.02.06)

Ole B. Lilleås, Advisor, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, (16.02.06)

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Lars Sigurd Valvatne, Senior Adviser, Section for Human Rights and Democracy, (Oslo, 24.10.05)

Tormod C. Endresen, Head of section, Human Rights and Democracy, (Oslo 12.12.05)

Human Rights House –Network⁴⁵

London

Natasha Schmidt, Index on Censorship, Human Rights House Network Information Coordinator London. (Baku, 08.09.05)

Sarajevo

Srdjan Dizdarevic, Secretary General of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, President of the Board of the Human Rights House, Sarajevo (Baku, 10.09.05)

⁴⁵ All were separate meetings designed specially for this evaluation and lasted between 1 and 2- hours.

Mirsad Pandzic, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, HRH Network Information Coordinator Sarajevo (Baku, 10.09.05)

Zagreb

Tin Gazivoda, Head of the Human Rights Center, Croatia. Member of the executive board of the Croatian Helsinki Committee, Emerging Human Rights House, Zagreb (Baku, 08.09.05)

Goran Milakovic, Croatian Helsinki Committee, HRH Network Information Coordinator Zagreb (Baku, 08.09.05)

Warsaw

Halina BortnowskaDabrowska, Board Member of the Polish Helsinki Foundation, Warsaw (Baku, 09.09.05) -

Marta Lempicka, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, HRH Network Information Coordinator Warsaw (Baku, 09.09.05)

Kampala

Joseph Manoba, Legal Aid Project, Emerging Human Rights House, Kampala (Baku 11.09.05)

Minsk

Siarhei Smatrychenka, Vice president, Belarusian Pen centre (Minsk 13.01.06)

Ales Antispenka, Board member of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), (Minsk 13.01.06)

Aliaksandr Zhuchkou, Member of board, Lev Sapieha Foundation, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Liudmila Dzitsevich, Vice-Chairman, Belarusian Language Society, (Minsk 12.01.06)

Aleh Trusau, Chairman, Belarusian Language Society, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Mikhail Patrukhov, Director, Belarusian Association of Journalists, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Andrei Bastunets, Deputy Chair, Belarusian Association of Journalists, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Ales Bielatski, VIASNA, Emerging Human Rights House, Minsk (Baku 09.09.05)

Boris Zvoskov, Law Initiative, Emerging Human Rights House, Minsk (Baku 09.09.05)

Miroslav Kobasa, Chairman of the Board, Lev Sapieha Foundation, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Moscow

Alexey Smirnov, Founder of the Moscow Research Centre for Human Rights, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Valeriy Borshchev, Board Member, Director of Social Partnership, Human Rights House, Moscow (Russian Research Center for Human Rights) (Baku 09.09.05)

Liubov Volkova, Social Partnership, Human Rights House, Moscow (Russian Research Center for Human Rights) (Baku 09.09.05)

Ida Kuklina, Coordination council, the Union of Soldiers Mothers Committees of Russia, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Valery Segreev, Project consultant, Moscow Center for Prison Reform, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Natalia Dziadco, Moscow Center for Prison Reform, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Victor Kogan-Basuy, Regional Representative, Right to Life and Human Dignity, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Veronika Marchenko, Mother's Right Foundation (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Nina Tagankina, Project manager, Moscow Helsinki Group, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Anastasia Aseyeva, Administrative director, Moscow Helsinki Group, (Moscow, 16.01.06)

Liubov Vinogradova, Director of the RRCHR, Moscow (Moscow, 17.01.06)

Maria Paramonova, former coordinator/contact person of the network in Moscow (Moscow, 17.01.06)

Boris Altshlez, Director, Right of a Child, (Moscow, 17.01.06)

Nathalia , Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia, (Moscow, 17.01.06)

Svetlana Kuznetsova, Chairman of the board, Moscow Soldiers Mothers' Committees (Moscow, 17.01.06).

Nairobi

Morris Odhiambo, Deputy Executive Director CLARION, Nairobi 06.03.06

Njuguna Mutahi, Coordinator, People Against Torture (PAC), Nairobi 07.03.06

Caroline Nyambura, Program Coordinator, Coalition on Violence Against Women – Kenya (COVAW-K), Nairobi 07.03.06

Beatrice Kuria, Financial Manager, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Nairobi 08.03.06

Martin Olouch, HRH Network Information Coordinator Nairobi, (Baku 10.09.05 and Nairobi 06.03.06).

Beatrice Kemunto Sungura, FIDA, Emerging Human Rights House, Nairobi (Baku 10.09.05)

Stephen L. Musau, Executive Coordinator, Release Political Prisoners, Nairobi 08.03.06

Others

Alek Hulak, Executive Director, Belarusian Helsinki Committee, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Hary Pahaniaila, Vice President, Belarusian Helsinki Committee, (Minsk 13.01.06)

Andrei Dynko, Chief Editor, Hawa Hiba (weekly newspaper) (Minsk 13.01.06)

Alexey Simonov, President, Glasnost Defense Foundation, (Moscow, 17.01.06).

Sara Gustavson, Swedish Embassy Nairobi - SIDA, (Nairobi by phone 090306)

Per Brixen, UNDP Nairobi (Nairobi by phone 090306)

Participations

Evaluator participated as observer at the annual network meeting in Baku, September 2005

Evaluator participated as observer at the board meeting HRH-F, Oslo 24.10.05

Evaluator participated as observer at the board meeting HRH-F, Oslo 12.12. 05.

Evaluator participated as observer at the Belarus HR network conference, Minsk 12th of January 2006.

Appendix 5 Question Guide

Question guide used in the interview with the delegates at the annual meeting in September 2005 in Baku, Azerbaijan, the network meeting of HR NGOs in Minsk and members of the Moscow Human Rights House in January 2006 and well as in Nairobi March 2006.

Focus around own Human Rights House Basics about own org.

Which organization are you representing? How many employees (fulltime, part time, voluntary)? Are you a membership organization? Do you have your own physical house? How, since when, where? Why not? What are the constraints? Who needs to do what to make the house a reality?

Collaboration

Why do your NGO want to be member of a human rights house?

(What are your expectations of being member of a Human Rights House? Have any of these expectations been met? Explain how or why not)

Do you, for the time being; have any common activities with the other organizations within your house?

Can you mention common activities you have had or planned to have?

Do you share any practical facilities or machineries with the other organisation in your house (PC, car, front desk, Xerox, camera, lunchroom, seminar room, others)?

How did you decide which organisations should be member of the network? Network Basics about HR networking

Do you know how many human rights organizations exist in your town? Which ones do you have regular contacts with?

Can you mention the other networks of NGOs or Human rights organizations locally, nationally or internationally?

Why have you chosen to be a member of those networks?

What does the networks contribute with? What are your contributions towards the network?

Do you think HRH-F has anything to do with the collaboration and cooperation within your own Human Rights House?

What eventually can HRH-F in Oslo do to increase cooperation between the in-house organizations?

Have you yourself had contact with any of the other organizations within the HRHN during the last 6 months?

If yes, for what purpose?

If no, do you know if anyone else in your org has had any contact with other org within the network?

For the time being, what are the most important advantages for your organization being member of the HRH Network?

How could your own organisation contribute to make the network stronger? Do you share your experiences with the other organizations within your own house? and with the wider network? How?

Why do you want to be member of a human rights house?

How did you choose the other members of the house members in your town?

Why have a house not materialized in Nairobi since the start of the project some 8 years ago?

Who's responsibility?

What sort of problems?

What has to be done to advance the process?

What are the conditions for a functioning house here?

Who needs to do what?

What has the Secretariat in Oslo contributed with towards the network?

What has the Secretariat in Oslo contributed with towards the house?

What sort of competence do the secretariat in Oslo possess that is relevant for you?

Have you seen the annual report from the network?

Have you read the annual report from the network?

Have you seen the manual on how to establish a HRH?

Have you read the manual on how to establish a HRH?

What did you find useful in it?

Have you had contact with any of the other members of the network (except Oslo) during the last year

What are your expectations from being within the network of HRH?

Contacts, funding, competence, others?

Do you see any advantages of being a HRH network member?

Do you see any disadvantages?

What would be the consequences if HRH-N did not pay a network person within your house?

Does the network coordinator have any other responsibilities than being the coordinator of the network?'

Has the creation of the House changed your relations to HR NGOs outside the house? In what way?

Do you see any relevance of using HRH-Network money on the Bergen and the London house?

Do you think that you should be prioritized by funding from the N MFA since you are a member of the HRH-N?

Do you think you should have anything to say when it comes to decide where to try to establish new HRH?

For your own organization, what do you see as the major advantages of being a HRH network member?

For your own organization, who are the most relevant foreign collaborators when it comes to competence and knowledge?

Does HRH-Oslo contribute with anything else than money to the network?

Like what?

Do you think the personnel working in Oslo have sufficient knowledge about the human rights situation in your country to be of any support for your work? How? Like what?

Who selects which NGO to be member of a new house?

Why do you publish stories on the www?

Who do you publish them for?

Do you know if your stories are read? By whom?

Do you know if anyone in your own country reads the stories on www.humanrightshouse.org?

Do you know any of the criteria HRH-F uses when they take the final decision who to be members?

Who are able to exclude a member?

What is the role of the network?

What should be the role of the network?

How could the network function as you wished it to do?

Do you lend out conference hall or other equipment to organizations outside your house?

Do you have any demands for equipment or infrastructure from organizations not present in the house? Secretariat Do you know any person in the Oslo secretariat?

Where do you meet, have you yourself contacted them, how, for what purpose, have you been contacted by them,

Do you know what the people in Oslo do?

Have you seen the manual for establishing a human rights house?

How do you find it? Is it useful? What is useful with it? Do you think it is possible to make a manual working worldwide? What are problematic in your country about the manual? What are the main constraints about setting up a house?

Do they contribute to your organization, to your house, to the network? In what ways?

Do the secretariat organize seminars or workshops to strengthen your capacities?

Do you yourself receive the HRH-N newsletter by e-mail? Do you read it every time, sometimes or never? Have you yourself read the annual report for the network yet? Do you have a network

coordinator within your house? (Percentage of position and work to accomplish) if coordinator her/himself, what is your job? What do you do? Who decides what you do? Who is your boss?

Are the organisations in the house interested in your work? Why and how?

If an organisation will leave your house, who decides which one to replace it?

Has Oslo anything to do with the selection phase?

Who decided originally who are to become the members of the house?

Do the secretariat give your NGO any advantages? Added value? Like what?

Special questions for Oslo Secretariat

How are your own competences developed at your house?

How are your competences used?

How are they improved or augmented?

What are your main skills and competences?

What would you like to work more with? Why?

If you yourself were to prioritize, what would you like to work with? Establishing new houses, enlarging the collaborations within the houses, making human rights information available to a Norwegian public or a global public?

What do you think about the administrative organization of the secretariat?

What is the most interesting with working here?

Do you feel that your own work contributes to better the situation for human rights in certain countries?

Appendix 6 Comments by HRH Nairobi on the Report of the External Evaluator

We have read through the evaluation report of the external evaluator and have the following remarks to make. The report generally captures the difficulties being faced by the HRH project in Nairobi. We are however, concerned by some statements and facts which we all agree are not correct or factual. This is irrespective of whether they were given to the evaluator by those who were interviewed. Our comments are as follows:

1. Except for a few specific examples quoted, the generality of the report makes it difficult to pick out a clear picture of what are the specifics about the project in Nairobi. It would have been ideal if the report dealt with each HRH individually as a section in the report.
2. The persons with the in-depth understandings of the HRH project were not available for the evaluation. The short notice at which the evaluation was arranged could not allow for necessary preparations to be made for them to be available. Some of the people interviewed therefore did not possess adequate understanding of many intricate issues about the project. Not surprisingly many of them cannot “remember” having said what they are supposed to have said. The report fails to take cognisance of the fact that during the Nairobi evaluation, the evaluator met only two executive directors of the organisation out of which only one was a founder member of the HRH in Nairobi.
3. The report comes out clearly as one not done by an “independent assessor”. Some of his very “important recommendations” on the Nairobi project are based on information he had before he came to Nairobi and not from the findings of his visit in Nairobi. E.g. *from the report it is very clear that the evaluator had prior knowledge of the deliberation of the HRH Foundation Board in Oslo where strong indications had been made severally to have the HRH projects in Nairobi terminated.* This appears to have influenced his recommendations more than anything else. He had too much prior information about the general issues of the HRH, which we strongly believed influenced his rather low opinion of the HRH project and particularly the rather hurried recommendation to close down the HRH project in Africa.
4. I have a problem with the regime that was used by the evaluator. What were his terms of reference? What was he evaluating? The rather rigid questions asked were bound to generate rigid answers. The question like “*What benefit has your organisation had by being a member of the HRH?*” This is a judgemental question which is quite misleading and is bound to generate weak and vague answers, grossly under-estimating the actualities of the situation. Given the fact that he was interviewing fairly new members of the IB, he could not get any reasonable answer. He should instead have asked, *What activities or issues have you done with other organisations by virtue of being members of the HRH?* He would have been given loads of answers. From here it is him who would have made his interpretation which ones amounted to a benefit. In our cultural setting, people are supposed to be praised by others and not by themselves. So we tend to avoid direct questions that prompt people to praise themselves or their organisations. According to 2 people interviewed, the

question on benefits was, understood to mean benefits accruing from joint activities financed by HRHF only. *(by then HRH had not received any funding for any project activities)* .They therefore thought that the other benefits accruing from their cooperation and joint projects financed by other donors were not relevant here, The truth of the matter is that the seven HRH member organisation are also member of five other thematic networks. The benefits of these networks are intertwined and cannot be easily isolated from each other, more so by fairly new members of the IB.

5. The findings of the evaluator come out as if the establishing of HRH should be a matter of convenience and not cause. According to him, Africa should be abandoned because of the relative lack of success the organisation has had there, and because it is far away and thus disconnected from the other regions HRHF has gotten involved it is far etc. This on the other hand is in contradiction with his other criticism that HRHF as only been able to establish Human Rights Houses in places where, once again relatively speaking, the need for such establishments is limited (Bergen, London).

The website: www.humanrightshouse.org

Some of the findings about this website which he attributes to Nairobi are definitely not true. That some people told him that they don't give stories for publications because they are edited without their consent further brings into focus what questions were being asked. The four organisations that have contributed material to the Nairobi sub page of www.humanrightshouse.org do not admit to have expressed any kind of misgivings about being edited beyond their consent. These findings on the web page are therefore incorrect or misleading. It should also be noted that the HRH organisations' general laxity in contributing material to the website applies even to their organisation's own websites.

If the evaluator would have been keener in his questioning, he would have noticed or realised that the general laxity to use website by HRH organisations is not limited to the HRH website but applies to even their own organisation's website. I can also attest to the fact that those member who claim to have not read the HRH website, have definitely not read their own organisations website. It is a matter of computer literacy and the nature of the work one does. In organisation like CLARION and CRADLE where research is a day to day part of their work, searching and reading websites is a day to day activity. For instance, The IB member interviewed at Kenya Human Rights Commission, for instance, is an accountant. To her, looking up her own organisation's or any other website may not be directly or closely relevant to her work at KHRC. In Kenya, the internet still used by students, researchers and few interested people. That is even why some HRH organisation will buy space in a national newspaper to put a press statement than post in their website.

There are very few places one can get updated information on the human rights situation in the country. Similarly very few human rights activists use of websites for their work. Those who claim not to have used www.humanrightshouse.org, have most likely not used their own organisations' sites either.

Quoting of newspapers:

Human rights violations and abuses is what people want to hear. This information is available in the general media. So there is nothing wrong with quoting them is it gives the information credibility. Otherwise people may think that we sit down and cook up stories. There are many situations when I

have personally attended a press conference but I still quote the newspaper story for obvious and security reason. In any case most of the human rights stories in the newspaper emanate from our Human rights NGO's.

Website Readership

He claims that nobody reads the site. We don't know how he came to that conclusion. In my little experience with internet, I know that many people hardly go to specific website when they are looking for information. They search for information using search engines in the internet. If you type words like, *human rights in Kenya, violation of human rights in Kenya, corruption in Kenya. Sexual violence in Kenya* into such engine, you are most likely to be directed to our HRH website. This is why I receive very many enquiries from abroad regarding human rights issues. Many Human rights organisation have their own website, but given the fact that the HRH website keeps pace with local media on human rights information, it is more relevant and will pop up first during internet searches.

The evaluators suggestion that organisational website be used instead of the HRH is based on lack of information about how they look like. Most of them lack any current stories on human rights emanating outside their organisation. They are loaded with internal projects and programmes and their donors and organisational profile. He should have noticed that some press statement issued by our organisation reach the HRH website before even their own organisations website.

- The Nairobi website became active in July/august 2004. and the coordinator was only able to begin updating the site after some basic training in October 2004.

Fundraising

In regard to fundraising, the evaluator claims that *"there was no common understanding among associated organisations about fundraising process.* The problem of fundraising in Nairobi is very clear and trying to come up with these kind or reasons is unacceptable. He contradicts himself elsewhere in the report when he enumerates very clearly why there is problem in fundraising in Nairobi.

To suggest that we have failed to come up with new strategies in fundraising is false. He was fully aware of the UNDP initiative. To suggest that we did not follow up the UNDP issue is to begin speculating. The truth of the matter which many people have refused to accept is that the amount of money that was being sought in the fundraising was well beyond the normal funding levels by donors in Kenya. For example, the amount being sought is roughly the total annual budget of the seven member organisations of HRH.

The evaluator once again ignored the prevailing situation in respect to donors and NGOs since 2002. It is common knowledge that it was virtually impossible to get any money, let alone the kind of money we were looking for, from the donors starting 2002. The donor community cut their normal budget to NGO by 85%. Most NGOs particularly those in the human rights sector were forced in to what I call "self preservation Mode". Survival became the order of the day. Donors committed all their monies in the GJLOS. It was therefore very difficulty to fundraise for the house. Donor was simply not in the mood to give money even for things that they easily funded before 2002.

Secondly it must be acknowledged that this was a unique fundraising that was even strange to most donors. It is not very usual to fundraise for construction of a building. Most donors found it strange. The Canadians made it clear that they don't fund buildings.

Of course, the project was a Norwegian initiative and many people including other donors saw it like that. The withdrawal of the Norwegians from the project had negative impact mainly in regard to mobilising other donors to make commitment.

HRH not visible or known –

Did he interview people in the streets? Did he interview consumers of human rights services? It is not members of the IB or member organisations to tell him that. If it is not known. Why have we received request from other organisation to join? How do I get invited to many functions and activities as coordinator of HRH unless people know that HRH is there? In any case what do you mean by not known or visible? For example, walk to the street of Nairobi, ask an ordinary Kenya, even one with a college degree if she or he has heard of CLARION or CRADLE, they will wonder what you are talking about. Yet these are two leading organisations in Kenya. The may Know FIDA just because of the controversies it generates with women rights issue.

Evaluation of the HRH concept

The evaluator appears to have come very harsh of the whole concept of HRH. He failed short of saying it should be shut down altogether. I would have been very happy if he had made a comparative analysis in his evaluation. I would have been happy to hear about and see a success story from another network with similar complexities as HRH.

I have read the evaluators winding obsession with the need to work in certain region with communities having common cultures with a lot of scepticism. HRH was supposed to take challenges and work in areas that there was an expressed need for their services. Or were they to go to areas that there work would simply be easy to perform?

- The coordinator was not interviewed in Nairobi as is indicated in the evaluator's notes. He was instead interviewed in BAKU.

Martin Oluoch
HRH- Nairobi
On Behalf of the IB