

Supporting Defenders Serving Humanity



ANNUAL REPORT 2020
FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2019

Eighteen brave and bright activists from across the world participated in our flagship Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme in June 2019 (*pictured here with part of the ISHR team*).

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Pg 2

**Message from
Chairperson
and Director**

Pg 4

ISHR impact
2019 at a glance

Pg 13

Serving humanity
What contributions
do defenders make?

Pg 26

A decade of impact
ISHR's greatest hits!

Pg 29

2020 vision
ISHR's agenda
for change

Pg 32

Our team
Passionate,
principled,
collaborative
and connected

Pg 34

Supporter profile

Pg 36

Our supporters
Changemakers!

Pg 37

**Good governance,
monitoring,
evaluation
and learning**
Developments
and disclosures

Pg 38

**Financial
statements**



Message from Chairperson & Director

Dear friends

As we embark on a new decade there are plenty of reasons for anxiety and concern.

We are experiencing a climate crisis, with our own home countries, Brazil and Australia, experiencing catastrophic fires over the last year.

We are experiencing a global pandemic, with COVID-19 disproportionately killing elderly and vulnerable people and those with limited or no access to adequate health care.

We are experiencing a democratic recession, with nationalism and authoritarianism on the rise in many countries and regions.

We are experiencing rising inequality within and between countries. A recent Oxfam report revealed that the richest 22 men in the world enjoy more wealth than all the women in Africa.

And we are experiencing a deep deficit in political leadership, with global 'leaders' from China and India, to the United Kingdom and the United States, exploiting fear and nationalism and working to divide us.

There are plenty of reasons for anxiety and concern.

But as we embark on this new decade, we see even more reasons for ambition and hope.



And it is human rights defenders who are planting and nurturing this ambition and hope, at the local and global levels.

We take hope from human rights defenders such as the children, young people and indigenous communities who are inspiring and teaching us how to live more responsibly and sustainably, protecting our precious forests, rivers, mountains and oceans.

We take hope from human rights defenders such as doctors, health care professionals, sanitation workers and those advocating for universal access to high quality public health care, no matter where we live or how much we earn.

We take hope from human rights defenders such as the students and workers in Hong Kong, striving for democratic freedoms and against Chinese authoritarianism.

We take hope from women human rights defenders like Loujain Al-Hathloul and other activists in Saudi Arabia, who continue their struggle for the basic right to be treated as equal with men in their country, even as they face arbitrary detention and torture.

And we take hope from human rights defenders such as Gambia's Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou who, by filing proceedings against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice to prevent the genocide of Rohingya, demonstrated the real political leadership that is required for a fair, just and rules-based international order.

To find reasons for hope is not to deny or diminish the widespread threats and attacks against activists. We are appalled by the killing of environmental human rights defenders in Brazil and the Philippines. We condemn the arbitrary



detention and ill-treatment of those who express their political opinions in Bahrain and Egypt. And we denounce the stigmatisation and malicious prosecution of those working for migrants rights in Hungary, Italy, France and the United States.

But to find reasons for hope is to resolve that these defenders did not sacrifice in vain and to deepen our commitment to all those who share our values of justice, equality and freedom.

It is increasingly recognised that human rights work requires resilience and may involve high levels of stress or even trauma.

At ISHR, this means that we are strengthening our focus on holistic security and wellbeing at the individual, collective and organisational levels, including through the adoption of a dedicated policy. Combining physical, digital and emotional aspects of protection makes our organisations and movements stronger.

So, yes, we feel anxiety and concern for the decade ahead. But drawing inspiration from, and providing solidarity and support to, the human rights defenders with whom ISHR is privileged to partner, we feel an even greater sense of resilience, commitment and hope.

In solidarity with defenders, and with you.

Philip Lynch
Executive Director

Lucia Nader
Chair of the ISHR Board

 **ISHR** | INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ISHR impact 2019 at a glance

Throughout 2019 we supported human rights defenders, strengthened laws and systems for their protection, and contributed to a safe and enabling environment for their vital work at the national, regional and international levels.

How we work

We have a vision in which all people enjoy freedom and dignity, in communities that are just and inclusive, in a world that is peaceful and sustainable.
Our mission is to serve human rights defenders; those who strive to make this vision a reality.

We pursue this mission by achieving
three complementary goals:



Goal 1: We **support human rights defenders** to use international and regional human rights standards and systems to expose violations, seek accountability and remedy, and promote national implementation



Goal 2: We **strengthen international and regional standards and systems** to make them more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders and victims



Goal 3: We partner with local civil society to **secure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders at the national level**

We achieve these goals through
five complementary tactics:

1

Human rights
defender training,
resources,
capacity building,
fellowships and
advocacy support

2

Policy analysis
and advocacy



3

Legal advice,
advocacy and
strategic litigation



4

Participatory
campaigns and
values-based
communications

5

Coalition building
and coordination



We work in a way which is passionate, principled,
connected and collaborative.



Supporting human rights defenders

What we achieved:

Through our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme and our Women Human Rights Defender Advocacy Week, as well as through our Fellowships and extensive training and capacity building workshops at the national and regional levels, **we supported more than 375 at-risk defenders** from across the world to develop networks of support and influence, to build energy and resilience, and to become even more effective advocates for national-level change.

The launch of our **innovative e-learning space** provided human rights defenders with unprecedented access to information, tools, tips and tactics. Over **1200 defenders have built their capacity and skills by visiting the ISHR Academy** since March 2019, including many from rural areas, who are subject to travel bans, or for whom travel to Geneva or New York may expose them to risk of reprisal.

Our goal

Human rights defenders are more free and safe, better networked and trained, and more strategic and influential advocates at the national, regional and international levels.

How we get there

Through our human rights defender support programme – which includes practical and expert training, advice and advocacy support, facilitating access to high-level policy and decision makers, and civil society strategisation and coordination – we:

- make defenders more influential, equipping them to better use international and regional human rights mechanisms to achieve change on the ground
- provide defenders with solidarity and stronger networks of influence, protection and support
- contribute to defenders' resilience, wellbeing and the sustainability of their work

At the **national and regional levels we provided defenders with highly targeted and tailored training and advocacy support**, including **to environmental human rights defenders, women human rights defenders, defenders of the human rights of LGBT and intersex people**. Trainings and workshops in countries including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Gambia, Jamaica, Liberia, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, the Philippines, the Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia, among others, equipped grassroots defenders with powerful advocacy skills, networks and tactics.

In highly restrictive national environments, international human rights mechanisms may provide one of the very few or only platforms from which defenders can tell their stories, expose violations, promote accountability for perpetrators, or seek justice for victims. Recognising

this, we provided **intensive training, advice and advocacy support to defenders from China, Hong Kong, Egypt and Venezuela** at various more secure locations.

It is powerful and imperative that defenders are able to tell their own stories. We were privileged to be able to **support human rights defenders like Lina Al-Hathloul, sister of detained Saudi women's rights activist Loujain Al-Hathloul, to give direct testimony and evidence at the UN**, as well as to meet with UN experts, Ambassadors and even a Foreign Minister. Subsequently, a significant group of UN experts issued a joint statement condemning the detention of Loujain 'for exercising her fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association' and calling on the Saudi government to 'immediately release Ms Al-Hathloul and all other human rights defenders in Saudi prisons'. [READ MORE AT PG 15](#)

An independent evaluation of ISHR found that we play a highly distinctive and valuable role in **connecting national level human rights defenders with high-level diplomats and decision-makers, as well as senior UN officials and experts**. In 2019 we were honoured to support and accompany defenders from all regions in face-to-face meetings with the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of Refugees, Ambassadors, Treaty Body members, and UN Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts, among others. We also supported many defenders in their engagement with the African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights.

Devastatingly, repressive and authoritarian governments around the world continue to lock up and forcibly disappear many human rights defenders. In 2019 we built coalitions, designed social media campaigns and conducted participatory online and offline actions to show **solidarity and support for arbitrarily detained defenders** such as Ahmed Mansoor in the United Arab Emirates and to increase pressure for justice. Our **campaign on forcibly disappeared defenders in China obtained coverage in The New York Times and Le Monde as well as engagement from more than half a million social media accounts in mainland China alone**. Subsequently, an influential group of UN human rights experts issued a joint statement calling upon China to 'immediately end harassment and surveillance of prominent human rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong' who was disappeared,

'The deterioration in human rights in China is a long-standing concern, but this is a tipping point. No country in the world should be able to get away with arbitrarily detaining a million of its own people.'

ISHR Director Phil Lynch in Newsweek, 14 March 2019



arbitrarily detained and then subject to constant harassment following his release. UN experts similarly released a statement in which they expressed grave concern 'over imprisoned activist Ahmed Mansoor's physical well-being', saying that 'the poor conditions of his detention in the United Arab Emirates, including prolonged solitary confinement, may constitute torture'. [READ MORE AT PG 19](#)

As the Secretariat for HRCnet, we coordinated a network of 16 mainly regional and national NGOs to strengthen civil society access, participation and advocacy at the Human Rights Council and to promote implementation at the national level.

Holistic security and a focus on wellbeing are paramount to the safety and sustainability of defenders and their work. Throughout 2019, ISHR strengthened its focus on these vital issues, incorporating a **digital security module** in our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme and adopting an **organisational Wellbeing Policy** following a highly consultative development process involving all staff. The policy sets out a range of organisational, collective and individual responsibilities and commitments designed to contribute to the safety, wellbeing and resilience of our staff and partners. ■



Strengthening standards and systems for defenders' protection

What we achieved:

Together with partners from the Free Saudi Activists coalition, and thanks to the principled leadership of Iceland and Australia, we secured **two unprecedented joint statements at the UN Human Rights Council demanding the release of Saudi women's rights activists**, together with all other people detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Shortly after the first statement in March, a number of the women defenders were provisionally released, while others were brought before a court for the first time.

[READ MORE AT PG 15](#) ➔

As climate activists around the world face stigmatisation and harassment from powerful and vested interests, we worked with Norway and civil society partners from all regions to draft and then secure the consensus adoption of the **first ever UN resolution on environmental human**

Our goal

International and regional mechanisms are more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders. These mechanisms develop standards and make recommendations which respond to and positively influence the operating environment for defenders on the ground. When defenders are subject to restrictions or attacks at the national level, international and regional mechanisms are engaged and respond. In addition, multinational business enterprises and associations recognise the value, and act to protect, human rights defenders and civic space and freedoms.

How we get there

Our policy research and advocacy, our authoritative papers and briefs, our strategic legal advocacy, and our access to and influence with high-level decision-makers within the UN, regional bodies, governments and business enterprises, help make those systems and bodies more accessible, responsive, effective and protective for human rights defenders.

rights defenders. The resolution articulates the vital and important work of environmental activists and means to enhance their recognition and protection. [READ MORE AT PG 16](#) ➔

Twenty years on from the adoption of the seminal Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in relation to which ISHR played a decisive drafting and advocacy role, we worked to develop a **major UN General Assembly resolution on how the Declaration should be implemented at the national level.**

Adopted by consensus with a record number of co-sponsors, 85 States from all regions, the resolution provides governments with a road-map to provide a safe and enabling environment for defenders, prevent threats and attacks, and provide effective protection measures.

We worked with over 1,300 civil society organisations from 174 countries to secure the **overwhelming adoption of a**

resolution, and the renewal of the mandate of a mechanism, to combat violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Demonstrating the long-term impact of ISHR training and advocacy support, many of the national level advocates and activists who successfully pushed their governments to support the resolution were participants or alumni of ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme.

[READ MORE AT PG 24](#) ➔





Number of **ISHR submissions** to periodic reviews of States by Treaty Bodies



Number of **ISHR recommendations** taken up by States in the Universal Periodic Review



'This unprecedented joint statement at the UN sends a strong signal that Saudi Arabia is not untouchable, and that Human Rights Council members should be held to a higher level of scrutiny'

*ISHR Human Rights Council Advocate **Salma El Hosseiny** in The New York Times, 7 March 2019*

The work of human rights defenders is vital to international peace and security and to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict. In 2019 we **stepped up work at the UN Security Council**, providing members with a comprehensive report and concrete recommendations on how to more effectively protect and support women human rights defenders and peace builders. We also commissioned and published a legal policy brief on their obligation to safeguard civil society actors who engage with the Security Council and its mechanisms, whether in New York or in conflict zones.

[READ MORE AT PG 14](#) ➔

Our advocacy to ensure that human rights defenders, witnesses and victims can safely engage with international and regional human rights bodies led to the **first ever joint statement on reprisals at the UN General Assembly**, delivered by the United Kingdom and joined by a cross-regional group of

71 countries. Our work in this area also contributed substantially to: States including the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg pursuing accountability for individual victims of acts of intimidation and reprisal; a UN resolution explicitly recognising the enhanced duty of the Human Rights Council President and Member States to prevent reprisals; and the much anticipated adoption of new guidelines on preventing and ensuring accountability for reprisals by the African Commission on Human & Peoples' Rights.

ISHR's 'scorecards' on candidates for election to the Human Rights Council **prompted a number of States to take concrete and positive action** to improve their scores. Our campaign against Venezuela's election to the Council, although ultimately unsuccessful, demonstrated the ways in which membership can be used to enhance international attention and scrutiny.

[READ MORE AT PG 21](#) ➔

While striving for progress, much human rights work is also about preventing backsliding and regress. In that regard, we worked with Amnesty International on a **successful campaign endorsed by over 400 NGOs to secure funding and prevent the cancellation of sessions of the UN human rights treaty bodies**. We also worked with a diverse coalition of States and civil society partners to dissuade the tabling of a proposed Human Rights Council resolution to weaken the independence of UN human rights experts.

ISHR jointly with members of the TBnet coalition developed the **first joint NGO model for a fixed and predictable cycle of reviews of States by the UN Treaty Bodies**, in preparation for the 2020 review. The proposed model constitutes a significant development and dovetails with proposals from the Treaty Bodies, States and academia. ■



Promoting national implementation and partnering for change on the ground

What we achieved:

Together with national partners, ISHR is now working in more than a dozen countries – including Chad, Guinea, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, the Republic of Congo and Zambia in Africa; Mongolia, Nepal and the Philippines in Asia; and Iraq and Tunisia in the Middle East – to develop and secure the enactment of **specific national laws on human rights defenders**. In at least five of these jurisdictions, draft laws based on the ISHR Model National Law are under active consideration by parliament or by the Council of Ministers.

[READ MORE AT PG 18](#) ➔

In those jurisdictions in which ISHR has already secured the enactment of national human rights defender laws – including Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali – we are working with national partners to ensure effective implementation, including the **specific and effective protection of women human rights defenders**.

Our goal

States enact and effectively implement specific laws and mechanisms to recognise and protect defenders, as well as review and repeal laws which restrict or criminalise them. There is an increase in public and political understanding and support for defenders' vital work.

How we get there

We work with local partners to advocate for national implementation of international and regional standards on the protection of defenders and an enabling environment for their work. Our deep partnerships with grassroots human rights defenders, and our reputation and track record of cooperation with governments and human rights institutions, uniquely position us to advise on and support national-level implementation. Through our values- and hope-based communications and narratives, we positively influence public and political attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies in relation to defenders and we counter stigmatisation and smears against them.

In partnership with local and international NGOs and alumni of our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, we undertook missions in Liberia to develop strategies, build capacity and prepare action plans on the national implementation of international human rights obligations, particularly with respect to **the rights of LGBTI persons**.

Working with local partners, we **secured targeted national recommendations from influential UN human rights experts** on the importance of

developing and fully implementing human rights defender protection laws and mechanisms in States including Togo, Mauritania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger, among others.

Indigenous communities in French Guiana are opposed to a large gold mining project on their land, called 'Montagne d'or'. With support

from ISHR they submitted a complaint to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As a consequence, the Committee issued an 'early warning' asking France to secure the free and informed consent of the indigenous communities affected by the mining project or suspend it. A few weeks after the UN Committee issued its warning, the **French authorities withdrew their support for the mining project**, amounting to a huge victory for the affected indigenous communities and the environment! [READ MORE AT PG 22](#) ➔

Diplomats posted in countries where defenders may be at risk can play an important role in their protection and in promoting an enabling environment for their work. Several countries have adopted specific 'Diplomatic Guidelines' on the protection of defenders – including Switzerland, Canada, the European Union, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United

Kingdom. Their effectiveness is limited, however, because defenders and diplomatic representatives lack awareness and training on the guidelines and because the support provided lacks consistency (based on political considerations, lack of coordination or real or perceived conflicts of interest). In 2019, following extensive consultations, ISHR launched a series of **'action sheets' on diplomatic initiatives for the protection of defenders.**

This innovative set of resources helps defenders better leverage diplomatic support, and assists diplomatic representatives to provide better quality, consistent and targeted support to defenders, including women human rights defenders, defenders working in restrictive environments and environmental defenders.

.....
As a further aspect of our work to strengthen diplomatic protection of defenders, ISHR contributed significantly to a revision of the Swiss Guidelines, which now include a specific section on how Swiss companies can better respect human rights and protect human rights defenders.

.....
Following sustained advocacy by ACAT France, ISHR and others, the wife of imprisoned Sahrawi defender Enaâma Asfari, who was being denied entry in Morocco to visit her detained husband in reprisal for submitting a complaint to the UN, was allowed to visit him in January 2019. While this constituted a significant and welcome development, we continue to monitor the situation as the arbitrary detention of Enaâma remains, and his wife was subsequently again unfairly denied entry to Morocco. ■



As part of our commitment to monitoring and evaluation, in 2019 we commissioned an independent evaluation of the impact of our national legal protection programme over the period 2016 to 2019. The evaluation, which involved in-depth interviews with more than 40 key stakeholders as well as a document and literature review, concluded that over this period ISHR's work has:

- *secured the enactment of national human rights defender laws and empowered and supported national-level defenders to participate in political processes to achieve these results*
- *strengthened national protection of defenders through enhanced enforcement of existing laws and policies*
- *built understanding among defenders about their rights, increased exercise and assertion of those rights, and enhanced access to support when engaged in their human rights work*



Defender
Lina Al-Hathloul

Defender
Brenda Kugonza

Defender
Olga Karach

Serving humanity

What contributions do defenders make?

Human rights defenders are those people and groups who act with humanity, serve humanity, and bring out the best in humanity. They help build a better future for us all.

They do this by working to ensure that all people are treated with dignity and fairness, in communities that are diverse and inclusive, together in a world which is peaceful and sustainable.

In this section we set out a range of stories and examples highlighting the contributions that defenders make to humanity and how ISHR safeguards, supports and strengthens this work. We show how the work of defenders and ISHR contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our work directly contributes to achieving 10 development goals

Human rights defenders are indispensable to sustainable and inclusive development, as well as addressing poverty and inequality. Their participation, inclusion and protection are central for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Human Rights Council recognises their important role in supporting States to realise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the pledge that no one will be left behind and to reach the furthest behind first. The Council stresses that defenders must be ensured a safe and enabling environment to undertake their work free from hindrance and insecurity.

This is absolutely central for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Attacks and restrictions against defenders and civic space, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, run contrary to this goal.

The SDGs are underpinned by legally binding human rights norms and standards. Their implementation requires a human-rights based approach and an inclusive and participatory process that ensures equality, non-discrimination and the full and effective participation of the population.

Defenders and independent civil society engage with their communities, governments, and non-State actors to push for the realisation of all human rights, which includes the SDGs.



Percentage of **ISHR Board members** who are women



Percentage of **ISHR Senior Management Team** who are women

Women human rights defenders prevent and resolve conflict, and build sustainable and inclusive peace

The work of women human rights defenders is vital to sustaining peace and resolving conflict. At all stages of conflict, women defenders play a critical role in promoting equality and inclusion, challenging discrimination, providing services and redress to groups that are marginalised or disadvantaged, mobilising communities, demanding justice, and holding those in power accountable. Women defenders and peace builders are uniquely positioned and critically important to inclusive, rights-based, participatory and sustainable peace and security. Diminishing their role can increase the risks they face and reduce prospects for a sustainable peace.

Despite this, the UN Security Council has not taken a clear, comprehensive approach to meaningfully include women defenders in the 'Women, Peace and Security agenda'. Recognising this, on International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in 2019, ISHR launched a major new report, *'Are Peace and Security Possible Without Women Human Rights Defenders? And why this question matters*

to the UN Security Council'. The report makes a series of concrete and practical recommendations to ensure that the promotion, protection and participation of women defenders is a priority for the Security Council as an essential ingredient to sustainable and inclusive peace and security. ■

The work of women defenders to sustain peace and resolve conflict, and the work of ISHR to support and protect them, is essential to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Recommendations
made by ISHR:



82% adopted by the
UN treaty body to which they
were directed



79% taken up by States in the
Universal Periodic Review, with
each ISHR recommendation
made by an average of 7 States



International human rights advocacy contributes to freedom, accountability and women's rights



For many years, Saudi Arabia was considered untouchable at the United Nations. Its leaders enjoyed absolute impunity for their human rights violations, including the widespread detention of human rights defenders and the systematic oppression of women. I've lost count of the number of meetings I've had with governments over the last seven years which concluded that the Kingdom was too politically, economically and strategically important to be sanctioned.

Cracks began to appear when a number of governments rightly condemned Saudi authorities for the brutal and barbaric murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018.

And a major hole in the wall of impunity was punched in March 2019 when, for the first time ever, a group of 36 governments joined forces to collectively condemn Saudi Arabia.

demanding the release of women's rights activists, together with all other people detained for exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council on International Women's Day, ISHR's Salma El Hosseiny said, 'These women human rights defenders are detained only because they fought for their right to exist equally as men in their country'. Following the joint statement, a number of the women defenders were provisionally released from detention while others were brought before a court for the first time – clear evidence that international advocacy and pressure work! However, so long as others remain in detention, or face charges or restrictions, continued and increased international pressure is essential to secure their freedom.

It is apt that the joint statement – signed by all 28 European Union States as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Norway, among others – was delivered by one of the smallest of them all – Iceland. Apt because it shows that committed individuals and coalitions, prepared to put principle above political expediency, can successfully challenge authoritarianism and prejudice. And we will ultimately prevail.

'These Saudi women human rights defenders are detained only because they fought for their right to exist equally as men, in their country.'

ISHR Human Rights Council Advocate Salma El Hosseiny in Business Day, 7 March 2019.

In what *The New York Times* described as a 'landmark initiative', Saudi Arabia was lambasted for its arbitrary detention, ill treatment and torture of women human rights defenders – women who had the courage and tenacity to demand dignity and equality.

I was so proud of the work of my ISHR and NGO colleagues who refused to accept that women defenders should be detained for their work to end discrimination. They rejected the diplomatic orthodoxy that Saudi Arabia is beyond scrutiny.

Together with partners from the *Free Saudi Activists* coalition, ISHR staff worked tirelessly and collaboratively to secure the unprecedented joint statement

Success may not come immediately. There will be challenges and setbacks. But progress is achieved and history is made by those who value justice, equality and freedom over discrimination, fear and oppression. ■ **Phil Lynch**

The work of women defenders to promote gender equality and overcome discrimination and prejudice, and the work of ISHR to support and protect them, is essential to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



A healthy environment; a healthy future – the vital role of environmental human rights defenders

From promoting the elimination of plastic bags to opposing mass deforestation in the Amazon, environmental human rights defenders are working to prevent climate catastrophe and to protect plant, animal and human life around the world. Despite this, an estimated three defenders are killed each week, with those opposing environmental exploitation at particular risk and in need of particular protection.

Following sustained advocacy by ISHR and a coalition of more than 180 civil society partners, in March 2019 the UN Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution contributing to such recognition and protection. The resolution provides a roadmap for governments, business and the UN itself to promote a healthy environment and to protect environmental human rights defenders.

‘We all want to breathe clean air, drink safe water, and to be able to provide sustenance and a healthy, dignified life for our families. Human survival and wellbeing rest on a biodiverse and healthy environment and a safe climate’, ISHR’s Salma El Hosseiny told the Council following the resolution’s adoption by consensus. ‘Environmental

human rights defenders help us to achieve that. Through this resolution, the Council recognises and celebrates their work. It will lead to more breathing space for defenders, and therefore for us all,’ she said.

With ISHR having strongly advocated that UN agencies themselves adopt specific policies on the recognition and protection of defenders, particularly those most at risk, we were also delighted with the announcement by the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Environment Programme of a major new agreement to strengthen protection of environmental human rights defenders and their families. ■

The work of environmental rights defenders, and the work of ISHR to support and protect them, is essential to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Building coalitions - From little things, big things grow...

An increasing number of small and medium-sized States – many of which are key financial and diplomatic partners of ISHR – are showing how a principled and determined approach can make a difference to protecting victims and promoting accountability for perpetrators.

Paradigm examples of this are the leadership shown by Iceland in March 2019 and Australia in September 2019 delivering the first ever joint statements on Saudi Arabia and thereby ending that State's long enjoyed impunity for grave and systematic human rights violations, including the widespread arbitrary detention and torture of those who advocate dignity and equality for women and girls.

Perhaps inspired by Iceland in March, the June 2019 session of the UN Human Rights Council saw ISHR and other civil society organisations collaborating with committed States to call to account a number of governments responsible for egregious human rights violations but long considered too powerful or strategically important for action to be possible. Iceland led the first ever resolution on extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg pursued accountability for individual victims of acts of intimidation and reprisal, including in Saudi Arabia. And around 25 States expressed collective concern in respect of China regarding widespread surveillance, restrictions to freedoms of religion and movement, and large-scale arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

No problem is too big – and no government is too powerful – to be tackled and to be changed by committed individuals and coalitions. ■

Civil society advocacy and principled State leadership at the UN is essential to the realisation of SDG Goal 16, which is to 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels', as well as:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



'What is happening in Xinjiang in China is the wholesale destruction of a minority people and a culture, from the razing of religious sites to the separation of families, incentives for intermarriage, and the imprisonment of more than 350 academics and intellectuals'

ISHR Asia Programme Manager Sarah Brooks quoted by Reuters, 25 June 2019



Human rights defenders in the Philippines need legal protection and support for their work to promote tolerance and accountability

Human rights defenders in the Philippines play a vital role in promoting tolerance, combating extremism, and pursuing accountability for widespread extrajudicial killings linked to the government. The Philippines is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders; 697 defenders were killed there between 2001 and 2018.

Over the last year, ISHR has worked closely with local partners in the Philippines to help them develop and pursue new legislation to provide protection to those who advocate and act for humanity. In June 2019, the House of Representatives supported the passage, through three readings, of a Bill to protect human rights defenders based on ISHR's Model

Law. While the Bill still needs to be formally adopted in the House, and in the Senate, it sends a powerful message of hope to activists at risk. As one human rights defender in the Philippines told ISHR: 'On the ground, this could be a powerful tool for justice and accountability for thousands, or even millions, of Filipino defenders'. ■

The adoption and implementation of specific national laws to recognise and protect human rights defenders, and ISHR's extensive national legal protection programme, contribute substantially to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



'International pressure and scrutiny, in solidarity with national level human rights defenders, is vital to achieve peace and democracy in Iraq.'

Hasan, Iraqi human rights defender and participant in ISHR's 2019 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme

Supporting human rights defenders to achieve peace and democracy in Iraq

In July 2019, over two intense weeks, 18 dedicated human rights defenders participated in ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme. They exchanged experiences, strengthened their skills, put them into practice and built a network of allies in Geneva and across the globe. They now know how to strategically use the United Nations to support their campaigns on the ground. Hasan, for instance, came to the training from Iraq. With the knowledge and contacts he acquired, he was able to significantly influence a major review of Iraq's human rights performance at the United Nations. As protests and violence erupted in Iraq, he managed to get other

countries on board to call on the authorities to respect and listen to the demands of peaceful protesters and their aspirations for equality, participation, and freedom of expression, association and assembly. ■

By supporting and amplifying the work of human rights defenders and peace builders in countries like Iraq, ISHR is contributing to:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Solidarity with Ahmed Mansoor and all defenders detained in reprisal for expressing their aspirations for justice and democracy



Ahmed Mansoor is a 50-year-old electrical engineer, poet, blogger, and father of four. He is also one of the few publicly outspoken human rights defenders in the United Arab Emirates, advocating for democracy and good government and against unreasonable restrictions on freedom of speech and association. He has campaigned for the Emirati government to abolish torture and inhumane treatment in prisons, and to provide access to decent health care for those deprived of their liberty. In reprisal for his UN advocacy he was banned from leaving the Emirates, and in 2017 he was sentenced to ten years in prison for sharing his opinions on social media.

Over his last three years in jail, UAE authorities have been hoping everyone would forget Ahmed. But our campaigning work and solidarity actions – in partnership with others in the human rights movement – have made sure that Ahmed continues to be present in the media, on social media and in decision making spaces worldwide. We have pressed for his freedom and to ensure that he is provided with adequate health care. ISHR

will continue campaigning for Ahmed's release and for a UAE in which all people can freely exercise their rights to expression, association, assembly and the defence of human rights. ■

The work of defenders like Ahmed Mansoor, and solidarity actions to safeguard and amplify that work by ISHR and others, contributes to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



'We condemn the appalling phenomenon of threats and attacks against individuals that provide the UN with information about human rights violations. Such attacks are not incidental — they operate as powerful signals to human rights defenders back home that those speaking out will be silenced. Of course, it is in countries where human rights defenders find their work restricted that unhindered access to the UN is all the more crucial.'

ISHR New York Co-Director *Madeleine Sinclair* in the *Financial Times*, 12 December 2019



Human rights defenders are preserving the environment and indigenous knowledge and culture



Human rights defenders hold governments and unscrupulous corporations accountable. They expose corruption and work to ensure that people, communities, land and the environment are not scarified on the altar of profit.

Leon Dulce is the national coordinator of the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, an organisation protecting people's rights and the environment in the Philippines. Leon and other Kalikasan activists are campaigning to hold accountable corporate giants such as Oceanagold, an Australian-Canadian mining company allegedly responsible for water depletion and rights violations against the Tuwali-Ifugao indigenous people of Nueva Vizcaya province. Leon participated in an intensive ISHR training and capacity building programme in Geneva in June 2018. The programme strengthened his advocacy skills and his understanding of the UN system, and expanded his means and networks of influence. Back at

home, he trained others on what he had learned. As a consequence, Kalikasan submitted a complaint to several UN independent experts in December 2018. This complaint and consequent pressure exerted by UN experts was significant in influencing the subsequent decision by local authorities to restrain Oceanagold's operations in June 2019. With the help of ISHR, Leon's organisation and partner communities were able to mobilise international support, including UN support. This was crucial in empowering them to launch a pivotal blockade that enforced the suspension of the mine and contributed to the preservation of the environment and indigenous cultural rights. ■

Supported by ISHR, environmental and indigenous rights defenders are contributing to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Supporting women's health and right to choose



Human rights defenders promoting sexual and reproductive health have made a vital contribution to keeping people healthy around the world, helping prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, significantly reducing genital mutilation, and providing access to essential hygiene products for women and girls. In many countries, the courageous advocacy of human rights defenders has meant that women can choose how and when they want to be mothers, without government interference.

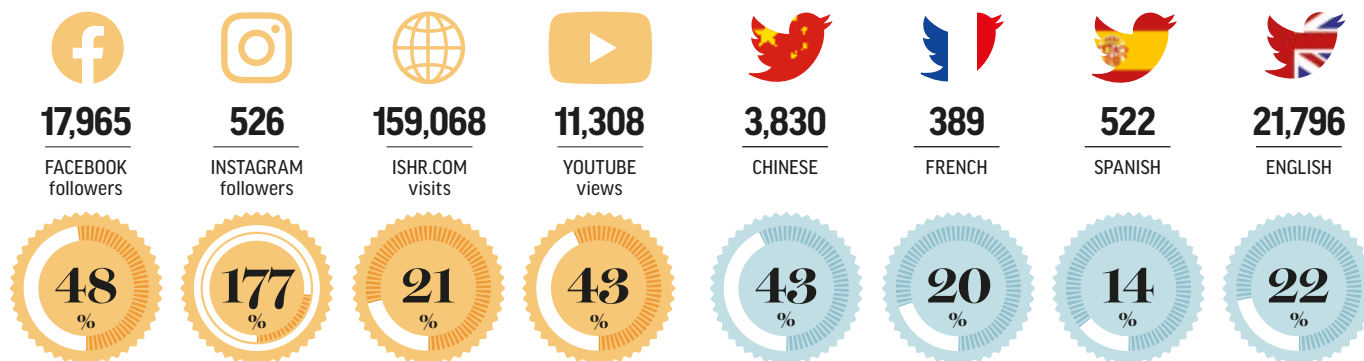
Poland is one country in which the campaign for women's equality and sexual and reproductive health rights is ongoing, with a draft law to restrict access to abortion pending at the time of writing.

When Poland put forward its candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council, ISHR identified an opportunity to subject the State to a higher level of scrutiny and pressure on these and other human rights issues. In September 2019, we published an influential 'score card' on Poland, following which Poland responded to important UN communications on issues affecting women's reproductive health and rights and the Polish

government accepted visits by UN experts. These steps will strengthen women's rights and the capacity of national civil society to engage with the United Nations to push for further change in the country. ■

Advocacy by ISHR and our support to women defenders and those advocating access to adequate health care are influencing States to take concrete action towards the realisation of SDGs including:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Increase in **ISHR social media** activity since 2018

Increase in **Twitter** followers since 2018

Serving indigenous human rights defenders to protect culture, land and the environment



Indigenous and environmental human rights defenders continue to protect and preserve indigenous cultures, traditions, lands and local languages that enrich our world and promote respect, diversity and a healthy environment.

Indigenous communities in French Guiana are opposed to a large gold mining project on their land, called 'Montagne d'or'. With support from ISHR they submitted a complaint to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In response, the Committee issued an 'early warning' asking France to either secure the free and informed consent of the indigenous communities affected by the mining project, or suspend it.

A few weeks after the UN Committee had issued its warning, the French authorities withdrew their support for the mining project, rendering it unable to proceed and resulting in the protection of both indigenous communities and the environment. ■

Legal advice and strategic advocacy support provided by ISHR to indigenous and environmental human rights defenders contribute to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



Enhancing freedom of expression and access to information in restrictive environments



Human rights defenders have ensured that in many places around the world people can express what they think in the streets, on social media, in books, newspapers and the radio. Especially in countries where most media channels are owned or controlled by the government or a few powerful corporations, human rights defenders and independent journalists provide vital access to information, making governments and businesses more accountable.

Ricardo Villalobos is a Venezuelan activist. He works with Aula Abierta, an organisation that defends freedom of expression and participation of students in decision making

processes. After being trained by ISHR, Ricardo shared the knowledge he had acquired with his team. Together, they created a unified and joint advocacy strategy for his organisation to achieve national changes, such as stopping reprisals and intimidation against professors and students who speak their minds. ■

Training, advocacy support and solidarity provided by ISHR to defenders in highly restrictive environments contribute to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



'I really want to thank you and ISHR for supporting me and giving me the amazing opportunity to participate in HRDAP. Obviously all these great things couldn't have been reached without the tools and the unique spaces you created for us in June of this year.'

Ricardo Villalobos, Venezuelan human rights defender and participant in ISHR's 2019 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme

Securing access to education and engendering hope for the future

Abdul Aziz Muhamat fled from the war in Darfur and sought refuge in Australia. In line with the Australian government policy of mandatory indefinite offshore detention of anyone seeking asylum by boat, authorities detained him. He spent almost six years on a remote island, enduring, with hundreds of others, deprivation, harassment, humiliation and violence.

Through his voice, transmitted via an award-winning podcast on a smuggled mobile phone, the world learnt of the illegality and immorality of Australia's refugee and asylum seeker policy. Aziz's contribution in standing up for the rights of refugees was recognised with the 2019 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights

Defenders, with ISHR proud to serve as an Award jury member.

After travelling to Geneva in early 2019 to accept the Award, with the support of ISHR and others Aziz was able to secure asylum in Switzerland and be supported in his re-settlement. In June 2019, thanks to the generous contribution of a private donor, Aziz participated in ISHR's intensive Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme. He learned how to better use the UN system and what governments should be doing to protect the rights of people on the move. He also developed and strengthened networks of support. He is now studying at university, having been denied access to education for over six years, and is a leading and influential civil society advocate at the UN Human Rights Council, where he advocates not just for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers trapped by Australia in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, but for all those worldwide who just want safety, protection and a hopeful future for themselves and their families. ■

By providing training, protection, advocacy support and solidarity to defenders of migrant and refugee rights, ISHR contributes to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



'With the solidarity and support of NGOs like ISHR, I will continue to advocate and will not be silent until every refugee and asylum seeker enjoys their dignity and freedom. Together we will achieve this. Together, nothing is impossible.'

Abdul Aziz Muhamat, migrant rights defender, Martin Ennals Laureate and participant in ISHR's 2019 Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme

Movement strengthening and solidarity at the UN: The role of capacity building and coalitions



Millions of people around the world face human rights violations because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These violations are often ignored or given insufficient attention by governments, especially when they are committed by State authorities themselves. In this context, the ability of human rights defenders to engage with the UN and use its mechanisms to put pressure on States to make positive change is immensely important. We are privileged to contribute to building a network of LGBTI human rights defenders confidently using these tools to 'queer the UN' and make their communities safer and more inclusive.

It is only relatively recently that these defenders have been able to get SOGIESC issues onto the UN agenda. Back in 2004, Brazil was forced to withdraw a resolution on sexual orientation that it introduced at the then Human Rights Commission because it was considered so contentious. Initial progress at the UN was incredibly challenging – even uttering terms such as 'sexual orientation' within the UN was taboo for many States. Few diplomats or UN experts knew what these concepts meant or were aware of the intersectional violence and discrimination faced by LGBTI people around the world. On top of this, few working for the protection of the rights of LGBTI persons had the necessary knowledge or resources to engage with the UN.

Fifteen years later, 27 States in the Human Rights Council voted in favour of renewing the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination on the basis of SOGI, with 52 States from every region of the world

co-sponsoring the resolution. Only 12 voted in opposition, and 7 abstained. Beyond the Council, for several years now, Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review regularly make recommendations to countries on SOGIESC issues, and UN agencies have given increasing attention to the human rights of LGBTI persons.

So how have LGBTI defenders achieved such a dramatic change? While there was no one factor that made it possible, some essential elements include building the capacity of human rights defenders, strengthening coalitions, and developing normative standards on SOGIESC issues – efforts in which ISHR plays a key role.

Empowering defenders with the knowledge and skills to engage with the UN

The first step was taken by a small number of global, regional and national organisations familiar with UN human rights spaces in Geneva and New York, including ISHR, to build the capacity of defenders to raise SOGIESC issues. Initially this focused on engaging strategically with UN Treaty Bodies, then from 2006, incorporating the Universal Periodic Review. Other initiatives developed defenders' skills to engage with Special Procedures mandate holders, and the Human Rights Council.

Some training programmes specifically targeted LGBTI groups; others involved national coalitions of organisations working across various areas. The most successful were those similar to ISHR's Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, which provides intensive in-person training, followed by ongoing advocacy support, and helping to capacitate defenders and organisations engaged in more than one mechanism over time. Capacity-building initiatives also aimed at making defenders aware of opportunities to obtain financial resources to enable further engagement with UN mechanisms and bodies, as well as in-person participation. They also sought to go beyond the specific individuals trained and reach wider networks.

Building knowledge among UN experts and diplomats on SOGIESC issues

As part of training programmes, defenders engaged in advocacy missions to brief UN experts and diplomats, raising awareness and understanding of human rights violations and lobbying these actors to take action. This



Number of people accessing information and support through the ISHR Academy since its launch in March 2019



Number of human rights defenders to whom ISHR provided in-person training or advocacy support

resulted in evidence of serious and widespread human rights violations on the basis of SOGIESC being included in UN documents, and in experts setting out standards and making concrete recommendations to States. Through enhanced interactions with diplomats, defenders were able to identify and build a core group of States willing to champion SOGI issues at the UN — something that was essential for the Human Rights Council or General Assembly to be able to include these topics in their work.

During this initial engagement with UN bodies and diplomats (as well as with national-level actors), human rights defenders encountered a lack of understanding of where SOGIESC issues fell within the international human rights system. In response, ISHR and ARC International convened human rights experts from around the world, including UN Special Procedures mandate holders, to develop the Yogyakarta Principles (YPs) adopted in 2006, and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YPs +10) adopted in 2017, to articulate how international human rights law applies to issues of SOGIESC. These principles clearly outlined State obligations to protect LGBTI people under existing international law to demonstrate that LGBTI defenders were not seeking 'additional rights'.

The YPs and YPs +10 assist defenders to emphasise that LGBT rights are human rights; that all rights are universal. In capacity-building and advocacy missions relating to the Universal Periodic Review, human rights defenders were trained to target representatives of countries in the Global South. This was integral in highlighting that SOGIESC issues are global; that LGBTI persons exist everywhere.

Impact

With increased knowledge of the tools available and increased ability to engage with the UN, SOGIESC defenders are having a significant impact at the national and international levels. The recommendations for specific States made by UN Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review, and Special Procedures are leveraged at the national level to strengthen ongoing advocacy initiatives to protect LGBTI people from violence and discrimination.

The increased volume of information submitted to UN mechanisms also contributes to the adoption of resolutions at the Human Rights Council and General Assembly referring to SOGI. Most recently, a record number of States voted to renew the mandate of a Special Procedure (created in 2016) dedicated specifically to addressing violence and discrimination on the basis of SOGI, ensuring a tool to address these violations and increase pressure for positive change. Moreover, while in 2016 the resolution creating the mandate was challenged six times at the General Assembly, in 2019 the renewal raised no controversy.

Crucially, the training programmes and advocacy support provided by ISHR and others have allowed LGBTI

rights defenders to represent themselves in UN spaces, speak up, and bear witness to their struggles across the globe. This power to speak and be heard has helped build the strength and resilience of LGBTI movements, going far beyond honing the skills of individual defenders to draft effective submissions to the UN. More broadly, these programmes have also enhanced support and solidarity for LGBTI communities across human rights movements and increased awareness of the violence and discrimination they face. ISHR is proud to have played a leading role in coordinating the #RenewIESOGI campaign, which included global awareness raising of the work of the Independent Expert on SOGI and advocacy at the national and international levels. Through the campaign, 1312 organisations from 174 States and territories called for the renewal of the mandate – with over 70 LGBTI defenders advocating directly at the Human Rights Council.

Building for the future

These successes are a testament to the importance of building capacity through the development of resources and training for defenders of LGBTI human rights. However, challenges remain, in particular the lack of resources available to defenders to include UN advocacy in their work. While the number of tools and guides available to defenders continues to grow, training programmes remain limited. There are groups and intersectionalities within the LGBTI communities that continue to be marginalised, such as women and intersex persons. Furthermore, as we mark almost 20 years of ongoing engagement with UN mechanisms in relation to SOGIESC issues, it is clear that successes at the international level do not automatically translate into progress on the ground.

With enhanced communication and solidarity across the LGBTI global movement, as well as the human rights movement more generally, the fight against violence and discrimination will not only continue but strengthen. ISHR will continue to be a close ally to our partners, supporting coalitions, adapting to new challenges and learning from all that has been achieved in the last 15 years. ■

Tess McEvoy and Helen Nolan

Through our work to build and mobilise coalitions, and to provide training and strategic advocacy support to defenders of LGBTI human rights, ISHR contributes to the realisation of:

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**



A decade of impact

ISHR's greatest hits



As we enter a new decade, perhaps apprehensive at the human rights challenges ahead, it is worth reflecting on the last decade and what we have collectively achieved. With apologies to the many hits that could have made this list, here are ten of the top human rights wins to which ISHR substantially contributed together with our dedicated supporters and strategic partners.

1 We trained, advised and supported over **2500 human rights defenders**, powerfully equipping those who are working to make their communities, our world and our future more fair, just, inclusive and sustainable.

2500

2 We developed an authoritative and influential **Model National Law on Human Rights Defenders**, leading to groundbreaking legislation in three states and significant progress in at least twelve more.



3 We contributed to secure the establishment and renewal of an **international mechanism to combat violence and discrimination** on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.



4 We provided a platform and support for **frontline human rights defenders to give testimony and evidence at the UN** and to meet with some of the world's key decision makers, including the UN Secretary General, Foreign Ministers and heads of business.

5 We significantly developed and strengthened **international and regional law and jurisprudence on human rights defenders**, including through the first ever UN resolutions on women human rights defenders, environmental human rights defenders, civil society space, and defenders of economic, social and cultural rights, and the first ever African Commission resolutions on women human rights defenders and reprisals.

6 We put **human rights defenders near the top of the business and human rights agenda**, with the protection of human rights defenders now enshrined in a number of corporate policies, and discussed in venues from board rooms, to investor briefings, to the World Economic Forum.





7 We transformed the way in which international and regional bodies seek to prevent and respond to cases of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, including through the adoption of dedicated policies and the appointment of senior focal points by the UN, the African Commission, and every single human rights treaty body.

8 We contributed to successful efforts to **secure the release of more than 30 arbitrarily detained human rights defenders** across the world. We continue to advocate for those many who remain detained.



9 We lobbied and advocated tirelessly to secure the **first ever joint statements at the UN Human Rights Council on China and Saudi Arabia**, condemning widespread and systematic human rights violations perpetrated by those States



10 We developed blueprints and built alliances to **safeguard and strengthen the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies**, all at a time when multilateralism and international institutions have been under attack.

And one more for good measure...!



11 We built, supported and participated in a wide range of **strategic and highly effective coalitions**, from solidarity networks between defenders across the world who are at risk, to networks of corporate leaders who understand the business imperative to support civic space, to alliances of more than **1400** organisations around the world dedicated to equality for all people regardless of who they are or who they love.

1400





Defender
Leon Dulce



Defender
Igor Pereira Bastos



Defender
Ruth Alipaz Cuqui

2020 vision

ISHR's agenda for change

The work of human rights defenders is essential to protect the dignity and freedom of all people, and to ensure that they can participate fully in communities that are fair, just and inclusive. ISHR supports defenders to undertake this vital work, and strengthens laws and mechanisms for their recognition and protection. In 2020, with your continued and additional support, ISHR will further develop two vital areas of work to better achieve our mission:

- We will develop and test new narratives and build new coalitions which strengthen public and political support for human rights defenders and other civil society actors
- With the international human rights framework under attack precisely at the time when it is becoming the one and only avenue available to defenders working in highly restrictive environments like China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, we will strengthen international mechanisms to make them more accessible, effective and protective for human rights defenders and victims of violations

New narratives on human rights defenders

Public and political support for defenders is a crucial element contributing to their protection and to a safe and enabling environment for their work. To build such support requires highly effective communications.

Within a broader context of new narratives on human rights, we've been doing a lot of thinking and testing at ISHR about more positive and effective narratives on human rights defenders. We've noted that most of our sector's communications on defenders focus on the threats and risks they face rather than on the invaluable contributions they make.

We've also been thinking about the development and application of such narratives at the UN, with framing in international standards and resolutions having a significant ripple effect on framing at regional and national levels. This is a point understood and paradoxically demonstrated by

China pursuing a strategy of seeking to insert Chinese Communist Party language into various resolutions, and Russia pursuing a strategy of seeking to remove any positive references to human rights defenders from all resolutions whatsoever! We've been aided in this thinking by our new Campaign and Mobilisation Manager, Marianne Bertrand, as well as great external partners and allies like Amnesty International, Hope Based Comms and various members of the Vuka! coalition.



Number of human rights
defender video profiles published



Total number of videos produced

ISHR's narratives strategy has four key elements, each with activities we'd like to undertake with more resources:

- 1. We'll participate in, learn from and contribute to existing initiatives on new narratives for human rights defenders.** Together with civil society partners – as well as through collaborations with academic partners and communications experts – we want to develop strategies, tactics and messages to address stigmatisation and to build awareness and support for defenders. We will test and refine these narratives, sharing findings and resources with defenders around the world. We also plan to produce an activist guide on how to apply new narratives on defenders.
- 2. We'll build capacity and expertise with the defenders we train and support – around 300 per year in person and thousands more online – to communicate more positively and effectively about their work.** In particular, we will train and support national level defenders to develop and apply new narratives to address stigmatisation and to build legitimacy, understanding and support. We will do this at the international level through our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme, at the national level as a component of our national partnerships to develop and enact specific human rights defender protection laws, and online through the ISHR Academy.
- 3. We'll shape the narrative on human rights defenders at the UN.** We will inform and influence the use of narratives and messages among experts, diplomats, decisions makers and civil society partners in multilateral fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council, recognising that shaping the narrative on human rights defenders at these levels has a significant flow on to how defenders are discussed and understood at regional, national and local levels.
- 4. We'll shape the narrative on human rights defenders in the business community and through the media.** We will inform the narrative on defenders in the business community, primarily through the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and human rights defenders which we convene with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre and the B-Team. And we will engage with both national and international media, including through unusual outlets to spread the message, share stories and shape narratives

Strengthening international mechanisms to make them more accessible, effective and protective for defenders

As civil society space closes and accountability mechanisms are increasingly eroded at the national level, more defenders are seeking to use the international human rights system to prevent and expose violations, to push for accountability, to obtain justice and protection, and as a lever to increase pressure for national-level change.

ISHR works to ensure that these mechanisms are more accessible, effective and protective for defenders and that they develop standards and make recommendations which respond to and positively influence the operating environment for defenders on the ground. We also work to ensure that when defenders are subject to restrictions or attacks at the national level, international mechanisms are engaged and respond. ISHR plays a unique role in supporting and coordinating civil society engagement at the UN, with a particular focus on supporting the engagement of defenders and civil society actors from the Global South.

Over the next few years, there are five key areas in relation to which we want to expand our activities and impact:

- 1. Increase scrutiny and accountability for members of the Human Rights Council.** We will ensure that when States are elected to the Human Rights Council, they are subject to increased human rights monitoring and scrutiny, shifting the current calculus for States such as Venezuela and Saudi Arabia who see membership as an opportunity to defend and advance their interests.
- 2. Support defender engagement to strengthen the Human Rights Council.** We will ensure that the General Assembly mandated review of the Human Rights Council's status – scheduled to occur between 2021 and 2025 – is informed by the experience and expertise of human rights defenders and that its outcome is a Council that better responds to the situation, priorities and needs of people on the ground.



- 3. Safeguard and strengthen the UN Treaty Bodies from the perspective of rights holders and defenders.** With the UN human rights Treaty Bodies to be reviewed in 2020, we are working as part of a broad civil society coalition to ensure that this leads to a strengthening rather than a weakening of the system. This will include extensive advocacy in Geneva and New York, as well as online (such as through our special collaboration with Open Global Rights).
- 4. Safeguard and strengthen the UN Special Procedures.** We will work to safeguard the system of UN Special Procedures, in particular by building alliances and lobbying against nefarious proposals by States including China, the UAE and Pakistan to undermine their independence and effectiveness. We successfully headed off two such proposals in 2019, but it is anticipated that a hostile initiative will again be introduced in June 2020. We will also work to ensure the renewal of vital mandates, such as that of Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, and advocate that appointees to such mandates are independent, highly qualified and that special consideration is given to people from groups that are under-represented or have experienced marginalisation and discrimination.
- 5. Strengthen protections against reprisals and enhance accountability for perpetrators.** Through a combination of research, reports, strategic litigation, advocacy and campaigning, we will strengthen the UN's response to acts of intimidation and reprisals against defenders. Building on our recent success in securing the first ever joint statement on reprisals at the UN General Assembly, we will advocate for the adoption of a GA resolution, and also for States and UN experts to follow up and speak out on cases in ways which increase visibility and costs for perpetrators. Building on our successful efforts for the UN to develop a system-wide response to reprisals through the appointment of a Secretary-General mandated Senior Official, we will also advocate with the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to develop and ensure the effective implementation of a UN-wide policy on human rights defenders, which seeks to make their recognition and protection a priority for all UN agencies. ■



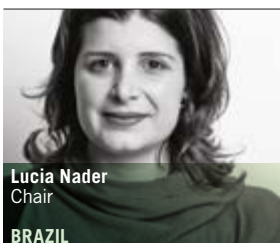
At our 2019 staff strategy retreat, generously facilitated on a pro bono basis by Florian Pollner of McKinsey, we identified the following factors as essential to ISHR's current and future impact:

- 1** *A commitment to always putting human rights defenders at the centre of our work and to consult, collaborate and build deep partnerships with national-level defenders*
- 2** *A diverse staff team, with a broad base of expertise and experience, united by shared values, a passion for human rights, and a commitment to collaboration*
- 3** *Significant investment in developing relationships of trust and confidence with diplomats and experts and in building, mobilising and contributing to broad-based coalitions*
- 4** *Principled and persistent advocacy, combining both a long-term strategy and an opportunistic and dynamic approach*
- 5** *A commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning and a preparedness and ability to innovate and develop new skills, tactics and tools.*

Our team

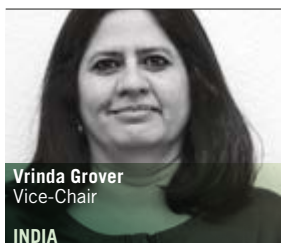
Passionate, principled, collaborative and connected

BOARD



Lucia Nader
Chair
BRAZIL

Expert on human rights and civil society organisations, former Executive Director of Conectas Human Rights in Brazil, Board member of the Fund for Global Human Rights.



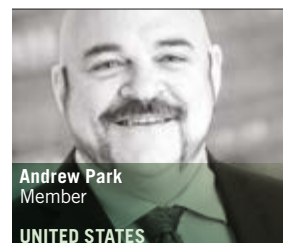
Vrinda Grover
Vice-Chair
INDIA

Human rights activist, lawyer and defender advocating and litigating landmark cases on women's rights, torture and sexual minorities in India.



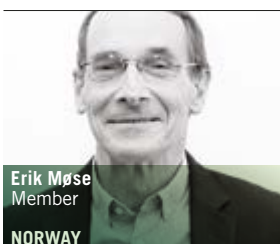
Maryam Al-Khawaja
Member
BAHRAIN/DENMARK

Bahraini human rights defender, consultant and trainer, Board member of Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights and CIVICUS, former Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights.



Andrew Park
Member
UNITED STATES

Human rights expert, former International Program Director at the Williams Institute and Wellspring Advisors LLC and former coordinator of the International Human Rights Funders Group.



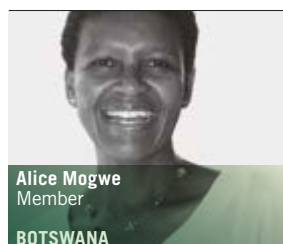
Erik Mjose
Member
NORWAY

Judge of the Supreme Court of Norway, former judge of the European Court of Human Rights and former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.



Elizabeth Broderick
Member
AUSTRALIA

Expert member of UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, Adjunct Professor at The University of Sydney, former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner.



Alice Mogwe
Member
BOTSWANA

Director of Ditshwanelo (the Botswana Centre for Human Rights), President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), former Chairperson of the Southern Africa Trust.



Katarina Bervar Sternad
Member
SLOVENIA

Director of PIC (Legal Information Centre for NGOs) in Slovenia, focusing mainly on migrant rights and women's rights, as well as Coordinator of the Coalition for ESC Rights.



Mirosław Wyrzykowski
Member
POLAND

Chair of the Human Rights Department, Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Warsaw, former judge of the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland.



Pierre Avanzo
Treasurer
FRANCE

Management consultant, practitioner with Mobius Executive Leadership and former Partner with McKinsey & Co, where he worked for two decades across Asia, Europe and the US.



Jean-Claude Ern 
Treasurer
SWITZERLAND

Equity Partner at Banque Pictet and CEO of the Swiss Wealth Management market, lawyer admitted to the Geneva Bar.

ISHR is 'well managed' and 'adequately prepared', with no significant issues identified in relation to governance, reporting, financial management, procurement, audit or risk management.

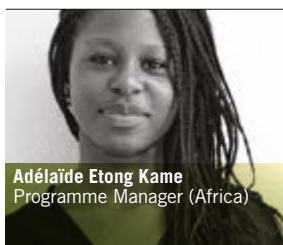
*Independent evaluation of ISHR
by KPMG, August 2019*

STAFF



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Campaign and Mobilisation
Manager

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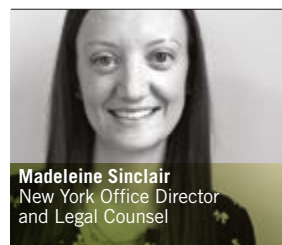
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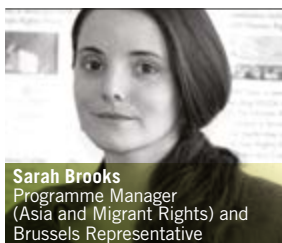
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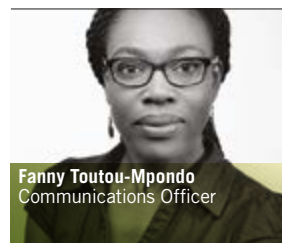


Eva Homolkova
Fundraising Officer

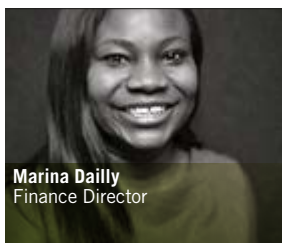


Helen Nolan
Programme Manager
(Training and LGBTI rights)

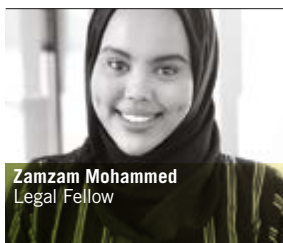
@Helen_ISHR



Fanny Toutou-Mpondo
Communications Officer

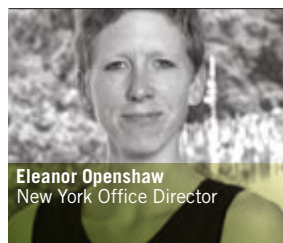


Marina Dailly
Finance Director



Zamzam Mohammed
Legal Fellow

@Zammy_Mohammed



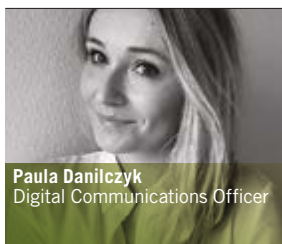
Eleanor Openshaw
New York Office Director

@EleanorOpenshaw



Diego Villanueva
Office and Programme
Management Officer

@DiegoISHR



Paula Danilczyk
Digital Communications Officer

@Paula_ISHR



Michael Ineichen
Programme Director

@IneichenM



Pooja Patel
Programme Director

@Pooja_ISHR



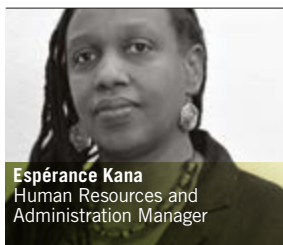
Clément Nyaletsossi Voule
Senior Advisor

@CVoule



Christine Do Phan
Communications Manager

@Christine_ISHR

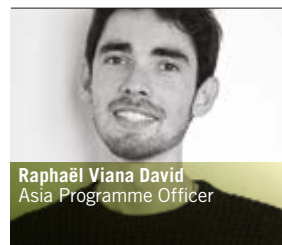


Espérance Kana
Human Resources and
Administration Manager



Vincent Ploton
Director of Development and
Treaty Body Advocacy

@VPloton



Raphaël Viana David
Asia Programme Officer

@vdraphael



Salma El Hosseiny
Programme Manager
(Human Rights Council)

@Salma_ISHR

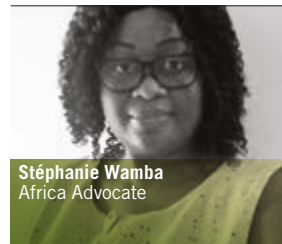


Phil Lynch
Executive Director

@PhilALynch



Antsa Rakotonanahary
Finance Coordinator



Stéphanie Wamba
Africa Advocate

@StephanieWamba

Fellows and Interns

Anna-Tia Buss, Coraline Challamel, Chloé Israel Collier, Cailan Cumming, Karen Dedegbe, Evira Sepúlveda Durán, Cédric Gelissen, Teyslor Kangot, Kaleha Kegode, Alexandra Ladwig, Jean Mazel, Oghenakaro Okandeggi, Shauna Pratico, William Smith Hatton, Marina Wilbraham, Alisha Zhao

The names of some Human Rights Defender Fellows have been omitted for personal security reasons



Marina Wilbraham
New York Administration Officer



Fabiana Leibl
HRCnet Coordinator

Supporter profile

Patricia Schulz is a Swiss lawyer specialised in international human rights law and gender equality. She is a Senior research associate at UNRISD, the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development, and a former member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

As a young woman, I participated in feminist organisations in Geneva and also financially supported Geneva-based organisations engaged in achieving gender equality. I value social justice, equality, respect, fairness and dignity. Later, donating was for me a 'compensation' for not being an activist myself anymore - due to my profession and subsequent lack of time.

My parents didn't attend university, but they created an enterprise and worked together. They always told me and my brother that if we wanted to study, they would

support us. They were happy and proud that both of us succeeded in our university studies and went on to have interesting careers. I don't have children, but I am aware that due to poverty and inequality, far too many parents must experience desperation at not being able to provide their children with good education, food, health care, as my parents could. This thought

has been with me all the time and that's why I engaged with children's sponsorship programmes, as well as projects for rural development, water and literacy, especially for women and girls.

About five years ago, I decided to donate 10% of my income each year to local, Swiss and international non-governmental

About five years ago, I decided to donate 10% of my income each year to local, Swiss and international non-governmental organisations as an expression of solidarity and gratitude for the luck I've had in my life. To have an impact, NGOs need money.



organisations as an expression of solidarity and gratitude for the luck I've had in my life. To have an impact, NGOs need money.

I first came across ISHR in 2011, when I joined the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), tasked with monitoring how States implement the Convention on non-discrimination of women and gender equality. I discovered and admired the work of ISHR and decided to become a regular donor two or three years ago.

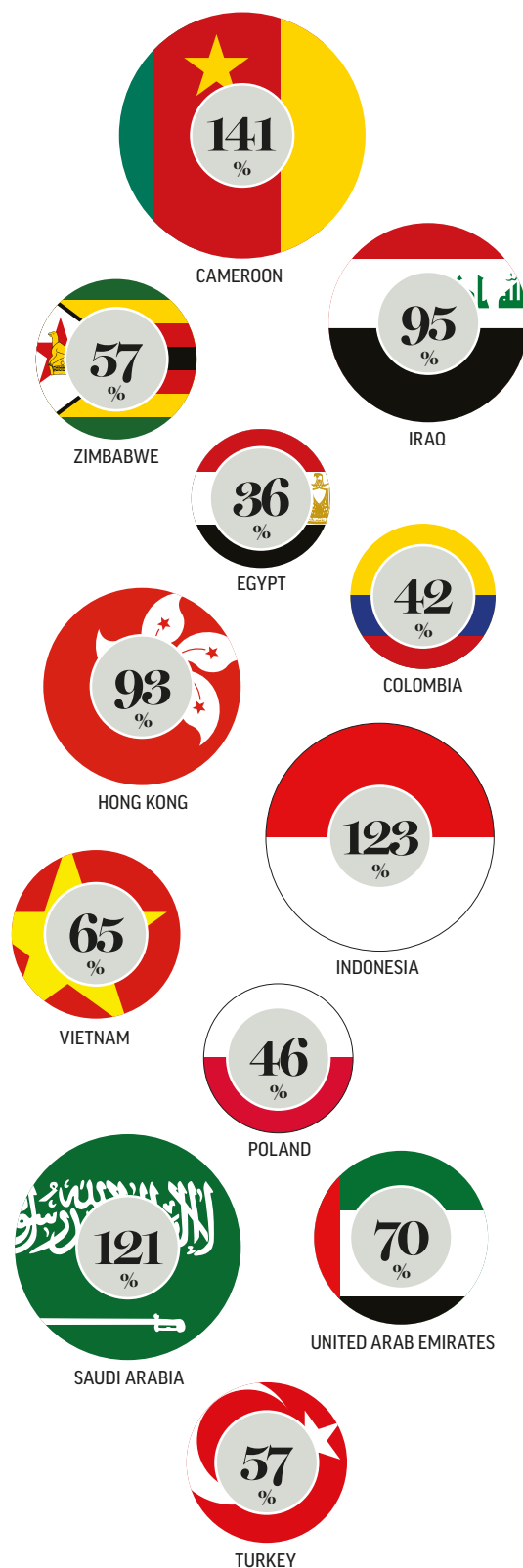
When I was the director of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality, I collaborated with women's organisations and valued their contribution to the realisation of gender equality and non-discrimination in Switzerland. As a member of the CEDAW Committee, I dealt frequently with the appalling retaliation against women human rights defenders by States, private corporations and various armed groups. I measured how vital the voices of women human rights defenders were, and how profoundly NGOs help the treaty bodies accomplish their mission to support implementation of human rights in all countries.

The work of NGOs like ISHR is indispensable, even if they cannot fully compensate for the lack of, or insufficient, public policies and competent State institutions in a country to ensure civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all the people.

Donating makes me feel connected to other donors and mainly to the people at the receiving end, who resist acts of violence, engage to overcome climate change and extreme weather conditions, and fight to obtain basic necessities and rights such as food, good education and health systems or decent housing and access to justice. I wish to share with others - and to do this by supporting NGOs I trust, such as ISHR, because I know that their work has an invaluable impact on the ground. ■

If you are interested in becoming a regular supporter or would like to make a donation, please contact Eva Homolkova, Fundraising officer, e.homolkova@ishr.ch or visit our website <https://www.ishr.ch/donate>

Increase in use of ISHR information products by human rights defenders from the following States. These increases reflect the relevance and accessibility of ISHR's online resources for defenders in restrictive or deteriorating environments.



Our supporters Changemakers!

'It seems to me that the world can be divided into those of us who care deeply about human rights, equality, and fairness to all, those who see human rights as a threat to their privileged positions, and those who are just too busy surviving to become involved. I can well imagine that there are times when you wonder whether your efforts are making for a more progressive world. However, it is apparent to me that the world would be a much more desperate and tragic place without the work of human rights defenders. So, please never be discouraged in this important work. I am so gratified that you all are on the side of justice, fairness and equality and wish you all resilience and strength in your endeavours of which I am in awe!'

Julian Carr, Director of Fair World Foundation and private donor to ISHR

Thank you

The generous contributions of our financial supporters sustain our work to support human rights defenders, strengthen human rights systems and achieve human rights change. They provide hope and make change happen!

As a registered non-profit association in Switzerland, and recognised as tax exempt in the US under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, your gift to ISHR may be tax deductible in these and other jurisdictions. Please support human rights defenders and invest in ISHR.

Governmental and Intergovernmental Donors

- Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Belgium – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Canada – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Canton de Genève
- Czech Republic – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Denmark – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Finland – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ireland – Irish Aid
- Liechtenstein – Office for Foreign Affairs
- Luxembourg – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Netherlands – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Norway – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
- Switzerland – Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- United Kingdom – Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- United Nations Democracy Fund
- United States Department of State
- Ville de Genève

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Jonathan Webster

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Hilary Charlesworth
Phil Lynch and Lucy McKernan
Lucia Nader
Julie de Rivero
Patricia Schulz
Chris and Margaret Sidoti

\$101 - 499

Marina Dailly, Francesco Debolini, Elizabeth Evatt, Olivier de Frouville, Hurst Hannum,

Hans Ineichen,
Sarah Joseph, Bob Last,
Madeleine Sinclair, John Shawley, Anonymous

UP TO \$100

Wolfgang Benedek, Christine Do Phan, Jill Donnelly, Chris Duckett, Ian Duddy, Gregor Henneka, David Homolka, Emily Howie, Hugh de Kretser, Christy Larranaga, Stephen Marks, Fabiana Pardi, Lorraine Potts, Page Schrock, Valentine Sébile, Sophie Sinclair, Peter Splinter, Alperen Usta, Julie / Yulia Allgöwer, Anonymous

International law firms

During 2019, ISHR worked with some of the world's leading law firms on a pro bono basis, enabling us to leverage substantial legal expertise and resources.

- Akin Gump
- Ashurst
- DLA Piper
- Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
- Robert Kirkness, Thorndon Chambers
- Shearman & Sterling
- White & Case
- Winston & Strawn

Good governance, monitoring, evaluation and learning

Developments and disclosures

ISHR is deeply committed to principles of good governance, transparency and accountability.

- In 2019, ISHR's systems of governance, reporting, financial management, procurement, and risk management were subject to an independent donor-commissioned audit by KPMG. In each of these areas, the audit concluded that ISHR is 'well managed' and 'adequately prepared'. ISHR accepted a recommendation to develop a stand-alone anti-corruption policy, which will be finalised and adopted in 2020.
- There were no reported or investigated breaches of ISHR's Code of Conduct or Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy in 2019.

ISHR is also deeply committed to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

- Consistent with this commitment, during the course of 2019, we commissioned an independent expert evaluation of our national legal protection programme. The evaluation, which involved in-depth interviews with more than 40 key stakeholders as well as a document and literature review, concluded that over the period of 2016 to 2019, ISHR's work has: (1) secured the enactment of national human rights defender laws and empowered and supported national-level defenders to participate in political processes to achieve these results; (2) strengthened national protection of defenders through enhanced enforcement of existing laws and policies; and (3) built understanding among defenders about their rights, increased exercise and assertion of those rights, and enhanced access to support when engaged in their human rights work.

ISHR considers that holistic security and a focus on wellbeing are paramount to the safety and sustainability of defenders and their work.

- Throughout 2019, ISHR strengthened its focus on these vital issues, incorporating a digital security module in our Human Rights Defender Advocacy Programme and adopting an organisational Wellbeing Policy following a highly consultative development process involving all staff. The policy sets out a range of organisational, collective and individual responsibilities and commitments designed to contribute to the safety, wellbeing and resilience of our staff and partners.

ISHR is committed to climate justice and to a healthy and sustainable environment. We stand with and support environmental human rights defenders through our dedicated programme on business and human rights defenders. ISHR also recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements.

- Consistent with this recognition, in 2019 we commenced development of an Environmental Policy. The draft Policy sets out our commitment to promoting biodiversity and a healthy and sustainable environment, reducing our environmental impact, and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our strategy and operating methods. The policy also provides guidance and sets out targets and measures so that ISHR can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Financial Statements

This is an extract of ISHR's audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019. For a complete version, please contact Marina Dailly at m.dailly@ishr.ch

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 CHF	2018 CHF
Income		
Revenues - Core		
Governmental Agencies	1,207,312	1,010,048
Foundations & Trusts	293,000	230,690
Individual Donors	38,659	35,662
Other Revenue	89,521	125,178
Total Core Grants	1,628,492	1,401,578
Revenues - Earmarked		
Governmental Agencies	1,011,809	1,598,277
Foundations & Trusts	282,413	375,702
Intergovernmental Agencies	101,320	–
Special Contributions & Consultancy	69,874	–
Total Revenues Earmarked	1,465,416	1,973,978
Total Income	3,093,908	3,375,556
Costs		
Personnel Cost GVA	1,798,066	1,544,661
General Expenditures		
Missions/Travel/Accommodation	408,215	466,342
Publications, Translations, Outreach	152,563	158,166
Office Rentals/Operating Cost	291,519	308,719
Financial Charges/Audit Fees	23,793	27,216
Governance & Strategy	41,176	29,977
US Friends of ISHR Inc	199,948	285,194
Special Rapporteur's Mandate	235,778	223,528
Total Costs	3,151,058	3,043,804
Income (Deficit) for Year	(57,151)	331,752

Income by Source Total CHF 3,093,908

2%	Special Contributions & Consultancy (Earmarked)
3%	Intergovernmental Agencies (Earmarked)
33%	Governmental Agencies (Earmarked)
39%	Governmental Agencies (Core)
9%	Foundations & Trusts & NGOs (Earmarked)
9%	Foundations & Trusts (Core)
4%	Other Income / Individual Donors

'The quality of ISHR's bookkeeping and financial reporting is on a high level; it fulfils the needs of a non-profit organisation with multiple donors, programmes and projects'.


*Independent review of ISHR by Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton,
September 2019*

BALANCE SHEET ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2019

	2019 CHF	2018 CHF
Assets		
Current Assets		
Petty Cash	339	1,986
Bank Accounts & Special Bank Accounts	351,007	831,529
Sub-Total	351,346	833,515
Debtors	125,703	46,976
Withholding Tax	–	–
Deferred & Accrued Assets		
Deferred Expenses	–	–
Grant Receivable Gvt & Inter-Gov	1,222,854	517,350
Grant Receivable Non-Gvt	310,852	91,116
Total Deferred & Accrued Assets	1,533,706	608,466
Total Assets	2,010,755	1,488,957
Liabilities & Reserves		
Current Liabilities	51,782	241,634
Provisions	1,873	6,873
Sub-Total	53,654	248,507
Deferred Grants	1,388,512	614,710
Total Liabilities	1,442,167	863,217
Reserves		
Reserve Funds	625,739	293,987
Income (Deficit) for Year	(57,151)	331,752
Total Reserves	568,588	625,739
Total Liabilities And Reserves	2,010,755	1,488,957

Expenditure by Category Total CHF 3,151,058

1%	Strategy and governance
32%	Supporting human rights defenders
29%	Strengthening human rights standards and systems
25%	Promoting national implementation and an enabling environment for defenders
13%	Operations, administration, finance and fundraising



The "Lennon Wall flag" pictured here was created by artist Badiucio, and inspired by messages of solidarity left on sticky notes on the streets of Hong Kong during peaceful protests in 2019.

'Solidarity is a principle and a fundamental value. We will only be able to win when we feel as our own the crimes and attacks on the dignity of people in other parts of the world. In these critical times in which everything is in crisis, we need to organise, articulate and mobilise.'

Youth climate activist and environmental human rights defender from Honduras

'We are so powerful and we know this because those currently in power are terrified of us. The more powerful we are, the more frightened and aggressive our opponents become. We must remember that the louder the backlash gets, the closer we are to achieving what we came here to do: avert the worst of the climate crisis and thereby create the world that we want to live in, together.'

Aoibhinn Crimmins, student environmentalist and #schoolstrike4climate organiser in Australia

**Now more than ever we need
people who serve humanity.**





ANNUAL REPORT 2020
FOR YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2019

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