

# VISION AND STRATEGY SHAPING A FAIRER FUTURE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS



**Human rights defenders are people who promote and protect the human rights of others. They are people who act with humanity, serve humanity and bring out the best in humanity.**

ISHR's Strategic Framework for the period 2021-2025 sets out the ways in which we support and act in solidarity with defenders and, in so doing, contribute to a world that is fair, just, sustainable and peaceful, in which all people enjoy freedom, dignity and equality, in communities that are diverse and inclusive.

Our strategy was developed in a context characterised by uncertainty and change. This includes a worsening climate emergency, a global pandemic and associated financial crisis, deepening inequalities, worsening authoritarianism and populism, and the erosion of multilateralism, accountability mechanisms and the rule of law.

It is also a context, however, characterised by increased human rights awareness and action at the local, national, regional and international levels. Human rights defenders are mobilising around issues such as environmental justice, racial justice, gender equality, democratic

representation and participation, and the redistribution of economic and political power. They are engaging with the international human rights system to address major global issues, such as systemic racism and police violence and the need for robust and effective human rights regulation of corporations, as well as to monitor and seek international accountability for widespread and systematic violations in States such as China, Egypt, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

On many of these issues, we are at an inflection point; a point at which the work of human rights defenders is perhaps more imperiled but more important than ever. For many defenders, international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms have the potential to protect and amplify their work and impact on the ground. Indeed, for many defenders working in restrictive national contexts, regional and international mechanisms may be the only platforms available. For these mechanisms to be effective, however, they need to be credible, accessible and responsive to defenders, providing them with a safe and influential platform from which to demand justice, push for accountability, and contribute to positive change.



# OUR GOALS FOR CHANGE

Supported by our Theory of Change, ISHR works to ensure that:

**1. Human rights defenders are equipped, connected, supported and influential.**

We provide defenders with tools, trainings and networks to be more effective and influential in promoting, protecting and contributing to the realisation of human rights.

**2. States, businesses and other non-State actors respect and protect human rights defenders.**

We monitor, mobilise, advocate and litigate to ensure that States and businesses consult, respect and protect defenders.

**3. Human rights laws and mechanisms are accessible, responsive and effective.**

We conduct research, provide advice, and undertake advocacy and litigation to ensure that international and regional human rights laws and mechanisms are accessible to defenders, responsive to their demands, and effective in promoting rights and accountability.



# WHO WE SERVE AND SUPPORT

ISHR supports and acts in solidarity with human rights defenders in their work for freedom, dignity, equality, justice and other fundamental values at the international, regional and national levels. We undertake this work with and through other non-governmental organisations, networks and coalitions.

We are deeply informed by the situation, protection needs and priorities of defenders. We work with them in partnerships that are long-term, committed, respectful, empowering and which recognise and honour their knowledge and expertise.



ALERTIA - REPORT



**NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACCESSING INFORMATION AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE ISHR ACADEMY**

10,876

141%

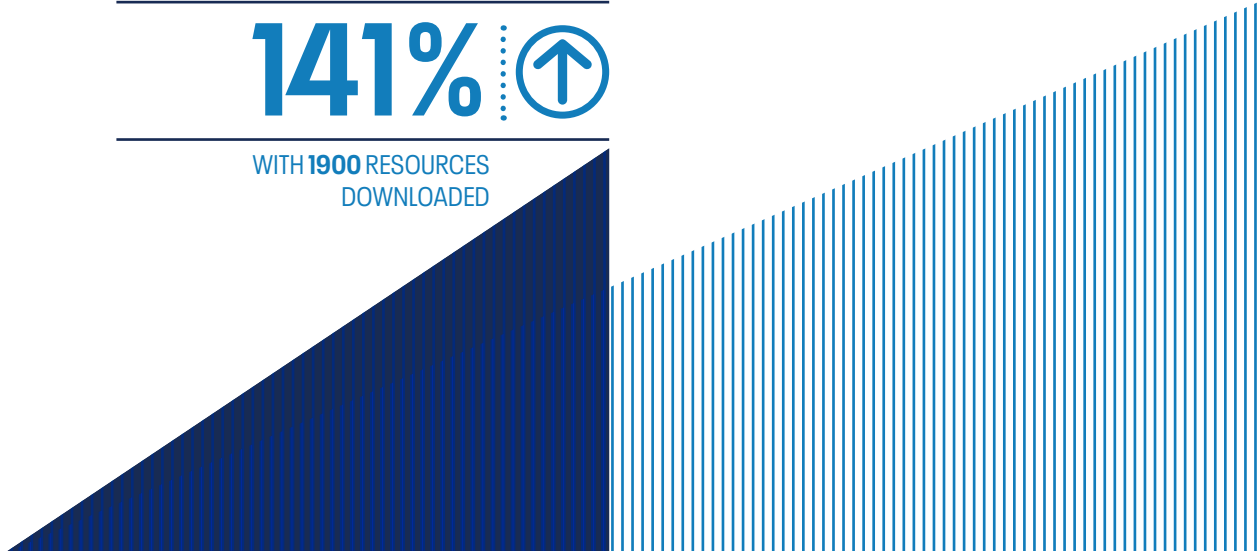
WITH 1900 RESOURCES DOWNLOADED



**NUMBER OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TO WHOM ISHR PROVIDED TRAINING OR ADVOCACY SUPPORT**

1,019

191%



**ISHR's programmes provide support and solidarity to human rights defenders working on the following issues, which we recognise as intersectional and interdependent:**

- Equality, dignity and non-discrimination**

Through this programme, ISHR provides solidarity and support to women human rights defenders and defenders working on topics related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. We also support migrant and refugee rights defenders, and anti-racism defenders, as well as other defenders working to dismantle patriarchal, racist, capitalist, colonialist and other oppressive agendas.
- Environmental justice and sustainability**

Through this programme, ISHR provides solidarity and support to defenders working on issues of environmental justice, corporate responsibility and accountability, and sustainable and inclusive development. We also seek to ensure that businesses and other non-State actors are effectively regulated with respect to human rights and defenders, consult with and become positive advocates for defenders, take action to respect and contribute to the protection of defenders, refrain from actions that restrict or violate their rights, and are held accountable when they fail to do so.
- International accountability**

Through this programme, we provide solidarity and support to defenders working in highly restrictive or repressive environments, and undertake lobbying, advocacy and litigation to ensure that defenders are safe and free. We work to promote both State and non-State accountability for widespread and systematic threats, attacks, restrictions and reprisals against defenders.
- Transparency and the rule of law**

Through this programme, we provide solidarity and support to defenders working in deteriorating environments where there is a need to safeguard democratic institutions and accountability mechanisms. We also support defenders working in environments where there is an opportunity to strengthen human rights defenders protection laws and mechanisms.

**In each of our programmes we use a range of integrated tactics, developed and implemented in partnership with defenders at the national, regional and international levels. These tactics include:**

- Training, capacity building, strategic advice, advocacy support and fellowships for human rights defenders
- Legislative and policy research, advocacy and advice
- Strategic litigation and interventions
- Narrative development, campaigning and mobilisation
- Coalition and movement building and coordination, including acting as secretariat for HRCnet and as co-convenor of the Business Network on Civic Freedoms and Human Rights Defenders

# A VALUES-DRIVEN ORGANISATION

We are **principled** and **passionate** about human rights.

We are deeply **connected** and **act in collaboration** and **solidarity** with human rights defenders.

We develop and work in **partnerships** and **coalitions** that are long-term, committed, respectful and empowering.

We seek to learn and **expand our human rights knowledge** and **share our human rights expertise**.

And we promote **equality, inclusivity, diversity, transparency** and **accountability, both internally and externally**.

## DISCOVER MORE

We are energised by ISHR's strategy, inspired by the defenders we serve, and committed to working with our partners to achieve our shared vision. To learn more and to support this vision, see <https://ishr.ch/about-us/strategy/>

“As an activist and employee with NDWA, I have directly benefited from ISHR's training and mentorship. **ISHR has a unique way of working** with activists. They carry great consciousness of diversity, realities and the needs of their trainees. With this I mean that they take direct interest in our wellbeing, the **principles of humanity are applied at all times**, and they really create an environment that enables us all to appreciate, value and acknowledge the growth we journey collectively. The ISHR team has been the best partner organisation that NDWA worked with, as they do respect our autonomy and realities on the ground which manifested into **equal partnership**.”

LINDA BAUMANN, FEMINIST, HUMAN ACTIVIST AND STRATEGIC COORDINATOR  
AT NAMIBIA DIVERSE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (NDWA)