

## Training on engaging with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights: **Description**

In-person course: **Mid October 2025** (TBC depending on the dates of ACHPR85). See updates [here](#).

**Please read the information below before completing the online application form, which can be found [here](#).**

**Applications must be submitted before midnight in Banjul on 25 August 2025, and ONLY complete applications will be considered.**

### 1. Background

Human rights defenders play a vital role in pushing for sustainable human rights improvements. A free and vibrant civil society is essential to ensure States, businesses and other non-State actors respect, protect and fulfil all human rights for all and to hold them to account when they fail to do so.

The [International Service for Human Rights](#) (ISHR) conducts regular training courses on the use of the main human rights mechanisms, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). This training will equip human rights defenders from Africa with the knowledge and skills to integrate the ACHPR into their existing work at the national level in a strategic manner. The programme also provides an opportunity for participants to engage in lobbying and advocacy activities at the ACHPR with the aim to effect change back home.

### 2. The training (in-person Mid October 2025)

**The training course allows activists to benefit from valuable insights and advocacy support enabling them to develop their knowledge and skills, to make strategic use of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in their national advocacy strategies.**

The expected venue is Banjul, The Gambia (but can be sometimes elsewhere) and the training will take place in between the [NGO Forum](#) and the 85<sup>th</sup> session of ACHPR.

This training programme consists of the following elements:

- a) Access to the [ISHR Academy](#) e-learning platform, which includes interactive materials and toolkits, before and after the course.
- b) 2 live sessions of 2 hours ahead of the in-person training, and self-paced course (2 hours)
- c) 2 days of in person sessions, which will include:

- ✓ Acquire knowledge and skills on the relevant regional instruments and processes: State Periodic Review, Communications, country visits...
- ✓ Learn more about the work of the ACHPR and **how to engage strategically** with its mechanisms
- ✓ Case-studies scenarios to practise **real-life situations and submissions**
- ✓ **Sharing** stories of good practices



- d) An opportunity to **meet, discuss and learn more** about the challenges and strategies of defenders around Africa.

### 3. Advocacy opportunities\*

ISHR will provide support and advocacy accompaniment to support defenders to engage (in-person) with key advocacy opportunities during the 85th ordinary session of the ACHPR (October 2025). Such opportunities can include:

- Reports by key **Commissioners/ Special Procedures mandates** in the area of human rights defenders, women's rights, on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises
- Panel Discussions on issues affecting the protection of **human rights in Africa**
- State periodic reviews

*\*As part of the training, ISHR is exploring the possibilities of enabling participants to attend the NGO Forum and/or part of the 85<sup>th</sup> session of ACHPR.*

### 4. Objectives

The objectives of the course fall into the following three broad categories:

a) **Supporting human rights defenders:**

- Enhance the ability of human rights defenders to engage strategically with the ACHPR, as well as to develop diplomatic and civil society networks;
- Improve the quality of NGO participation in the ACHPR, with a view to exert a greater influence on human rights foreign policy;
- Share tools and knowledge, which human rights defenders can use to ensure their voice is central in regional human rights decision-making;
- Explore and compare the benefits of engagement with these mechanisms, and examine how advocates can use them to bolster their work at the national level;

- Develop strategies and lobbying techniques to increase the potential of human rights defenders' national and regional advocacy work.
- b) **Influencing the substantive outcomes of regional human rights mechanisms** in a positive manner, including ACHPR resolutions and the work of ACHPR thematic and country specific human rights experts (such as Special Rapporteurs).
- c) **Creating a peer group of human rights defenders** working on a diverse range of issues, identifying best practice in advocating for human rights change, and exchanging lessons and experiences in conducting regional/international advocacy.

## 5. Participant profile

This programme is directed at experienced human rights defenders in non-governmental organisations, who have existing advocacy experience (5 years minimum) at the national level and some prior knowledge of the regional human rights system. ISHR supports and promotes solidarity with and between, defenders working on all human rights issues or contexts in Africa, which we recognise as **intersectional and interdependent**, such as equality and non-discrimination, environmental justice, accountability or transparency and rule of law.

Final decisions regarding participants will be based upon the following criteria:

- Match between applicants' area of work/expertise and/or the opportunities provided by the 85th ordinary session of the ACHPR;
- Applicants' knowledge of human rights and their experience and willingness to engage with the ACHPR and integrate it effectively into domestic level advocacy in a sustainable manner;
- Applicants' experience of carrying out advocacy at the national and/or regional level;
- Applicants' advocacy responsibilities and role within their organisation;
- Applicants' willingness to contribute to peer education in a diverse group of participants;
- Applicants' with less opportunities to access the ACHPR.

**The course will be carried out in French and English with simultaneous interpretation.**

ISHR will also commit to ensure diversity and a fair balance between gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics, geographical sub-regions and focus work of the HRDs.

## 6. Application process

By midnight Banjul time on **25 August 2025** each applicant must submit [a completed application form with a reference letter](#) different from your organisation (**take some time to read carefully the requirements and collect information you need**). We expect to receive a high number of applications and we will only select around 15 participants. This means that we cannot accept many worthy candidates. Your understanding is highly appreciated. **ONLY complete applications will be considered.**

## 7. Cost

ISHR will cover the cost of participation of all selected candidates, this includes flights, accommodation and food. ISHR will explore the possibility to cover the participation of selected trainees to the 85<sup>th</sup> session of ACHPR and the NGO Forum, but cannot guarantee that the funding will be available. Please see the application form for more information.

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