

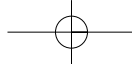
OHCHR

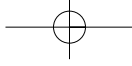
Human rights in action

Promoting
and Protecting Rights
Around the World



The Office
of the United
Nations High
Commissioner for
Human Rights







Preface

OHCHR

This pamphlet is intended to introduce you to the work of my office in meeting the greatest challenge facing human rights today: translating international human rights standards into national laws and practices. The protection and promotion of human rights have only a limited life in the legal phrasings of treaties; they must be given meaning in individual lives. When I accepted this position, I tried to put the challenge as starkly as I could: “Ensuring that human rights are attainable by those who need them most – the victims of human rights violations – is what gives the United Nations meaning.”

After the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations set about drafting international human rights instruments. As the six core treaties began to be widely ratified and entered into force, “treaty bodies” were created to review how states were doing at meeting their commitments. The treaty bodies, staffed by independent experts, worked to engage Governments in constructive dialogue on human rights and to enable the progressive application of international norms. The UN Commission on Human Rights also established rapid response mechanisms – the Special Rapporteurs and other “special procedures” – to investigate major human rights violations and recommend what to do about them.

My office was created after the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993. This represented a further step in recognizing the centrality of human rights to securing a better global future. It was meant to be a proactive, practically oriented office; I intend to make it more so. The highest priority of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is the realisation, in practical terms, of human rights at the country level. This is accomplished through technical co-operation projects, field presences and other activities aimed at creating or strengthening national systems for the protection and promotion of human rights in cooperation with Governments, national and regional partners and with UN country teams.

My office cannot do much on its own. Most of our efforts, as will be seen in the following pages, seek to inspire, organize, inform and extend the work of governments, above all – as well as regional and non-governmental organisations and UN country teams – as we strive toward the common goal of protecting the human rights of individuals across the globe. The work is incomplete, of course, but I hope you will agree that we have made a good beginning.



The Office of
the United Nations
High Commissioner for
Human Rights

Sergio Vieira de Mello, High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human
rights
in action

3



Promotion: the Role of **Technical Cooperation**

What is technical cooperation?

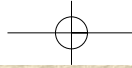
Human rights have little value if they are not implemented. States recovering from conflict or lack-

ing human rights expertise often need help in implementing their human rights obligations by translating them into laws and practices. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights devotes much of its resources – through its Technical Cooperation Programme – to supporting States' efforts in this regard. The Programme helps countries to apply international human rights norms at the national level. It provides practical assistance for the building and strengthening of institutions which have a direct impact on the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Priority areas for action are recommended by the bodies charged with monitoring States' compliance with international treaties (the "treaty bodies") and the mechanisms of the United Nations' Commission



Thousands of internally displaced persons live in the "Nelson Mandela" neighbourhood in Cartagena, Colombia. OHCHR, along with UNHCR, work on protection issues here. The area has also been visited by several Special Rapporteurs on mandates as varied as violence against women and children in armed conflict.



on Human Rights (particularly the “special procedures” described below). OHCHR works closely with partners, especially UN Country Teams, state and national institutions and civil society organizations.

How does technical cooperation work in practice?

The Technical Cooperation Programme is funded primarily through the UN Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. In 2002, a total of US\$11 million was spent on technical cooperation activities, of which US\$10 million came from what are called “voluntary contributions.” These funds exist outside the regular UN budget. In order to benefit from the Programme, a Government must submit a request for support to OHCHR, which then carries out an assessment of the country’s human rights needs. This needs assessment is normally conducted through a mission to the State; it involves consultations with the Government and other partners, including Parliament, the courts, civil society and UN Country Teams (UNCTs). Once the assessment has been completed, a project is formulated that identifies areas in need of improvement and outlines a comprehensive strategy for action. The project is reviewed closely during implementation and, once completed, there is an independent evaluation to measure the success of the programme and, where necessary, develop a plan for further action. OHCHR will increasingly rely on external partners to implement these activities, especially UNCTs. OHCHR will ensure direct implementation of these activities only when other partners are unable to do so.

Human
rights
in action

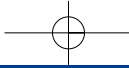
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What kind of technical cooperation activities are undertaken by OHCHR?

Each project is requested by and tailored to the needs of the beneficiary country. Assistance may be provided in the following areas.

National Parliaments: OHCHR supports Parliaments in discharging their human rights functions, addressing a variety of issues, including the development of national human rights action plans, the role of parliamentary human rights committees and the technical processes of signing up to international human rights treaties.





Colombia

FIELD PRESENCE

OHCHR's office in Bogotá was established in 1996 to observe and monitor the Colombian situation and to advise the Colombian authorities on how to promote and protect human rights in the context of internal armed conflict. OHCHR activities have included: observing, monitoring and providing analytical reports to the High Commissioner with a view to ensuring that the international community is aware of the human rights situation in Colombia; advising the Colombian authorities on the formulation and implementation of policies to promote and protect human rights; providing technical assistance to selected State and non-governmental institutions to strengthen national capacity in human rights protection; and promoting human rights through publications and awareness-raising campaigns. This strategy allows the office to highlight human rights topics and raise the level of discussion within Colombian society, especially among policy-makers.



In Choco, a department bordering Panama, OHCHR was asked to give conclusions and recommendations concerning the killing of 120 black civilians who took refuge in a church. The plight of the black IDPs of Chocos touches upon many of the issues addressed by OHCHR, such as racism, extreme poverty, the right to development and the protection of civilians in armed conflict.



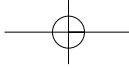
A destroyed classroom after a guerrilla fight in Selvas del Chocos.

Human rights in action

6



Internally displaced persons in Choco.



Field Action

Staff of the OHCHR Mission in Serbia and Montenegro meeting victims of police ill-treatment in Ugao village, Sandzak region, Serbia, April 2002. Identifying and exposing serious human rights violations plays an important part of the office's field operations. Countries moving from conflict must deal with difficult questions of impunity or accountability for acts of the past, particularly among the armed forces and the police.



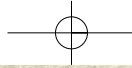
Legislation: OHCHR assists Governments in the reform of legislation that has a clear impact on the situation of human rights, thereby ensuring that laws are brought into conformity with international human rights standards. Drafts provided by a Government are reviewed and recommendations made.

Constitutions: OHCHR provides assistance for the incorporation of international human rights norms in national constitutions. It can facilitate a national consensus on the elements to be incorporated in those constitutions. It may assist with advisory services, the organization of workshops, the provision of human rights information and documentation, or public information campaigns to ensure the involvement of all sectors of society. Issues addressed in OHCHR's constitutional activities include legislative drafting and constitutional law; the drafting of bills of rights; the provision of justiciable remedies under the law; options for the allocation and separation of governmental powers; the independence of the judiciary; and the role of the judiciary in overseeing the police and prison systems.

Staff from a Sierra Leone regional human rights office assisting a team of forensic experts to map mass graves in the village of Mende Kelema. Villagers gave testimonies to the experts, the first team to visit the country, who then traced the gravesites using GPS (global positioning system).



National institutions: OHCHR assists in the creation of independent national human rights institutions, which play an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level. OHCHR's work in this area is guided by the Paris Principles, adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, which represent the benchmark against which national institutions are measured. The Paris Principles provide important guidance on such issues as legislation; composition and independence; competencies and responsibilities; handling of complaints; and methods of operation, including how national human



In the Lacluta Viqueque sub-district of Timor Leste, nine men, perpetrators of past human rights violations, have addressed the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission in order to be re-integrated into their community. The Regional Commissioner and elders enter into a dialogue with the perpetrators and with their victims. After discussion and a ritual, the nine men, who must disclose their actions and denounce any further violence, are reconciled with their people and ordered to carry out community work. The Human Rights Section of UNMISSET is working with the Commission.



rights institutions should interact with Government and civil society.

OHCHR works with some 50 countries on this issue in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program and a wide array of partners. It supports the sharing of best practices among national institutions and their involvement in UN and other international and regional fora; promotes the establishment of regional networks of national institutions; and encourages treaty bodies and special procedures to turn to national institutions as sources of expertise and country knowledge in order to ensure follow-up to their recommendations. OHCHR has also issued a practical manual for those involved in the establishment and administration of national institutions and has organized seminars to guide government officials in the structure and functioning of such bodies.

Administration of justice: OHCHR provides orientation and training courses for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers and prison personnel. Such courses allow participants to become more familiar with the human rights standards that apply to the administration of justice, as well as humane and effective techniques for the performance of law enforcement, penal and judicial functions. These courses also equip participants with the knowledge necessary to incorporate human rights into their own countries' manuals and training activities and to review existing regulations and practices to ensure conformity with human rights standards.

Human rights education: Human rights education enhances knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms for their protection. It also promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage individuals to uphold





Cambodia

FIELD PRESENCE

The Cambodia office was established in 1993 with a mandate that combines technical assistance, monitoring and protection. Activities focus on strengthening government institutions, non-governmental organisations and civil society. OHCHR has helped the Government to establish institutions and a legal framework consistent with international human rights standards. It has helped to strengthen judicial reform efforts and the justice system to ensure human rights are promoted and protected under the rule of law; to ensure fair and professional law enforcement, consistent with human rights standards; and to enhance the capacity of the Government to meet its international human rights treaty reporting obligations. OHCHR works to develop the capacity of Cambodian NGOs and civil society organisations to carry out human rights protection and promotion activities. Current attention is focused on strengthening NGO capacity to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights and the human rights of vulnerable groups.

Economic, social and cultural rights. This workshop, held by OHCHR-Cambodia in January 2002, brought together Cambodian human rights and development NGOs to be trained on monitoring and documenting violations of economic, social and cultural rights and develop strategies to advance them. Education, health, housing and land rights were specifically discussed. The workshop was such a success that the NGOs set up their own Monitoring Committee, conducted surveys in several provinces, and prepared a parallel report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.



Non formal education for street children. Street children and children from slums attend classes run by local non governmental organizations at a makeshift school on the premises of a Buddhist temple in Phnom Penh. Due to pervasive poverty and the relatively high cost of



education, many Cambodian children are unable to complete school. Programmes of this kind are often the only opportunity for learning for these children. OHCHR-Cambodia assisted the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia in conducting an assessment of the right to education and making recommendations to strengthen its implementation.



Human rights in action

Human Rights and the Military



It is essential for the good functioning of the rule of law that the armed forces be bound by the Constitution and other laws of the land, that they answer to a democratic Government and that they are trained in and committed to human rights and humanitarian law. While traditional military training often includes attention to the laws of war, including the four Geneva Conventions, specific training in the area of human rights is also necessary. OHCHR's approach to military training is based on two main precepts: First, international human rights standards do apply in situations of armed conflict, in addition to humanitarian law. Second, the duties of modern professional soldiers increasingly include civil policing duties, the maintenance of order and public safety under states of emergency, and assignment to international peace-keeping operations. The effective, professional and humane performance of these duties requires a knowledge of, and sensitization to, international human rights standards, as well as the skills to apply them in the daily work of the military.

Field Action

Human
rights
in action

10

Sia Mondeh was ten years old when she was abducted by an alleged former RUF combatant. Her case was reported to staff from the Kenema office of UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) while they were on patrol. An investigation was opened and the girl was found in Puhejun village, Tongo field. She, as well as the surrounding community, confirmed that she was being treated as a slave. The human rights officers, with the help of the police and NGOs, managed to get the girl out of the family where she was being held. She was brought to Kenema where her family was traced in Kaima, Sando Chiefdom, and was recently reunited with them after six years of separation.



their own rights and those of others. Education makes an essential contribution to the prevention of human rights abuses and conflict and helps create a society in which all persons are valued and respected.

OHCHR's work in this area focuses on the following:

- Developing human rights training and educational materials, such as manuals for teachers in primary and secondary schools, judges, prosecutors and lawyers, prison officials and human rights monitors;
- Facilitating information-sharing and networking among human rights education actors through activities such as the development of OHCHR's Database and Resource Collection on Human Rights Education; the organization of events to

Field Action



Housing: following two fires at squatter settlements in Phnom Penh in November 2001, 3,300 families were relocated to Anlung Krognam area, some 15 kilometres from Phnom Penh.

The resettlement site was an undeveloped flood plain, with inadequate sanitation, water supply, access to education and health facilities, food and income opportunities. OHCHR-Cambodia, in cooperation with UN Habitat and Cambodian NGOs, has been working to improve the situation of the relocated families. In June 2002, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia visited the relocation site and met with the concerned communities. He then raised the issue of their poor conditions with the Government, and obtained commitments that forced evictions would not reoccur, that land-sharing and upgrading of existing settlements would be used as an alternative to large-scale relocations, and that proper consultation with the affected communities would take place if ever relocation is necessary.



In mid 2002, OHCHR and UNDP launched its first joint project in Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at assessing development at the municipal level through a rights-based approach. In the absence of consolidated

and public reports on the human rights situation at the grass roots level, the Rights-based Municipal Assessments Project will play a crucial role in future development programming across the country. Sixteen National RMAP Assessment Officers were trained in Sarajevo October 2002 and deployed to six municipalities for three months. Over the next 2.5 year, teams will assess 48 municipalities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.



initiate and strengthen activities with a human rights education focus; and the provision of support to activities organized by partners;

- Developing country technical cooperation projects that include human rights education and training components;
- Supporting local efforts for human rights education through the Assisting Communities Together project, which provides financial assistance to grass-roots initiatives (see box);
- Disseminating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, now available in more than 320 languages.

Treaty obligations: OHCHR organizes training activities for government officials responsible for preparing reports to the international human rights



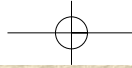
Following one of the most tragic armed conflicts in contemporary Africa, OHCHR is providing strong support to the Human Rights Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in dealing with past human rights violations and contributing to building a new and peaceful Sierra Leone. The year 2002 was a watershed in Sierra Leone. The war was declared over and general elections took place. Civil authorities were re-established across the country. Economic activities resumed and numerous refugees and internally displaced persons returned to their homes. During the conflict, OHCHR backed the Human Rights Section in monitoring violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including atrocities committed against women and children. UNAMSIL and the International Committee of the Red Cross were the only international actors allowed to monitor the situation of detainees in the prisons under the state of emergency. To give the national recovery a solid foundation on international human rights principles, the Sierra Leone Human Rights Manifesto was signed by the High Commissioner, the Government, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights and the National Forum for Human Rights, an umbrella group of non-governmental organisations. The Human Rights Section is backing OHCHR in supporting the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. OHCHR has been advancing sensitization programs related to the Special Court established to undertake prosecutions for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict, including summary executions, amputations, sexual violence

Sierra Leone

against women and crimes against children. OHCHR continues to guide the Human Rights Section in developing local capacities for the protection and promotion of human rights, both within the State (for example, strengthening the administration of justice) and national human rights institutions and within civil society (by helping, for example, new women's organizations struggling against harmful traditional practices and gender discrimination).

A demonstration was organized in Daru in June 2002 at the court barray. The demonstration took place just after a sensitization workshop which included the Regent Paramount chief Daniel Dombai Kamba, section chiefs, police, teachers, youth groups, ex-combatants, religious leaders, elders, and others. The workshop was organized by a UNAMSIL regional human rights office and two local NGOs and focused on basic human rights, women's rights, the TRC and the Special Court. Section chiefs, who came from as far as 18 miles away, promised to carry the human rights message to their communities.





Field Action



Members of the Hailesslassie Bekre family who were, in 1999, deported from Addis Ababa to Eritrea after their identities were mistaken. Four years later, when being repatriated to their country, they were detained in the buffer zone separating Ethiopia and Eritrea, a



"no man's land" known as Zela Ambessa. Efforts by the UNMEE Human Rights Office enabled the siblings to finally return home.

Field Action

During a field mission, the Special Rapporteur and OHCHR Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Staff meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Southern Serbia in Bujanovac, March 2001. OHCHR can play an important role during and in the immediate aftermath of conflict. The office works closely with the UN rights mechanisms and with



key political actors to ensure that human rights are effectively integrated into peace plans and follow-up action.

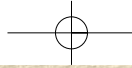
treaty bodies. Participants are provided with methodological tools, such as OHCHR's "Manual on Human Rights Reporting", and can benefit from interaction with experts from the treaty bodies as well as with specialized OHCHR staff. When possible, trainees may observe meetings of treaty bodies. Participants also engage in practical exercises that allow them to test skills acquired during the course.

Assisting Communities Together (ACT)

Civil society plays an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. OHCHR, in partnership with UNDP, supports grassroots activities of NGOs by providing them with micro-grants of up to \$5,000. These funds assist activities that require a relatively small amount of support to be implemented but that can nevertheless have an important positive impact. The ACT project has, for example, supported activities that seek to raise awareness of human rights, such as the creation of information centres on human rights, special television programmes and cultural events. By supporting these and other initiatives, the ACT project both strengthens partnerships between UN and local human rights constituencies and facilitates the local human rights work which is such a vital part of efforts to bring lasting improvements in people's daily lives.

For more information, please refer to the OHCHR brochure "Assisting Communities Together".





Protection: the Role of **Monitoring**

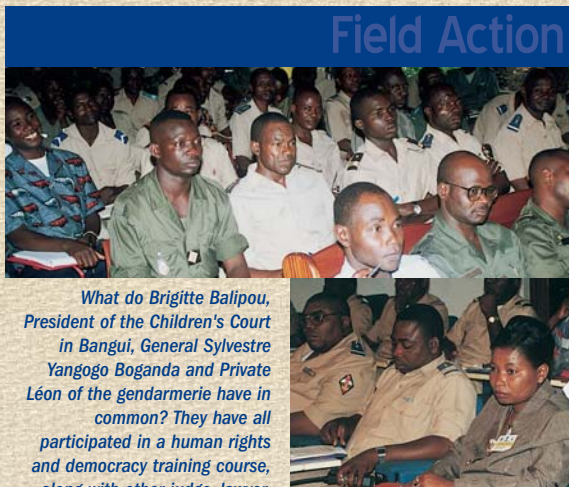
Human rights monitoring gauges the extent to which human rights are being enjoyed and exercised. Its initial purpose is to identify and clarify – in an independent, impartial and objective manner – specific human rights violations, as well as patterns of violations. This process requires a

meticulous verification of the facts. Monitoring allows us to examine, study, document and come to understand a case, a series of cases, a particular situation or a pattern of human rights violations.

The purpose of monitoring is not just to share information, but to use that knowledge to ensure better protection and promotion of human rights. Understanding the causes – as illuminated by research into patterns of violations – helps lay the basis for action. On one level, this may entail the pursuit of remedies for specific violations. On another, this knowledge may be used to devise strategies to address the causes – through technical cooperation, for example. In other words,

human rights monitoring allows the international community to identify problems and to advance concrete recommendations to solve them.

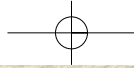
Human rights monitoring is carried out by independent international human rights experts mandated by the Commission on Human Rights (see below), as well as by OHCHR field presences when this has been agreed



What do Brigitte Balipou, President of the Children's Court in Bangui, General Sylvestre Yangogo Boganda and Private Léon of the gendarmerie have in common? They have all participated in a human rights and democracy training course, along with other judge, lawyer, police and gendarme colleagues.

Since 2000, these two-week training courses have been organized by the Human Rights Section of the BONUCA peace-building mission to strengthen national capacities in human rights in the Central African Republic.





with the respective Governments. In addition, monitoring of an investigative nature is conducted by independent commissions of inquiry or by OHCHR when requested to do so by such bodies as the Security Council or the Secretary-General.

The Commission on Human Rights and its “Special Procedures”

The UN has a number of monitoring mechanisms to examine specific themes or country situations from a human rights perspective. The Commission on Human Rights assigns experts (special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts) or working groups to examine, monitor and publicly report on human rights situations in specific countries or territories or, more broadly, on themes related to human rights violations worldwide (torture, for example, or the independence of judges and lawyers). There are currently 37 mandates, of which 26 are thematic and 11 are country (or territory) specific. They are collectively known as “special procedures”. The mandate holder’s work involves analysis of information from various sources, interaction with Governments, fact-finding missions and the drafting of annual reports to the Commission and the General Assembly. The

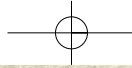
activities of the country and thematic mechanisms are based on communications received from various sources (such as the victims or their relatives, and local or international non-governmental organizations) alleging human rights violations. Communications may concern individual cases or contain details of situations where violations of human rights may be taking place on a larger scale.

Where information attests to the imminence of a serious human rights violation (for example, fear that a detained person may be subjected to torture or may die as a result of an untreated disease), some mechanisms allow for the

Field Action

An international lawyer from OHCHR’s judicial assistance programme assists a national lawyer and a detained person. Following the crisis of 1993, the Burundi judicial system collapsed and became dysfunctional until 1996 when OHCHR brought international lawyers into the country. The programme has helped to restore confidence in the administration of justice and revive its activities.





Field Action

Government representatives, as well as civil society were invited to the inauguration of the first regional human rights office of UNAMSIL, in Kenema, Sierra Leone. The UNAMSIL regional human rights offices carry out human rights monitoring and reporting, training and capacity building, community liaison, advocacy and support to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court.



With organisational assistance from the Human Rights Section of UNMISSET, this building is being rehabilitated as the Headquarters of the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Timor Leste. A former prison, used to detain political prisoners during the occupation by Indonesia from 1975-99, it will also house an association of former political prisoners and, eventually, the building will become a centre for NGOs and a human rights archive.



submission of an urgent appeal to Governments to request clarification; call for the effective protection of the alleged victim and observance of human rights standards; urge the authorities to undertake full, independent and impartial investigations and to adopt all necessary measures to prevent further violations; and request to be kept informed about the situation. Some urgent appeals may be submitted jointly by more than one mechanism. Urgent appeals frequently result in a positive outcome.

The special procedure mechanisms are the backbone of the system of international human rights protection and are critical for monitoring observance of human rights standards and addressing many of the most serious human rights violations. They are useful for assessing the needs of a specific country in the field of human rights, thus functioning as a diagnostic tool for the Government's follow-up action.

Other types of fact-finding and investigative monitoring missions

In addition to the work of the special procedures, fact-finding missions and investigations have also been undertaken by ad hoc commissions of inquiry and committees of experts, special missions of the Secretary-General and field missions of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Those missions have been composed of members of special procedures mechanisms (special rapporteurs and working groups of the Commission





OHCHR (originally as the Centre for Human Rights) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has reported on the human rights situation there since 1993. Monitoring activities grew in 1998 to include a focus on major human rights issues in the country, including gender discrimination, the protection of minorities and rule of law, and social and economic rights. Main objectives and strategies include: ensuring that issues of gender-based violence as they relate to the international police mandate are addressed within the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina; pursuing the concept of gender mainstreaming and greater gender analysis in the policies implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina; ensuring that social and economic rights are addressed in working national institutions and international agencies; helping NGOs on rule of law issues and reporting and assessment of human rights; identifying vulnerable groups and helping define the violations of their rights and appropriate remedies; and ensuring that the legal framework on immigration and asylum provides for effective protection of human rights.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

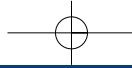


Seven years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, some 388,000 persons remain internally displaced within Bosnia and Herzegovina and an estimated 200,000 refugees are outside the country. While delay in property repossession and reconstruction of war damaged homes have hindered the return process, other factors also present further obstacles.

OHCHR emphasises the importance of human rights protection for those who elect to return or locally integrate to ensure solutions are sustainable. In November 2002, the then Special Rapporteur for BiH and FRY visited the home of a Bosnian Croat refugee family who has recently returned to their pre-war home in Derventa municipality, and who face many difficulties in reestablishing their lives in the country.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country of destination and transit for persons who have been trafficked. OHCHR has been the lead agency in combating trafficking since 1998, by encouraging other agencies with relevant mandates to mobilize their resources, in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner. OHCHR has ensured that the situation of trafficked persons, particularly women and children, has been included in new legislation, that the National Plan of Action on Trafficking is implemented in partnership with NGOs, and that the OHCHR Human Rights Guidelines and Principles on Trafficking are integrated into all efforts.



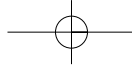


Occupied Palestinian Territories: Gaza and the West Bank

At the request of the Palestinian National Authority, OHCHR began technical cooperation in 1996. The initial work dealt with introducing human rights standards into legislative processes and training the security services. The main focus of OHCHR's work is institution building in the area of rule of law in both Gaza and the West Bank. This work is done with Palestinian Authority institutions and with civil society groups and non-governmental organisations, in particular the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights and the women's organisation Mashraqiyyat.



OHCHR in cooperation with the Palestinian Bar Association organized a seminar on the Role of Lawyers in Protecting Human Rights in October 2002 in Ramallah city. Although there are currently numerous checkpoints set up in the West Bank and in Gaza, 26 lawyers (including 6 women) managed to get to Ramallah from different districts of the West bank and Jerusalem. The course was a practical introduction to basic principles of international human rights law and standards related to the role of lawyers, prosecutors and the judiciary and their application in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Strong demand has led to the organization of other training courses for the Palestinian lawyers.





Field Action

Bokeo people and the King. About 900 indigenous people from the Bokeo district in the province of Ratanakiri in Cambodia became involved in a land dispute with a military general in 1997.

Cambodia's indigenous people largely depend on their natural environment for survival. Due to their comparatively low literacy rate, poor command of the Khmer language, and poor knowledge of the law, indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

The 900 villagers, who had lived on the disputed land for generations, were fraudulently induced to sell their land to the general. They filed a complaint to the provincial court asking for the return of their land. Local NGOs, OHCHR-Cambodia and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia intervened to advocate for a just solution of their case.

After years of dispute, and following a request by the Special Representative, His Majesty the King granted an audience to the villagers and announced that the land would be returned to the people.



on Human Rights), independent experts and UN staff. UN missions have included criminal investigators, military analysts, forensic experts, security officers, information management experts and administrative personnel. Fact-finding and investigative monitoring missions can be initiated by a variety of actors, such as:

- Security Council (1992 Commission of Experts on the Former Yugoslavia, 1994 Commission of Experts on Rwanda)
- Commission on Human Rights, ECOSOC (1997 Joint Investigative Mission of CHR Special Procedures for the DRC; 1999 International Commission of Inquiry on East Timor; 2001 Human Rights Inquiry Commission to the occupied Palestinian territories)
- Secretary-General (1993 Panel of Inquiry, Liberia; 1997 Secretary-General Investigative Team for the DRC)
- General Assembly (1998 UN Investigation Team for Afghanistan)
- Government's initiative (2000 International Commission of Inquiry on Togo)
- High Commissioner for Human Rights (FRY, Kosovo, 1999)
- Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (2002 forensic mission to Afghanistan)



Field Presences: Promotion and protection where they matter most

OHCHR at the country level

OHCHR concentrates its resources at the country level because that is where international norms can be translated

into reality and reflected in national legislation and practice; where the promotion of human rights, through information and education, can forestall human rights violations; and where links can be forged among the international, regional and national systems for human rights and civil society.

Some field presences have focused on promotional and technical cooperation activities. Others have responded to human rights violations in armed conflicts, with strong protection roles. Others have both promotion and protection roles. OHCHR also plays an important part in field

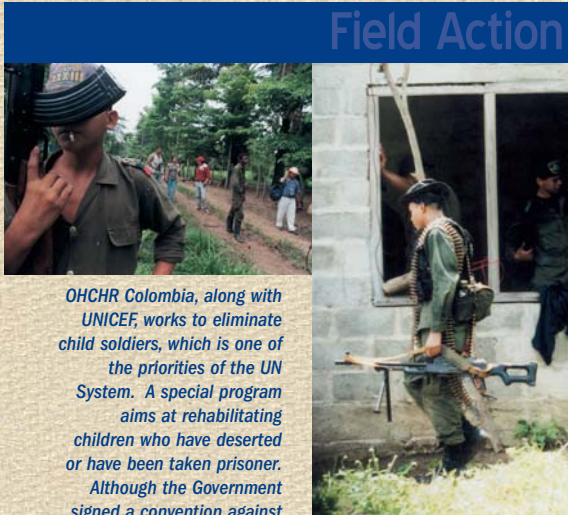
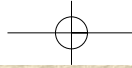
Human
rights
in action

20

OHCHR Staff Member joins two Liberian members of the Independent Election Commission to monitor the July 1997 elections in Liberia. OHCHR contributed to UN election observation in Liberia by sending four staff members, each of whom was posted to a rural area where their tasks included observing and reporting on voting and vote counting at polling stations and ballot-counting venues.



Field Action



OHCHR Colombia, along with UNICEF, works to eliminate child soldiers, which is one of the priorities of the UN System. A special program aims at rehabilitating children who have deserted or have been taken prisoner.

Although the Government signed a convention against the recruitment of soldiers under 18 years of age, the guerrillas continue to engage boys and girls as young as 13-15 years old.



operations run by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs. Under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in charge of a mission, the human rights component of a peace operation undertakes core promotion and protection functions aimed at addressing the causes of human rights violations while assisting in the development of strong national human rights protection systems.

Technical cooperation programmes are a dynamic part of OHCHR's work. A large number of OHCHR field presences are managed by programme officers responsible for the implementation of specific technical cooperation projects in

human rights, working within United Nations Country Teams. In the implementation of its projects, OHCHR pursues ever closer cooperation with other UN actors, especially with UNDP and the country teams, to "mainstream" – or integrate – human rights throughout the UN system, ensuring efficient use of resources and maximum impact. Mainstreaming creates additional demands on OHCHR to provide guidance and training.

In 1992, there was only one human rights field presence, in what was then Yugoslavia. Currently, OHCHR is present in some 40 countries, fielding over 200 national and international personnel.

Human
rights
in action

21

The Human Rights Strengthening Programme (HURIST)

HURIST is a joint project between OHCHR and UNDR. It seeks to support the implementation of UNDP's policy on human rights as presented in the policy document "Integrating Human Rights with Sustainable Human Development". HURIST supports UNDP country offices that have received requests from Governments for cooperation in the field of human rights. It aims to encourage human rights action by UN Country Teams, to enhance national capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights and to facilitate a human rights approach to development programming.

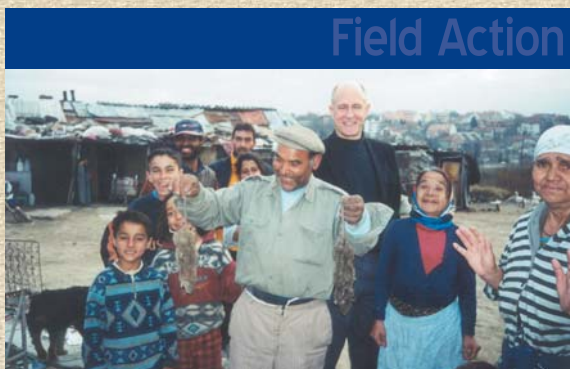


OHCHR at the regional and sub-regional level

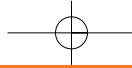
Regional and sub-regional arrangements and strategies play an important role in promoting and protecting human rights. OHCHR has deployed representatives to improve its technical cooperation activities regionally by enhancing cooperation and promoting the exchange and dissemination of experience and best practices.

OHCHR works closely with governmental agencies, parliaments, civil society, international organizations (including other UN agencies, international financial institutions and regional organisations) to focus on cross-regional substantive issues – such as trafficking in women in Southeast Asia or in Europe – and to ensure that OHCHR’s advisory services are readily accessible in all regions.

Regional human rights arrangements have been established within three existing intergovernmental organisations: The African Union, the Organization of American States and the Council of Europe. OHCHR has regional advisers collaborating with the United Nations Economic and Social Commissions in Bangkok, Santiago de Chile, Addis Ababa and Beirut. OHCHR also supports other regional human rights endeavors such as those by the League of Arab States. OHCHR has regional offices in Southern and Central Africa (Pretoria and Yaoundé) and plans to deploy representatives in Dakar (for West Africa) and in the Pacific and Caribbean sub-regions.



In the field, OHCHR offices such as in the Serbia and Montenegro work to promote the human rights of minorities and other vulnerable and marginalized groups such as the Roma.



www.ohchr.org

More Information

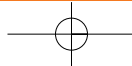
The High Commissioner for Human Rights bears the principal responsibility for United Nations human rights activities. The mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is to protect and promote human rights for all. OHCHR bases itself on the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social – should be given equal emphasis and promoted and protected without discrimination.



For more information on OHCHR's work, please refer to our web site (www.ohchr.org). You will find there introductory information on the history and role of OHCHR and a wealth of more detailed information about our activities.

You will also find a link to OHCHR publications, most of which are available in all the official languages of the UN: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. OHCHR publications are distributed free of charge.

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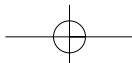


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