

Using Indicators for Monitoring and Implementation of Human Rights **OHCHR's Work and Support to NHRIs**

Information Note

(ICC 25, Session on "NHRIs and Monitoring", 21 March 2012)

The need for quantitative and qualitative indicators to enhance the measurement and implementation of human rights has been increasingly highlighted by international and national human rights mechanisms. Indicators are seen as critical tools for assessing progress in the implementation of human rights, formulating human rights-based public policies and making available relevant information to States, monitoring mechanisms, as well as civil society.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) initiated its work on human rights indicators more specifically in response to a request from the Inter-Committee Meeting of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies seeking assistance in using statistical information in assessing the realization of human rights in the States parties to the core international human rights treaties.¹ OHCHR has developed a conceptual and methodological framework for human rights indicators whose objective is to adopt a structured and consistent approach for translating universal human rights standards into indicators that are useful at country level.

Status of the work

In 2008, the Inter-Committee Meeting of the Treaty Bodies (ICM) endorsed the conceptual and methodological framework outlined in the *Report on Indicators for Promoting and Monitoring the Implementation of Human Rights* (HRI/MC/2008/3).²

The framework was developed by OHCHR, in consultation with a panel of experts, including members of treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, United Nations agencies, NHRIs and civil society organisations. The framework has been subjected to a validation exercise involving workshops and consultation with national human rights stakeholders, namely government agencies, NHRIs, statistical institutions, non-governmental organisations and United Nations country teams, in different regions and countries.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities require States parties to use

¹ The work was also pursuant to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly in 1993 stating that "to strengthen the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, additional approaches should be examined, such as a system of indicators to measure progress in the realization of the rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" (para. 98). References calling for the use of indicators in the field of human rights can be found in many parts of the international human rights normative framework on economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights. A recent reference is Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which is specifically about statistics and data collection.

² The report is available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indicators/index.htm>. A first outline of the proposed framework was submitted to the ICM in June 2006 (report HRI/MC/2006/7).

indicators, drawing on OHCHR's framework and list of illustrative indicators, for reporting on the realisation of the rights enshrined in the respective treaties.³

At a regional level, the Principles and Guidelines on the implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights recommended the development of structural, process and outcome indicators.⁴ In 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported on the on-going development of indicators for measuring progress of rights under the Protocol of San Salvador, drawing on the OHCHR framework.⁵ The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights also stressed the relevance of the same framework for systematic work on the implementation of human rights.⁶

NHRIs' work on indicators for the promotion and monitoring of human rights

A growing number of initiatives, whether spearheaded or supported by NHRIs in collaboration with other human rights stakeholders, have worked on developing the use of indicators to promote and monitor human rights drawing on OHCHR's framework. For example, OHCHR provided support on indicators in Ecuador, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal and the United Kingdom.

Kenya - In operationalising its mandate the Kenya National Human Rights Commission has been working on the development of indicators to help in monitoring the realisation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights in Kenya. In 2010, a working group comprising KNCHR, Ministry of Justice National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (MED) of the Ministry of Planning, and the Performance Secretariat on human rights indicators was established. The objective was to encourage the use of OHCHR framework on indicators among government agencies. KNCHR also used the OHCHR framework to analyse the state of human rights implementation in Kenya in its third annual report.⁷

Mexico- OHCHR-Mexico's collaboration with the National Institute for Statistics and Geography and the Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos has focused on the selection of indicators on selected human rights. The development of indicators has been part of the strategy to strengthen the State's capacity to monitor its compliance with international human rights instruments. In collaboration with the Mexico City Human Rights Ombudsperson and OHCHR, the Judicial Council of the Tribunal of Justice of Mexico City formally approved in 2010 the implementation of validated indicators on the right to fair trial and started populating them in other local tribunals in Mexico.⁸

Ecuador – A joint collaboration among the government; through the Secretariat for National Planning and Development, the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Cults and the National Institute for Statistics and Census; the Defensor del Pueblo and civil society organisations initiated the development of human rights indicators (SIDERECHOS). The system aims at supporting the integration of human rights into national planning process and follow-up to the recommendations of UPR.

Nepal – The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers (OPMCM), several government ministries and civil society organizations and OHCHR-Nepal developed indicators with two parallel objectives. The first

³ United Nations documents CCPR/C/2009/1, CRPD/C/2/3 and E/C.12/2008/2.

⁴ The final document is available from

<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/2743668/1592567488/name/Eng%20Nairobi%20ESCR%20Pcpl%20Guidelines%20Finalized.doc>

⁵ For more information, see, for instance, <http://scm.oas.org/pdfs/2011/CP25807-I.pdf>

⁶ "Serious implementation of human rights standards requires that benchmarking indicators are defined", 17/8/2009. (http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/090817_en.asp)

⁷ Third State Human Rights Report of Kenya available at <http://www.knchr.org/>

⁸ Diagnóstico de derechos humanos del Distrito Federal, Ciudad de México, 2008 (<http://www.cdhd.org.mx/>)

was for use in the National Human Rights Action Plan of Nepal (NHRAP) and second was to promote and monitor the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in the country.⁹

United Kingdom - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in partnership with the Scottish Human Rights Commission has worked on the development of a Human Rights Measurement Framework (HRMF) for England, Scotland and Wales. The framework aims to provide a set of indicators to measure human rights progress and help the EHRC in fulfilling its monitoring and reporting mandate, including to the Parliament.¹⁰

Salient features of OHCHR's framework for human rights indicators

In short, the conceptual and methodological framework:

- adopts a common approach to identifying indicators for measuring civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, thereby strengthening the notion of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights;¹¹
- translates the narrative on the normative content of human rights (starting with the related provisions of international human rights instruments and general comments / recommendations of treaty bodies) into a few characteristic *attributes* and a configuration of *structural*, *process* and *outcome* indicators. The identified indicators bring to the fore the steps taken by a State in addressing its human rights obligations – from acceptance of international human rights standards (*structural* indicators) to efforts being undertaken by the State, the primary duty-bearer, to meet the obligations that flow from the standards (*process* indicators) and on to the outcomes of those efforts from the perspective of rights-holders (*outcome* indicators);
- makes it easier to identify contextually meaningful indicators for universally accepted human rights standards. It seeks neither to prepare a common list of indicators to be applied across all countries irrespective of their social, political and economic development, nor to make a case for building a global measure for cross-country comparisons of the realization of human rights;¹²
- focuses on two categories of indicators and data-generating mechanisms: (a) indicators that are or can be compiled by official statistical systems using census, administrative records and statistical surveys; and (b) indicators or standardized information more generally compiled by human rights organizations;
- focuses on quantitative as well as qualitative indicators to assess the implementation of human rights effectively. Efforts have been made to keep the identified indicators simple, based on objective and transparent methodology and, to the extent feasible, there is an emphasis on the disaggregation of identified indicators by type of prohibited grounds of discrimination;
- comes with lists of illustrative indicators identified on a number of human rights and thematic issues. The list, which has been subjected to validation exercises, aims to support

⁹ Indicators for Monitoring Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: A User's Guide is available at <http://nepal.ohchr.org/en/resources/publications/2011/Indicators%20for%20Monitoring%20ESCR%20in%20Nepal-%20A%20User's%20Guide.pdf>

¹⁰ The Report on the Equality Measurement Framework is available at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/equality-measurement-framework/>; and <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/prechr/>

¹¹ The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action stressed that “all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis” (para. 5).

¹² OHCHR's work on human rights indicators is guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States to comply with their human rights obligations for the benefit of all human beings (ref. GA res. 60/251 establishing the HRC).

efforts of human rights stakeholders in identifying contextually relevant indicators through participatory processes at country level.

OHCHR's on-going work and support to human rights stakeholders

OHCHR encourages exchanges of country-level experiences in using indicators to foster the implementation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The Office also continues the development of indicators on identified human rights and thematic areas as well as the compilation of related meta-data. OHCHR organises capacity building and training workshops on the application of the framework and use of indicators in undertaking human rights assessments, integrating human rights in policy-formulation, implementing and follow-up of recommendations adopted by human rights mechanisms.

OHCHR will publish in 2012 a Guide to help disseminate and operationalize the adopted framework.

For further information:

Please visit <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indicators/index.htm>

or contact

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Research and Right to Development Division
Development, Economic and Social Issues Branch
Right to Development Section (Human Rights Indicators Team)
United Nations Office at Geneva
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
E-mail: hrindicators@ohchr.org